

WORKING THROUGH TRADITION ALONE:

JOYCE'S MYTHIC RETURN

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## ABSTRACT

Though much has been written on Joyce and mythology, this thesis explains the necessary link between myth-oriented literature and Joyce's appropriation of materials from external sources. The study focuses primarily on *Finnegans Wake* but devotes significant attention to *Ulysses* as well. Though Joyce was an individualistic twentieth-century writer, his last book integrates with older traditions of collective authorship, and in particular we find many recurrences of elements from Irish mythology and folklore. The strange words of *Finnegans Wake* often prove alterations of other authors' sentences. Much as each bard of an oral tradition would overhear and then reuse the stories, motifs, and even wordings of other bards in the production of his/her 'own' songs, Joyce seems to have regarded any and all texts he read as potential precursors to portions of *Finnegans Wake*, which he likened to 'pure music'.

Chapter 1 investigates Joyce's reappropriation of pre-existent elements, situates his work in relation to various myth-oriented literatures, and parallels aspects of his authorship with the roles of the Irish *fili* and druids.

Chapter 2 explores how the returns of myth in *Finnegans Wake* depend upon felicitous states of knowledge-deficiency. Joyce's readers must use their imaginations to make sense of the difficult text much in the way that Vico's ignorant 'first people' created gods to explain their world.

Chapter 3 discusses Joyce's affinity with James Clarence Mangan regarding Irish tradition, and also differentiates Joyce's work from the project of the Irish Literary Revival.

Chapter 4 examines the dichotomy between orality and writing in *Finnegans Wake*. The fox of Irish fables becomes an allegory for the poet who mediates between oral culture and tradition-binding literature.

Lastly, Chapter 5 discusses themes of plagiarism and piracy in *Finnegans Wake*, noting that the appropriation of readymade materials is often considered criminal in the present age.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Author's Declaration	vi
Abbreviations	vii
INTRODUCTION Joyce and the Readymade	1
CHAPTER I Reappropriation and Joyce's Mythological Authorship	13
i. <i>Finnegans Wake</i> and the Pre-existent	13
ii. Myth as Collective Assemblage of Readymade Units	21
iii. The Mythic Characteristics of Joyce's Work	27
iv. Joyce, Ancient Poetic Roles, and the Dark Tongue	38
CHAPTER 2 Imaginative Ignorance, Generative Forgetting, and Recollection through Names	48
i. Memory and Mythic Tradition	50
ii. Vital States of Not-Knowing in <i>Finnegans Wake</i>	56
a. Forgetting Restores Potent Ignorance on the Narrative Level	57
b. The Reader's Necessary, Unassuming Ignorance	60
iii. The Means of Mythic Recall: Name as Entirety	64
iv. Contra Lévy-Bruhl, the Mythic as Dormant within the Modern	70
v. The Allforabit: Recalling Myth thru Time, Data thru Media	74
CHAPTER 3 Irish Authors' Relationship with Tradition: Joyce, Mangan, Yeats	80
i. 'I AM [Ireland]': The Individual's Conception of Homeland	82
a. Bloom's Incomplete 'I. Am. A.'	84

b. Stephen's Failed (Re)creation of Ireland within His Soul	88
c. Shem's Denial of Birthplace	93
d. Joyce's Understanding of Irish Tradition vs. His Contemporaries'	96
ii. Mangan and Apolitical Concern with Country	98
iii. Fascism, Invasion, and Yeats's Literary Revival	111
a. <i>Finnegans Wake</i> : Not a Piece of Political Activism	113
b. Aryan & Greek Connections in the Irish Literary Movement	115
c. Yeats on the Irish Tradition's Outside Relations	118
d. Joyce's Multiracial Literary Democracy	124
CHAPTER 4 Written/Oral Dichotomy in <i>Finnegans Wake</i> : Foxes & Raftery	132
i. The Textualization of Oral Literature	132
a. The Offer of an Oral <i>Finnegans Wake</i>	132
b. Orality vs. Writing	135
c. The Metonymic Solution: The Oral within the Written	139
ii. A Multiplicity of Foxes: 'Fawkes', 'Fakes' and 'Faxes'	142
iii. Animosity between Folks and Fox	147
iv. Conditions of Oral/Written Cyclicity	155
CHAPTER 5 Conclusion: Plagiarism and Piracy towards Tradition	160
i. Quotation and Imitation	162
ii. Piracy and the 'Prankquean' in <i>Finnegans Wake</i>	168
iii. Joyce as Literary Remix DJ	173
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 179

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Aside from the support of the usual suspects (whose love, financial aid and constructive criticism can never be undervalued), the production of this thesis might not have been possible had the author not encountered the recent and current serialized work of Grant Morrison. Due to a character flaw, I am predisposed to meet contemporary art (of any sort) with extreme scepticism-cum-pessimism. However, it has been an immeasurable and surprising pleasure during the past half year to discover Mr Morrison's newer work, particularly his 'R.I.P.' storyline. It means very much to me whenever I am able to enjoy contemporary art to this degree, and so I must note this experience here. Without this inspiration, proving to me the continued relevancy and power of *this* spirit of creativity, completing my thesis on *Finnegans Wake* would have been almost impossible. Mr Morrison is reworking a modern myth more commensurably, entertainingly, hilariously, ominously and imaginatively than I thought was still possible. I have not been so impressed with a contemporary since the spring of 2000, when another living artist gave me a shock I've still not recovered from, by showing me that it was still possible for an oral poet to represent (almost *become*) our mass culture—however briefly (two, three years), and however steep the cost to the poet's personal life, health, and, ultimately, natural maturation.

## *AUTHOR'S DECLARATION*

This thesis was developed by the author between October 2006 and July 2008. I declare that, apart from the words and ideas whose authors are clearly acknowledged, this document is the result of my own work and has never before been published. My supervisor, Vicki Mahaffey, did aid me in developing and expanding my ideas, as well as in refining and clarifying my writing skills, and for these things I owe her much gratitude.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- CH* *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. Robert H. Deming, 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1970. There is continuous pagination between volumes.
- FW* Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*. New York: Penguin, 1976. References are to page and line numbers, which are the same in all editions.
- JJ* Ellmann, Richard. *James Joyce: New and Revised Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- LI, LII, LIII* Joyce, James. *Letters of James Joyce*. Vols. 1-3. Ed. Stuart Gilbert. London: Faber and Faber, 1966. Vols. II & III, ed. Richard Ellmann. London: Faber and Faber, 1966.
- OCPW* Joyce, James. *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*. Italian Trans. Conor Deane. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- P* Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Ed. R. B. Kershner. New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993.
- PSW* Joyce, James. *Poems and Shorter Writings*. Ed. Richard Ellmann, A. Walton Litz, John Whittier-Ferguson. London: Faber and Faber, 1991.
- SL* Joyce, James. *Selected Letters of James Joyce*. Ed. Richard Ellmann. London: Faber and Faber, 1975.
- U* Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Ed. Hans Walter Gabler, Wolfhard Steppe & Claus Melchior. London: The Bodley Head, 1993. References are to episode and line numbers.

## INTRODUCTION

### JOYCE AND THE READYMADE

Throughout his career James Joyce constructed literature by reappropriating various types of readymade material. To say that an artist must look to the world to find subject matter, although obvious, serves to remind us that nothing appears spontaneously, that all things, even ideas, had a different composition before they took the shapes we see them in today. With Joyce, however, artistic acts of reforming readymade material hold special significance. His most famous novel, *Ulysses*, through its title, plot outline and characters, refers to various outside sources, some personally known to Joyce and some mythological. Although in recent years significant work has been done on the gestation of Joyce's books from notes and manuscripts<sup>1</sup>, relatively little attention has been given to how much his later works owe to what might be called a process of literary 'metempsychosis', the transmigration of content and meaning from one text to another. With *Finnegans Wake* in particular Joyce appears to 'reincarnate' portions of older texts by keeping their spirits alive in somewhat altered forms. Joyce often obscures his source materials, changing the details in response to befit his own books and their contexts.

This thesis will explore how Joyce appropriated a great range and variety of materials in *Finnegans Wake*. The expressive return of these elements, ideas and narratives—pulled from the past and incorporated into Joyce's final, multiform text—

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<sup>1</sup> See in particular the excellent collection edited by Luca Crispi and Sam Slote, *How Joyce Wrote Finnegans Wake*, and also Finn Fordham's *Lots of Fun at Finnegans Wake: Unravelling Universals*.



encourages careful readers to reawaken dormant imaginative skills within themselves by using interpretive processes associated with mythic thinking. By unpacking the difficult language and tracing the references, we realize just how much the amalgamated, dreamlike narrative draws from external sources, real and imaginative. This recycling process runs parallel to Joyce's mimicking, in writing, of the oral performances of traditional bards: in both cases Joyce joyfully retransmits and recreates cultural materials, and he hopes his audience will discover joy in these processes as well.

Joyce's reliance on pre-existent material seems linked to his status as a realist; not only do his works portray everyday life, but his very words and subjects are often taken from real life with minor changes. Joyce's literary appropriation of the readymade is nearly contemporaneous with the blossoming of the readymade technique in visual art. In 1937, issue 26 of *transition* featured both an excerpt from 'Work in Progress' and, on the cover, a picture of Duchamp's *Comb* (1916) readymade. Seeing this, Joyce said to Sylvia Beach, 'The comb with thick teeth shown on this cover was the one used to comb out *Work in Progress*' (qtd. in Beach 72). Joyce's use of the past tense here is intriguing. More predictable would be a metaphor about how the comb could be used by a reader to untangle *Finnegans Wake*'s language, but Joyce's phrase suggests that he is the one who has metaphorically used the comb. Perhaps this remark alludes to how Joyce has *combed* through so many source texts, looking for useful phrases and ideas to appropriate into his own work.

Joyce himself said that he was 'quite content to go down to posterity as a scissors and paste man' (*JJ* 626). This suggests that he understood his role to be closer to what is commonly thought of as an editor, knowing that being a full-fledged creator, capable of producing something from nothing, is ultimately impossible. Freud

knew this as well, advising in ‘Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming’ that ‘We must separate writers who, like the ancient authors of epics and tragedies, take over their material ready-made, from writers who seem to originate their own material’ (440)—*seem* being the operative word. Joyce did not feign originality to the extent that most novelists do, and through his oeuvre we perceive a unique author whose appropriations of the readymade include not only the lives of people he knew but also the myths and histories of many cultures. Sometimes his sources are disguised quite thinly, or not disguised at all when a character retains the name of his source (as in the case of *Ulysses*’ George Russell, for example). Not only is the autobiographic quality of his works made quite clear, but Joyce also played down his innovations, as in the case of the internal monologue, when Joyce cited his precursor and said that he was but ‘resurrect[ing]’ (*LI* 232) Édouard Dujardin, who was the real ‘annonciateur de la parole intérieure’ (*JJ* 520n).

Similarly, throughout *Finnegans Wake* Joyce acknowledges a debt that the language of his final book owes to Lewis Carroll, the creator of the Jabberwocky and a purveyor of nonsense literature. The complexion and humour of Joyce’s last work depend upon portmanteau words, a term coined by Carroll in *Through the Looking-Glass*<sup>2</sup>. Carroll also invented a game called Doublets, or ‘Word Ladders’, in which players form new words from old ones by altering single letters (see Gardner 195). The logic of *Finnegans Wake* often works through what could be called ‘sound ladders’, combinations of words based on homophonic similarities. The text encourages its readers to perceive the orality of language, which dovetails into Joyce’s jocular characterization of the entire book as a communally authored, tradition-bearing song (a conception that chapters one and four will discuss in greater detail).

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<sup>2</sup> *Portmanteau* is itself a portmanteau word, a combination of *porter* and *manteau*.

Unlike countless other novelists, Joyce's appropriations go far beyond the fictionalization of real people: from *Stephen Hero* through *Ulysses*, Joyce engages ever more deeply with the readymade elements of mythology. By the time of *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce has become so skilled that his expropriations do not merely use the structures of myth to prop up his own plots, do not merely suggest mythological personages in order to bolster his own characters and themes. Rather, through its selections and adept alterations of myth, Joyce's late writing seems a natural part of the heterogeneous traditions it draws from and describes. Famously, Ezra Pound suggested that Joyce constructed *Ulysses* by using 'a scaffold taken from Homer' (*CH* 264), but in the case of *Finnegans Wake* the assorted 'scaffolding'—many different boards taken from different places—becomes part of the building itself.

With its first section echoing Genesis, *Finnegans Wake* seems simultaneously to (re)inaugurate mythologies and to rewrite them even as it writes within them. This material is born again in Joyce's very words. *Finnegans Wake* is not simply a piece of literature that has to do with mythology; it functions as a genuine piece of mythology as well. As Rob Pope explains,

[E]very telling or presentation of a creation myth is in some measure a retelling or re-presentation of a version or vision that is held already to exist. In that sense, to claim any kind of authority, a creation myth *must* be a re-creation myth. . . . [I]t is the very words, stories, images and associated actions of a myth which themselves *in the event* . . . *realise* the moment of creation. . . . The telling or performance of the myth (in words and images, music and dance, for instance) can then be grasped as an *embodiment* and an *enactment*, not simply the record or rehearsal of a prior state. (137)

With *Finnegans Wake* Joyce becomes a capable author-editor of an immense and diverse body of material, much of which was previously authored collectively and anonymously. Thus, a problem that *Finnegans Wake* strives to overcome, and a theme

of the work that needs more investigation, is how an individual author in the twentieth century could conceivably assume and recreate various defunct, collective traditions of ancient origin. This thesis's title comes from a paraphrasing of Albert B. Lord, who declared that traditional mythic literature must be the product of 'many singers over many generations' rather than 'the creation of one man, because *tradition does not work through one man alone*' (my italics; 'Tradition and the Oral Poet...' 26). By stating that Joyce in his final work does attempt to *work through tradition alone*, we emphasize two things. Firstly, there is the loneliness that a would-be mythic poet would feel in the modern age, after the traditional schools of myth-oriented poets had died out. Joyce could not acclimate himself to the Irish literary revival for very long, and 'Work in Progress' further isolated Joyce due to his contemporaries' inability to recognize the purposes of its difficulty and strangeness. Secondly, the title intimates Joyce's marked and accentuated—though quite underappreciated—use of readymade forms and a miscellany of pre-existent materials, which is especially apparent in *Finnegans Wake*. While Joyce has long been paired with Homer due to the structure of *Ulysses*, this thesis compares Joyce in his late career with the prototypical mythic poet in terms of *process* and *function*. Ancient bards freely reworked passed-down narratives to suit their listening audience, and Joyce does much the same for the readers of *Finnegans Wake*, though his scope is worldly, his memory prodigious, and his alterations radical.

Unlike most writers, Joyce never shied away from conspicuously reusing miscellaneous textual materials from a wide range of literary and non-literary sources in his literature.<sup>3</sup> In fact, his entire body of work at one level represents the conversion of his limitations into advantages, the honing of an ability to reappropriate a wide

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Joyce's first long piece of literature (which he burnt soon after its completion) was the play *A Brilliant Career* (1900), which even his then-fifteen-year-old brother Stanislaus could tell was a 'rehash of ingredients borrowed' from Ibsen (*My Brother's Keeper* 115).

array of pre-existent forms into a complex, dynamic textual design.<sup>4</sup> This same oeuvre, at a related level, represents his coming to terms with Ireland, the largest source of his material, the country he exiled himself from yet in which all of his significant literature is set.

This thesis examines Joyce's methods in *Finnegans Wake* of reusing and altering many sorts of materials from various traditions, but particularly those from ancient Irish mythology. Maria Tymoczko, in her book *The Irish Ulysses*, has done a remarkable job of tracing the influence of Irish tradition on Joyce's most popular novel, and this thesis hopes to contribute toward a similar study of *Finnegans Wake*. Below we will also consider the significance of Joyce's engagement with other, non-Irish mythologies, which his work also blends together and revitalizes. Just as much of this ancient material existed only in nostalgic, backward-looking, folkloric forms in the Ireland of Joyce's youth, so too does mythology in general seem culturally absent (or perhaps *inactive*) for us today, the hallowed names of old appearing (when they appear at all) only in conventional narrative forms. As chapter two will explain, the myths of the distant past may not seem our own, but their meanings remain in our collective unconscious, forgotten though with the potential to be revived from half-forgotten names. *Finnegans Wake* respects these holes in mythic knowledge and even constructs its design to accommodate readers' ignorance of the material: its text uses part to signify whole, connotations to imply meanings, and names to invoke beings and their histories. The book often relies on the paired motifs of something absent returning and of the dead coming back to life—for that which momentarily returns must first be understood as all but lost. Joyce's title references both Tim Finnegan of the nineteenth-century ballad, revived at his wake by the smell of whiskey, and Finn

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<sup>4</sup> Noting this special talent of Joyce's for '[i]nspired cribbing', Ellmann writes that 'his gift was for transforming material, not for originating it. . . As he remarked in later life to Frank Budgen, "Have you ever noticed, when you get an idea, how much *I* can make of it?"' ('Introduction' xv).

MacCool of Irish legend, who, like King Arthur, may someday return.

‘Return’ is omnipresent in *Finnegans Wake*: Joyce returns to themes of his previous works, and thus to his own personal history. Kimberly Devin writes that ‘Artistic creativity for Joyce is re-creativity, and finally a doubled re-creativity: if his earlier works record transmutations of cultural myths, his final oeuvre reforges his own personal transcripts of that inheritance’ (28). This thesis, however, is less concerned with these more personal ‘returns’<sup>5</sup> than with the larger, cultural memories whose altered reappearances *Finnegans Wake* orchestrates. Historical elements and events (such as the Battle of Waterloo) replay themselves in Joyce’s last text, which itself suggests a never-ending cycle<sup>6</sup>, while various mythic figures also return or, in the case of the sleeping Finn MacCool, threaten to return.

Bringing mythic thinking in general—and Irish myth in particular—to bear on *Finnegans Wake* will enable us to view the work on one of the most fundamental levels of its composition. As the first chapter details, while scholars have already noted various commonalities between *Ulysses* and old Irish epic, *Finnegans Wake* goes further by not merely referencing, harking back to, or mimicking facets of myth, but extending those traditions into the modern age and building upon them. While *Ulysses* sometimes engages with similar themes, it is not as committed to them. Tymoczko writes, ‘As with the elements from Greek mythology or the parallels . . . with Dante and Shakespeare, [*Ulysses*’] correspondences with Irish tradition are most often general, partial, and suggestive rather than exhaustive’ (8). *Finnegans Wake*, on the other hand, embodies traditional themes and seemingly becomes part of the material it references. As Beckett stated, this strange text ‘is not *about* something; *it is*

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<sup>5</sup> For instance, see *Scribbledehobble: The Ur-Workbook for Finnegans Wake*, edited by Thomas Connolly. This reprints a notebook Joyce wrote in soon after the completion of *Ulysses*, its pages representing revisionary notes on his previous novels, short stories, and works of poetry, arranged chronologically.

<sup>6</sup> Its first and last pages are hypothetically joined by the same incomplete sentence.

*that something itself* (*Our Exag.* 14). Joyce's last work facilitates a meeting between mythic and modern mindsets, and in so doing reveals the ever-present intermingling of all essences from all times—always going on though unrecognized by most. By approaching Joyce's text not with modern, readerly conceits but with an openness that takes nothing for granted, we learn that *Finnegans Wake* not only gives us privileged access to re-examine our own surroundings through a 'collideorscape' (*FW* 143.28), but it also allows us to realize the extent and value of our cultural inheritances, the treasure-trove of myths and legends that are the common property and potential tools of everyone.

Chapter one considers Joyce's authorship in relation to mythology in general and also situates this thesis and its terminology in relation to definitions put forth by scholarship of mythological and oral traditions. As alluded to above, the second chapter will then explain how the return of myth in *Finnegans Wake* is predicated upon distinct, felicitous states of knowledge-deficiency that prove generative. The difficult work often encourages its readers to utilize their lack of knowledge as a childlike, imaginative ignorance, itself the progenitor of myth. This useful ignorance is mirrored by the theme of forgetfulness at the ever-shifting narrative level. Lastly, there is the 'allforabit' nature of *Finnegans Wake*. The text is in some respect written in a peculiar shorthand that evokes a large body of external texts. Through this synecdochic process, a partial word or opaque reference seems to call forth a whole entity in the reader's mind if at least a trace of that entity's 'nameform' (*FW* 18.25) can be discerned. (For example, 'Everguin' (285.left margin) recalls Eve, Queen Guinevere, and the Evergreen Touring Company. Aspects of each of those entities prove useful in understanding the surrounding text. Nearby we find a reference to King Arthur, to whom Guinevere was unfaithful, and the owner of the Evergreen Touring Company managed a play titled *A Royal Divorce* (see Glasheen 154).)

Chapter three details Joyce's project of mythic return as distinct from a similarly-themed project of the time, which Joyce distanced himself from, the Irish literary revival. The relation between Ireland and Joyce as a necessarily Irish author will then be investigated. Joyce uses his characters to explore the potential relations between different types of individuals and their home country. These exploratory tactics enable Joyce himself to engage deeply, and most productively from an artistic standpoint, with Ireland and its ancient literary tradition.

Chapter four then examines the dichotomy between orality and writing in *Finnegans Wake*, the very long, difficult book that Joyce playfully offered to the world as if it were a pleasant song. The foxes of Irish fables become an allegory for the artist who mediates between oral culture and traditional literature. Special consideration is given to St. Ciarán's fox, who swallows a lessonbook that becomes a holy book upon his regurgitating it. We will investigate how in Joyce's text *foxes* are also 'Fawkes', 'faxes', and 'fakes'. Much like bearers of tradition, these roguish mythic animals consume the literature of the people, convey it to other places, and then expel the texts that they have reconfigured through their digestive processes.

Lastly, chapter five explores how the construction of *Finnegans Wake* intimately relates to a plagiarist and a pirate, as embodied in the personas of Shem the sham and the prankquean, respectively. We will come full circle by discussing how, in the modern age, the appropriation of readymade materials for a mythic purpose may be considered unlawful.

In what way, and to what extent, is Joyce an author of mythic tradition? Simply by the names of some of his characters and the titles of some of his works we know that mythological allusions and parallels are not hard to come by, and Joycean scholarship all but began by detailing these connections, with Joyce himself providing the schema correlating chapters of *Ulysses* with episodes of the *Odyssey*. Despite the



mythological importance of the *name* itself, however (see chapter two), this thesis is not very concerned with these sorts of topological correspondences with myth, which Joyce's earlier texts sometimes utilize simply to bring attention to themselves.<sup>7</sup> Rather our greater interest here lies in how *Finnegans Wake* integrates with mythic literary traditions, and how Joyce negotiates his individual authorship into a vast body of communal authorship. Unlike T. S. Eliot, who believed that the conscientious poet influenced by tradition(s) 'must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past' (39), Joyce's process ostensibly orients aspects of the past into the present. Rónán McDonald writes that Eliot 'overcomes the troubling impressionistic or personal dimension of artistic appreciation . . . through the objectivity and authority of the literary past' (84). In *Finnegans Wake*, on the other hand, Joyce gains a degree of control over a heterogeneous assortment of traditions, bringing certain chosen elements into the service of his conglomerate text. Further, rather than grant exclusive focus to the individual literary greats of past generations, Joyce exhibits more concern for the manifold disciplines and people of the past.

Eventually, through these processes Joyce becomes something of a myth himself, with his own defining back-story and linguistic hallmarks. This is the second meaning of the 'mythological authorship' in the first chapter's title: on one level Joyce becomes as mythic as any of the personages named in his writing even as he acknowledges his position as a mere mortal scribe, as embodied by the Shem persona. Much as Dante made himself the protagonist of the *Commedia*, able to interact with denizens of heaven and hell, Joyce includes many aspects of himself<sup>8</sup> in *Finnegans*

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<sup>7</sup> Quoting Hugh Kenner, Maria Tymoczko relates that 'one reason Joyce described *Ulysses* in Homeric terms and was explicit about the Greek mythos while the book was in progress was that the Homeric scheme turned the book "into something that could be talked about"' (13).

<sup>8</sup> Although Joyce clearly pairs himself with Shem the Penman, it is a mistake to think that his identifications end there. Joyce also bears resemblance to Shaun the Post in that he is a 'mere mailman' (*FW* 408.10) figuratively carrying a Letter that he has not truly written. The accusations of indecency lobbed against HCE also double as obscenity charges against Joyce for *Ulysses*. In the second chapter

*Wake* because he sees himself within the very traditions he references and describes. In the text we not only find traces of Joyce paired with aspects of twentieth-century Ireland, Europe, and with their ancient and medieval counterparts, but Joyce's biography also stands in relation to America, to Eastern religions, and to literary, scientific and philosophical traditions as well.

Any scholar may describe the genealogy of a set of ancient gods, or any writer may produce a work of fiction in which these gods are treated as characters, but these simple acts of transcribing mythological names, recounting legends or even vicariously altering them, do not purport to affect the vitality (or dormancy) of these long-absent traditions. Approaching their tasks with humility, neither scholars nor writers of fiction can become bearers, much less furtherers, of traditions they almost certainly do not believe in. Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*, however, does indeed assume those roles, as evidenced by his careful choice and thorough treatment of mythological subject matter. For his acts of naming, misnaming, renaming and reconceiving mythological figures and narratives, Joyce deserves more credit for reviving Irish tradition. Perhaps Joyce believed that he could reunify his native tradition as well, since he had said that his chosen predecessor, James Clarence Mangan, had 'inherit[ed] the latest and worst part of a tradition upon which no divine hand has drawn out the line of demarcation, a tradition which dissolves and divides against itself as it moves down the cycles. And because this tradition has become an obsession for him, he has accepted it with all its failures' (*OCPW* 135-36). As devoted to Irish tradition as he says Mangan was, Joyce synthesizes these disparate, 'divided' parts, making that which has 'dissolved' return. In the following chapters we will see that not only do various strands of Irish mythology live together within *Finnegans*

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we will also see that ALP's loneliness in cycling around and around the dreamlike narrative evokes Joyce's loneliness in writing and rewriting *Finnegans Wake*.

*Wake*, but the book also interfuses them with foreign mythologies. While all these traditions adhere to an Irish foundation, they retain their previous national identities as well.

Moreover, *Finnegans Wake* speaks to a modern understanding of mythology in general and the influence that it continues to have on our world. Far from whimsical superstitions, the mythic techniques Joyce provides us with can enrich our reality, deepen our experience, and increase our awareness. An engaged reading of the work, in all its difficulty, allows us to perceive our surrounding culture with ancient thought processes that we all possess, though they get little exercise in the modern world. As early as 1912 we know of Joyce's suspicion that the 'much trumpeted progress of this century', which 'consists for the most part of a tangle of machines', was atrophying imagination on a large scale:

[I]n the midst of this complex and many-sided civilization the human mind, almost terrorized by material greatness, becomes lost, denies itself and grows weaker. . . . Indeed, one might say of modern man that he has an epidermis rather than a soul. The sensory power of his organism has developed enormously, but it has developed to the detriment of his spiritual faculty. (OCPW 187-89)

Gloriously and audaciously, with his most mature work Joyce engages with and situates his writing within ancient traditions, attempting to prove his authorship worthy of entering into them even as he transforms and contemporizes them. Centuries after the times when scribes made careful transcripts of meaningful, orally-transmitted stories, Joyce produces a book branded with a final dateline (1922-1939) that seems to tell eternity, Yes, during these years there was again a scribe who treated these traditions as living.

## CHAPTER 1

### REAPPROPRIATION AND JOYCE'S MYTHOLOGICAL AUTHORSHIP

#### 1. *FINNEGANS WAKE* AND THE PRE-EXISTENT

While this thesis focuses mostly on Joyce's expropriation of mythologies, we should acknowledge that *Finnegans Wake* reforms many other sorts of pre-existent materials as well: historical data, personal information known to the author, and even words themselves. Joyce's text blends these elements together vigorously and indiscriminately to form a 'mythistory' (to use a term coined by Joseph Mali in his book by that title), a new form that houses and partially, artfully, invitingly obscures the readymade elements. Such obscurity has the effect of placing the reader in a state of emphasized ignorance, setting the stage for imaginative responses, as will be discussed more in chapter two. (The reader of Joyce's text is encouraged to creatively make sense of the inexplicable much as Vico's 'first people' created myths in response to their strange world.)

The deeper we look into *Finnegans Wake*—perhaps deeper into anything—the more we begin to discern the presence of ever more rudimentary elements that could be described as readymade. The book explains that the Letter, a metaphor for the work itself, was a loveletter found by 'that original hen' in a compost heap '(dump for short)', or in other words by 'Dame Partlet<sup>1</sup> on her dungheap' (110.22, 26; 124.23-4).

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<sup>1</sup> A character from Chaucer; 'The expression means "hen", & figuratively, "woman"' (McHugh, *Annotations* 124).

The Letter is also analogous to a child that Kate, the old woman or crone persona of the female triad<sup>2</sup>, remembers conceiving (as herself or as ALP) with Finn/HCE upon the ‘filthdump’ in Dublin’s ‘Phornix Park’ (80.6). The All-Father thunders after Kate sneakily hides the Letter/child, burying it within the mound of earth just as Irish monks buried important texts (including the *Book of Kells*) to hide them from thieves and Viking invaders:

What subtler timeplace of the weald than [...] to will hide a leabhar [Irish for ‘book’] from Thursmen’s branihands [Thor’s men/bandits] or a loveletter, lostfully hers, that would be lust on Ma, than then when ructions ended, than here where race began: an by four hands of forethought the first babe of reconciliation is laid in its last cradle of hume sweet hume. Give over it! And no more of it! So pass the pick [to dig the earth] for child sake! O men!

For hear Allhighest sprack for krischnians [Krishna-Christians] as for propagana fidies [papal centre for missionary work] an his nuptial eagles sharped their beaks of prey [...] (80.12-22)

On the narrative level, though his mother ALP may have dictated it to him, it is Shem the Penmen who transcribes the Letter, and his *composition* process echoes the themes of the *compost* heap: decay, recycling, and (re)birth. Shem has ‘made synthetic ink and sensitive paper for his own end out of his wit’s *waste*. You ask, in Sam Hill [“same hill”/heap], how?’ (my italics; *FW* 185.6-8). The answer to this ‘how?’ comes in a Latin passage (‘cloaked up in the language of blushfed porporates’ (185.9-10)): Shem makes his special writing materials from his urine and dung (see 185.14-26). In other words, the Letter, and in a metaphoric sense *Finnegans Wake* as well, is made up of external materials that have passed through the digestive system of the writer (Shem or Joyce). We are presented with writing as a reappropriation of pre-existent elements; and thus we can read to a much different effect Antonin Artaud’s annoyed statement that ‘All writing is *shit*’, or *filth* or *garbage* or *trash*,

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<sup>2</sup> Iseult the girl and ALP the woman being the other two related personas.

depending on the translation<sup>3</sup>. What is more, just as the Letter doubles as a child conceived on a dungheap, so does Shem's writing foster rebirth. Defecation and creation are linked, as Leo Bersani writes when analyzing the idea that 'All writing is shit': 'We may consider the excremental process and birth as the most appropriate for all ontological reflection' ('Artaud...' 100). By its content and its very nature Shem's writing offends, and in its offensiveness it is analogous to HCE's scandalous act in Phoenix Park, which may have been defecation. Campbell and Robinson note that 'Defecation as a creative act is a well-established infantile idea. What the witnesses in the Park have seen may be interpreted, in part, as the moment of creation' (218).

The metaphorical compost heap of *Finnegans Wake* recalls the mounds of earth on the Irish landscape, which in mythic tradition are considered gateways to the Otherworld of the fairy people, the *sídh*. This word once signified only the mounds themselves but then became associated with the supernatural beings dwelling within, who were once a race called the *Tuatha Dé Danann*. The *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* (or *Book of Invasions*) tells us that after being conquered by the Milesians the *Tuatha Dé Danann* fled below the earth, under these earthen mounds or rocky *raths* (ring or fairy forts). The associations between faeries and the dead are strong in Irish tradition:

It is arguable . . . that in primitive times all the dead were fairies, and that Christianity has removed most of them out of the fairy power. There are many fairy traits that might support this hypothesis, the green or white garments worn by the fairies—both of them colours of death—the small size of many of them—in stories of the separable soul the soul is generally regarded as small, or even tiny—the sepulchral mounds which they inhabit, the number of fairies who are supposed to be ghosts, and so on; but on the whole one might say that those of the Dead who inhabit Fairyland are people who have no right to be dead at all. (Briggs 96)

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<sup>3</sup> In the original French the word is *cochonnerie*, literally 'pigshit' or 'pig stuff'. The references and translations above are found in Artaud, *L'Ombilic des Limbes* 106; Jannarone, 'Exercises in Exorcism' 38; Artaud, *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings* 85; and Artaud, *Collected Works of Antonin Artaud*, Vol. 1 75.

Joyce connects *sidhe* (pronounced ‘shee’, giving us ‘banshee’) with ‘she’ so often in *Finnegans Wake* that Adaline Glasheen ‘ha[s]n’t the strength to list them all’ in her *Census* (261). In July 1938, a month before her husband correctly named the title of Joyce’s work, so long kept a secret, Maria Jolas ventured ‘Fairy’s Wake’, to which Joyce responded, ‘Brava! But something is missing’ (*JJ* 708). The fairies were to be but part of the resurrected material, the buried conglomerate corpse that becomes a literary corpus.

The writing of the Letter doubles as the recycling, in Irish soil, of the *de-composing* remains of dead bodies and dead mythologies. Joyce as rearranger<sup>4</sup> forms a seemingly original creation by adroitly manipulating selected pre-existent materials whose structures have been broken down into smaller elements. A close examination of this new compound would reveal that the same rotted material has returned anew: ‘the same returns’ (*FW* 18.5).<sup>5</sup> And what is the ‘all-riddle of it’, this strange book the contents of which it seems we have never seen before? ‘That that is allruddy with us’ (274.2-3). Joyce said of *Ulysses*, ‘I made it out of next to nothing. *Work in Progress* I am making out of nothing’ (Mercanton 40<sup>6</sup>). *Nothing* or *nothing new*, as Richard Ellmann characterized the resultant *Finnegans Wake*: ‘a wholly new book based upon the premise that there is nothing new under the sun’ (*JJ* 545).

Putting the ancient mythological themes aside for a moment and considering the actual text of *Finnegans Wake*, we discover that a startling number of its phrases

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<sup>4</sup> I use this term in distinction from David Hayman’s concept of Joyce (or his narrator) as ‘the Arranger’. Whereas Hayman describes how Joyce’s carefully arranged structure of repeating fragments affects the readers of *Ulysses*, I emphasize the marked pre-existent quality of the elements in *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce’s arrangement of ideas, stories, and words, is more accurately described as a *rearrangement*. These source materials have existed before in various contexts, and in Joyce’s text we often perceive these things as being *reused*.

<sup>5</sup> Described in another way, by the character Mutt, it is as if an infinite number of stories have all fallen together like snowflakes, forming a new cohesive heap: ‘Countlessness of livestories have netherfallen by this plage [*page*: French for “beach”], flick as flowflakes, litters from aloft, like a waast wizard all of whirlworlds. Now are all tombed to the mound, isges to isges [*gês*: German for “earth”], erde from erde [= German for “earth”; *merde*: French for “shit”; “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust”]’ (*FW* 17.26-29).

<sup>6</sup> From *Les Heures de James Joyce*, as cited and presumably translated by Ellmann in *JJ* 543n.

have been borrowed (and then altered) from other authors' works. We will never be able to locate all of Joyce's sources, and thus never know what percentage of *Finnegans Wake* is 'unoriginal'. Danis Rose and John O'Hanlon, however, in their abandoned H.C.E. Project<sup>7</sup> thoroughly investigated the notebook material that went into one episode (*FW* 532.6-554) and were able to 'locate external sources in practically every case (95% of cases)' (*Understanding* 333). These workbooks themselves represented 'about half of the text of the example (4000 words [8000 total])' (*ibid.*). Thus, within this one episode, either roughly half of the text is 'unoriginal' (i.e., it amounts to alterations of other texts), or else the figure is closer to 95% and Rose and O'Hanlon simply lacked the documentation that would lead us to Joyce's sources. Since it has been estimated that about 90% of the lines in the Homeric epics are composed of ancient poetic formulas<sup>8</sup>, the large percentage of recycled phrases in *Finnegans Wake* is highly significant in understanding Joyce's process as comparable to those of myth-oriented literary traditions. 'If one estimates what would be left in *FW* if all the borrowing from other books were excised,' writes John Garvin, 'one is faced with the conclusion that the operation would result in a very lean book' (227).

Here are a few specific examples of *Finnegans Wake*'s dependency on a variety of external texts. James Atherton discovered that *FW* 281.4-13 records a long sentence from an essay by Edgar Quinet (in French) about Vico and Herder's theories of history (34). Quinet argues that nature survives the rise and fall of civilizations. Joyce makes only very minor changes to the sentence: he changes *jours* to *temps*, removes a semicolon, pluralizes *nom*, and substitutes *arrive*s for *succède l'une à*

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<sup>7</sup> The H.C.E. Project was halted due to opposition from the Joyce Estate. The same findings would have also gone into Rose's government-supported 'MaMaLuJo Project' CD-ROM, which the Estate also halted by means of copyright.

<sup>8</sup> See Lord, *The Singer of Tales* 142.



*l'autre*. We also find this same sentence in radically altered, somewhat Anglicized forms at 14.35 ff., 117.11 ff., 236.19 ff., 281.4, 354.22 ff., and 615.02 ff.<sup>9</sup> Thus Joyce makes at least seven similar sentences from one sentence of Quinet's.

On the other hand, sometimes multiple extracts from the same source can become a single passage of *Finnegans Wake*. This is what happens at 288.5: 'him, he druider would smilabit eggways ned, he, to don't say', which as Roland McHugh notes ('Review...' 36) is a conglomeration of three extracts from *Huckleberry Finn*: 'Jim he grumbled a little, but give in' (Twain 77), 'He said he druther see the new moon over his left shoulder' (64), and 'Please to don't poke fun at a poor girl like me, mum' (70).

A decade ago Rose bemoaned the fact that scholars had not made use of his radical claim that *Finnegans Wake*,

famously the world's most idiosyncratic, eccentric and creative work, is in truth an *assemblage* made up of bits and pieces of sentences freely plagiarized by Joyce from the writings of other[s] . . . [O]ne would have thought . . . that the publication of *The index manuscript* in 1978 would have far-reaching consequences for Joyce scholarship. . . . As it happened, nothing happened. (*Textual Diaries* 18-19)

In the past decade there has been an increase in 'genetic' criticism that documents Joyce's altered transfers of notebook material to drafts. However interesting these transfers are in themselves, we must not neglect the overall process: Joyce's pointed appropriation of so much outside material into his notebooks in the first place.

Furthermore, after Rose and O'Hanlon discovered the huge percentage of pre-existent text in *Finnegans Wake*, they still admittedly could not 'address the perhaps equally important question of the rationale—the "why"—of Joyce's method' ('Constructing...' 3). This thesis poses an answer to this 'why', an answer that grants

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<sup>9</sup> Clive Hart has also found over a dozen 'Lesser Recalls' of Quinet's sentence (238), but I suspect his list is incomplete, especially since his account of the 'Full Statements' does not include 117.11 ff.

us a new perspective on how to read *Finnegans Wake* and interpret its techniques and effects. Joyce's extensive reemployment of pre-existent texts and elements can be viewed as his attempt to become a traditional ancient poet, a 'fashioner' almost in the sense of a carpenter (who after all does not create the wood)<sup>10</sup>. In order to wield the larger readymade forms of myth ably and successfully this type of poet must first master smaller readymade units, i.e. verbal formulae. Just as the ancient poet's song ideally represents as many features of its culture as possible, the more Joyce creatively 'plagiarizes' (by modern sensibilities), the more culture his text embodies. Consequently, when we discover and identify references in *Finnegans Wake* we not only excavate material from an immense, artfully (re)arranged cultural landfill, but we also achieve greater understanding of how this heritage can still hold potential meaning for modern readers, to whom Joyce presented his work as the great sacred text of the era.

Not only does *Finnegans Wake* return artfully altered passages from other, disparate texts (from the Bible to *The Book of the Dead* to novels such as *Huckleberry Finn*<sup>11</sup>), but Joyce's compost heap breaks down pre-existent constructs so well that the entire text can be interpreted as an altered return of *all* possible language, down to individual words. The most striking feature of the work itself, its peculiar language, is not as original as it is usually perceived to be. The similarity between the language of *Finnegans Wake* and the *bétra na filed* (or 'Dark Tongue') of ancient Irish druids is discussed in this chapter's final section. Besides this parallel, however, and in keeping with the conception of Joyce as editor or rearranger, it is simply more profitable to understand Joyce's portmanteaus not as wholly original creations through and through, but rather as what they really are: strategic rearrangements and combinations

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<sup>10</sup> Of the 'early medieval "shapers"' and the 'late medieval "maker"' Rob Pope writes, 'both terms are Germanic counterparts of the Graeco-Roman "poet", which also meant "fashioner" or "maker"' (198).

<sup>11</sup> Atherton's *Books at the Wake* was the first major investigation of this.

of pre-existent words. All authors use pre-existent materials, words themselves foremost amongst them. Usually, however, these appropriations are taken for granted both by the audience and the authors themselves, who usually make relatively few changes to their materials and thus produce a representation of reality that seems quite recognizable to the reader. The later Joyce, on the other hand, recognizes all authors' inescapable reliance upon source material that has been constructed and reconstructed by innumerable others in the past. Under no illusions about being a *creator*, Joyce admits his editor-like position (in part he is Shem the lowly penman, the mere transcriber) and thereby focuses more directly on his task of selecting and rearranging material as best he can. At bottom, this is the task of all authors, though most do not have reason to examine the situation so fundamentally.

In *Finnegans Wake* the most prevalent results of this recognized 'editing' process are the endless portmanteaus made from careful combinations of pre-existent words. The potency of Joyce's radical portmanteaus lies in their uncanny familiarity with the communally-developed words that the reader already knows. *Portmanteau* in French means a suitcase for coats or cloaks, signifying a way of transporting vestments between different locations. Figuratively, this is just what Joyce's radical portmanteaus are: containers that carry words (the vestments of thoughts) from language to language, culture to culture, ancient to modern, forward and back again.

Beyond words, even letters themselves are taken and altered by Joyce, whether within portmanteau words or alone (as in the case of capital E, which becomes one of the sigla to be flipped on all sides). Often Joyce's alterations take on mythic overtones and imports, and changes of individual letters are no exception. Giving perhaps the most succinct and striking example, George Gibson notes that the name of the book's father-persona, HCE, is a reversal of ECH, the name of the 'great solar god who resided in [the] human vehicle' of the Irish high priest when presiding

over the ancient *Teamhur Feis* (Rites of Tara) (6)<sup>12</sup>. Eventually ECH became *Eochu*, ‘the ultimate name for *all* Irish patriarchs’ (Gibson 43).<sup>13</sup>

## 2. MYTH AS COLLECTIVE ASSEMBLAGE OF READYMADE UNITS

When Joyce told Beckett in the late 1930s, ‘I have discovered I can do anything with language I want’ (*JJ* 702), we should marvel not at his arrogance but at the fact that he needed to wait so long to express this feeling. This underscores the conception of the mature Joyce as an aspirant author of various traditions and of *tradition* in general, for he was increasingly mastering the tiniest elements of language and thereby building toward the substantiated use of larger elements, themes, and mythologies.

In other words, Joyce’s channelling of greater pre-existent ideas (Irish myths, for example, or the figures of the primal father and mother) is to an extent based upon his considered rearrangement of individual words and even letters. For instance, within the great personage of Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker we find (among many other things) Humpty Dumpty, who in turn contains the ideas of falling, humps, dumps, and eggs. Eggs themselves contain the idea of birth, and literally contain yolk and white, the latter of which is a common element that also goes into the identity of Finn (named after his fair hair). Joyce stays in touch with these elements within HCE by frequently reworking them on the textual level, forming portmanteaus to suit the

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<sup>12</sup> Gibson in fact believes that all of the functionary personages in *Finnegans Wake* have parallels with the Irish mythological figures associated with the Rites of Tara:

ECH becomes, in the *Wake*, HCE; the mother goddess Ana becomes Anna; the twenty-eight virgin priestesses from the temple of the goddess Brigit become the Twenty-Eight Virgins from Saint Brigit’s Finishing School; the Druidic slayer of ECH at Tara, Mog Ruith, becomes the sinister nemesis of HCE, Magrath; Saint Patrick remains Saint Patrick. The other members of the *Sigla Group* (for example, the Four Elders, the Twelve Magistrates, the Twins, and so on) have their counterparts at the *Teamhur Feis* as well. (8-9)

<sup>13</sup> Macalister writes that ‘all the kings, as a matter of course, originally were called *Eochu*’ (‘*Temir Breg*’ 331).

context of the given sentence: 'he dumptied the wholeborrow of rubbages on to soil here' (*FW* 17.4-5), 'Hatches Cocks' Eggs' (71.27), 'Hennery Canterel—Cockran, eggotisters' (137.7-8). With smaller connotations supporting larger themes, this system of composition is similar (though not quite as hierarchical) to the operation of the traditional oral singer, as described by Milman Parry: 'His major theme can be made up only of minor themes, his minor, only of lesser, and his lesser, only of the verses and phrases which he has heard from other singers. The old romantic notion of the poetry as a thing made by the people is by no means a completely false one. The poetry does stand beyond the single singer' (450).

At bottom, mythic literature is in every respect traditional, meaning that by definition it is, like language itself, the product of more than one mind. What is more, it is the creation of more than one mind over centuries: 'A single man or even a whole group of men who set out in the most careful way,' Parry writes, 'could not make a beginning . . . It must be the work of many poets over many generations' (330). Each poet ventures his alterations upon the established material: recurring stock situations, mythic characters, and especially the poetic phrasings and formulas. Judging audiences and subsequent poets then decide what changes would be worthwhile for the tradition to retain. Lacking a living, healthy mythic denomination of poetry around him, Joyce assumes that any words he might read or overhear can just as well be treated as a potential precursor for a future portion of his own text.

Without any favoured theogony or preset poetic format imposed upon him, Joyce in the twentieth century must determine on his own what is worth recycling and what forms these materials could best be recycled into after he breaks down (to varying extents) the structures they had before he encountered them. As will be noted below, Joyce stresses the collective nature of his final work not only to make his authorship seem more legitimately traditional but, more pragmatically, because he

blatantly *does* need much outside help to perform this immense and arduous task which he has undertaken alone.

Just as no single person can control much less create a tradition, no single work or text can contain an entire tradition. The ‘allforabit’ quality of *Finnegans Wake* acknowledges this, prompting the reader to consult external sources in order to strive for a fuller conception of the ideas and images put forth by the hyper-connotative language. Though any given fraction of the text may suggest numerous absent wholes, the entire text itself is not the complete story, just as the *Odyssey* is not the complete biography of Odysseus and just as the *Theogony* is not the totality of Greek mythology. Kevin O’Nolan writes in ‘Homer and the Irish Hero Tale’, ‘[W]hen we go outside [any] story [in a mythic tradition] and find the same phrases elsewhere, we may conclude that they are beyond question formulae’ (15-16). In a similar way, with readers encouraged by the book’s allusive difficulty to look for Joyce’s external sources, and with scholars locating similar phrases elsewhere in other books, *Finnegans Wake* fuses a myriad of literatures together, treats this miscellany as its precursory tradition, and designates certain stretches of these (often previously unrelated) texts as its formulae, thus building meta-mythologies. Whereas Homer’s epithets and stock formulas (‘rosy-fingered Dawn’, ‘raging Achilles’) were chosen in part to fit the traditional epic meter, the recurring, reworded motifs in *Finnegans Wake* reference clichés and quotations from various, unrelated sources: ‘the truce, the old truce and nattonbluff the truce’, ‘lead us not into reformication’, ‘and Irish eyes of welcome were smiling daggers’ (336.19, 333.30, 176.22-23).<sup>14</sup> Joyce’s composition takes innumerable phrases such as these, each well-known within its native field (legal, religious, lyric), and pulls them together within the formation of a new,

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<sup>14</sup> See Clive Hart’s *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake* for an index of many such phrases and their recurrences.

polymorphous tradition.

Although Parry and most other scholars referenced in this thesis were unknown to Joyce, Joyce's very behaviour concerning *Finnegans Wake* makes it seem as if he were working from their theories, so convincingly does he reinvent himself as a mythic traditional author. Mary Colum recounts how Eugene Jolas noticed that *Finnegans Wake* 'seemed in the end to be almost a collective work' because of how Joyce enlisted the aid of many persons in the 'minutiae of it, though of course the moulding of the material . . . the pattern, was Joyce's own' (Mikhail 162). Elsewhere Jolas recalls Joyce propounding the idea that 'Really it is not I who am writing this crazy book. . . . It is you and you and that girl over there and that man in the corner' (*Man from Babel* 166). In another instance Jolas quotes Joyce as saying, 'This book is being written by the people I have met or known' ('Homage...' 174). These strange claims clearly express Joyce's wild desire—impossible to achieve on a realistic level in the modern world—for *Finnegans Wake* to be a work of collective authorship, a book possessing an immense traditional value comparable to that of an ancient myth-oriented text or epic song. No matter if Joyce's name appears as sole author on the cover since, for example, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are attributed to Homer, understood by many (including Vico) as a mask of the whole ancient Greek people. Also of note is Joyce's entreaty for *Finnegans Wake* to be understood as 'pure music' (*JJ* 703). Though he may have never heard the (somewhat self-contradictory) term *oral literature*, Joyce seems to dance around it, at one time intimating to a visitor that his final book could be considered 'literature' only when read aloud, and in another instance writing to his daughter that 'In a word, it is pleasing to the ear' (*JJ* 702-3).

After Parry in the 1930s traced parallels between the barely living Slavic oral tradition and the remnants of the ancient Greek oral tradition that he discerned in the Homeric texts, he argued for academics to take oral and folk traditions more

seriously: '[T]here is [a] failure to see that literature falls into two great parts . . . because there are two kinds of *form*: *the one part of literature is oral, the other written*' (377). For Parry, the proliferation of writing 'accounts for the growth of a new form of society in which there is no longer any place for the old heroic ideal' (ibid.). Joyce's transposition of Odysseus into Leopold Bloom suggests that he would agree with this, though Joyce evidently believed that the modern world was still informed by mythic structures. The anecdotes mentioned above also illustrate Joyce's attempt through *Finnegans Wake* to challenge any conception that overly privileges oral and/or written forms of communication at the expense of any other.<sup>15</sup>

Undoubtedly, Joyce did not make these claims that the book was 'pure music', was 'literature' only when being listened to, or was written under collective authorship, with complete seriousness. His notion that *Finnegans Wake* was simply 'meant to make you laugh' (JJ 702), rather than having multiple 'levels of meaning to be explored', is itself humorously duplicitous as well.<sup>16</sup> These amusing ideas Joyce put forth, however, do envisage *Finnegans Wake* as a traditional piece of mythic literature. Oral, collective, and pleasing (ideally, at least) to a large audience whose culture the work represents: these indeed are the general criteria that works of mythic tradition meet and that *Finnegans Wake* strives toward. But because there is no contemporary faction of mythic poets for him to join and learn from directly, Joyce must exploit the very absence which should derail his prospective career as an author of tradition. As noted in the introduction, the opening of *Finnegans Wake* doubles as another Book of Genesis, the setting and personas seeming to emerge from the

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<sup>15</sup> Donald Theall has noted that, 'following Marcel Jousse and Vico, [Joyce] situates speech and writing as modes of communication within a far richer and more complex bodily and gestural theory of communication' ('Beyond the Orality...'). We should add that actual practitioners of mythic traditions, as distinct from theorists, have always understood the importance of the non-verbal elements of storytelling. To take the example of the last of the Irish folk bards, Delargy relates how they considered 'gesticulations' and 'movements' to be 'essential to heighten the effect of the story' (12, 16).

<sup>16</sup> Similarly, he had said of *Ulysses* 'there is not one single serious line in it' (JJ 524).



nothingness ('In the beginning is the void' (378.29)) to which they will eventually return. Return and absence suggest one another, each bolstered in distinction from the other, and so Joyce makes use of the current absence of a mythic tradition by stressing 'return' as an omnipresent theme: the return of mythic tradition and the abundance of readymade elements this entails. As mentioned, not only do ancient names and primal scenes make their returns in *Finnegans Wake*, but individual words and sometimes even letters are made to emit a heightened sense of pre-existence, each one an altered incarnation of a piece of our communal heritage.

These tiny, pre-existent building blocks of language, the actual letters on the page whose rearrangements produce such widely varying connotations, both were Joyce's primary focus during composition and are the reader's greatest concern while reading. By examining their construction from the ground up, toward the cumulative production of a book of his design, we perceive that this development upward and outward is driven by a pursuit of large-scale mythological traditions, specifically by a long-standing ambition of Joyce's to rendezvous with the heart of Irish tradition. As George Gibson points out, even early in his career

Joyce clearly designates the connection between Irish mythic tradition and his own goals as an artist. In *A Portrait*, Stephen Dedalus makes the momentous decision to leave Ireland, and he states his ultimate reason for this decision simply and emphatically: 'the shortest way to Tara was *via* Holyhead' [216]. Stephen/Joyce leaves Ireland, not totally rejecting his native land but rather as a way to acquire perspective in order to reconnect with Ireland's mythic center: Tara (*Teamhur*), the ancient Irish omphalos, her cultural and spiritual nexus, the great *nemeton* of her pagan religion, the matrix of her lore and mythology. At the outset of his career, Joyce clearly envisions a future connection with Ireland's mythic past, her ancient center, and his own artistic and spiritual quest. (4-5)

However personal, this quest is not as indescribable or vague as we might think: for we know that the process reaches fruition with *Finnegans Wake*—last, best effort of James Joyce to write, and write himself into, mythological traditions, particularly his

native Irish.

### 3. THE MYTHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF JOYCE'S WORK

The potential range of Joyce's final book was apparent early on. In 1929 Frank Budgen wrote that 'He has at his disposal all the legends not only of his own tribe but of all the human race' (*Our Exag.* 38). With the nod to Joyce's 'own tribe', we may remark here that of all the mythologies employed in *Finnegans Wake*<sup>17</sup>, the Irish branches are the most often utilized—though they are not 'privileged', as chapter three will show. This section discusses the attributes that *Finnegans Wake* (along with *Ulysses* to a degree) shares with ancient Irish literature, and also those other aspects of Joyce's work that we find present across many mythological traditions. Though this thesis makes much of the bearing that Irish tradition has on Joyce's work, we must take care never to enclose Joyce solely within an Irish context, much less a strictly ancient one. Though he entered the stage of world literature at large decades before gaining much appreciation as an Irish author specifically, there nevertheless remains a danger, when trying to make up for this initial lack of Irish appreciation, in insisting too much upon Joyce's Irishness, as if to trap him in the very net he needed to elude through exile.

The most obvious point of deviation between Joyce and Irish tradition came

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<sup>17</sup> In addition to Irish and Greco-Roman mythologies, Norse mythology also has significant presence in *Finnegans Wake*, the Eddas having long been cited as an important source. Persian, Indian, and Arabian myths also enter into Joyce's work, in part because of his use of the *Arabian Nights*. Though he did not have extensive knowledge of Eastern mythologies and religions, the contents of Joyce's personal library reveal that he often studied books *about* these areas if not the sacred texts themselves (Heinrich Zimmer's *Maya der indische Mythos* is particularly important in this regard). Lastly, we would be remiss not to mention the Bible and the Koran as important pre-modern (religious if not 'mythological') sources as well. While there is not room in this thesis to investigate how Joyce employs religious sources in *Finnegans Wake*, the poet of mythic tradition can certainly be understood to serve 'religion in its most basic sense' (Lord, *The Singer of Tales* 220).

when Joyce, setting himself apart from many *fin de siècle* revivalists, refused to learn Gaelic. As Herbert Gorman accounted in his authorized biography, perhaps embellishing the apparent contentiousness at Joyce's behest:

Gaelic he would not touch. At the earnest solicitation of George Clancy he attended some of the Irish classes conducted by either Patrick Pearse or another but dropped out in disgust and boredom at the continual ridicule aimed by the overenthusiastic lecturer at English: sound, sense, syntax and all. *The resuscitation of what he considered dead tongues did not interest him at all*; it was living languages, their evolution and possibilities, their dramatic extension into planes where the living word became the living thing itself that called to him and started him on his endless journey. For the patriotic importance of Irish he did not care a fig. He knew that he would never write in that language any more than he would in Choctaw and he knew also that there would never be anything but an artificial audience (a forced hothouse growth in Ireland itself, at the most) for works written in that tongue. And he feared, too, that a national immersion in Gaelic would cut Ireland still further off than she was from the great central current of European culture, a culture that recognized no fixed country boundaries but was universal to all. (My italics; 59-60)

While on one hand it seems outrageous for the author of *Finnegans Wake* to effectively claim authorship within a tradition whose primary language he does not know very well, on the other hand Joyce can be regarded as acting naturally or honestly, simply using the extent of his knowledge, ability, and position as he saw fit. To have formally learned Gaelic and then disproportionately employed it in twentieth-century literature would have been conceivably unnatural or contrived. Joyce had already written *Ulysses* without 'any special acquaintance with the *Odyssey* or with Greek' (Ellmann, 'Joyce & Homer', 570)<sup>18</sup>. While *Ulysses* tells us little (if anything) about Homer, however, *Finnegans Wake* does confront the reader, through its numerous allusions to Irish history and myths, with an overdetermined sense of having truly sprung from ancient Irish roots. But while we can find thousands of Irish-language connotations in *Finnegans Wake* (portmanteaus are also made from Swahili

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<sup>18</sup> In his own words, being perhaps too self-deprecating: 'I don't even know Greek though I am spoken of as erudite' (*LI* 167).

and many other languages as well), the basic syntax remains English, Joyce's mother tongue. As the above passage of Gorman's shows, Joyce clearly did not think it necessary to learn Gaelic. Already Irish by birthplace (and in chapter three we will learn the importance of this one qualification), Joyce did not need to learn the Irish language to consider himself a legitimate Irish author, no matter where he lived or what languages he employed.

Joyce's lack of proficiency in the Irish language does not pose a problem to our conception of him as an author skilled in ancient traditions, which seems to have been a favourite self-conception of his as well. Fond of Vico and his characterization of Dante as the second great poet of *ricorso* (following Homer), Joyce may have envisioned himself as the next in line. It is worth pointing out, then, that though Dante in the fourth canto of *Inferno* wrote himself into the company of the ancient Greek poets, because he lived before the fall of Constantinople he could have only known the Homeric poems through translations, never being able to read (much less hear) them in the original ancient Greek. Thus not only does a certain ignorance seem to benefit readers of *Finnegans Wake*, but certain deficiencies in knowledge seem to benefit authors seeking to reform mythic literature as well: Vergil not knowing a comparable oral tradition yet reproducing Homer's meter in written Latin, Dante knowing Homer only through Latin or Italian synopses, Joyce not knowing ancient Greek or Gaelic all that well.<sup>19</sup> Relatedly, Joyce made a special point to note that the contemporary male embodiment of his tradition, HCE, was illiterate like Mohammad (see Lernout 52).

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<sup>19</sup> Probably taking this lack of knowledge theme too far, Vivian Mercier contends that Joyce was quite unconscious of his reprisals of old Irish elements: 'Though [Joyce] was so much more in the true bardic tradition than many minor figures of the Anglo-Irish Literary Revival, I doubt whether he ever became fully aware of this fact' (*Irish Comic Tradition* 235). Tymoczko strongly disputes this: 'It is certainly possible for a writer to be in a literary tradition without being familiar with all of its texts; but in Joyce's case there is evidence of his extensive familiarity with the content of the Irish literary tradition' (10).

As mentioned above, we must take care not to reduce *Finnegans Wake* to an Irish allegory, for many of the techniques Joyce uses are common to several mythic traditions. For instance, there is nothing Irish about the inclusion of lists and catalogues in Joyce's later works, as anyone who has heard of the famous catalogue of ships in the second book of the *Iliad* would know. Should the lists turn absurd in contents or length, however (as they do toward the end of *Ulysses* especially, and as they always are in *Finnegans Wake*<sup>20</sup>), then we have better grounds to say that Joyce 'continues a feature implicit and explicit in the medieval texts of Ireland as well as in later Irish literature', as Maria Tymoczko does regarding *Ulysses* (151). Indeed, rather than 'continues', due to their previous cultural absence, Joyce *reprises* or *revives* the Irish art of absurd list-making, because Irish literature no longer featured such lists for centuries (not since the compilation of the Annals of the Four Masters in the early 1600s).

On a similar note, we may mention the striking inconsistencies that abound in Joyce's later works: from the stout Bloom at one point being given chest measurements of '28 in and 29½ in' (*U* 17.1818)<sup>21</sup>, to the almost constantly shifting perspectives of *Finnegans Wake* which prevent any stable realistic facts from being pinned down. These elements should not only recall the inconsistencies and variations 'found in early Irish literature', nor should they be treated foremost as 'analogues to

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<sup>20</sup> Counting the lists in the book that are over a page long, we find: the 'This is...' list of items in the museum tour (8-10), the list of abusive names HCE was called (71-72), the list of alternate names for ALP's 'mamafesta' (104-107), the list of Finn MacCool's attributes (126-39), the list of the contents of Shem's house (183-4), the list of ALP's gifts (210-12), the list of what the children studied (306-308), the list of what HCE (or Shaun?) would eat as a meal (405-407), the list of persons and events in the Letter's own history of transmission (420-21), the list of Shaun's pieces of advice for Issy (ca. 433-48), the list of those arriving for the festival (497-99), the list of all who are to live inside HCE (543-45), the list of HCE's instructional actions for ALP (552-54), the list of '-ations' (557-8), the list of the contents of ALP and HCE's bedroom (558-59), and the list of things someone (Shaun?) did has a child (595-96). We should also mention the catalogues whose items are not arranged sequentially, such as the hidden river names and the titles of all of Shakespeare's plays scattered throughout the text.

<sup>21</sup> For this and other inconsistencies in *Ulysses*, see Robert Martin Adams's *Surface and Symbol*, particularly the chapter 'Conscious Error, Unconscious Erudition', and also Bernard Bergonzi's article 'Opaque and Glittering'.

the oral variants and variation in perspective of the early Irish heroic tales' (Tymoczko 65), but they should remind us of how 'Even Homer nods'. In other words, *all* mythic traditions, when one attempts to perceive patchwork snatches of oral tales as a whole, are fraught with inconsistencies and variant tellings. When Joyce's text contradicts itself to humorous effect, however, then we might consider the inconsistency to be reminiscent of Irish tradition specifically.

Nor is extensive topography exclusive to ancient Irish literature; at least two others, the Greek and Roman, emphasize place as well. Tymoczko notes that 'the characters in *Ulysses* geographically enter into and then leave the location in which strange manifestations occur, just as in Irish folklore or early Irish otherworld texts characters enter into or depart from the fairy world or the otherworld at specific geographical points in Ireland' (189-90)—yet instances of the same motif are readily found in the *Odyssey*<sup>22</sup> and *Aeneid*. For example, the ancient Greek tradition situated the door to Hades at Necromanteion, just south of Parga, whereas in Roman mythology the cave at Avernus, near Cumae, led to the underworld.

Below we will also note how the episodic nature of Joyce's work is not a wholly 'Irish' element either. None of this is to diminish the effects of Irish tradition on Joyce's texts but simply to dissuade us from seizing *all* mythic, traditional aspects of Joyce's work as being of indiscriminately ancient Irish origin. Joyce was obviously influenced by other national traditions. Quite the opposite of an insular artist (with *The Book of Invasions* one of his primary ancient influences, as chapter three will elaborate), Joyce was an Irish-born author whose literary project, while indisputably *Irish*, not only furthers his native mythic tradition to meet others, but expands and

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<sup>22</sup> Joyce's favourite authority on Homer, Victor Bérard, collected his own assessments of the geography of the *Odyssey*—differing somewhat from the usual ancient accounts—in *Les Navigations d'Ulysse*. For Bérard, Homer's underworld is located where Vergil's is, at Cumae. See also Seidel's *Epic Geography: James Joyce's Ulysses*.

elaborates all of these traditions, ebulliently playing their shared and singular qualities off one another.

As already indicated, perhaps the most distinctive feature that Joyce's work does indeed share unequivocally with Irish mythic tradition is that of humour. As Tymoczko explains, in sharp contrast with the usually staid epic voice, 'Comic elements are pervasive in the Irish literary tradition: virtually no piece of secular literature (and little of the ecclesiastical literature) from the early period is devoid of humor. Wit and wordplay, including riddling and punning, are also important elements of the Irish comic tradition' (81). *Ulysses* can be considered a comedy in the classical sense in large part because it is not an outright tragedy (the difficult book's final 'yes' helps significantly in this regard, retrospectively endowing the work with an ambivalent affirmation). *Finnegans Wake*, on the other hand, has so many puns and plays on words built into its portmanteaus that no reader could miss the usual presence of joking in the text, even if he or she does not get the jokes. Augustine Martin, in his biography of James Stephens<sup>23</sup>, writes that his subject 'was the first of the Irish writers to treat Celtic gods and heroes irreverently and is thus the fore-runner of a burlesque tradition in Irish fiction that later includes, Joyce, Eimar O'Duffy and Flann O'Brien' (42). Perhaps for modern fiction this is true, but there are innumerable precedents for the comic treatment of myth in the older Irish literature. Vivian Mercier in *The Irish Comic Tradition* includes a chapter explicitly linking the later Joyce with the techniques of often grotesque, absurd parody and satire often found in the Irish bardic tradition from the twelfth century onwards.

The shifting style of Joyce's work also relates to ancient Irish tradition, many

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<sup>23</sup> Joyce bizarrely beseeched Stephens to finish 'Work in Progress' for him if he was unable. Again, the magical importance of *name* played a role: the request seemed largely based on *James Stephens* being a combination of Joyce's first name and the first name of the character that represented him in youth. (Stephens also said that his birthday was 2 February 1882, which was Joyce's birthday as well, though Stephens's real birthday may have been 9 February 1880 (see Pyle 114))

of whose texts intersperse prose with poetry of varying meters. In old Irish texts, the mythic characters' dialogues are often represented in poetry, while the surrounding narrations are in prose. This stylistic diversity again sets the Irish tradition apart from the mythic literature of other cultures (the long epics of Homer and Vergil relentlessly employ dactylic hexameter only), just as it sets Joyce's work apart from usual novelistic forms. Though considered Modernistic, these innovations of Joyce also ally with the typical conventions of ancient Irish literature. '[I]f one were to have sat down to write the *Irish* national epic in English at the turn of this century, transposing an Irish poetics and content into English,' Tymoczko writes, 'it would have come out rather like *Ulysses*. It would have involved a compromise between established European guidelines for the genre and native formal principles for hero tale. The content would have balanced Irish themes, perspectives, plotting, and tone with those sanctioned by classical models' (57). The major exception barring *Ulysses* from being a true epic in the traditional sense, however, is that its characters are not readymade enough. Whatever their mythical allusions, Stephen and the Blooms were inescapably invented as relatively conventional, modern, fictional creations. Never does one feel that *Ulysses* actually attempts to recount or rewrite the lives of Odysseus, Telemachus, Penelope, or of Shakespeare, Hamlet, Anne Hathaway, etc. In *Finnegans Wake*, however, ancient and modern identities blur. Past traditions are not merely referenced, they are made fleetingly present through the fantastical, disorienting workings of the multifarious text—which is mixed of more styles, mixed more deeply and more frequently, than the text of *Ulysses* with its structured chapter motifs.

While Tymoczko contends that *Ulysses*' 'episodic structure' links the work more to the 'episodic composition of the cycles of Irish heroic literature than to the structure of other classical or medieval heroic texts' (60), we should note that the literatures of *all* mythic traditions begin in fragmentary states. It is only through time



that disparate stories can be organized and woven together into larger, cohesive bodies, each understood as in some sense a singular work. Even the longest of the Irish epics, the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, a mixture of prose and poetry, is brief compared to many epics of other cultures. By admitting not only the advantages but the shortcomings in the Irish tradition's lack of stylistic uniformity and (perhaps resultant) lack of narrative cohesion, we can recognize Joyce's achievements as even more impressive. Not once but twice did Joyce organize a series of often humorous, stylistically varied episodes into an overall work several hundred pages long. The second time he did this, with *Finnegans Wake*, the material amounts, in addition to everything else it is, to one of the most extensive compendiums of mythology ever assembled, Irish or otherwise. What is more, through the work's self-referential quality and (as we will see) through its difficulty Joyce's book becomes a vital part of the very traditions it describes.

However 'encyclopedic', *Finnegans Wake* cannot be consulted in any straightforward, textbook way, and this too augments the legitimacy of its ancient Irish traditionalism. Though its careful arrangement and ordering become ever more apparent the more one studies it, the text of *Finnegans Wake* initially seems chaotic. Uncertainty regarding why any one paragraph, sentence, or even word of the text could not follow any other, however, indicates that the reader is trying to form themes larger than he or she has yet witnessed the minutiae of Joyce's text building toward. Taken in piecemeal succession, one perceives much unity within each chapter and episode<sup>24</sup>, and there is a definite sense of progression in the work, even if the interconnections and reasons for apparent inconsistencies remain unclear. To give one broad example, the ages of the children personas vary throughout: though they did not

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<sup>24</sup> This is especially so within the passages of interpolated fables: the prankquean and Jarl van Hooter, the Mookse and the Gripes, the Ondt and the Gracehoper, etc.

seem quite so young in the first Book, in Book II they are only of school-age, then in most of Book III they are becoming adults, yet in the final chapter of Book III they are infants. As Tymoczko writes in *The Irish Ulysses*, and as is even more apt as an analogue of *Finnegans Wake*:

Irish hero literature is organized into ‘cycles’ of relatively short, discrete narratives; bridges between stories generally do not exist, and *it is often difficult even to establish chronological relations between many of the tales*. . . . The result is another notable feature of early Irish literature: the quantity of material that is introduced but not explained, material that gives the stories a somewhat cryptic quality to the uninitiated modern reader. (My italics; 61, 63)

Before discussing the ‘cryptic quality’ of *Finnegans Wake*, let us remark briefly on the overall ‘cycle’ of the text, the first words picking up mid-sentence where the last words end. John Peale Bishop has linked this with a not uncommon narrative structure used in Irish tradition: ‘The circulatory form is one which seems to be especially sympathetic to the Irish mind, for many of the Irish fairy tales proceed in a circle, like the story of Oisín, where we are brought at the end back to the beginning’ (*Collected Essays* 158).<sup>25</sup>

Despite being a modern text, *Finnegans Wake* places its readers in a position similar to the one they would be in when faced with an ancient text of mythic tradition. (Joyce acknowledges this situation and brings it to the forefront in Chapter 1.5, which describes the Letter as if it were an ancient manuscript of questionable origins.) This distance does not alienate a contemporary audience from Joyce’s text, but instead places ancient mythic literature and this piece of twentieth-century

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<sup>25</sup> Tymoczko’s study of *Ulysses* and Irish tradition also mentions the following, and though this cannot be applied to *Finnegans Wake*—more could be made of this if the word ‘riverrun’ also closed the book, or if ‘the’ also opened it—it is still worth noting: ‘It is possible to tell when a poem in an early Irish text is quoted in full and when only a fragment of a poem is quoted because poems in Irish tradition end where they begin: they come full circle, either by repeating the entire first line, or by repeating the opening word or syllable, or by repeating the opening phoneme or phonemes. Such a closing is called a *dúnad*, “closing, shutting; stoppage” (71-72). It could be suggested that *Finnegans Wake* lacks such an ending repetition, or *dúnad*, because there is not to be any ‘stoppage’ of Joyce’s recirculation process.

literature on equal footing. To the extent that one is able to engage with *Finnegans Wake*, so too will all these mythic traditions also in a sense return, Joyce's reader simultaneously gaining their access.

Much like texts of the early Irish tradition, *Finnegans Wake* does not offer clear explanations of its features, character personas or narratives, nor does it lay these things out for the reader in any straightforward way. As far back as *Portrait* Joyce caused his readers extra effort by foregoing any formal, conventionally novelistic introductions of characters: 'Stephen's friends', writes Theodore Spencer, are but 'items, so to speak, in Stephen's mind. They are not pictured for us; Joyce expects us to take them for granted, as features in Stephen's landscape which need no further identification beyond their names' (12). This refusal to introduce characters and situations continues through *Ulysses*, and in fact extends to the provision of setting information as well: though the industry of guidebooks hides this from us, the fact is that Joyce's novels do not from their beginnings easily offer up where and when they take place. In the entirety of *Portrait*, for instance, a novel quite bound to place and time, only once is a specific year even mentioned, and that year is 1829 (*P* 45). Relatedly, the reader must always work to ascertain Stephen's age in any given chapter. In these respects Joyce treats major features of his texts almost as if they were pre-existent in the audience's memory, as if even the first reading were already a rereading.

This same technique carries greater significance in *Finnegans Wake*, in which so many of the figures and situations—being based on mythic and historic material and arranged into primal relationships—are effectively famous. Everyone recognizes the names Eve and Adam in the book's first line, yet Joyce's text does not explain that Adam & Eve's is the name of a church and a pub on the banks of the Liffey—had he done so, we would know the setting sooner. The full names of the matriarch and

patriarch personas, Anna Livia Plurabelle and Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, never actually appear in the text verbatim. In many opaque sections, the presence of major personas can only be discerned through experience and repeated readings, after which we recognize which epithets and attributes describe Father, Mother, Daughter, Sons, Scholars, etc. All readers *should* be able to recognize such basic concepts without being formally introduced to them, much as the prototypical ancient Greek audience should already know their traditional gods, heroes, and histories, allowing Homer to proceed *in medias res*.

The outline of *Finnegans Wake* does not give readers as much trouble as the opaque language itself does, however. This too is a particular trait of some ancient Irish mythic literature. In the next and final section of this chapter, we will see how this most prominent feature of *Finnegans Wake* distinctly positions Joyce as the latest in an ancient line of Irish poets. As James Delargy noted in his study of the final Irish folk bards:

The boastful speeches of kings and heroes, the long alliterative ‘runs’ and obscure passages, together with the tricks and quips of narrative were hallowed by long tradition, and were intended for the approval of the listener rather than of the reader. To read these tales is for many of us to-day a dreary duty, as we strip apart the story imprisoned in the tangled net of this beloved verbiage. But we should bear in mind that obscurity of language held an attraction for the pedantically minded though unlettered listener. One old story-teller friend of mine, speaking of old men whom he had known in his youth, was full of admiration for their ‘hard Irish’ (*crua-Ghaoluinn*), remarking that ‘*they had such fine hard Irish you would not understand a word from them!*’ (My italics; 32-33)

Lastly, Irish literature through the medieval period is known for its frequent, particular blendings of history and mythology. This writing has been labelled ‘pseudohistory’ (Tymoczko 168), but we must realize that to a large extent these distinctions between fact and fiction are the result of our modern sensibilities. To those who live their lives in correspondence with them, myths are more true and vital

than the most verifiable historical data. Moreover, the most enduring histories inevitably become myths. As Caoimhín Breatnach notes (drawing upon the work of J. Carney), the Irish poets of old would bring the past to bear on the present in order to address their contemporary concerns: 'This constant allusion to the past was clearly designed to add weight to events of the present. The poets' interest in past traditions was not motivated by a desire to merely preserve these older traditions. As Carney has observed, the older traditions served as a rich source for analogues which could be applied to the present' (199). Proinsias Mac Cana writes that the 'range of interest' of the sage Irish poet 'would have comprised such genres as genealogical lore, panegyric, mythological tradition, and quasi-historical and heroic narratives about the kings, heroes and tribes of Ireland' (41). Likewise, *Finnegans Wake* is remarkable in its mixings of various genres and of fact with fiction. While we can easily get caught up in tracing obscure references back to old sources, Joyce's book also works by bringing ancient history to bear on more recent events, colliding modern figures with chosen mythological counterparts, again and again showing us how various narratives from various times and levels of reality can be drawn together.

#### **4. JOYCE, ANCIENT POETIC ROLES, AND THE DARK TONGUE**

Joyce performs certain tasks of ancient poets in the twentieth century at around the same time as the birth of modern scholarship on oral tradition. When describing his branch of research into ancient poetic traditions, Parry posits an unseen gulf separating mythic and modern sensibilities: '[I]t is only by careful study that we can work away from the habitual ideas, that uneducated and uncivilized man is not really very unlike the man of the modern world, and that the genius of the oral poet is not

really any different from the genius of the written poet' (471). Today it seems strange to think that such similarities between ancient and modern were ever considered 'habitual'. While this thesis does not contend that the oral poet *is really very like* the modern poet, it argues that the literate poet is indeed able to reproduce a significant number of the traditional oral poet's methods and effects. *Finnegans Wake* is one large piece of evidence supporting this view. Joyce's book proves that, though ancient tradition may indeed in a sense 'die' in the face of writing and all else that modernity entails and emphasizes, nevertheless literature can utilize ancient material and techniques, awakening readers to states of mind that all human beings possess, even if most have forgotten about them.

From Parry on there has been much concern with the terminology applied to oral tradition ('*folk, or popular, or primitive, or traditional, or merely early poetry*' (Parry 468)), and how to best describe the material most exactly and least (unintentionally) derogatorily.<sup>26</sup> Just as the ancient poets never knew these distinctions, Joyce himself does not bother with them very much: strict compartmentalization could only hinder his final work's expansive philosophy. In a sense it does not matter very much how old any particular source is, or what stage of development a source's surrounding culture was at, because all potential sources are but one reappropriation away from the text of *Finnegans Wake*. For our purposes here, 'tradition' is used to denote a lineage of cultural understanding, passed from generation to generation, which incorporates 'myth' (stories of preternatural beings) relayed through artful words (written or spoken) as 'literature'.

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<sup>26</sup> See especially Parry 468, 470 and Lord, *Singer* 6 for early examples of this sort of hairsplitting over terminology, which many later comprehensive studies in the field also seek to rectify. In a more recent work, John Miles Foley has coined the particularly useful terms *unambiguously oral texts* ('such as the songs collected by Parry and Lord') and *oral-derived texts* ('that is, the manuscript or tablet works of finally uncertain provenance that nonetheless show oral traditional characteristics'), and has contended that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* belong in the latter group (*Traditional Oral Epic* 5). If *Finnegans Wake* were to be classified in such a way, it could be considered an *oral-aspiring text*, as chapter four will explain.

We shall also retain ‘folk’ to signify the (usually rural) bards prevalent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the Irish context specifically ‘folk’ will refer to the traditional practice, conveyed almost exclusively through spoken Gaelic, of Irish peasants after the fall of the bardic schools in the early seventeenth century due to English influence (political and linguistic)<sup>27</sup>. Albert Lord, for one, warned that ‘outside the circle of folklore enthusiasts the connotations of “folk” . . . tend to be derogatory. One thinks of the simple peasant with his “quaint ideas”’ (*Singer* 6). In chapter three we will see that Joyce himself does consider the Irish folk—distinct from the older mythic traditions from which their customs derived—as quite obsolete by the twentieth century. As the hermetic, modern-world-denying folk tradition compares unfavourably with the expansionary aims of *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce’s opinion, however mean, is not altogether unjustified.

Now that we have defined this terminology, we can proceed to ascertain Joyce’s place as an Irish-born author of ancient myth-oriented traditions. Attributing to his penultimate work aspects which are even more suited to *Finnegans Wake*, Tymoczko writes that ‘Joyce marks *Ulysses* as the product of an Irish poet and asserts through the formal structures his own identity as a *file*<sup>28</sup>, the Irish poet who was equally the storyteller, an identification suggested, probably at Joyce’s instigation, in Gilbert’s study of *Ulysses*’ (79). We must keep in mind, however, that Gilbert’s explicit description of ‘the *file* or professional minstrels in Ireland’ as Joyce’s ‘predecessors’ (70-71) was an idea guided by the author then writing *Finnegans Wake*, who was reputedly ‘bored’ with his all of previous works instantly ‘after they are written and published’ (Mikhail 157). Joyce certainly would have liked the

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<sup>27</sup> See Donna Wong’s account in *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, pp. 633-36.

<sup>28</sup> In modern Irish, which I will follow, the singular form is *file* and the plural *filí*. But in Old Irish, which many of my sources use, the same terms are respectively *filí* and *filid*. Other variants exist as well, however. For instance, Stuart Gilbert uses *file* to represent the plural.

audience of *Finnegans Wake* to understand his role as akin to the ancient Irish *fili*, a self-conception he had gradually worked toward substantiating most of his life. Late in *Portrait* Stephen imagines himself as ‘a priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everlasting life’ (*P* 192), and F. L. Radford contends that this ‘prophetic observation’ depicts a role ‘closer to that of the ancient Irish *fili* than to any other cultural analogue’ (268).<sup>29</sup> The wide range of occupations that the *fili* held—all concerned with learnedness, from lawyers to poets to magicians—corresponds to the breadth of knowledge professed by Joyce, especially in his final work.

Above we noted *Finnegans Wake*’s great miscellany of elements and sources, each piece of which Joyce tries to employ for all it is worth, whether it is esoteric or common. Scholars have often remarked upon the juxtaposition of and appreciation for both ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture in *Ulysses*. This sort of sophisticated even-handedness is also a hallmark of the *fili*, who ‘observed no rigorous distinction between literary and unliterary elements in his work; it was, all of it, functional, and it was socially rather than personally motivated’ (Mac Cana 38). Further, in keeping with their objective of integration, while ‘they inherited something of the druidic preference for the oral mode, both in their teaching and their composition’, the *fili* nonetheless ‘did not eschew the use of writing’ (Mac Cana 35). As we will see below and as chapter four will discuss at greater length, the operation of *Finnegans Wake* also synthesizes writing and orality, just as it does ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultural allusions and modern and mythic mindsets. Much as they were the ancient *fili*’s, these attempts at integration are also part of Joyce’s function.

Joyce resembles not only the *fili* but also the Irish druid (or seer), an

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<sup>29</sup> Radford assures us that the identity of the *fili* is ‘a concept we know from his letters to Stanislaus as being part of Joyce’s own self-image’ (268).



occupation more concerned with spiritual matters. We have many examples of Joyce at his strangest professing beliefs that his writing, particularly *Finnegans Wake*, could sometimes magically influence real events or predict the future.<sup>30</sup> Both of these roles, *file* and druid, however, blur not only historically but also in our scholarly descriptions: ‘A *file* was a practical sort of man whom you could actually consult about things that are going to happen. He was a useful member of society, unlike the poet of modern society. . . . [T]he name of *file* [means] the seer, the foreseer of the future’ (Greene 2). Modern sensibilities may easily overestimate this apparent contradiction between practicality on the one hand and prophetic consultation on the other, but centuries ago it *was* considered practical to consult such a poet about the future.

*Finnegans Wake* seems the manifestation of Joyce’s belief that he could assume such roles in the modern world, a conviction based not so much on personal intuition or any sort of sentimentality for myths of the past, but rather on his ability to wield immense amounts of traditional information and bring them to bear on the contemporary world. Joyce in his last book may seem to pursue completely strange and new, obscure goals, but his authorship actually recalls the performances of Irish druids and *filí*. Though others in the recent past had been enamoured with similar ancient poetics<sup>31</sup>, their attempts at recreating them seem less comprehensive and ambitious than Joyce’s. Specifically, most of these imitations lack the culturally informative aspects, the consistent employment of pre-existent material and

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<sup>30</sup> See Atherton 14-15 for an account of several of these incidents: for example, ‘When the Russo-Finnish War broke out shortly after the publication of *Finnegans Wake* Joyce wrote, “As foretold by the prophet, the Finn again wakes.”’

<sup>31</sup> We think of Shelley taking over for Aeschylus in writing a new *Prometheus Unbound* (the ancient version having been lost), of Tennyson writing his poem ‘Ulysses’ to complete the story of the ancient Ithacan king, or of Longfellow effectively employing in English the same dactylic hexameter of ancient epic verse.

readymade forms, and the documentation of contents<sup>32</sup> that were, are, and always will be in the world. As Eric Havelock writes, ‘The Romantics’ also

sought to revive the conception of the poet as prophet and seer possessed of a unique vision of reality and a unique insight into things temporal. These powers, however, were conceived in a sense quite alien to those wielded by the Homeric poet . . . They aspired but they did not inform. The Homeric poet controlled the culture in which he lived for the simple reason that his poetry became and remained the only authorised version of important utterance. He did not need to argue about this. It was a fact of life accepted by his community and by himself without reflection or analysis. (*Preface to Plato* 145)

We can clearly see that *Finnegans Wake*, in its conglomeration of vast amounts of mythic and cultural information, is comparable to the practices of the Homeric poets as well as the secularly useful *file* and the spiritually useful druid. However, an obvious difference between most products of ancient poets and *Finnegans Wake* is that Joyce’s work is not nearly as transparent in revealing its contents and external sources.

The distinction between druid and *file* can be roughly traced to two interconnected authorial influences brought to Ireland by St. Patrick in the late fifth century: the privilege of writing instead of speech, and the privilege of Christianity as opposed to native pagan mythology. Though chapter four will deal more thoroughly with the oral/written dichotomy, for now let us note that ‘[b]efore the sixth century Irish literature was, for all practical purposes, purely oral’ (Mac Cana 35); thus the occupation of the druids, being almost totally oral, was in direct opposition to Patrick. The *fili*, on the other hand, almost by definition, were those former druids able to

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<sup>32</sup> While these documentarian or informative qualities are not usually attributed to Joyce’s work, we should remember his expressed intention for *Ulysses* ‘to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book’ (qtd. in Budgen 67-68). Similarly, a sizeable portion of the history of Western culture could conceivably be reconstructed from *Finnegans Wake*.

incorporate writing<sup>33</sup> into their native cultural practices. Importantly, however, the ‘impact of writing seems to have had little effect on the oral character of Irish literature’ (O’Nolan, ‘Homer & Irish Heroic...’ 18). This endurance of the oral within the written presages *Finnegans Wake* and its ability to retain the ancient in the face of the modern.

As recorded in the manuscript of the *Senchas Már* (or *The Great Tradition*):

Before Patrick came the right to speak was not given to anyone except three people: the chronicler, for recounting and storytelling; the man of art, for composing praise and satire; and the man of law, for issuing judgments by way of pronouncements and maxims. But since Patrick came, each of these kinds of speech is under the yoke of the man of the *white language*—that is, of the Bible. (My italics; trans. & qtd. in Nagy, *Conversing* 203)

This speech-controlling ‘white language’ is of course the very opposite of the *bélra na filed*. As mentioned above, this latter is the Dark Tongue, the obscure language used in ancient Irish rituals which Joyce seems to recreate with the peculiar language of *Finnegans Wake*.

Toward the end of the previous section we noted that linguistic opacity remained a feature throughout Irish literary tradition. In the case of the Dark Tongue, however, this opacity had the extra purpose (in addition to impressing the audience with its complexity) of storing the most advanced and most precious information that the druids and *fili* had discovered. Preserved in such a code, this data could be transmitted to those of the next generation able to comprehend the language and extend the material further. ‘For the *Fili*,’ George Gibson writes, ‘the Dark Tongue and its concomitant array of linguistic techniques were . . . used as tools for prophecy, for acquiring insight, inspiration, and knowledge of the hidden connections, obscured patterns, and invisible relationships between things’ (228).

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<sup>33</sup> And to an extent their ability to incorporate Christianity as well, though again this lies outside the scope of this thesis.

As for the purpose of this parallel between the language of *Finnegans Wake* and the language of ancient druidic secrets, Gibson has it that Joyce conceived of his final work as a cultural event whose character and effects were the *opposite* of St. Patrick usurping the Rites of Tara by lighting ‘his Paschal fire nearby on the Hill of Slane’, thereby ‘herald[ing] the end of Irish paganism’ in 433 AD (7). *Finnegans Wake* with its polyglot, multiform language exhibits an intent to oppose forces of cultural consolidation, reduction, or outright censorship, proposing instead an enterprise of endless, wild though calculated, reappropriations and expansions of foreign materials. If it were possible, it seems Joyce’s process would take all myths in the history of the world as its backing tradition. *Finnegans Wake*’s process of utilizing any and all sources indiscriminately, all in the service of the work’s consummate functionality, makes itself apparent not only on the broadest, myth-(re)making levels of the work, but also on the level of the multifarious, secret-storing and information-binding text itself:

In the book whose ultimate purpose *is* renewal and recovery, there is no more appropriate means for Joyce to express this purpose than through his deliberate re-creation of the very language that was banned by the Invader at Tara so long ago—making the Dark Tongue truly the language of the Ricorso, and its recovery in *Finnegans Wake* the defense and indictment of the book itself. (Gibson 236)

Let us conclude this chapter with the clearest confirmation of Joyce’s ancient, traditional authorship, which he received not only in his lifetime but before the final version of *Finnegans Wake* even went to press. Having seen sections of ‘Work in Progress’<sup>34</sup>, R. A. S. Macalister in his *The Secret Languages of Ireland* (1937) compared Joyce’s text with the language of the *Hisperica Famina*, an ancient *filidecht* manuscript written in the Dark Tongue. What is more, besides the likelihood that he

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<sup>34</sup> See Mercier’s letter in *A Wake Newslitter*, No. 14, June 1963, pp. 7, 10.

had already been familiar with Macalister's previous scholarship on pagan Irish rituals<sup>35</sup>, Joyce actually read *The Secret Languages of Ireland* and incorporated its findings into *Finnegans Wake* less than two years before its completion. In part because Macalister never refers to Joyce by name (thus excluding him from the index), only a handful of scholars in the first half-century of Wakean criticism even noted this connection.<sup>36</sup> The influences of Macalister and the Dark Tongue have remained largely overlooked (Tymoczko does not mention them at all), though time will tell if Gibson's recent claim that 'Macalister is very likely the most important source of information on Irish lore' will change this (17).

A large amount of Macalister's commentary on 'Work in Progress' is worth quoting:

These days of ours have seen the rise of a school of writers, whom the reader can readily name for himself, for they have earned their full share of advertisement. . . . My knowledge of these works is . . . limited to the chance extracts from them which I have come across from time to time in the periodical press. If I may generalize from these fragmentary data, their language is fundamentally English: but the sense, if any, is placed beyond the reach of ordinary persons by anarchic neologisms of idiom, accident, and vocabulary; by artificial deformations of words, and violent wrestings of their orthodox meanings . . . and by interspersed combinations of letters, not always pronounceable, and to me, at least, unintelligible. I am quite ready to admit the possibility that these writers may have grounds for self-congratulation, hidden from my undiscerning eyes. Critics tell me so, and in matters so far outside my competence I must believe what I am told. But *originality is not to be reckoned among these assets*. Every one of the vagaries above enumerated was anticipated twelve or thirteen hundred years ago by the authors of *Hisperica Famina*: the only novelty which has been introduced into the modern antitype is an occasional affectation of moral irresponsibility. (My

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<sup>35</sup> Joyce's conceptions of the Rites of Tara in *Finnegans Wake* seem informed by Macalister's earlier work. Gibson notes that Joyce must have followed Macalister because the latter's interpretations are unique in their privileging of 'occultism' and 'strange correspondences', which drew criticism from other scholars in the field: 'These charges have made Macalister's work on Tara both marginal and obscure; these are, however, the very charges that have been levelled at Joyce himself' (19).

<sup>36</sup> In 1968 Adaline Glasheen documented how Joyce added to *Finnegans Wake* certain words in Shelta, Ogham, Bog Latin, Cearlagair Na Saer, and general Gaelic only after the publication of *The Secret Languages of Ireland*, in which Macalister defined those very words (*A Wake Digest* 48-51). (For instance, *fin* in Shelta is 'man'.) Through 1980, Mercier, Rose, and Ian MacArthur, appear to be the only Joycean critics to have mentioned Macalister, and no extended treatment was ever given to him until the publication of Gibson's *Wake Rites* in 2005. Joyce also includes 'MacAlister' in a list of the Twelve at *FW* 370.21.

italics; *The Secret Languages of Ireland* 78-79)

Reading this in 1937, near the end of his long labour, what ‘self-congratulation’ Joyce must have taken from these somewhat disdainful remarks. Whatever negativity Macalister, who devoted his life to ancient studies, apparently felt toward modernist literature, he nonetheless must have been greatly impressed by seeing the Dark Tongue quite as he had described it, though in an English variant, reappear in contemporary journals. Until now there has been no explanation of why Macalister refers to Joyce in the plural, but here we can pose one: In his own way, Macalister conveys his awe by describing Joyce’s authorship as both multiple and anonymous. There could be no greater compliment for someone aspiring to be a traditional poet than to be (mis)taken for an entire ‘school’ unto himself.

Though understanding *Finnegans Wake* obviously means more than understanding its connections to mythic literature, we benefit greatly by pursuing many lines of thought from the ancient literary contexts into which Joyce undeniably sought to earn entry, revitalize and reappropriate. Instead of the ‘occasional affectation of moral irresponsibility’ that Macalister complained of, however (presumably Joyce’s penchant for obscenity), the culmination of our research will investigate the ever-present literary ‘crimes’ of appropriation, which Joyce perpetrates on every page of *Finnegans Wake*, just as a master of deep poetic traditions should.

## CHAPTER 2

### IMAGINATIVE IGNORANCE, GENERATIVE FORGETTING, AND RECOLLECTION THROUGH NAMES

The introduction and first chapter investigated how Joyce's composition tends toward a law of conservation of artistic material—nothing created, nothing destroyed. This chapter will explore how ancient material can be recalled from long cultural absence, and how *Finnegans Wake* exploits (or even redeems) modern readers' ignorance in order for mythic knowledge to eventually return.

To bring back dead mythological elements Joyce must trust that all lost elements always survive in some unseen reservoir. While Jung with his 'collective unconscious' positions such a catchall below the threshold of human consciousness, Joyce in *Ulysses* suggests that all information, including the entire past Irish tradition, is stored above, in the *akasa* (Sanskrit for 'sky'): 'Gone with the wind. Hosts at Mullaghmast and Tara of the kings. [...] The tribune's words, howled and scattered to the four winds. A people sheltered within his voice. Dead noise. Akasic records of all that ever anywhere wherever was' (7.880-83).

As will be explained below, Vico informed Joyce that the gestation of mythic poetry has little to do with scientific intelligence but everything to do with imaginative ignorance. Joyce's incomplete knowledge of mythologies, along with his imperfect (however prodigious) memory, actually proves conducive to the cultural project he envisioned for *Finnegans Wake*, the rebirth in the modern era of forgotten ancient material.

Joyce was not the only modernist who recognized the creative potency of not-knowing, however. The themes in the following passage from Kafka's 'Investigations of a Dog' are particularly relevant to the facets of *Finnegans Wake* addressed in this chapter. The 'great advantage' of 'earlier generations', Kafka's narrator contends, was that

their memory was not so overburdened as ours today, it was easier to get them to speak out, and even if nobody actually succeeded in doing that, the possibility of it was greater, and it is indeed this greater sense of possibility that moves us so deeply when we listen to those old and strangely simple stories. Here and there we catch a curiously significant phrase and we would almost like to leap to our feet, if we did not feel the weight of centuries upon us. . . . I can understand the hesitation of my generation, indeed it is no longer mere hesitation; it is the thousandth forgetting of a dream dreamt a thousand times and forgotten a thousand times; and who can damn us merely for forgetting for the thousandth time? (299-300)

If exploited positively, the forgetting that lifts 'the weight of centuries upon us' can also restore us to an ignorant primal state and thus open the possibility for *mythic return*, or return of repressed cultural material within the human imagination. The ingenuity of *Finnegans Wake* binds and redeems various related states of not-knowing ('*O ferax cupla!*' (606.23 ['O felix culpa'/'O fruitful pair'])). For instance, while the character-personas (ALP in particular) seem locked within a cyclic narrative that forgets itself by the book's last page, readers benefit by approaching the difficult text with an active curiosity predicated by unassuming ignorance.

*Finnegans Wake* incorporates ignorance and forgetting into its construction in a variety of ways, and these absences of knowledge facilitate the entrance of larger mythic presences whenever the reader searches them out after perceiving their names. Even Joyce himself cannot possibly know everything about the ancient, traditional elements referenced in his final work, yet the mere inclusion of a mythic name can effectively summon the entire named figure into our imagination. The fact that these



names are usually obscured by difficult language actually aids the recall process, as the true names are not provided by the text but rather arrived at by the discerning reader. Regardless of however much we can read into any reference to Tristan and Isolde, for example, we must allow that all elements of the Tristan and Isolde story (every variant of it, however obscure) may have a bearing on any given reference to it in the text of *Finnegans Wake*. Once the reader recognizes that Tristan and/or Isolde are being invoked, every related element of their story potentially comes into play. To request this influx of an entire entry from the akasic records, the essential piece of data needed is the *name*, an ingredient that has always carried tremendous significance in mythic traditions and primal thinking. Joyce seems to consider that such ancient processes still function in modernity, thus refuting some scholars whose work on myth influenced him deeply, such as Frazer and Lévy-Bruhl.

Lastly, the mythic name is linked to the *bit* of *Finnegans Wake*'s synecdochic 'allforabit' concept, in which 'a part so ptee [*petit*] does duty for the holos [whole]' (18.36-19.2). Communication theorists, influenced by Marshall McLuhan's interpretations of *Finnegans Wake*, have noted the compatibility of basic bits of information across various technologies and media. This chapter will go further, arguing that the mythic name allows conveyance of ancient traditional material to the modern world, which has forgotten myth, and to modern readers, who lack mythic knowledge.

## **1. MEMORY AND MYTHIC TRADITION**

The prototypical oral poet does not remember traditional songs verbatim. For illiterate singers, such as the Homeric and the Slavic bards upon which Parry and Lord based

their theories, all performances that describe the same narrative are understood to be the exact same poem, no matter how much they may differ from one another on a word-by-word basis. The skill of the poet of oral tradition is largely defined in terms of his or her proficiency at using various types of formulas, which can be as broad as the outlines of mythic storylines or as narrow as the usual metrical patterns of verse. Such a poet does not conscientiously adhere to or recollect any previous telling:

He does not 'memorize' formulas, any more than we as children 'memorize' language. He learns them by hearing them in other singers' songs, and by habitual usage they become part of his singing as well. Memorization is a conscious act of making one's own, and repeating, something that one regards as fixed and not one's own. The learning of an oral poetic language follows the same principles as the learning of language itself, not by the conscious schematization of elementary grammars but by the natural oral method. (Lord, *The Singer of Tales* 36)

Thus the oral poet functions by singing (each time in different words) the set pieces of a tradition not defined by any immutable external sources, while the audience checks that the poet's songs seem to match what they also have already learned by heart. The arrangement of myths and the songs based on them change slowly over the years, roughly corresponding to the surrounding culture's understanding of itself at any given time.

The development of writing alters traditional poetic composition immensely. Serving as the frozen voice of ideal, absent singers, writing effectively recasts specific sequences of formulaic material—which the oral poet never intentionally remembered or fixated upon—into blocks of text that resist alteration. Verbatim memorization instantly becomes an admirable skill, though its use is comparatively recreational because no one needs to recall in such detail mythic information that has already been recorded. For example, after the 'official' transcription of the Homeric epics in Athens in the late sixth century BC, contests were held at the Panathenaic festivals to

see (not *hear*) which rhapsode could recite them most accurately (see Young 42). Foundational formulas become immovable text; the audience no longer judges a poet in relation to an evolving communal tradition but upon adherence to dictation set down beforehand, and the oral tradition dies along with the myths it propagated.

Joyce is obviously not an oral poet but a literate writer; chapter one, however, noted the frequent oral-aspiring quality of Joyce's late work, a trait he shares with much of the Irish tradition before him. Remarkably, as the first chapter also mentioned, Irish traditional poetry always retained much of its 'oral character' despite the increasing cultural emphasis on writing in the centuries from St. Patrick onwards (O'Nolan, 'Homer & Irish Heroic...' 18). The bardic schools once taught a form of oral composition that entailed students working on, perfecting, and memorizing a new poem alone in the dark for an entire day; after this the young poets would recite for their masters' evaluation, at which point the new verses were committed to writing (Corkery 74). This strange practice forces a solitary, mental composition tending toward the oral to be strictly memorized, and then to adhere immediately to writing upon first presentation. To give a later example, Delargy relates that even for Irish folk in the early twentieth century, '[t]he tale must be passed on as it has been received, unaltered, not in regard to language, but in form and plot' (20). Even though they felt the need to discourage evolving structural alterations, these late lines of Irish oral poets nonetheless share something with the ancient Homeric singers in their explicit statement that stories need not be remembered (or reproduced) verbatim. Evaluating the entire history of Irish tradition, Delargy writes that

Irish literature, both written and oral, must be studied as a continuous whole. Both oral tradition and written literature have exercised considerable influence on one another; the early sagas contain a wealth of motifs borrowed from a still older orally preserved tradition: Gaelic medieval romance shows unmistakable evidence both of the written literature, and of folk-elements, native and foreign; while, in more recent times, the paper manuscripts of the

seventeenth to nineteenth centuries have exercised a greater influence than has hitherto been suspected on Gaelic oral literature. (30)

The above outline of various traditional poets' relations to their source materials—unwritten or written, used as pliant guidelines or tending toward verbatim recollection—provides a context in which to interpret Joyce's own relation to the sources of *Finnegans Wake*. In his reprisal of mythic traditions Joyce employs writing, obviously, but also much of the fluidity of oral tradition. As the first chapter discussed, Joyce selected snatches from a wide miscellany of external texts, which became the makeshift, pre-existent 'formulas' that *Finnegans Wake* often repeats, altering them each time, on a sentence-by-sentence level. Oral poets of myth intuitively make use of inherited metrical strategies and traditional word-runs in their performances. Joyce, on the other hand, despite his oft-lauded memory, could not learn his many chosen 'formulas' by heart and thus needed a small library of notebooks in which to record them.<sup>1</sup> Significantly, as explored below, Joyce while composing 'Work in Progress' did not value his own revisions of these precursory 'formulas' at the expense of the original versions he had found in other authors' books. This gives us some insight into how Joyce set up, channelled, and (re)vivified a patchwork textual tradition whose disparate, pre-existent sentences he reworked into his own conglomeratic mythology.

At a very early point in the composition of *Finnegans Wake*, in a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver dated 24 May 1924, Joyce wrote, 'I found my memory, vision, power of attention all gradually getting worse yet I knew that if the books or even the Mss and notebooks were left here I would go on. [...] To write a book like this I

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<sup>1</sup> Obviously Joyce did not need to keep written notations of the common phrases that *Finnegans Wake* also uses as formulas, though these number into the hundreds. To give but one example, Joyce repeats and alters 'The early bird gets the worm' in a variety of ways: 'I have met you, bird, too late, or if not, too worm and early' (37.13-14), 'Earlyfouler' (197.8), 'Keep airy hores and the worm is yores' (435.23-24), 'the curly bard said after kitchen the womn in his hym' (465.28-29).

should have a study of my own where I could quickly get at my books and papers. Otherwise it is impossible' (*LI* 214). Jed Deppman deduces from such comments as this that Joyce, while undertaking his immense task, actually held his own drafts and manuscripts (i.e. his revisions of other authors' words) to be of lesser importance than the original books which contained their source formulas:

Such comments, scattered about in his letters and in the memories of his friends, are proof that to write his new book Joyce needed . . . more information, sources, and details than his mind could carry. Yet, as the letter also suggests, while preliminary research and a room of his own were necessary for him to write 'a book like this,' he was also dependent on the actual physical presence of his source material, that is, the manuscripts, notebooks, and other 'books and papers.' . . . His unromantic admission —'I knew that if the books or even the Mss and notebooks were left here I would go on'—confirms that in 1924 not only did Joyce not think he could continue if he were entirely cut off from his sources and drafts but he also had in mind a rough hierarchy—'or even the Mss and notebooks'—in which his books were more important resources than the sketches and notes that he himself had written. (307)

The exact hierarchy is not as important as the fact that Joyce expressed a strong desire to keep his source materials with him even after he had made use of them by turning them into notes for *Finnegans Wake*.

Poets within an oral tradition must hear all relevant formulaic elements often enough to sense the metrical and thematic options available to them. Yet no poet can consciously remember all formulas. Unable to commit his source 'formulas' to memory and unwilling to forget them even after making use of them, Joyce as an apprentice poet of mythic traditions felt compelled to remain in possession of the original sourcebooks. With no living tradition surrounding him from which he could repeatedly overhear formulas, Joyce must remain in possession of the books which literally *are* his amalgamated backing tradition on the sentence level. It is as if Joyce needs to feel the continued influence of his source sentences (even after he rewords them in his own compositions) in order for these original 'formulas' to function as a

living, pastiche tradition that underpins his emergent tradition-binding authorship. Asking Joyce to leave his sourcebooks would be like asking an oral poet who has not yet mastered his craft to never again hear any other, older poet sing.

The first chapter already alluded to the sense of aloneness evident in Joyce's weighty task of sifting through and reappropriating so many readymade elements into one cohesive work. While collective authorships certainly had a bearing on *Finnegans Wake*, the entire production on a much more practical level was composed by Joyce alone. Proceeding as if destined to recycle this traditional material, Joyce fears that if he fails all he has been cultivating will be prematurely lost to oblivion.<sup>2</sup> Everything may disappear again eventually at the end of the current cultural cycle, but he has tried to document and synthesize as much as possible before all vanishes from his mind when he leaves the world. Near the end of *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce incorporates into ALP's final monologue overtones of his own lonely struggle to complete his mythic feat in the modern world: 'Thinking always if I go all goes. A hundred cares, a tithe of troubles and is there one who understands me? One in a thousand of years of the nights? All me life I have been lived among them but now they are becoming lothed to me' (627.13-17). '[I]f I go all goes' not only expresses the precariousness of Joyce's task but also echoes words Dante spoke when asked to undertake a papal embassy ('If I go, who remains? If I remain, who goes?'). Yeats had quoted this when ineffectively inviting Joyce to join the Academy of Irish letters (McHugh, *Annotations* 627). No existent community could give Joyce the support his final literary work needed; offers of membership became repugnant, 'lo[a]thed' to him, because they only indicated how poorly Joyce's supposed peers appreciated his last work, which has 'lo[st]' them because it is so unlike the literature they knew.

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<sup>2</sup> As previously noted, Joyce placed such importance on the work's completion that he even requested James Stephens to complete it if he could not.

The surrounding culture neither believes religiously in the myths that *Finnegans Wake* documents and forges into mythic archetypes (HCE, ALP, etc.), nor expects such strange, conglomerated language that relates a wide range of material. Emphasizing themes of revival and ricorso, Joyce admits not only the absence in the modern world of much of his chosen material but also the inability of anyone to comprehend it to any comfortable degree. After all, as its sole bearer he himself has experienced how such massive information is more than anyone's memory can retain. Joyce cannot trust his modern audience to guide his work—as an ancient audience would guide an ancient poet—by offering their approval to the most appropriate representation of tradition as they understand it at the time. In fact, the situation is almost reversed: Joyce must guide his audience, making them aware of just how ignorant we all are of past traditions. The next section will explain how *Finnegans Wake* actually utilizes these inescapable modern conditions of not-knowing.

## 2. VITAL STATES OF NOT-KNOWING IN *FINNEGANS WAKE*

Vico wrote that the type of thinking that generates myths can take place only in atmospheres of creative ignorance:

[T]he first people . . . lacked the power of reason, and were entirely guided by their vigorous sensations and vivid imaginations. . . . Their poetry also sprang naturally from their ignorance of causes. For . . . ignorance is the mother of wonder; and being ignorant of all things, the first people were amazed by everything. In them, poetry began as literally *divine*. For whenever something aroused their feelings of wonder, they imagined its cause as a god. (par. 375)

Only a process of forgetting, unlearning the modern conceits that stifle imagination, could restore consciousness to a state receptive to myth, in which many strange

features seem endowed with mythic presence. To this end, the design of *Finnegans Wake* returns its readers to a childlike state of wonder with respect to the complexities of language, history and geography.

### ***A. Forgetting Restores Potent Ignorance on the Narrative Level***

Ending with an incomplete sentence that seems to wrap around to the first page, the book's final section showcases ALP's struggle to pass her memories on beyond the completion of one cycle. 'What has gone?' she wonders, and the following short paragraphs starkly contrast with the long sentences of reminiscing around them:

How it ends?

Begin to forget it. It will remember itself from every sides, with all gestures, in each our word. Today's truth, tomorrow's trend.

Forget, remember!

Have we cherished expectations? Are we for liberty of perusiveness? Whyafter what forewhere? [...]

Forget! (614.19-26)

ALP reminds herself to forget, putting trust in the text that is her story to 'remember itself from every sides', just as the surrounding culture remembers a poem even after a single poet within that tradition dies, and just as the data of dying mythologies remain in the akasic records. ALP, having 'lapped so long' (625.27), trusts that the contents of the Letter will not disappear from the universe, though she can never know for certain since after the last page of *Finnegans Wake* all features within will return to their starting places again. Joyce suggests that traditions as well as individuals are forgotten between historical cycles, yet this very forgetting allows the materials to later re-emerge in renewed mythic forms. George Gibson writes that 'Patrick's victory at Tara meant the defeat, suppression and forgotten memory of the other and earlier tradition. This loss results in collective amnesia [and] Joyce sought



to remedy this amnesia' (82). Joyce's solution, however, consists not only of the return of many elements from lost traditions but also the acknowledgement that all cultures must intermittently lose—or lose track of—some of their contents. This may come as if it were advice ('Forget, remember!'), but the process seems inevitable, however much ALP may wish otherwise. As Clive Hart notes, '[I]f she could be brought back to meet her lover among the rhododendrons of Howth Castle and Environs with her memories intact, she might avoid the Fall and so escape from the eternal circle in which she is condemned to run. As things stand, however, she must eventually revert to the same old way of life' (53).

Near the beginning of the narrative cycle Kate, the aged version of ALP, gives the reader a tour of the 'museyroom' (*FW* 8.9). As the caretaker of old artefacts, this crone persona shows ancient materials in a condition of low relevance to contemporary society, preserved away in a museum. Kate reminds us of the old Irish-speaking milkwoman from the first chapter of *Ulysses*; both figures bring with them the presence of past tradition experienced *as old-fashioned*. John Vickery writes that this old milkwoman seems the embodiment of James Frazer's theory of eras in mythic decline, and what he says of the milkwoman can be applied to Kate as well:

[Joyce's] description of her as 'a wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal' [*U* 1.404] indicates that like Frazer he was concerned to link modern folklore with primitive beliefs. The goddesses of Homer's day have, as Frazer averred, dwindled to crones and milkmaids; the witch is the intermediary in the degeneration of immortality. . . . What *The Golden Bough* affords Joyce here is . . . a general thesis. Imaginatively deployed, it allows him to link immortal queens, contemporary peasant women, and sinister female workers of magic and spells in an image of the power of woman and her loss of it. The awesome lineage of the woman is rendered in a context of historical decline and diminution. The witchlike old woman is one with all those figures in *The Golden Bough* who illustrate Frazer's thesis about the dwindling of magic and its rituals . . . (353-54)

To this we might add that the figures in Irish tradition diminished over time. While

the small figure may still represent an entire soul—and perhaps it is nothing but the soul—the decrease in size signifies that the figure’s relevance has all but passed: ‘[P]rimitive peoples commonly believe that the soul, when separated from the body, resembles a tiny person. The Celts shared this belief, and it seems that the leprechaun’s definitive trait, small size, associates him with these spirits of the departed’ (Winberry 68).

Accordingly, while the size of imagined beings has shrunk in the modern age, the oldest, most powerful mythological figures are imagined as having been gigantic. *Finnegans Wake* conceives its title personage as a great sleeping giant whose bulk embodies the very landscape. Shaun also expands to the size of a hillside when, in III.3, he begins to take over for his father HCE. This too seems influenced by Vico, who connected gigantism with the birth of mythology from the ignorance of primal humans. As John Bishop explains:

Men void of the learned capacity to perceive, who sense nothing but their own feelings, can only stand as giants in proportion to all the rest of the unborn world . . . ‘Born in ignorance . . .’ the first men of Vico’s ‘giantle’ humanity ([*FW*] 509.19 [‘gentile,’ ‘giant’]) accordingly resemble the unconscious hero of *Finnegans Wake* . . . (*Joyce’s Book of the Dark* 188-89)

Another state of not-knowing, Finn’s unconsciousness (dreaming or dying) is also vital to Joyce’s narrative. Early on, re-enacting the scene from Tim Finnegan’s wake, the Twelve men (analogous to jurors) calm the title personage back to sleep (or death) when he begins to stir: ‘Now be aisy<sup>3</sup>, good Mr Finnimore, sir. And take your lasure like a god on pension’ (*FW* 24.16-17). They behave as if Finn were the Red King in *Through the Looking-Glass*, as if their entire existence may depend on his slumber or be contained within his dream.

Furthermore, the Twelve themselves are dreamers. Though they dream in a

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<sup>3</sup> *Aisy* perhaps connotes *Aes Sidhe*, the spirits buried in the mounds. *Aes* means ‘godly’.

more metaphoric sense even than Finn does—for they appear to be awake within the story—their ‘dreaming’ also facilitates the societal workings of *Finnegans Wake*’s narrative world:

Who are those component partners of our societate . . . who crunch the crusts of comfort due to depredation, drain the mead for misery to incur intoxication, condone every evil by practical justification and condem any good to its own gratification, who are ruled, roped, duped and driven by those numen daimons, the feekeepers at their laws, nightly consternation, fortnightly fornication, monthly miserecordation and omniannual recreation, doyles when they deliberate but sullivan when they are swordsed, Matey, Teddy, Simon, Jorn, Pedher, Andy, Barty, Philly, Jamesy Mor and Tom, Matt and Jakes Mac Carty?

Answer: The Morphios! (142.8, 19-29)

As their dreaming resembles the imaginative abilities fostered by ignorance, the Twelve correspond to Vico’s ‘first people’, inhabiting the myth-laden setting they have created as ‘new men’ possessed by godlike forces (‘numen daimons’). Time and again, the plot of *Finnegans Wake* consists of stock scenes of inquiries and accusations made by people who, often admittedly, lack sufficient knowledge of the objects of their conjecture and scorn: the Twelve jurors do not know HCE’s crime, the scholars cannot read the Letter, Shaun cannot write like Shem. The ignorance of all these men, working beyond their means and postulating more than they know to be true, fuels the same cyclic process that ALP’s forgetfulness will eventually reset. Respectively, ignorance and forgetfulness suggest the beginning and end of knowledge, but never the accumulation of knowledge beyond one full cycle.

### ***B. The Reader’s Necessary, Unassuming Ignorance***

*Finnegans Wake* implies that recurrent states of not-knowing make the world go ‘round; and just as the unconsciousness of Finn and the ill-advised judgments of the Twelve Morphios facilitate the narrative, *Finnegans Wake* depends on a certain type

of ignorance on the reader's part as well. Early on Joyce's text tells us to pause a moment, 'if you are abcedminded' (18.17), and note 'the ignorance that implies impression that knits knowledge that finds the nameform that whets the wits that convey contacts that sweeten sensation that drives desire that adheres to attachment that dogs death that bitches birth that entails the ensuance of existentiality' (18.24-8). While 'find[ing] the nameform' will prove especially pertinent in the following sections, let us first examine the connotations of an absentmindedness partnered with interest in the alphabet (by extension, the Letter).

We begin our reading of *Finnegans Wake*—as we begin our reading of any book—in relative ignorance. Unlike most other books, Joyce's work prolongs the reader's state of ignorance as long as possible through its difficult, hyper-connotative language. The reader must search out and bring in all sorts of outside references, yet each traced reference opens up questions about the validity and vitality of potential connotations and their possible significances. Competing logistics collide with one another and metaphors mix. The very impossibility of settling on any tidy, rational explanation of even a portion of this text *seems to be the point*. It is as if the more we learn about this book the stronger our realization of how little of it we can comprehend; with each attempt to progress from our initial state of ignorance (not knowing *anything* about the book) we encounter a multitude of new things to be ignorant about.

In its own jocular and bemused ways, Joyce's text sometimes speaks quite expressly to the plight the reader faces; as James Cahalan notes, '*Finnegans Wake* is the only work in which Joyce chose to address his readers directly' (307). For example, we read in 1.5, the chapter devoted to examining the nature of ALP's (or the Hen's) Letter:

You is felling like you was lost in the bush, boy? You says: It is a puling sample jungle of woods. You most shouts out: Bethicket me for a stump of a beech if I have the poultiest notions what the farest he all means. Gee up, girly! The quad gospellers may own the targum but any of the Zingari shooleirim may pick a peck of kindlings yet from the sack of auld hensyne. (112.3-8)

Even though the four gospellers may have special translations and interpretations of the ‘scripture’ of *Finnegans Wake*<sup>4</sup>, the above passage assures us that anyone can find *some* meaning in this strange, difficult writing. In this quest for understanding, the reader is interpellated by Joyce’s text through the offer of lost, secret knowledge. If we approximate the meaning of the above extract, the text effectively tells the reader, ‘As you have recognized that you are ignorant of me, so do I too recognize your ignorance and empathize with you. But follow me now when I tell you there are still things in me you are capable of discovering.’ As with *Ulysses*, Joyce always actively encourages—never discourages<sup>5</sup>—any and all interpretations of *Finnegans Wake*. In this way the reader is invited to build his or her own connection to the work, sparked by whatever elements of the text he or she recognizes. What is more, lost in this primal ‘jungle of woods’ and grasping in our ignorance for any familiar word or name, we feel a mythic presence whenever ‘here and there we catch a curiously significant phrase’ (Kafka 299)—for ‘whenever something aroused their feelings of wonder, they imagined its cause as a god’ (Vico par. 375).

Having limited the purchase of the reader’s understanding through strange language and conglomerated themes, the workings of the book remain imaginatively

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Targum: each of several Aramaic translations & interpretations of parts of Old Testament’ (McHugh, *Annotations* 112). But would such targum really help us understand the Letter? The Four, who own such translations, still seem puzzled.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Power quotes Joyce as saying, ‘What do we know about what we put into anything? Though people may read more into *Ulysses* than I ever intended, who is to say that they are wrong: do any of us know what we are creating?’ (102-3). This striking mark of humility from a man reputed to be egoistic connects with another decidedly modest way in which Joyce related to *Ulysses*: Ellmann tells us that ‘Joyce made a point of not challenging any interpretation’ (*JJ* 527). He must have realized that to claim authoritarian control over *Ulysses* (and, later, *Finnegans Wake*) would not only be false but also unbeneficial to the relationship between the puzzling work and its investigating audience.

ambiguous. No matter how many references we trace or how many portmanteaus we unpack, our understanding of *Finnegans Wake* must by Joyce's construction remain in an infant state. If this is a 'book of the dark' then might not its readership need to be 'left in the dark' to experience it? Today, both as individual readers and as a scholarly community, we have not yet sufficiently learned how to read *Finnegans Wake*. Nor should there be any one clear method of analysis, for our processing of the book has always benefited from a multitude of vantages from which to make partial headway into the text. By and large the construction of the work has made it profitable and enjoyable to remain in a perpetual cycle of forever learning *how* to read it. Joyce trains his audience to use their powers of creativity upon his strange text the same way Vico's 'first people' used their imaginations upon their strange world. It is important to note that even as they *made sense* of their surroundings through the gods they created, these people did not *understand* their world in any immutable scientific capacity. So too is it with our reading of Joyce's text. By the nature of *Finnegans Wake*, any master reader would perhaps resemble Finn himself, an 'overgrown babeling' (6.31), pleasurably locked in a cultural state conducive to primal, mythic poetry; his thoughts would be wildly creative but they would in no way pin down or exhaust the meaning of his world.

Though much can be learned from *Finnegans Wake*, for all its 'encyclopedic' qualities the work's greatest value lies in its imaginative construction. However well organized and potentially edifying, despite the inclusion of so many facts from numerous disciplines, the key ingredient of Joyce's system is imagination. This organization recalls Vico's description of all societal institutions as the progeny of primal poetry: '[P]oetry laid the foundation of pagan civilization, which in turn was the sole source of all the arts' (par. 214). '[A]ll the arts serving human need, advantage, comfort, and, to a great extent, even pleasure were invented in the poetic

centuries, before philosophers appeared' (par. 217). As Ernesto Grassi writes, summarizing Vico's contention: 'Poetry, not rational metaphysics, discloses the real; this is also Joyce's thesis' (153). Vico says of Dante, the 'Tuscan Homer' (par. 786), that in order to write the primal poetry or 'true history' of his *Comedy*, he needed to *overcome* 'all his erudition and esoteric knowledge' and cultivate instead his 'barbarous nature' (par. 817). Joyce, once dubbed Dublin's Dante by a contemporary (*JJ* 75), understood that all organizations of knowledge, however valuable, were intermittently swallowed up in periods of cultural night. Bishop writes, 'A sustained reading of *Finnegans Wake* actually does manage to draw a reader deeply into the "blank memory" [515.33] of the "percepted nought" [368.36]' (*Joyce's Book* 63). From this apparent emptiness, however, all lost, forgotten material can and will eventually return, though in altered forms. All of the different states of *not-knowing* in *Finnegans Wake* (forgetfulness, sleeping, dreaming, unconsciousness and ignorance) lead toward a fuller appreciation of this cultural night or *akasa*.

### **3. THE MEANS OF MYTHIC RECALL: NAME AS ENTIRETY**

Birthered through ignorance, myths die when their remembrance is reduced to trivia. When a myth ceases to serve its religious function, its name is the last thing the surrounding culture remembers; but even though the meaning of the name may steadily decrease, from the name the entire myth can be summoned back.

When Tennyson's Ulysses states 'I am become a name' he laments not only his celebrity status but also the disproportion that has arisen between what is said about 'Ulysses' and what the aged king can actually do. Both narratively, within the imaginary Ithaca he rules, and literally, for the real people who no longer believe in

his myth, Ulysses has stagnated and become impotent. The poem recognizes that once Ulysses loses prominence and fades from the cultural landscape—metaphorically taking a final voyage in which he will perhaps find Achilles on the Happy Isles—authorship of the Ulysses figure loses its exclusivity and sacrosanctity. Once the ancient Greek tradition of which he was a part became defunct, anyone could write anything they wanted to about Ulysses. In a sense Homer's Ulysses and Tennyson's become equally (ir)relevant once the former has lost most of his cultural function, the mythic persona having been reduced to a name and nothing more. Matthew Rowlinson notes:

Tennyson's text . . . refers to Ulysses' fame as it is circulated *by* the Homeric epics, as well as *within* them, and also by—to name only the most salient moments in a long history—the *Epistles* of Horace, by Dante's *Inferno*, and by Tennyson's poem itself, which may here be taken as reflecting on its own enterprise. In the implicit claim that the name Ulysses designates the single 'I' that speaks in his poem, Tennyson implies that all of these texts, with all of their divergences from one another's narratives, refer to a single fictional person whose life exists in different versions. (122)

Each 'Ulysses' is as good as any other in the modern age, when in a sense all of them are nothing but common words on a page. (Likewise, Joyce's modern Ulysses avatar is an everyman: Bloom is the result of the renowned Ithacan king having fallen through Vico's ages—from the age of heroes to the age of people—and become a representative of the everyday life of human race.)

Joyce's employment of names in his final book strives to move beyond these text-bound confinements, attempting to reaffirm the status that both names and the mythic figures they designate hold within oral traditions. As Lucien Lévy-Bruhl wrote, 'From the emotional point of view, the mere listening to the myth is to [those who believe it] something quite different from what it is to us. What they hear in it awakens a whole gamut of harmonics which do not exist for us' (331). Any name in



*Finnegans Wake* not only suggests all other instances of that name but also invokes the multifarious entirety (more simply, the soul) of the absent entity, a logistic leap frequently taken in the thought processes of illiterate peoples. Between their states of mind and ours the 'collective representations' once inherent within a name have been 'gradually impaired and dissociated' (Lévy-Bruhl 40). At the behest of civilization, we learned to forget our aptitude for myth. Having returned his readers to a position of imaginative ignorance, however, Joyce allows us to perceive how names at their most potent serve as far more than convenient designations or labels.

Not only does the mythic name recall a figure's characteristics, but its utterance very nearly *is* that figure. Decades ago Atherton noted the prevalence and strangeness of Joyce's acts of naming in *Finnegans Wake*, wondering,

Did Joyce, perhaps, adopt a principle described by Lévy-Bruhl as being almost universal among primitive people? They believe that there is a real and material connection between a man and his name; and many peoples are confused as to the difference between a name and a thing. . . . It is not impossible that Joyce himself had some such idea in mind, indeed he frequently claimed that to be mentioned in his book had an effect on the people named that was often drastic and sometimes fatal. He seems to have had some odd idea that his work could subsume the things it named, and it seems to have been something very close to the primitive belief which he must have thought to contain some element of truth. (45)

Our dual-focus on myth and return informs us that there is more to it than this. Names not only represent entireties but can also recall absent personages' essences to a society that has forgotten them. When we no longer intuitively know or believe in a myth, all we know of it is its name; thus names must be the starting point for the recovery of myth. Joyce orchestrates a situation in which an impressionable modern reader, working with 'the ignorance that implies impression', 'whets [his/her] wits' by 'knit[ting]' together the only information that the modern age still remembers of myths, this 'knowledge that finds the nameform' (18.24-25).

Sometimes the forgetting of names is purposive, enforced by strict superstitions. Since the name is the vital part of a person, the names of the dead have been taboo in many illiterate cultures for fear that speaking them could summon ghosts. In a similar way, the name of the Hebrew deity 'YHWH' was not to be pronounced out of reverence. Frazer in *The Golden Bough* notes that in many cultures the names of gods and other supernatural creatures are not to be mentioned, since 'the mere utterance of them may work wonders and disturb the course of nature' (384). Enacting (or marking) such an alteration in the status quo of modern humanity's relation to myth is part of what Joyce aims at with *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>6</sup>

Further, Frazer also tells of how some cultures would perform an act called 'raising the dead' by 'bestowing the name of the departed upon someone else, who thus became to all intents and purposes a reincarnation of the deceased' (256). This can only occur, however, after enough time has passed so that neither grief nor fear of the dead is felt any longer, that is, after the presence of those who died has been forgotten. Through thousands of renamings—conglomerations of the names of the living and the dead, the mythic and the historic—*Finnegans Wake* provides altered returns of figures whose presences have long been absent from the modern world.

For example, when glimpsed by the desperate reader through Joyce's written *Dark Tongue* the names of Zeus or Jove seem to carry increased relevance and more meanings than when printed clearly in a book of Greek or Roman mythology. In one instance *Finnegans Wake* partners Zeus with the Danish word for 'grandfather' and

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<sup>6</sup> Joyce was also very protective about the real name of 'Work in Progress' for years, as if keeping the real title a secret during composition somehow ensured that the process was not disturbed. When Eugene Jolas finally guessed '*Finnegans Wake*' in August 1938, Joyce reportedly turned white and said 'Ah Jolas, you've taken something out of me' (*JJ* 708). It should also be noted that late in life Joyce suggested an equivalency between an author's name and work: '[A] work belongs to its author by virtue of natural right and [...] the law can protect an author against the mutilation and publication of his work just as he is protected against the misuse that can be made of his name' (*OCPW* 216). Lastly, the name of Joyce's nearest surrogate in *Finnegans Wake*, Shem, means 'name' in Hebrew.

also gives him the same epithet that the *Book of the Dead* gives to the Egyptian god Ra: 'Besterfarther Zeuts, the Aged One' (414.35-36). Elsewhere, knowing that 'j' in becomes 'sh' in Gaelic (Glasheen 148), we find Jove hidden within 'shoviality' (6.19), remaking the Roman god as Irish and jovial while emphasizing his forcefulness (as in *shove*). Simultaneously, Jove is also appropriated into a folk song, since the text at this point reworks a portion of 'Phil the Fluter's Ball' ('Then all joined in with the utmost joviality...'). These obscured names of gods that Joyce's readers discover seem inseparable from a massive linguistic network containing and reworking much material from many diverse sources, arcane and commonplace, ancient and recent. Readers almost inevitably find parts of themselves in *Finnegans Wake*—all of our names seem hidden in there, as do so many names of places where we've lived—and Zeus/Jove lives again in that readers can connect him to their own lives through this text.

We should remind ourselves that the ancient peoples themselves only possessed the *names* of their respective cultural myths, not any actual bodies of these supposed gods. Names, however, meant much more to them than they do to us, for they used what they could project behind these names to explain their environment. Similarly, in *Finnegans Wake* we experience just as much of a myth when we posit a name and all the deeds and qualities associated with it behind a span of difficult text seen before our eyes.

The mythic potency of a name does not demand that the name be repeated verbatim<sup>7</sup>, which perfectly suits Joyce's process. Working optimally, Joyce's text causes the reader to regard each portmanteau word as if it were a mythic name. Just as

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<sup>7</sup> 'The same fear of the ghost, which moves people to suppress his old name, naturally leads all persons who bear a similar name to exchange it for another, lest its utterance should attract the attention of the ghost, who cannot reasonably be expected to discriminate between all the different applications of the same name' (Frazer 253).

every connotation or hint of Zeus floods the text with all related data (Greekness, thunder, ruling, etc., every associated anecdote in Greek tradition *ad infinitum*), each phoneme within a portmanteau brings to bear all the words containing that same phoneme. Finding himself in a state of ignorance, the reader perpetually learns language anew by grasping every sort of 'nameform' he can recognize and applying it for all it is worth in every circumstance.

Lastly, it should be noted that past Irish tradition displayed many of the same fascinations with names that Joyce's work does, *Finnegans Wake* especially. Just as Joyce in his literature sometimes revenges himself upon persons he disagreed with or had fallen out with, bards in the Irish folk tradition would often include the names of real people in their songs. Of the blind poet Raftery, whose relation to Joyce will be discussed at greater length in chapter four, Lady Gregory recounted, "He [Raftery] was very sharp with anyone that didn't please him," I have been told; "and no one would like to be put in his songs." And though it is said of his songs in praise of his friends that "whoever he praised was well praised," it was thought safer that one's own name should not appear in them' (*Poets & Dreamers* 16). The more steeped in myth the human mind, the tighter the connection between name and person, and the more the use of the former affects the latter. Further, prevalent in Irish tradition was the belief that names, once identified, can reveal surprisingly large amounts of stored, hidden information, just as more items than we think possible can be removed from a magician's trunk. As Tymoczko writes,

[O]ne of the chief ways by which the fili determined knowledge . . . was through sound and the magic of language, so that the cultivation of language per se and names in particular was a central feature of the maintenance of *senchas*. The magic of names and naming permeates early Celtic literature: not only are names etymologized, but . . . they are used metonymically to evoke particular stories or even a sense of the whole tradition. The interest in etymology is typical of much medieval thought, but no other medieval vernacular tradition attends to names and naming so minutely as does that of

#### 4. CONTRA LÉVY-BRUHL, THE MYTHIC AS DORMANT WITHIN THE MODERN

Joyce differs in one defining way from two of the aforementioned anthropologists, whose work otherwise influenced him positively in other respects. Frazer and Lévy-Bruhl—the latter especially—constantly emphasized the presumably irreconcilable differences between our thought processes in modernity and those of ‘natives’ or ‘primitives’, i.e. usually illiterate people highly susceptible to myth and superstition. Joyce, on the other hand, attempts with *Finnegans Wake* to recover ancient, myth-oriented mentalities that he trusts persist through many generations, despite the edifices of culture that have been constructed atop them. While Joyce undeniably benefited from having read their theories, he nonetheless recognized that both Frazer and Lévy-Bruhl insisted upon a dictum that *myth is not for the modern age*, which he contests in his final literary project.<sup>8</sup>

Passages of *Finnegans Wake* slyly criticize Frazer and Lévy-Bruhl. Joyce shows particular resentment for the authority that these scholars purport to wield over the sort of ancient material that he actually engages with poetically. ‘I am a worker,’ the text declares in 1.5, the episode concerning the nature of the Letter, ‘a tombstone mason, anxious to please averyburies [...] You are a poorjoist, unctuous to polise nopebobbies [...] We cannot say aye to aye’ (113.34-114.2). While Joyce negotiates his writing into ancient or dead traditions, he discerns that there is a counterforce, a faulty version of himself, anxious to police or ‘[mono]polise’ these same deceased elements, subordinating them to modernity. Through Vickery’s investigation of the

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, less rigorous modernizations of myths are present in *Portrait* and *Ulysses* as well.

text a few lines lower than the passage just quoted, we can identify this ‘poorjoist’ with Frazer and scholars of his type:

[Joyce] observes with something like Frazer’s portentous rhetorical balance that ‘the use of the homeborn shillelagh . . . shows a distinct advance from savagery to barbarism’ (114:12-13). In this he ironically renders one of Frazer’s chief beliefs, namely, that human history is the record of a slow and painful ascent from savagery to civilization. He also with trenchant economy undercuts in a revelatory manner Frazer’s penchant for solemnly uttering views of an intellectually simple order. (408)

Later in *Finnegans Wake* Lévy-Bruhl’s name is joined with Wyndham Lewis’s to create the figure of ‘Professor Loewy-Brueller’ (150.15) or ‘Professor Llewellys ap Bryllars, F.D., Ph. Dr’ (151.32-33). Glasheen in her *Census* conjectures that with the above conglomerate names Joyce merely ‘teases Lewis by joining him to Lévy-Bruhl’ (166). The disagreements between Joyce and Lewis have been well documented, but it has not been sufficiently understood that Joyce does indeed have reason to oppose Lévy-Bruhl as well. Atherton writes that ‘In spite of this attack ([*FW*] 151) on Lévy-Bruhl . . . Joyce seems to have made use of his theories’ (43). Joyce did indeed draw upon information about ‘native’ thought that Lévy-Bruhl (among many others<sup>9</sup>) documented, but this does not remove from consideration Lévy-Bruhl’s condescending opinion that the myths underlying such states of mind were ‘primitive, irrational, and false’ (Mali, *Mythistory* 21)<sup>10</sup>. Lewis and Lévy-Bruhl become associated because they both discredit Joyce’s prospect of utilizing certain mentalities that are considered ancient simply because they are not often used in modernity. In *Time and Western Man* (1927) Lewis explicitly criticized Joyce for overestimating so-called ‘time philosophy’, but Lévy-Bruhl must have galled Joyce

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<sup>9</sup> Specifically, in the pages of *How Natives Think* that deal with the mythic power of names (37-39), Lévy-Bruhl makes a dozen references to the work of other anthropologists. Nearly half of these same authors are cited by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*.

<sup>10</sup> Mali notes that this ‘liberal assumption’ of Lévy-Bruhl’s was ‘common to contemporary social scientists such as Frazer [and] Durkheim’ as well (*Mythistory* 21).

whenever he resolved to speak for all of modernity in stating ‘the fact that the prelogical, mystic mentality is oriented differently from our own . . . [T]hese mystic elements have disappeared as far as we are concerned’ (331). For Lévy-Bruhl any reappearance of these elements would not only be impossible but counterproductive, for he decrees us better off without them.

Moreover, *Finnegans Wake* tells us that ‘Professor Levi-Brullo, F. D. of Sexe-Weiman-Eitelny’ has found that ‘What the romantic in rags [Shem/Joyce] pines after [...] in accompaniment with the Mortadarthella [*Morte d’Arthur*] tradition is the poorest commononguardiant waste of time’ (my italics; 151.11, 17-21). In other words, the conglomerate professor concludes that Joyce’s ambition to utilize ancient tradition is hopeless, because the impractical, time-obsessed man is simply not capable of transcending his low position. As Campbell and Robinson note, ‘This is precisely the argument with which St. Patrick will refute the dream logic of the Archdruid in Book IV, thereby discrediting the Night World of *Finnegans Wake* itself . . . Joyce knows, as well as any, the case against his own book’ (112n).

Joyce also knew the case *for* his book as well, having partnered its workings with the appropriate philosopher. Vico’s ‘greatest achievement’, Mali tells us, was ‘to show in practical and historical terms how men in “earliest antiquity” had actually made *their* world by certain “modifications” that *still prevailed in our world of “modernity”*’ (my italics; *Mythistory* 66). As discussed above, by encouraging them to discover mythic ‘nameforms’ in its strange text, *Finnegans Wake* enables modern readers to (re)familiarize themselves with innate ‘ancient’ states of mind.

Whatever negative connotations these positions of ‘ignorance’ might have are partly due to modern, educated prejudice. This valuable ignorance can inspire Joyce’s readers to utilize an ingenuity in interpreting *Finnegans Wake* similar to the creative ways that Vico’s ‘first people’ explained their world. Such techniques are inborn,

almost impulsive; we remember them to the same extent that we temporarily forget or are able to unlearn our usual reading habits and assumptions (a prospect at times arduous). Moreover, these skills of ancient origin in their own way certainly exercise intelligence, though Lévy-Bruhl might argue otherwise. Joyce's reasoning and procedure accord with what Claude Lévi-Strauss says in the following:

[The approach that myth-oriented thought is] a fundamentally different kind of thought is exemplified by the work of Lévy-Bruhl, who considered that the basic difference between 'primitive' thought—I always put the word 'primitive' within quotes—and modern thought is that the first is entirely determined by emotion and mystic representations . . . [W]hat I have tried to emphasize is that actually the thought of people without writing is, or can be in many instances . . . intellectual—a difference in relation to Lévy-Bruhl. (16)

Lévy-Bruhl wrote that any account we may read of foreign myths is by its 'very translation' a 'betrayal' of the states of mind that originated them (330). Joyce, on the other hand, working with the conjecture that all humans possess inborn myth-making and myth-deciphering skills, writes as if all ancient material is to a large degree relatable across centuries and vast linguistic differences. The next section will examine how Joyce's conveyance of whole myths by means of their names is similar to the transfer of bits of information through technological media.

## **5. THE *ALLFORABIT*: RECALLING MYTH THRU TIME, DATA THRU MEDIA**

In the paragraph advising us to 'Stoop' if we are 'abcedminded' (*FW* 18.17), several lines below 'the ignorance that implies impression that knits knowledge that finds the nameform that whets the wits' (18.24-25), we read that 'When a part so ptee does duty for the holos we soon grow to use of an allforabit' (18.36-19.2). This last word indicates the processes of synecdoche that *Finnegans Wake* depends upon, in which



absent entirety or *alls* become activated through engagement of the *bits* on hand. A whole external text can become important to our reading of *Finnegans Wake* once we discover that Joyce has included an alteration of one phrase from that book. The whole history of a person, historical or mythical, can become relevant once we discern that person's name through Joyce's opaque text. In this way, all references to outside sources in *Finnegans Wake* function as names do in mythic thinking. The reader's recognition of a 'nameform' has an effect similar to that of speaking a name in an ancient or illiterate community: *all* the entity is summoned *forth* once the vital *bit* emerges. Furthermore, Joyce becomes an author of potentially all mythic traditions through the gateway of one of them: the Irish. The next chapter will explain why this is especially appropriate due to the Irish tradition's naturally expansive nature.

The *allforabit* is also the 'alphabet', and Marshall McLuhan in particular focused on the technological implications of this theme, interpreting '*Finnegans Wake!*' as Joyce announcing the end of the printed word's supposed dominance over human consciousness. McLuhan wrote that the cultural effects of print, 'the technology of individualism' (*Gutenberg Galaxy* 192), were repealed by electrically charged developments in the twentieth century: '[T]he wake of human progress can disappear again into the night of sacral or auditory man. The Finn cycle of tribal institutions can return in the electric age' (ibid. 95). The synecdochic aspect here lies in how Joyce's work, McLuhan believed, provides 'individual pass-keys'<sup>11</sup> to the collective consciousness' (ibid. 318). Each reader is conceivably a 'bit' who can gain an immense perspective on human experience.

In Joyce's day the word *bit* had not yet come to mean a unit of information, but various theorists influenced by McLuhan's view of *Finnegans Wake* have played up this coincidence. Donald Theall, in a book whose subtitle postulates that we are in

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. 'The keys to. Given!' (*FW* 628.15).

'the Joyce Era of Technology, Culture, and Communication', writes that cyberspace converts 'all modes of expression into minimal contrastive units—bits' (*Beyond the Word* 25). The advantages of bits lie in their easy transferability between different media and across long distances in short amounts of time. Likewise, the mythic 'nameforms' of *Finnegans Wake* allow the work's process to transcend the locality of its author as well as the years during which it was composed, collecting influences (and references) from the places and times through which it is transferred. Metaphorically, the Letter planted in Ireland 'rearrive[s] from North Armorica on this side the scraggy isthmus of Europe Minor . . . [a]fter rounding his world of ancient days' (1.4-5, 623.36-624.1). Joyce allows and encourages his audience to access and become interested in his referenced aspects of the past because of the transferability of myth-endowed *bits*.

From the emergence of the *bit*, one can theorize that it is not our various technologies that define our information, but rather our information that defines our technologies. For instance, 'the key to the future of television', Nicholas Negroponte writes, 'is to stop thinking about television as television. TV benefits most from thinking of it in terms of bits. Motion pictures, too, are just a special case of data broadcast. Bits are bits' (49). Though in the modern age every printed 'bit' about the figure of Ulysses may become as typical as any other, Joyce's ignorance-restoring techniques cause names within his text to invoke expansive mythic sensations in the reader's mind, and in this they behave much as hallowed names did when heard in more primal societies. As explained above, the mythic name—the *bit par excellence*—virtually binds together every text, song or utterance that includes it, and all but equates them with the referenced entity itself. Echoing this, Gordon Gow writes that (as Joyce supposedly predicted) 'the bit reverses what McLuhan saw as the fragmentation created by phonetic literacy, and creates a technological implosion of

interconnectivity.’ The accordant ‘implosion’ set off by *Finngans Wake* pulls far-reaching myths and mythologies together into a reader’s (ignorant) mind, (re)uniting their contents within a functioning, conglomerate tradition. Though we do not magically come into full conscious knowledge these whole entities, the *bit* provides us with premonitions of them.

The above conceptions put forth by Joycean communication theorists somewhat overstate the case and its novelty, especially in light of the material on oral traditions provided earlier in this chapter. Obviously, ‘phonetic literacy’ has not actually vanished from the earth. Even as *Finnegans Wake* sporadically references newer electric mediums such as radio, television and film, this hardly constitutes a repudiation of phonetics, literacy, or any combination of the two, especially in a book with such sonic qualities.

The *allforabit* is nothing new or inherently ‘electric’. It is not so much that electronic media causes humanity to revert back to ‘tribal institutions’, but rather they seem to replicate some aspects of the mind formerly engaged by ancient poetics. The ‘technological implosion of interconnectivity’ mentioned by Gow is very reminiscent of the synaesthesia, the ‘whole gamut of harmonics’ (Lévy-Bruhl 330), that orally-transmitted mythology potentially awakens. In words that could nearly describe *Finnegans Wake* and Theall’s ‘cyberspace’ as well, John Miles Foley writes that an oral poetic tradition

is not at all a limiting but rather a connotatively explosive, medium, a touchstone or nexus of indication and reference wholly different from a medium at the disposal of the ‘non-traditional’ artist, for such a diction and narrative structure have obvious and necessary reference not only to the present poem, poet, and time but also to an enormous number of other poems, poets and eras. Written diction and tradition, no matter how dense with allusions and inherited figures, can never command this open connotative field of reference. (*Traditional Oral 2*)

Joyce does his best to prove Foley's last point wrong, however, compounding as many allusions as possible into *Finnegans Wake*. The reader is interpellated as if he or she were an audience member within various cultural traditions, strands of which become activated as the reader recognizes various 'nameforms'.

As we have seen, various absences of knowledge predicate mythic return, and some ignorance on Joyce's part is also part of the equation. Decades ago Atherton stated the 'first, most important fact' for any reader of *Finnegans Wake*: 'that it is not necessary to have read all of [the] source books' (29), a task which would probably be impossible anyway. However, scholarship has not given adequate consideration to the fact that Joyce, for all he read, did not read all of these sourcebooks either. In the broad sense every tradition is by definition too large for one mind to contain, and in his compilation of a new multi-traditional work Joyce himself could not read all the various texts from which *Finnegans Wake* draws material. For instance, Joyce sent a copy of *Huckleberry Finn* to David Fleischman and wrote the following instructions in the accompanying letter:

I need to know something about it. I never read it and have nobody to read it to me and it takes too much time with all I am doing. Could you perhaps refresh your memory by a hasty glance through and then dictate to your mother . . . an account of the plot in general . . . After that I should like you to mark with blue pencil in the margin the most important passages of the plot itself and in red pencil here and there wherever the words or dialogue seem to call for the special attention of a European. . . . I shall try to use whatever bears upon what I am doing. (*LIII* 401)

Speculating what *Finnegans Wake* would have been like if Joyce had perfect memory or perfect eyesight is irrelevant; the fact is that its composition was accomplished *through* (not so much *in spite of*) limitations and deficiencies. Furthermore, our

overall understanding of the work may well remain quite the same—though more detailed—were we somehow able to achieve the impossible and comprehend every allusion and connotation. Being ‘left in the dark’, however, learning to strive against an ignorance that will never go away completely, may actually be more valuable than tracking down every single obscure reference. We all, Joyce included, function with necessary deficiencies, and taking stock of them is part of learning how to function as best we can.

These states of not-knowing, including imperfect knowledge or awareness of source materials, abound in our reading and are also present thematically in *Finnegans Wake*. Through the *allforabit* we are able to use the pieces of knowledge we do have, the ‘nameforms’ we recognize, to activate absent contexts that were beyond us previously and will no doubt disappear again. The synaesthetic overtones present in oral tradition and in *Finnegans Wake* have parallels in modern electric technologies. Joyce’s text encourages these lines of thought by referencing media such as radio and television. Yet we must not take this to mean that the *allforabit* concept itself is new, nor mistake the recognition of multiple cultural modes for the impossible ability to live in them all simultaneously and omnisciently. Even Homer nods, and even Joyce cheats by passing the sourcebook on for someone else to read.

Joyce does mix and draw from various communicative forms in his final text (oral traditions, contemporary slang, ancient manuscripts, novels of all kinds, radio, television, plays, films, etc.), but never are these external media actually blended. *Finnegans Wake* does not physically synthesize these media; whatever its mythic traits, it remains very much a book. Communication forms remain differentiated, and indeed such culture-spanning creativity depends on this. ‘[D]ifferences are extremely fecund,’ Lévi-Strauss writes: ‘What threatens us right now is probably over-communication . . . [I]t is only under conditions of under-communication that

[culture] can produce anything' (20). Because of its adherence to tradition and readymade forms the myth-oriented work may seem 'limiting' (Foley, *Traditional Oral 2*), yet, as we have seen, under the right situations and the right guidance, these handicaps become immense advantages. They provide access and may establish meaningful, sometimes personal connections between a modern audience and a web of hitherto unrelated material, much of it thought lost forever.

## CHAPTER 3

### IRISH AUTHORS' RELATIONSHIP WITH TRADITION: JOYCE, MANGAN, YEATS

With *Finnegans Wake* Joyce declares himself both the heir of Irish mythic tradition and the latest, worthiest (re)presenter of this ancient material. The root qualification for these roles has less than we might expect to do with his scholarly, belated knowledge of old Irish poetry. Rather, Joyce assumes control of Irish tradition by undertaking acts of the most primal poetics. The figure capable of harnessing the past for the present does not announce what he *knows* but rather what he *is*. Though *Finnegans Wake* contains vast amounts of erudition, on one level the book must always remain open to the most basic interpretations: before any other meaning can transpire, any given span of text announces itself *as this given text*. Of this privileging of *being* in contrast to the *knowing* of science '( < L. *scio*, "I know")', John Bishop notes the following:

Vico's genesis regards as primary the not-knowing of the human mind, whose coming-to-be through nescience ('I AM') will ultimately generate the man-made constructs of science and reason. (*Joyce's Book of the Dark* 189).

As civilization progresses from recurrent states of ignorance, an important step is made whenever one of its poets can state his identity and relation to the world, thereby encouraging kinship between his audience and their surroundings. The varying abilities of Joyce's major protagonists to confirm their own Irish identities, and the degrees to which they are inclined to affect their nation, play out as creative

and instructive processes through which Joyce becomes ever more confident at wielding the Irish tradition.

This chapter's first section examines how Joyce uses three of his protagonists to explore how Irishmen relate to their country. First we consider Leopold Bloom, the representative non-artist, whose broken off 'I. AM. A.' signifies his inability to state his identity, literally or metaphorically, on the Irish shore. The prejudice of society insinuates that he might not be right to even call himself Irish, but Bloom responds to that suspicion with the simplest of truths: 'I was born here.' Stephen, on the other hand, feels the need to make himself an outsider. Joyce shows Stephen as a character in obstinate opposition to Ireland, yet he always sets him within Ireland's shores. While Stephen's brief time abroad is never narrated, his blind pride at being able to leave Ireland fuels the end of *Portrait*, his devastation of having failed to escape is apparent in *Ulysses*, and his bitterness is omnipresent throughout. Stephen wallows in resentment of Ireland, threatened by his contemporaries' contentions about the native tradition, dismissing the old folk of the west and the literary revival of Dublin. Lastly, Shem in *Finnegans Wake* hopelessly attempts to deny his birthplace in order to forget the very tradition that surrounds him and that he transcribes with his every word.

The second and third sections of this chapter then examine how Joyce's conception of Irish tradition relates to the work of other Irish authors. Before reawakening it himself, Joyce claimed that the ancient line of poets had terminated with James Clarence Mangan, with whom he felt great affinity. Just as Mangan eluded the national literary movement of his day, Joyce distanced himself from Lady Gregory, W. B. Yeats and the Irish literary revival. Mangan, at least as Joyce conceived of him, bore a deep identification with ancient Irish literature that was to a great extent apolitically based. Similarly, Joyce avoided the political missteps of the Irish literary revival, which sometimes led to fascistic ideals, so as to welcome the



broadest potential audience and also to select from the widest range of materials possible. Moreover, in *Finnegans Wake* all sources become part of Irish literature while still retaining their foreignness—an inclusive policy Joyce takes from ancient Irish tradition itself, which is in fact a history of invasions.

## 1. 'I AM [IRELAND]': THE INDIVIDUAL'S CONCEPTION OF HOMELAND

Before investigating the most famous 'I AM' of Joyce's oeuvre, which occurs in the 'Nausicaa' chapter of *Ulysses*, let us turn to a very ancient Irish poem attributed to the mythic poet Amairgen, which supplies the crucial 'I AM's of Irish tradition. Danis Rose has proven that Joyce knew this poem in the English translation of R. A. S. Macalister ('Page References' 90), as provided below. Joyce even references the page number of Macalister's text in his abridged statement, 'I am (31) all things', which Rose has located in an early manuscript of *Finnegans Wake*. This becomes finalized as 'I am (twintomine) all thees thing' (*FW* 223.9), the slight number change signifying Issy, who is pantomiming at that point in the text (and she is 29, the leap-year child).

Voiced on a Milesian ship, to part a storm so that the invaders could land on Ireland and drive the then-ruling *Tuatha Dé Danann* underground, the poem begins:

I am wind in the sea,  
I am wave of the billows,  
I am sound of the sea:  
I am an ox of seven fights,  
I am a vulture on a cliff,  
I am a tear of the sun [=a dewdrop],  
I am fair among flowers,  
I am a boar,  
I am a salmon in a pool,

I am a lake in a plain,  
I am a word of knowledge,  
I am the point of the spear that fighteth,  
I am the god who formeth fire for a head [=giver of inspiration]. (Trans. & qtd.  
in Macalister, *Secret Languages* 31)<sup>1</sup>

With these words Irish tradition chose to remember the last invasion of mythic times. This same poem also ties to the origin of the country's name: for when each of the three Milesian queens asked that the island be named after her, Amairgen selected Ériu (giving us *Erin*), and Irish tradition confirmed his choice by repeating this story. Perhaps this identification with Amairgen's naming and his song came to be favoured because the Milesians were the first Gaelic people of Ireland. There were earlier myths and earlier mythological invasions, but the tradition chose to endow the above 'I AM's with a Genesis-like quality, as if those words spoke the Irish world into existence. Alwyn and Brinley Rees write that 'Potentially, the whole creation is bound up in Amairgen' (99). Nor is the Irish the only tradition activated by a poet giving voice to statements of such magnitude, for as the Reeses note there are parallels in the very early, mythological literature of other cultures as well:

Śrī Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* declares himself to be the divine seed without which nothing animate or inanimate exists. He is the Ātman, he is Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma and all the gods, the beginning, the life-span and the end: 'I am the radiant sun among the light-givers . . . among the stars of night, I am the moon . . . I am Meru among mountain peaks . . . I am the ocean among the waters . . . Of water-beings I am Varuna: Aryaman among the Fathers: I am Death . . . I am the Wind . . .' He is pre-eminent among hymns, poetic metres, the letters of the alphabet, the months and the seasons. . . . Vishnu, dormant during the interval of non-manifestation between the dissolution and recreation of the universe delivers himself of a similar series of 'I am' utterances. . . . Similarly Amairgen on the ocean of non-existence embodies the primeval unity of all things. (Ibid.)

Henceforth we will use the term 'I AM'-poet to refer to the archetype of these figures.

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<sup>1</sup> Macalister also translates this poem slightly differently in his edition of *Lebor Gabála Éirenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*.

Standing on the brink of a new beginning for his people, surveying land that he knows already exists but that he will now name, the 'I AM'-poet sings of his identification with the surroundings. 'Wind', 'wave', 'sea', and all the rest are no longer simply words that name aspects of the physical environment—nor are 'word of knowledge' or 'point of the spear' strict, empirical descriptions of the cultural environment—for the 'I AM'-poet has provided a new space in which the essences of these paired signifiers and signifieds reappear. Thus these same words are effectively *renamings*<sup>2</sup>, bringing with them an additional level of meaning that facilitates a new relationship between the environment and those who understand the song as a part of their history. The 'I AM'-poet's contribution to traditional literature continually reaffirms the communal bonds between the people's language and their surroundings, as long as the song remains in the cultural mind.

#### ***A. Bloom's Incomplete 'I. AM. A.'***

To be a bearer of Irish tradition Joyce needed to identify with Irish culture at large much as Amairgen did with his surroundings. We begin to realize how Joyce attempted to broaden his understanding when we examine the contrast between the two protagonists of *Ulysses*. On the one hand there is Stephen Dedalus, the individualistic artist, whose self-worth is based on his own 'I KNOW', which he considers the harbinger of his future artistic productions; on the other hand there is Leopold Bloom, the everyman capable of a great deal of 'I AM'-flavoured empathy for many people and things around him<sup>3</sup>. Bloom is a lover of knowledge as well, but his understanding has more to do with what he can learn from and use in the world he

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<sup>2</sup> Joyce goes further in that he uses heretofore unknown words which disguise many recognizable ones, thereby renaming not only the physical and cultural environment but the linguistic environment as well.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, Bloom personifies cheese as the 'Corpse of milk' (*U* 6.982), and later sympathizes with prostitutes: 'If you don't answer when they solicit must be horrible for them till they harden' (13.869-70).

experiences. Unlike Stephen, the student and hugely ambitious poet, the more pragmatic Bloom possesses knowledge with more of the flavour of *connaître* than *savoir*. By the time he was writing *Ulysses* Joyce declared himself much less interested in the rigid Stephen, whose ‘shape can’t be changed’ (qtd. in Budgen 59), than in the well-rounded Bloom. Unlike Stephen, Bloom does not always have a weighted, personal artistic investment in all things Irish, and so Joyce can better utilize him to investigate the relation between Ireland and an individual. Within the ‘I AM’-poet’s song is an implicit awareness of how the poem’s audience experiences their country, and this is what Joyce can better explore through Bloom. We must mark, however, that for all his basic goodness Bloom, unlike Amairgen, is decidedly incapable of making seemingly creationary incantations. As will be detailed below, Joyce’s narrative leads Bloom right up to the point of becoming an ‘I AM’-poet, only to see him fail. In so doing, Joyce examines as closely as possible the space between the ancient Irish literary tradition and Ireland itself, which is occupied (unknowingly) by the Irish everyman.

Bloom on the beach in ‘Nausicaa’ is no Amairgen on the landing ship, though he begins to inscribe familiar words in the sand. After Bloom masturbates while looking at Gerty MacDowell the text reads:

Write a message for her. Might remain. What?  
I. [. . .]  
AM. A.  
No room. Let it go.  
Mr Bloom effaced the letters with his slow boot. (*U* 13.1256-66)

The reader wonders not only what Bloom would have introduced himself as but, perhaps more importantly, what Joyce suggests by this incompleteness. Most curiously, how on the entire Sandymount beach could there be ‘No room’ for what Bloom wants to write? Perhaps there would be no room for the entire song of Amairgen, whose

initial happens to be the last thing Bloom writes and what Joyce has him, momentarily, introduce himself as: 'I AM A'. Further, by recognizing *A* as *alpha*, the beginning, we recollect how the 'I AM'-poet is 'pre-eminent among hymns, poetic meters, the letters of the alphabet' (Rees 99). But this is a mystical level at which this sensual everyman, who has just expended himself in desire, simply cannot operate. Bloom's incomplete expression, which he soon erases, clues us in to the fact that he cannot evoke any extended, primal, culturally binding expression of his identity and its relation to his environment. Bloom is 'incomplete' in this respect, despite his general well-rounded character.

To dispense with speculations, 'I AM A MAN', the most obvious distinction between himself and Gerty, seems perhaps the most likely completion of Bloom's sentence. This direct statement would be something of a relief to Bloom's consciousness, as it would leave off those qualifications which he was made to struggle so hard to defend in the preceding chapter, 'Cyclops': that he is a *Jewish Irishman*.

Bloom's unfortunate, ongoing task is to resist the prejudicial suspicion—on the part of others and, to a degree, even on his own part—that he may not have the *right* to an identity in relation to Ireland, whose meaning has already been so long defined that it almost seems a stale abstraction:

—A nation? says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place.  
—By God, then, says Ned, laughing, if that's so I'm a nation for I'm living in the same place for the past five years.

So of course everyone had the laugh at Bloom and says he, trying to muck out of it:

—Or also living in different places. [...]

—What is your nation if I may ask? says the citizen.

—Ireland, says Bloom. I was born here. Ireland. (*U* 12.1422-31)

Bloom himself seems unsure whether simple expressions can describe something as

massive as an entire country; his commonplace reasoning makes us notice the most basic, modern conception of what a nation is—and nothing more. It is tedious for Bloom to be faced every day (though rarely, we would hope, as confrontationally as in ‘Cyclops’) with the demand of verifying *who* he is and what *where he is* means to him. That *he* should mean something *to Ireland* is, under this system, unthinkable.<sup>4</sup> Worst of all, Bloom’s Irishness is called into question even though he lives in Ireland and—unlike Stephen Dedalus and Joyce himself—has never left. By interferences both external and internal, Bloom’s consciousness is not only infringed upon by the prejudice of others against his Jewish heritage, but it is also mired in personal misfortunes, failings, and apparent deviations: his father’s suicide, his son’s early death, his wife’s adultery, his own lusts over which he sometimes feels guilty. Bloom is sympathetic because he, like Odysseus in this respect, is not a god. In ‘Circe’ Bloom can rule Ireland and build a ‘new Bloomusalem’ (15.1544), but this is just as absurd as the visions in which he suffers accusations, warranted or unwarranted, and punishments, protested or desired. Inquisitive by nature, feeling always the need to explain, Bloom would have his expressed identity require so many provisions that perhaps there would indeed be no room on the entire beach to explain them all.

Bloom’s ‘I AM A’ statement, incomplete though still quite evocative, bespeaks none of the self-worth or ‘pride of the sorcerer’ (Rees 99) that the successful ‘I AM’-poet inherently possesses. Even reading a positivistic ‘yes’ into the hanging *A*, as Derrida does, would not remedy this lack of confidence on the part of the makeshift poet or beach drawer:

The self-positing in the *yes* or the *Ay* is . . . neither tautological nor narcissistic; it is not egological even if it initiates the movement of circular reappropriation . . . [I]t is not yet performative, not yet transcendental,

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<sup>4</sup> Though Joyce amusingly suggests that it was Bloom who gave Arthur Griffith, a known anti-Semite, the idea of founding Sinn Féin (*U* 12.1574).

although it remains presupposed in any performativity, *a priori* in any constative theoricity, in any knowledge, in any transcendentality. (302)

In the progression of primal poetics, then, Bloom's incomplete 'I AM A' statement seems an embryonic form of Amairgen's 'I AM' song, whose namings revitalize a pre-existent world. However, in concordance with Vico's cycle of ages (end linking to beginning), it also seems written by an overburdened latecomer or descendant, someone weighed down by the crushing 'weight of centuries' described by Kafka (299). Bloom's sentiment also approaches a premature senility: its writer, like the writer's nation, though not considered aged, has by 1904 already experienced enough convolution and trouble to make it impossible for him to summarize his relation to the world. The only remedy would be the sort of valuable ignorance that comes with forgetting; another successful 'I AM' statement could only be made after another cultural renewal, which *Finnegans Wake* will bring.

### ***B. Stephen's Failed (Re)creation of Ireland within His Soul***

Bloom is sequestered, the legitimacy of his Irishness challenged, in the grounded, everyday Irish reality that for Stephen Dedalus is a prison. Stephen's last name tells him to ascend this apparent trap in order to better survey it. Understanding that his identity is tied to Ireland's but refusing to work with that relation, Stephen stubbornly attempts to redefine Ireland in terms of how he perceives himself. The presupposition that Joyce based this drive of Stephen's on his own is borne out by almost everything we know of the author's life in the first years of the twentieth century. One of the best examples comes in a letter Joyce wrote from Trieste in 1906 to his reluctant publisher in Dublin: 'I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely

polished looking-glass' (SL 90). This presumptive project of *Dubliners*, to make the author's countrymen see themselves *as they are*—which can only ever mean *as the author sees them*—is in essence vicariously delegated to Stephen. After 1907 (and *Stephen Hero*) Joyce presents Stephen as a character of often resentful demeanour, unable to gain sufficient perspective. By contrast, the author himself has matured, becoming more appreciative of Ireland and more considerate of its cultural contents. Joyce's former, antagonistic perspective is just one part of the whole, though a part well worth investigating.

Having grown apart from his alter-ego as the years passed and the autobiography of his formative years was drafted and redrafted into various forms under various titles, at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Joyce leaves Stephen exiling himself from Ireland. Ironically, Stephen beseeches an 'Old father, old artificer'—words which recall the very forces whose control he has found repellent—to 'stand me now and ever in good stead' (218). Stephen's journal section, which concludes the work, displays a wild juxtaposition of often reductive and unconnected understandings of his relationships, personal and impersonal. Most relevant to this chapter, Stephen includes a hostile entry belittling both the old folk of Ireland and contemporary educated interest in their tradition. These are embodied in an old man from the west and John Alphonsus Mulrennan, a Dubliner who journeyed to meet him in a mountain cabin:

Old man had red eyes and short pipe. Old man spoke Irish. Mulrennan spoke Irish. Then old man and Mulrennan spoke English. Mulrennan spoke to him about the universe and stars. Old man sat, listened, smoke, spat. Then said:

—Ah, there must be terrible queer creatures at the latter end of the world.

I fear him. I fear his redrimmed horny eyes. It is with him I must struggle all through this night till day come, till he or I lie dead, gripping him by the sinewy throat till . . . Till what? Till he yield to me? No. I mean him no harm. (217)



Stephen does not recognize how he himself regards those living under old beliefs in the west as if they were ‘terrible queer creatures at the latter end of the world’. He stops short of wishing absolute death on this past tradition of his country, but a page later vows to ‘forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race’ (218), words that seem heroic but belie an assumption of superiority and great, long-nurtured bitterness as well.

Incapable of Amairgen’s reciprocity between country and personal identity, Stephen is concerned with reflecting himself and shaping Ireland, never considering how he might imaginatively become one with Ireland. As Vicki Mahaffey writes, even at the end of *Portrait* Stephen ‘still shows little awareness of the dialectical relationship between his story and history, the double interplay of text and context’ (*Reauthorizing* 100). The ‘I AM’-poet (re)defines the Irish landscape by identifying with its natural and cultural contents in a free creative exchange, giving access to his own identity while gaining access to Ireland’s. In a complicated way, this is just what Joyce himself attempts with *Finnegans Wake*. But Stephen seeks a simplistic redefinition of Ireland based strictly upon what he understands as his own soul: ‘Ireland must be important because it belongs to me’ (*U* 16.1164-65). The ‘I AM’-poet identifies himself with the nonhuman elements around him, but his words facilitate kinship between himself and his audience as well as a collective identification with the world that surrounds all of them. There would be no such exchange in the future poetics to which Stephen aspires. He wants to forge a conscience for the Irish people, but this process is to be done privately within his own soul, relying strictly on his own personal history for reference. Stephen would not give the Irish people *a conscience*; he would give them *his conscience*. We could not possibly imagine that Stephen would encourage interpretations of his future literature that he himself did not preconceive, as Joyce did regarding his own later works.

Whereas the rearranging poet performs in such a way that pre-existent materials (wind, water, weapons, etc.) seem (re)created by his very words, reappropriated into the special context of literary tradition, Stephen presumes the ability to do the impossible, to create the heretofore uncreated, to ‘forge’ the ‘uncreated conscience’ (*P* 218).<sup>5</sup>

Stephen’s Shakespeare theory further indicates just how adamant he is that the workings of high art are to be the direct expression of an individual. In his understanding of the traditional and readymade there is a heavy focus on what these elements signify about the artist’s personal life:

—As for his family, Stephen said, his mother’s name lives in the forest of Arden. Her death brought from him the scene with Volumnia in *Coriolanus*. His boyson’s death is the deathscene of young Arthur in *King John*. Hamlet, the black prince, is Hamnet Shakespeare. Who the girls in *The Tempest*, in *Pericles*, in *Winter’s Tale* are we know. Who Cleopatra, fleshpot of Egypt, and Cressid and Venus are we may guess. (*U* 9.879-84)

Neither the fact that almost all of Shakespeare’s plots were taken from pre-existent stories with histories of their own, nor the resonance that all these materials had with Elizabethan England plays any role in Stephen’s theory, so intent is he on making strict biographical correspondences. So much does Stephen overemphasize the obvious notion that Shakespeare would have drawn inspiration from his own experience that it suggests the traditional elements were supplanted, aesthetically taken over and silenced, by those people and events that the playwright knew personally. Stephen aims to speak *to* and *for* an entire country, yet he can hardly conceive of any creativity that does not spring from what the individual author has

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<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that the most optimistic view of Stephen’s prospective literary career is an insensitive one given, ironically enough, by the antagonistic Buck Mulligan. Buck replies that Stephen ‘is going to write something in ten years’ when Haines, the Irish folklorist from England, asks if he writes anything for the Irish literary movement (*U* 10.1089-90). That Stephen’s future writing is framed by others as if it should naturally be considered part of the Irish literary revival of the time is no accident; his inability to have managed this assumption skilfully, or to have evaded it, is part of what stifles Stephen’s art.

directly experienced from the immediate world around him. We can see that such belief satisfies a certain criterion of legitimacy, as the artist is seen to 'write only about what he knows', yet this would give us a *Hamlet* that was primarily the wish-fulfilment of a vindictive playwright, a Shakespeare who would have had Hamnet live in order to kill an adulterous Anne Hathaway. Revenge-driven in his own artistic endeavours, it is easy to see how Stephen would find this theory quite attractive. While this may not be *all* that the play is in Stephen's estimation, to judge by his statements in the National Library it seems the most important interpretation.

The 'metempsychosis' theme in *Ulysses*, which examines the recurrence of events and personality types without interpreting any one manifestation as definitive, indicates that Joyce himself had graduated to a conception of such corresponding elements, those personally known paired with those from history and tradition, that was less self-centred, more expansive and even rhizomatic. Stephen is portrayed as having an artistic conception, heavily favouring personal relations over distant correspondences, that falls quite short of his author's more expansive 'metempsychosis', which will progress even further into the 'allforabit' of *Finnegans Wake*.

Both protagonists mentioned thus far have fundamentally unsuccessful personal relations to Ireland. Bloom serves Joyce as an exploration of an everyman (no transcendental prophet or great writer) who, sensing himself persecuted, would have reason to leave Ireland yet stays willingly. Bloom is a 'good *man*' (my italics; Joyce qtd. in Budgen 191) incapable of completing the work of a mythic poet. On the other hand, Joyce sacrifices the daemonic Stephen as a kind of offering to Ireland so that his own Irish authorship might be redeemed. By emphasizing Stephen's errors Joyce shields himself from the lasting negative transference toward Ireland that Stephen still harbours, the latter's future art be damned. Joyce uses both protagonists

to assure himself that he really would be able to wield Irish tradition capably and legitimately, even though he does not live in Ireland, is not an everyman like Bloom, and has not held so tightly to the youthful, limiting artistic demands of Stephen.

### ***C. Shem's Denial of Birthplace***

Shem in *Finnegans Wake* seems an extension of the experimental opposition that Stephen served. The fulfilment of this new literary enterprise again necessitates the inclusion of a fictive, surrogate self in order to proceed both with disclosure of the Joyce's personal background and the intimation that by the current work he has transcended that position. Joyce shares his first name with his 'sham' character (Shemus is Irish for James, and in the first draft of 1.7 'Shem' the penman was originally 'Jim' (Landuyt 143)), but far from compromising the integrity of the work's authorship, this actually serves Joyce's purpose in presenting a text which is to be understood as part of an age-old tradition. Shem is characterized as a sham and a fake so that *Finnegans Wake* and the Letter (not authored by Shem but merely transcribed by him, as noted below) may be by contrast more legitimate, a genuine continuation of old Irish tradition that no twentieth-century 'penman' could ever imagine. By foregrounding Shem Joyce filters out from the work's behind-the-scenes production, and from what is understood as its authorship, the more transitory elements of his own identity. Thus the tradition appears to write itself through the strange language of Shem's pen, much as Apollo spoke in riddles through the Oracle at Delphi. That this new account of mythic tradition includes the James/Shem persona alongside many pre-existent others (Finn, Ireland-as-woman, St. Patrick, etc.) is an acknowledgement of what James Joyce's place is in the event of a successful *Finnegans Wake*. Without the inclusion of such a Shem character, the text would be

too susceptible to explanation as the personal wish-fulfilment of one latecoming author named James, much as Stephen shows that the scope of *Hamlet* can be limited to the personal orbit of William Shakespeare due to the author appearing in the play under another name, i.e. *not appearing under his own name*. Joyce's careful coordination of the Shem character in relation to the text and its authorship would have the effect of convincing himself that through James Joyce can spring the (re)creation of a pre-existent mythos.

Moreover, the inclusion of Shem attempts to convince the tradition itself that Joyce belongs in it in the role of scribe. Unlike Stephen, Shem is understood to be capable of writing *Ulysses*, the 'usylessly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles'<sup>6</sup> (*FW* 179.26-7). Despite this progression, however, due to accusations of obscenity and lack of literary *bona fides*, Shem's personality has an aura of stifling negativity. Shem takes as other models James Townsend Saward, the original 'Jim the Penman', a forger of cheques in nineteenth-century England, and the character of Shemus in Yeats's *Countess Kathleen*, who sells his soul to the devil. The text suggests that Shem has not composed *Finnegans Wake* but rather has merely transcribed the Letter from ALP's dictation. The potential pedagogical value of this task for someone like Shem should not be overlooked: though it is not suggested that his copying is a punishment, it is clear that he has so much to learn, so much room for improvement in how he has related to his birthplace, that writing out the entire new textual revision of Irish tradition would serve as a good corrective task for him. As we will see, however, there is reason to believe that for Shem this task is wholly mechanical, that he learns nothing from it.

Having left his home, Shem holds to a strict antinationalism even in his diet:

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<sup>6</sup> As we will see in the final section of this chapter, this is in appropriate contrast to the Yellow Book of Lecan, containing much of the Ulster Cycle, a counterpoint to Joyce's work being aligned with the Fenian Cycle.

‘He even ran away with hunself and became a farsoonerite, saying he would far sooner muddle through the hash of lentils in Europe than meddle with Irrland’s split little pea’ (*FW* 171.4-6). Despite some proclivity toward repentance (*forstone* is to *atone* in Danish), Shem is overcome by despair. His drastic solution is to forget all that he obtusely senses as his misery’s cause: Ireland, again. ‘[F]orforget, forforgetting his birdsplace, it was soon that, that he, that he rehad himself. By a prayer? No, that comes later. By contrite attrition? Nay, that we passed. Mid esercizism? So is richt’ (231.24-27). Shem’s ‘forforgetting’ of Ireland and ‘rehad[ding]’ of himself mirrors Joyce’s further loosening of his own egoistic resistance, opening his text to Irish tradition and thereby engaging in a deep creative exchange of identity with Ireland itself, much as the ‘I AM’-poet does.

Shem’s aesthetic exorcism of his birthplace from his mind, however, comes as a wrongheaded attempt to find himself, since he can never allow that Ireland is actually part of his identity. Yet Shem’s forgetting is an exercise correlative to his having transcribed the Letter. These are his two intertwined, defining actions: trying to sever his relation to Ireland while actually writing out Ireland’s book. This wilful forgetting is decidedly *not* the useful ignorance from which creativity may spring but rather unproductive denial. There is no redemption for Shem, for though he goes through the motions and writes down the words, he does not learn the lessons that Joyce presumably did. His identity, whether he likes it or not, is inextricably bound with Ireland’s. Therefore his most significant literary task—at once his most personal and original, and his most impersonal, composed of so much readymade, traditional material—could only be authored with Ireland in creative exchange. Joyce understands this well: the inclusion of Shem in *Finnegans Wake* is not so much a personal touch as it is the objective documentation of a readymade feature of Irish mythic tradition, within which Joyce now sees himself.

#### **D. Joyce's Understanding of Irish Tradition vs. His Contemporaries'**

Sections of chapter four will investigate Joyce's use of HCE, Parnell, and other 'foxes' in relation to the Irish tradition, which in some sense they lead and embody. Joyce understands the gravity and risk of implying that he writes within an ancient Irish framework even though he is a modern author who has emigrated from Ireland. Simply by living in the twentieth century he has an imperfect knowledge of this subject matter—but no one can ever know *all* of a tradition since the material by definition must exist in more than one mind. As was discussed at this section's beginning, it is not a matter of knowing but of self-confirmed, confident *being*: not 'I KNOW' but 'I AM'. Not knowing what it is to live in the west of Ireland, not having listened countless nights to other storytellers, being ignorant of so much: these deprivations ultimately do not disqualify Joyce from writing within an ancient Irish context.<sup>7</sup> As Albert Lord notes of the prototypical singer of the ancient Greek tradition, the decisive requirement of being an author of tradition is not to be absorbed within that tradition but rather to have made the act of identification with that tradition, the ambiguity of which this section has attempted to clarify:

He [the bearer of tradition] is not an outsider approaching the tradition with only a superficial grasp of it, using a bit here and a bit there, or trying to present a 'flavor' of the tradition . . . No, he is not even 'immersed' in the tradition. He *is* the tradition; he is one of the integral parts of that complex; for us, as undoubtedly for his own audiences, he is the most gifted and fascinating part of that tradition. His vividness and immediacy arise from [that] fact . . . (*The Singer of Tales* 147)

The rest of this chapter will examine Joyce's relation with other latecoming

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<sup>7</sup> This is not to belittle Joyce's understanding of Irish mythology and folklore, however. As Tymoczko writes, 'Joyce's knowledge of early Irish literature is generally overdetermined: there is usually a plethora of potential sources to be considered' (7). 'As a whole,' she continues, the 'structures from early Irish literature' that he used 'do not necessitate that Joyce did specialized research on or possessed recondite knowledge' (8).

poets and self-appointed caretakers of Irish tradition, specifically focusing on Mangan and Yeats. We will discover which elements of Irish tradition Joyce would have empathized with and which repelled him. Joyce's overcoming of the resistance he once felt for Ireland culminates in *Finnegans Wake's* proposed renewal, for the modern age, of the ancient Irish artistry which he believed had died with Mangan. The reawakening of this tradition is most apparent in the work's sleeping title character and, as Kimberly Devlin notes, in the related newly-awakened HCE persona, who

identifies throughout the *Wake* with heroes and leaders that come back after long absence or presumed destruction: The Flying Dutchman, Odysseus, Osiris, King Arthur, Rip van Winkle. These figures return, moreover, not only within their stories and myths, but also in the larger scheme of recorded history: the dreamer's appropriation of them bespeaks a desire for similarly legendary status, for literary if not bodily immortality. *Finnegans Wake* exposes the profoundest psychic impetus behind heroic identifications in a way that *Ulysses* does not. The self-inflating Circean imagoes of Bloom as the nation's savior spring merely from his random daydreams about municipal improvement and his desire to be accepted as legitimately Irish. (109-10)

Thus while the previous, now absent embodiment of tradition, Finn, was quite Irish<sup>8</sup>, the new 'samesake sibusstitute of a hooky salmon' (*FW* 28.35), HCE, contains more multi-cultural elements.

The preceding has explored how Joyce, despite being a latecomer, substantiated the legitimacy of his use of ancient material through the creation, employment, and arrangement of three characters whose problematic relations to Ireland by turns reflected and informed their author's own relation. The next section details Joyce's initial response to tradition (before he had learnt the creative techniques of responding by character proxy), which was to brand as 'rabblement' so many of the people of Ireland. The most ignorant of these folk would have in fact been competition for Joyce, each one of them through unconscious cultural

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<sup>8</sup> Just noting the Huckleberry *Finn* connotation proves that Finnegan is not completely Irish, but the HCE persona contains many *more* non-Irish elements.



inheritance already considering himself or herself something of an HCE or ALP, though without those personas' expansiveness. Joyce's desire for a role as scribe of ancient tradition thus conflicts with the mentality of many living in Ireland even in the early twentieth century, whose folk beliefs derived from the same mythic tradition of many centuries past. Joyce long sought reappropriation of the mythological wealth belonging to that very ancient civilization with which, Daniel Corkery writes, many Gaelic people even then 'were still in living contact, acquainted with its history; and such of its forms as had not become quite impossible in their way of life, they still piously practiced, gradually changing old moulds to new shapes' (41). These old Gaelic people, Corkery continues, 'were the residuary legatees of a civilisation that was more than a thousand years old. And this they knew; it was indeed the very pivot of all they did know, and the insult that followed on their poverty wounded them not only as human beings but as "Children of kings, sons of Milesius"' (41).

## **2. MANGAN AND APOLITICAL CONCERN WITH COUNTRY**

Joyce's dissenting opinion of the Irish literary revival is most cuttingly expressed in his 1903 review of *Poets and Dreamers*, a collection of tales from the west of Ireland by Lady Gregory, who was also one of his early benefactors.

These old people are full of stories about giants and witches, and dogs and black-handled knives, and they tell their stories one after another at great length and with many repetitions . . . It is difficult to judge well of their charms and herb-healing . . . and, indeed, it is well not to know these magical-sciences, for if the wind changes while you are cutting wild chamomile you will lose your mind. But one can judge more easily of their stories. These stories appeal to some feeling which is certainly not that feeling of wonder which is the beginning of all speculation. The story-tellers are old, and their imagination is not the imagination of childhood. The story-teller preserves the strange machinery of fairyland, but his mind is feeble and sleepy. He begins

one story and wanders from it into another story, and none of the stories has any satisfying imaginative wholeness . . . (OCPW 74)

Were *Finnegans Wake* stripped of its difficult language, one could imagine an unimpressed reviewer critiquing that work in much the same way. The distinction must be made that in his review Joyce belittles not legends and folklore (which are the origin of all literature) but rather the latest Irish storytellers and collectors of that material, both the old people of the west and Lady Gregory as well, almost indiscriminately. Especially noteworthy is Joyce's statement that the contemporary formulations of those ancient matters evoke 'certainly not that feeling of wonder which is the beginning of all speculation'—emphatically *not*, then, the useful, creative ignorance formulated by Vico as 'the mother of wonder' (par. 375). With his next sentence Joyce criticizes these folk storytellers of the early twentieth century as 'old', lacking 'the imagination of childhood', and thus the very opposite of Vico's 'first people', who are 'ignorant of all things [and] amazed by everything' (par. 375).

Chapter two explained the importance of ignorance and forgetfulness to *Finnegans Wake*'s design of mythological return; then the first section of the present chapter concluded with the notion that those in Ireland who still believed folklore, ignorant in the face of modernity, were in a sense competition for Joyce in utilizing the ancient spirit of Ireland. Joyce derides them; and we now see that this is because their tenacious relation to past tradition has resulted in an ignorance that is quite contrary to the felicitous, creatively pregnant ignorance of a people ready for the manifestation of primal poetry. The closed-minded folk conflict with the type of open-minded mentality with which *Finnegans Wake* is rewardingly approached. Rather than an innocent lack or *want* of knowledge, the ignorance of the Irish folk is the kind that results from a refusal to learn or develop, and this is why Joyce criticizes them. The obsolete practices of the folk (and subsequently the practices of the

folklorists) entrap mythic matter within obdurate formalities. This frustrates not only the early Joyce, who seeks to hold a mirror of his own soul up to the soul of Ireland, but also the maturing Joyce, who would enact an altered return to the nascence of that same material. Worst of all, some figures of the Irish literary revival can be seen to work against the poet of renewal by enthusiastically promoting the last death throes of tradition in the guise of bringing tradition back to life.

It's not clear exactly when Joyce first recognized that his literary career should entail such (re)creation and return of Irish tradition, rather than the simple obliteration of past tradition and the creation of Ireland's conscience strictly within his soul, as Stephen fantasizes. However, early on Joyce wilfully suggested that the old tradition had, at least for the time being, disappeared. In the 1907 essay 'Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages', he writes that

Just as ancient Egypt is dead, so is ancient Ireland. . . . The ancient national spirit that spoke throughout the centuries through the mouths of fabulous seers, wandering minstrels, and Jacobin poets has vanished from the world with the death of James Clarence Mangan. With his death the long tradition of the triple order of the ancient bards also died. Today other bards, inspired by other ideals, have their turn. (*OCPW* 125)<sup>9</sup>

Considering that Joyce will later claim aspects of this 'triple order' of poets (druids, *fili*, professional bards) for himself, it is striking that early on Joyce interprets Mangan as having been the end of this ancient Irish tradition. Usually Mangan is understood as one of the inaugurators of a new mode of patently Irish literature written in English. In contrast to 'such eighteenth-century Irish writers as Swift, Goldsmith, Sheridan, and Burke, who were not, for all Yeats's mythologizing,

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<sup>9</sup> This last line is reminiscent of how Joyce wrote of the aging Ibsen: 'Elsewhere there are men who are worthy to carry on the tradition of the old master who is dying in Christiania' (*OCPW* 52). Clearly in both cases these impersonal others indicate Joyce himself (just as MacAlister's 'school of writers' does!). In the 1907 version of his Mangan essay, Joyce uses certain critics' inability to understand Ibsen as a touchstone for explaining how Mangan is misremembered in Ireland (*OCPW* 131).

primarily concerned with their Irish origins', David Lloyd notes that Mangan was the contemporary of the line of 'Thomas Moore, William Carleton, Samuel Ferguson, Thomas Davis, John and Michael Banim, Gerald Griffin, and J. J. Callanan . . . all writers whose work, for all its "minor" status, is engaged in the project of redefining Irish identity historically and psychologically as well as politically' (2). As we will see, however, there is good reason not to include Mangan's work with his contemporaries' overt nationalism.

Already we can discern some of the reasons behind Joyce's affinity with Mangan (another *James*). Even while attracting the interest of other Irish writers in their respective eras, both stand apart from the respective literary movements surrounding them. Further, the young Joyce postulates an unproductive negativity between the spirit of the past, 'dead' tradition and living Irish writers, especially the revivalists. In both his (nearly identical) 1902 and 1907 essays entitled 'James Clarence Mangan', Joyce asserts that his subject 'inherit[ed] the latest and worst part of a tradition upon which no divine hand has drawn out the line of demarcation, a tradition which dissolves and divides against itself as it moves down the cycles' (*OCPW* 135)—and, as the introduction stated, *Finnegans Wake* will attempt to synthesize such divisions. But Joyce did not simply guess from Mangan's personal misery and eccentricity, for which he has been often remembered, that Mangan would also have observed Irish literature as dissenting in creative infertility. Sentiments in 'To My Native Land' rebuke the nineteenth-century musterings of Irish nationalism for being, ironically, part of what holds Ireland back. From a perspective beyond the literary scene around him, with his concern tied to the mythological tradition of old, Mangan promises that the glory of the almost forgotten past will return after the current struggles are overcome. With their related themes of awakening, cultural death, and dreaming—which will become important in *Finnegans Wake*—some of

Mangan's poems not only express Joyce's own feelings for the countrymen of his day, but may well have seemed prophetic of his own literary future:

Awake! arise! shake off thy dreams!  
Thou art not what thou wert of yore:  
Of all those rich, those dazzling beams,  
That once illum'd thine aspect o'er,  
Show me a solitary one  
Whose glory is not quenched and gone.  
[...]  
Thine honours fell, and when they fell  
The nations rang thy funeral knell.  
[...]  
Awake! arise! shake off thy dreams!  
'Tis idle all to talk of power,  
And fame, and glory—these are themes  
Befitting ill so dark an hour[.] ('To My Native Land' 1-6, 29-30, 43-46)<sup>10</sup>

Suffering, Patience, Faith, and Love,  
Such lot Heaven appointed thee;  
Never country stronglier strove  
For the Crown of Liberty.  
But thy mission rather seems  
This—to abide the Nation's thrall—  
And, when *they* have dreamt their dreams,  
*Then* to awake them all!  
[...]  
My last thoughts shall be of thee—  
My rejoicings, my regret;  
And even now I prophesy  
THY GRAND TRIUMPH YET! ('Still a Nation' 17-24, 29-32)

Mangan and Joyce thus, by their own self-conceptions, appear as bookends of a period during which the literary tradition of the Irish past has collapsed. Mangan sees its last remnants disappear and Joyce hopes to facilitate its return. Now alert to the extent to which such comments on Mangan may reveal Joyce's own feelings about Irish nationalism, let us mark Joyce's contention that 'Mangan, it must be remembered, wrote with no native literary tradition to guide him, and for a public

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<sup>10</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Mangan references are to line numbers of poems contained in *Selected Writings*.

which cared for the matters of the day, and for poetry only so far as it might illustrate these' (*OCPW* 56). This lacking 'native literary tradition' indicates not only Mangan's inability to find an existing literary community to belong to or learn from, but also the absence of folkloric hallmarks in Mangan's work, of any acknowledgement of the western Irish traditions that Lady Gregory or Yeats would later champion. Lloyd notes that Mangan is 'unique among early-nineteenth-century Irish poets in not seeking his resources in rural Ireland or in the historical traditions which the peasantry seemed to incarnate, [rather] he plays out his solitude urbanely' (195).

Certainly Joyce would find it notable that Mangan chose to live most of his life in Dublin (and as we will see in the next section, their affinity for cities is another aspect which differentiates their work from the rural settings of Yeats), yet we must not confuse the absence of explicit references to folkloric elements with lack of interest in the tradition itself, either on Mangan's or the early Joyce's part. Though Mangan wrote 'with no native literary tradition to guide him', Joyce somehow understands him to be nonetheless fixated on the past tradition which was dissipating before his eyes: 'And because this tradition has become an obsession for him, he has accepted it with all its failures and regrets which he would bequeath just as it is: the poet who hurls his anger against tyrants would establish upon the future an intimate and far more cruel tyranny' (*OCPW* 135). With these odd assumptions, Joyce seeks to explain the absence in Mangan's verses of the sort of material he should, by all accounts of his talent and his times, have cared about. There can be little doubt that Joyce projects some of his own feelings onto Mangan, and in so doing discovers for himself a fellow Irish writer whose relation to country seems akin to his own. Mangan respectfully watches the tradition laid to rest without, as it were, speaking as if it were still alive. Neither Joyce nor Mangan bemoans the end of the tradition; they do not resist its demise through an artificial continuation of its last, folkloric forms. Mangan,

in Joyce's estimation, does not draw upon the material in the derivative forms known to the folk of the nineteenth century—the superstitions and 'magical-sciences' (*OCPW* 74)—because, even while he eulogizes the tradition's essence, he recognizes that such matters are not relevant to his time. Whether their countrymen think so is another matter, but neither Mangan nor the early Joyce cares to deceive his own conscience in this way, so sensitive are they to the lost tradition and what its existence (or absence) means to their identities as Irish writers. At 'so dark an hour' Mangan reproves those who futilely struggle against the imminent eternal passing: 'Thus shall it be, and still in vain / Thou shalt essay to burst the thrall / Which binds, in fetters forged by fate, / The wreck and ruin of WHAT ONCE WAS GREAT!' ('To My Native Land' 46, 57-60). Accordingly, until he bears witness to the return of Irish tradition by composing *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce's beliefs do not allow him to foreground its material in his literature, no matter how popular the practice is among his peers:

During the revival, there were many temptations the realist had to resist. It was in defiance of contemporary Irish writers' interest in folklore, for example, that Joyce began his career with short stories that willfully orphaned themselves from folk parentage . . . Perhaps Joyce felt that many folk stories exhibited the imaginative incompleteness and senility of mind he identified in those collected by Lady Gregory in *Poets and Dreamers*, and therefore could not offer him an artistic model. Not that the young Joyce escaped the influence of folklore entirely . . . Still, folklore in *Dubliners* is thematic, not formal or structural.<sup>11</sup> (Foster 203)

As indignant as Joyce is at the prospect of joining the Irish literary revival himself, he may well have felt equal affront at Mangan's having been gradually

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<sup>11</sup> One can read 'The Dead' in particular without realizing just how many obscure references to old Irish tradition Joyce has placed in it. See Muldoon's *To Ireland, I*, which furthers John V. Kelleher's seminal article 'Irish History and Mythology in James Joyce's "The Dead"'. It is no accident that that so many such references appear in the short story that is Joyce's last, or that the story itself questions what is now living vs. what is dead. But however interesting it is to trace Miss Ivors's having 'a crow to pluck' with Gabriel to the crow as a symbol of 'Morrighu, or Morrigan, the bird of battle' (Muldoon 52), these hidden matters should not be overemphasized: their importance lies in their inability to reach the forefront of Joyce's story. As Kelleher himself writes, almost none of these things are 'primary to the story. It is all atmospherics' (433). The tradition has yet to be reawakened or foregrounded in Joyce's writing.

misappropriated as a proponent of the very nationalism they both attempted to elude.

As Lloyd explains,

Mangan has been represented as an early poet of nationalism and as a founding father, however flawed, of that cultural nationalism which from the 1830s to the present has sought to root Irish art in Irish soil. An attentive reading of the material, however, shows that this representation depends on the simplification of his writings or the obscuring of the specific characteristics that differentiate them from the texts and context to which they respond. (102)

Time and again Joyce distances Mangan from political intent, insisting that his forebear's poetry had a more spiritual concern:

From time to time he would leave this studious peace to contribute some song to the revolutionary journal, but he took little interest in the regular meetings of the party. He passed his nights alone. (*OCPW* 129)

Mangan always kept his poet's soul free from any blemish . . . refused to prostitute himself to the rabble or become a mouthpiece for politicians. He was one of those strange aberrant spirits who believe that the artistic life should be nothing other than the continuous and true revelation of the spiritual life; who believe that the inner life is of such worth as not to depend on any popular support. (*OCPW* 134-35)

It is worth investigating the extent to which Mangan again serves as a projection of Joyce himself as he attempts to relate to the soul of Ireland. In Joyce's reading, Mangan's supposed apolitical nature allowed him a close relation to his native imaginative tradition.

This is certainly not to say that Joyce and Mangan had no political beliefs, or that their works are not concerned with the political climate within which they were written. For all its ironic universalism, *Finnegans Wake*, by all its topical references to German fascism<sup>12</sup> and its ending timeline on page 628, is very much the product of an

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<sup>12</sup> Italian fascism is understated in *Finnegans Wake*, with Glasheen only finding one reference to Mussolini in the entire work. Perhaps Joyce decided to ignore this connection because he lived so long



author living in continental Europe from 1922 to 1939. The singularity with which the 1920s and 1930s are treated in Joyce's final work can be attributed, as Len Platt has explained, to their having 'formed the only reality for which [Joyce] could be held "responsible"' (147). This 'responsibility' involves documenting as interestingly as possible all eminent political opinions, but this obviously does not mean that Joyce sanctions or proscribes any of them, or expects to affect anyone's political opinion through his literature. While Enda Duffy describes *Ulysses* as a 'guerrilla' text fighting subversively against both British imperialism and Irish nationalism, we must admit that such a difficult novel was not conceived to effect political change, and that its meaning is not tied realistically to the Irish political landscape. Let us not forget that Joyce, for all his attentions to dates, made nothing of the fact that his new Irish epic was published in the same year that the Irish Free State was established.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, while Emer Nolan details Joyce's actual and literary reactions to Irish Nationalism, we must separate Joyce's opinions of his contemporaries and rivals from his actual concern with the roots of mythic tradition (which essentially strives to be as all-encompassing as possible), just as we must distinguish between an author's political opinions and the political opinions that can be inferred from his or her writing. After all, this is the same Joyce who contended that Ibsen was 'no more a feminist than I am an archbishop' (*JJ* 694), downplaying what became perhaps the most attractive feature of his favourite playwright.

Joyce always seems suspicious of the role of politics in literature, and also of the role of literature in politics. The nationalistic Irish literary movement sought to use

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in Italy himself, or perhaps he felt that Italian fascism simply was not as interesting or connotative as the German. When asked if he still liked Italy after Mussolini's rise, Joyce's response again emphasizes the spirits of nations as separate from any politics that have ever occurred within their borders: 'Naturally. Now as always. Italy is Italy. Not to like it because of Mussolini would be just as absurd as to hate England because of Henry the Eighth' (*JJ* 694).

<sup>13</sup> In Gorman's notes we read that when Joyce was asked why he did not welcome the prospect of an independent Ireland he replied, 'So that I might declare myself its first enemy?' (qtd. in *JJ* 399).

literature in a certain political way, to privilege certain features of the native folklore at the expense of others, to advertise a reversion to folkloric practices as cultural renewal, and to broadcast to the world ‘*This is Ireland.*’ Though Joyce includes the Irish literary revival and its nationalism as features within his literature, he did not want to be included, or confined in the movement himself. Soon after *Ulysses* was published Lady Gregory wrote Joyce to ask if he would allow a piece of his writing to be used in a book about the Irish literary movement that she was organizing. He bitterly refused (see *SL* 290).

What is significant about Joyce’s curious emphasis on Mangan’s work as apolitical, however, is what it says about Joyce’s relation (using Mangan as a gateway) to old Irish literary tradition and, by extension, to the ‘soul of Ireland’ itself. As Joyce attempts to trace the connection between himself and the tradition of his country, the falling away of politics is a by-product of the falling away of transience and individuality. As the previous section has detailed, it is the primal ‘I AM’-poet’s innermost connection to the nonhuman elements around him that allows him to revive and renew tradition. The ability (or inability) to be the poetic voice of tradition hinges upon the individual’s relation to place—Bloom must insist ‘I was born here’, Shem wants to forget his birthplace—no matter what the political climate of the day or in how many languages that voice may speak.

In another parallel with Joyce, Mangan knew many languages and much of his work, almost all that he published during his lifetime, takes the form of translations from Italian, Spanish, German, and ‘oriental’ languages. That these translations are infrequently faithful to the originals led D. J. O’Donoghue to call them ‘Oriental Versions and Perversions’, John Mitchel to term them ‘Apocrypha’, and Mangan himself to write that he had ‘perpetuated a great many literary sins, which . . . would appear to be “the antithesis of plagiarism”’ (‘Sketches...’ 28). On this point of

translation and sin, Joyce's creation of the Shem persona to transcribe the Letter of *Finnegans Wake* seems a reversal of Mangan's role. Living abroad, the character Shem is a hopeless plagiarist who cannot but transcribe a perfect copy of Irish tradition, whereas Mangan is an imperfect if not duplicitous reinterpreter for an Irish audience of material from foreign lands. Perhaps the greatest irony of all Mangan's translations, perfectly summarizing his 'sinful' effect, is found in a poem titled 'The Irish Language', attributed to a Gaelic poet from Kilkenny named Philip Fitzgibbon: 'The bright Golden Era that poets have sung / Shall revive, and be chaunted anew in our tongue' (41-42). The original poem foretells that the glory of the past will return in the same forms of old, accompanied by the same songs in the old language. Yet 'our tongue' for Mangan and his readership is not Irish but English, the language into which he spent much of his career freely 'translating' the poetry of other languages, just as he has translated, literally, 'The Irish Language'. Furthermore, though he twice tried to learn Gaelic, Mangan's understanding of it, like Joyce's, was rudimentary. In this way Lloyd argues that

Mangan eludes or critiques turn by turn the principles of originality, authenticity, and autonomy that ground the identity of the political subject and the representative man for nationalism specifically and for the democratic state generally. Playing out the role of the inauthentic in both writing and lifestyle, Mangan . . . always appears as masked. It is, moreover, made highly questionable that beneath the mask there lies some authentic identity: Mangan's technique is, rather, to multiply personae, masks, as he multiplies the texts on which his writings depend while simultaneously converting them into the 'secondary' texts of his own writing. (208)

To a more advanced degree these are also some of the defining techniques of Joyce's relation to Irish tradition. The 'role of the inauthentic' is delegated to Shem, the 'mask' scribe whose presence allows Joyce's own authorship to gain a deeper identification with his native country. Like Mangan's translations, *Finnegans Wake* also reinterprets sources that no revivalist would consider Irish; yet Joyce, in acts of

revitalization, reappropriates foreign materials into a mythological framework that must be considered Irish.

The external sources placed within *Finnegans Wake* all generally become Irish not so much because there are more references to Irish entities than to those of other nations, but simply because Joyce, like Bloom, was born there. If Joyce aspires to a function similar to that of an 'I AM'-poet, if he is to be a legitimate author of any tradition at all, then it must be of the Irish tradition, and he must then make an identification with Ireland; to proceed otherwise would be an act of 'forforgetting' denial. But just as *Finnegans Wake* for all its mixing of multiple languages possesses an inarguably English syntax (see Rieke 13 or Reynolds 202), so too is the flavour of its mythology more Irish than anything else. In no way, however, do these aspects hinder the work's expansive, democratic philosophy or brand the work as nationalistic: they simply constitute the acknowledgement that James Joyce was raised in Ireland under the English language. Further, however much readymade, traditional material—Irish or otherwise—is put into *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce's construction no more renounces his inalterable individuality than it does deny his Irishness.

Joyce's identification with Mangan seems built on a literary appreciation for the spirit of Ireland that is, at root, apolitical. In contrast to the revivalists, neither Mangan nor Joyce will pay lip-service to the persistent folklore of the day in order to effect changes in the nation's dilettante reading or theatre-going habits; their concern, if more abstract, runs deeper. Despite his reproach that the revivalists work 'in vain', Mangan gives no more definite a prescription to the Irish than 'shake off thy dreams!', which does not urge any active or activist reawakening of ancient tradition for the nineteenth century, but rather attempts to wake his countrymen to the fact that their tradition is dead. The continued inability of those in the early twentieth

century to admit this death signifies the great difference between Joyce's eventual program and the goal of the Irish literary revival. Through *Finnegans Wake* Joyce would effect a great return of lost tradition, which if it is to *return* must first be understood as *gone*. Joyce's contemporaries, on the other hand, operate under contradictions. They seek to 'revive' that which they refuse to believe has ever died, advocate for the future a retreat into the past, and inadvertently disrespect that which is eternal and (in Mangan's words) 'forged by fate' by assuming it could be reborn through secular re-enactments of its final, folkloric stages.

Throughout his career Joyce had varying reasons for insisting upon this antecedent demise of Irish myth. When he was young the deterioration of the folklore tradition gave him reason to suppose that he would be able to fashion a new conscience for Ireland out of his own. As he grew older he recognized the service that his talent could provide if he were to cease resisting the tradition with his individuality and instead posit his individuality in line with that national heritage, as its latest scribe. Ellmann contends that around the time of his second 'Mangan' essay 'Joyce clearly dissociated his own personality from Mangan's fainting rhythms', that 'Mangan no longer seemed to him a great poet' (*JJ* 259). We would overlook, however, an important aspect of his development by not recognizing this as evidence of Joyce no longer needing the assurance of a great Irish precursor. It was in these same 'fainting rhymes' of Mangan's that Joyce once heard the voice of an entire Irish tradition speaking through an individual author. By 1907, however, the pivotal year in which he transforms *Stephen Hero* into *Portrait* and firmly dissociates himself from Stephen Dedalus, Joyce begins to trust his own Irish traditional authorship.

As can be seen, the transient elements of politics—active calls for social reforms or real world changes—play little role in the personal communion between author and native tradition. In his rejection of the Irish literary movement Joyce is

indignant that a public entity would seek to define the aspirations of Irish literature in terms of its lowest common denominator: the folklore which played no great role in Joyce's upbringing yet whose superstitions are so *en vogue* that, in the name of progress, they threaten to be made a social institution. His interpretation and use of Mangan are testament to how the innermost essence of Joyce's art is not political but imaginative, mythical and traditional, even while politics and all other transient matters—characters arguing with each other insightfully, words provoking topical connotations—play themselves out on its textual surface, rising and falling like the transient cultures upon the impersonal body of the Irish land itself.

### 3. FASCISM, INVASION, AND YEATS'S LITERARY REVIVAL

This final section will contrast the type of mythic return performed by Joyce in *Finnegans Wake* with the sorts favoured by other Irish authors of his time, especially W. B. Yeats. No one would argue with the fact that Yeats had an overall positive influence on Joyce. Upon Yeats's death Joyce is said to have 'conceded to a friend that Yeats was a greater writer than he, a tribute he paid to no other contemporary' (*JJ* 660n). From his early work, which draws heavily on Irish folklore and mythology, Yeats provided Joyce with 'a substantial introduction to the main lines of Irish tradition' (Tymoczko 226). The occult formulations of *A Vision* also clearly influenced *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Particularly relevant is Yeats's imagery of gyres and 'Returns': 'Each age unwinds the thread another age had wound' (*A Critical Edition of Yeats's A Vision* (1925) 183). Yeats also concludes the work by extolling beliefs similar to the ones upon which *Finnegans Wake* is founded: 'We can believe that every school child possesses in some degree all natural faculty displayed by even the greatest man, for every such child can, if it will, understand some few lines of Milton or Shakespeare. That we may believe that all men possess the supernatural faculties I would restore to the philosopher his mythology' (252).

Yeats and the Irish literary revivalists, however, in their advocacy for a narrowly defined Irish 'race', sometimes bend toward a sort of fascism. By contrast, Joyce's final work utterly lampoons fascism, not by curtly dismissing it but by showcasing fascist elements as ridiculous, using them for all they are worth in order to make as much fun of fascism as possible. This is accomplished not only through derogatory punning but also by attributing eugenic ideals to the persona of Shaun ('the most purely human being that ever was called man' (*FW* 431.11)), only to then undermine them repeatedly. This technique can be understood as an outright rejection of fascism, but it is also the playing out of another wrongheaded relationship to country. As we saw at the start of this chapter, again and again Joyce uses his characters to investigate various systems of personal relation to Ireland. While Stephen and Shem dissipate their artistic potential by resentfully opposing Ireland, Bloom's inability to state his identity denotes a consciousness entangled by others' prejudices and all-too-modern concerns. Lastly, Shaun and all who fit his type are shown to be in error when they insist upon that most limited understanding of tradition, the ancestral connection through a bloodline that *Finnegans Wake* exposes as never having been pure in the first place.

Joyce's 'book of breedings' (*FW* 410.1-2) both recognizes that the history of Ireland is a history of invasions and (re)creates that tradition by doing what that tradition has always done: remix itself with others and expand outward, though nationalists would rather it retreated inward. As has been noted, *Finnegans Wake* (like Mangan's oeuvre, though on a larger scale) 'invades' other cultures and converts their literatures into its own secondary texts. The work's philosophy, however, is both indiscriminate and respectful in its appropriations: it takes whatever material is relevant, useful, or interesting from any foreign tradition, yet leaves all the source materials' respective national identities intact. Foreign words, names, and places

appear throughout, retaining their *foreignness* to Ireland though they are now included within the text of Irish tradition. In this way Joyce's native tradition returns revitalized by all it has learned while living abroad. Moreover, it is in the work's service to cite the foreign cultures from which it takes much of its material, for this underscores Western literature and culture in general have benefited from the 'fornicolopulation' (*FW* 557.17) that has been going on for millennia.

### **A. *Finnegans Wake*: Not a Piece of Political Activism**

Before laying out the facets of Yeats's work that contrast with Joyce's markedly anti-totalitarian creation, we should mark once again how *Finnegans Wake* remains essentially apolitical in its continuance of Irish tradition. It does not take sides in turbulent conflicts, sustaining an inclusionary spirit.<sup>15</sup> What I mean by *apolitical* could, admittedly, be understood as a politics of freedom which openly suggests various political viewpoints, has an interest in them, and expounds upon them all without subscribing to any one of them. *Finnegans Wake* is anti-fascist in that it lampoons fascism, but in no sense does Joyce consider it possible to remove fascism from the world through literary means. Indeed, by conglomerating German fascism with Aryan-leaning Irish nationalism, Joyce suggests that these elements have always been and will always be in the world. Rather than simply reprove these things straightaway, Joyce decides to make as much (fun) of them as he can, just as he does with many other topics. This is not indifference to fascism, but it is not activism against fascism either. *Finnegans Wake* would probably be the least practical place

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<sup>15</sup> While Platt, on the other hand, writes that 'it is difficult to see how Joyce can hold any serious status as a radical writer, politically engaged with his society and culture, if he ignores or is "indifferent" to fascism' (147), it seems that Joyce's unique radicalism consists not so much of his opposition to totalitarianism—hardly a 'radical' belief—but rather of his orchestration of life and literature. Even today this forces critics to argue for his not having been totally 'indifferent' to a war which he obviously, selfishly, and self-consciously could not help but resent for its having distracted people from reading *Finnegans Wake*.



imaginable in which to make realistic exhortations against fascism.

To be both *Irish* and restrictively *political* would almost necessitate the work's philosophy creeping toward nationalism, which in turn, could potentially be interpreted by others as creeping toward fascism, especially given the dates of composition for which Joyce was 'held "responsible"' (Platt 147). Paired with its project of mythic return, any political intent at all would seem to advocate a *returning to* a supposedly 'purer' Irish past, which Joyce neither believed in nor would want to institute. This return of ancient tradition is not a conquest of contemporary reality, nor is it marked by any forced submission of the modern consciousness. Rather Joyce gives an offer to all people (regardless of race, nationality, or political beliefs) to allow them access to an altered, mythic-laden view of reality. This proposal of *Finnegans Wake* integrates modern and ancient, contemporary and mythic, stimulating a Viconian sense of childlike wonder. Joyce's last work of literature recreates all history as framed by the Irish tradition which his birthplace demands that he write within, yet the foreign elements—qua foreign—do not contribute to any favouritism of the Irish framework as the politics of the Irish literary revival would have prescribed. Joyce, for his part, negotiates his text away from political allegiances, nationalistic or otherwise, even those he agrees with personally. Joyce rejected Jacques Mercanton's offer to publish in his journal *Mass und Werk* simply because, Ellmann tells us, 'Thomas Mann had stated his anti-Nazi position there in 1937' (*JJ* 709). Even that tenuous connection was too much for Joyce to risk.

The common understanding is that Joyce did not want *Finnegans Wake* to be banned for political bias: for all its topical allusions and mockery of fascism, Joyce evidently did not feel the work should suggest any strident political advocacy. The danger was in letting any outside, real-world political beliefs be ascribed to the book. This apolitical aspect of *Finnegans Wake* allows for maximum openness, for potential

*consumption of and by* as many cultures and belief systems as possible without political interference. In no way does this suggest even a hint of *tolerance* of or *indifference* to fascism on Joyce's part. In 1938 he helped sixteen Jews escape from Germany to Ireland and America (*JJ* 709)—surely this is evidence enough that he was realistically opposed to the Nazis, and thus his reputation needs no rescuing through the interpretations of literary texts.

### ***B. Aryan and Greek Connections in the Irish Literary Movement***

Since the later nineteenth century, there was a general Irish literary movement especially susceptible to the sort of eugenics that Germany would become notorious for in first half of the twentieth century. Joyce's careful development with *Finnegans Wake*—toward the renewal of Irish tradition, informed by other cultures of which it makes no conquest—must be understood as opposing this movement. Perhaps the clearest starting point for this Irish intertwining of Aryanism, nationalism and literature is Standish O'Grady's claim, in the first volume of his *History of Ireland: The Heroic Period* (1878), that 'In the times of which Homer sung, the Greek nobles had yellow hair and blue eyes. At the time when the heroic literature of Ireland was composed, the Irish nobles had yellow hair and blue eyes' (18).

From here it is easy to see how the Irish literary revival would have seized upon this proposed similarity between ancient Greek and ancient Irish cultures. More than a hundred years earlier, with James Macpherson and his *Ossian*, those seeking to legitimize their personal literary furthering of Irish tradition had known the value of linking local tradition back to the Greeks. Fiona Stafford notes that Macpherson 'share[d] his patrons' hopes that the early poetry of Scotland should have resembled

that of Homeric Greece, surviving along with the ancient Gaelic language, as a result of the local geography' (xv), and the first version of Macpherson's *Fingal* included verses that were made to parallel some of Homer's (Gaskill xxiv). Furthermore, long before *Ulysses*, a popular theory suggested that Ireland was in fact discovered by the ancient Greeks. These tendencies toward ancient Greek derivation, however farfetched, were seized by the later Irish literary movement. Yeats in particular used the attractive ancient Greek parallel to advocate tracing the Celtic heritage back into rural Ireland. In *The Celtic Twilight* of 1893 he reports that 'These poor countrymen and countrywomen in their beliefs, and in their emotions, are many years nearer to that old Greek world, that set beauty beside the fountain of things, than are our men of learning' (*Mythologies* 18).

Throughout his career, Joyce frequently undercut this privileging of ancient Greece, especially in terms of its originality as compared with Ireland, by suggesting that the Greeks derived their culture, at least in part, from the Phoenicians. This is most apparent in Joyce's employment of Victor Bérard's *Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssee* (1903), which argues that the *Odyssey* is the transposition of a Phoenician log-book into Greek verse. Gilbert in his authorized study of *Ulysses* made sure to provide numerous quotations from Bérard. Many of these disaffirm not only the primacy of Greekness but, more importantly, the very notion of simple and traceable origins in epic poetry, which Gilbert characterizes as not having been imaginatively *created* but rather *(re)arranged* from the readymade materials of many cultures. Again, we must bear in mind that it was the man currently writing *Finnegans Wake* who advised Gilbert to stress these ideas:

'It was on the Asia Minor coast,' M. Bérard remarks, 'where members of different races found themselves in close contact and whither merchant-adventurers from overseas imported the idioms of their countries, that such a fusion of dialects would most naturally take place. I can see no other part of

the Greek world where such a mixed tongue, triumphing over the opposition of local purists, would succeed in making its way and establishing itself.' (Gilbert 78)

'In the Odyssey imagination and fantasy play but a small part. Arrangement and logic were the poet's part in the work; he borrows his themes but shapes them in the Greek manner, endowing them with an anthropomorphic life; above all, he is at the greatest pains to compose and weld together his information in such a manner as to create a uniform whole. The Hellene is, first and foremost, a skilled arranger. . . . The poet invents nothing. He utilizes the facts given in the "log". . . . The poem is obviously the work of a Hellene, while the "log" is clearly the record of a Semitic traveler. The poet—Homer, if you will—was a Greek; the seafarer—Ulysses, as we know him—was Phoenician.' (Gilbert 81-82)

Bérard was not the only author from whom Joyce learned an ancient origin story having to do with the Phoenicians. Earlier on he knew of and cited Charles Vallancey, an English soldier arriving in Ireland in 1762, who theorized that the Irish language derived from the Phoenician. In Joyce's words:

This [Irish] language is eastern in origin and has been identified by many philologists with the ancient language of the Phoenicians, the discoverers, according to historians, of commerce and navigation. With their monopoly over the sea, this adventurous people established a civilization in Ireland which was in decline and had almost disappeared before the first Greek historian took up his quill. (*OCPW* 110)

Thus in 1907 Joyce, while implying an undue well-foundedness in Vallancey's 'wonderfully wacky' theory (Muldoon 124), traces the roots of Irish culture back to the Phoenicians, at the expense of the supposed primacy of ancient Greece.

In his final work, however, there are no simple ancestral lineages, especially not in the case of Irish heritage; the portmanteau words themselves express a multiplicity of origins and cultures, and Phoenicia becomes but one source of many. The 'Phenician rover' (197.31) in *Finnegans Wake* indicates both Ulysses and HCE. The latter personage is also 'from Phenicia or Little Asia' (68.29)—with the elision of an *o* to emphasize that he has been hatched from a *hen*, and with the 'recurrence'

theme of a *phoenix* rising again from the ashes. HCE's Phoenician origins are further founded, Campbell and Robinson note,

on two lines of mythological tradition. First: In the Irish cycles the races invading Ireland are represented as having sailed from the lands about Thrace and Phrygia. Second: In the Germanic cycles Woden (with whom HCE is identified) is fabled to have come overland to Scandinavia from Troy. From Scandinavia, then, he descended with the Vikings upon Ireland. (77n)

The mature Joyce's employment of Phoenicia expresses the multiplicity and indefiniteness of all cultural origins. This does not amount, however, to the simple addendum that Ireland may owe more than we thought to the Phoenicians because they were behind even the Greeks, for we cannot suppose Phoenicia to have been the sole source of Greek culture, much less of Ireland. Moreover, we must suppose that multiple cultural sources are behind even Phoenicia, which receives extra attention in *Finnegans Wake*, not because it is any sort of ultimate origination point or definitive cultural model, but because its name can be felicitously conjoined with *phoenix* (and, by extension, Dublin's Phoenix Park), thereby suggesting that relational multiplicity will expand indefinitely into the future.

Since Joyce always understood Irish culture to be the partial product of multiple foreign influences, there is every reason for its revitalization and continuance to entail the influx of other cultures and their literatures. Unlike many Irish revivalists, Joyce never assumes that any favourite snapshot of Irish history, any particular linguistic or racial balance, represents the 'true' Ireland. Nor does Joyce conceive of any possible influences whose very nature would bar them from inclusion within Irish literature: again, *Finnegans Wake* appropriates any material that it finds worthwhile, no matter its place of origin.

### ***C. Yeats on the Irish Tradition's Outside Relations***

Yeats prescribes a wary investigation of other national literatures for Irish writers. Just as revivalists focused on Ireland's connections to ancient Greece at the expense of its connections to other cultures less highly regarded (the Phoenicians, the Vikings, the Danes), Yeats would have Irish writers study only the most highly canonical foreign authors, incorporating lessons from them sparingly into an Irish mould. As John Frayne notes, Yeats 'thought that Irish writing should be the product of as intense a national or local feeling as possible, but that only a study of great works of literature by foreigners such as Homer and Balzac could save the Irish writers of his own time from becoming locally revered mediocrities' (267). Even with the unstated assumption that Irish creativity within its own borders simply lacks the necessary genius to compete on the world stage, Yeats is not content to let Irish authors naturally partake of whatever foreign sources would influence them, to whatever degree of influence they are inclined. In 1893's 'Nationality and Literature' he cautions, '[W]e must not imitate the writers of any other country, [but] we must study them constantly and learn from them the secret of their greatness' (*Uncollected I* 274)—almost as if the Irish had no greatness of their own, or that Irish greatness was inadequate or ineffable.

Despite his call not to 'imitate' foreigners, however, Yeats's descriptions of worthy Irish authors are sometimes given in those very terms, effectively placing his own countrymen in foreign moulds. For example, as he says of the poet Carleton, 'In future times men will recognise that he was at his best [...] the peasant Chaucer of a new tradition' (*Uncollected I* 364). Similarly, while explaining his artistic project to Joyce in 1902, Yeats says, 'When the idea which comes from individual life marries the image that is born from the people, one gets great art, the art of Homer, and of Shakespeare, and of Chartres Cathedral' (qtd. in *JJ* 103). For all his emphasis on

seeking resources in Irish folklore, Yeats evidently believes that heretofore no ‘great art’ has been produced by the Irish, which makes one question the reasoning for an Irish literary ‘revival’ in the first place. As Lloyd notes, ‘simple ignorance of Gaelic tradition’—even on the part of the Irish themselves—‘permitted the assumption . . . that that tradition could not itself constitute a national literature, that it was too primitive and unsophisticated to do so’ (73). Joyce, however, never seems to have underrated ancient Irish tradition in this respect, not even when he was young. Though he leaves for the continent, his characterization of the Irish cultural aspiration opposes Yeats’s in almost every respect: ‘not so much a desire of a young nation wishing to link itself to Europe’s concert, but the desire by an ancient nation to *renew in a modern form* the glories of a past civilization’ (my italics; *OCPW* 111).

Hardly a decade after O’Grady’s 1889 claim for ancient Greek and Irish racial similarity (‘yellow hair and blue eyes’), Yeats in his poem ‘Anashuya and Vijaya’ describes an Eastern ‘Golden Age’ clearly influenced by Aryan origin-myths (*Collected* 10). However tenuous or purely imaginative these connections between Irish tradition and Aryanism might have been, they evidently held such weight that by 1904 Lady Gregory in *Gods and Fighting Men* goes out of her way to dispel what she considers the ‘improbable’ notion of William Larminie’s, ‘that all [Irish] folk-tales are Aryan’ (465). Thus when Joyce mixes Irish and Aryan connotations—as he does with ‘Eirensians’ (*FW* 25.17), the ‘Arioun’ race (75.2), and ‘Eryan isles’ (580.34), among many others—he has *Finnegans Wake* mock not only the German fascism of the time but also certain facets of the Irish literary revival movement that he would have been aware of from his youth. The transformation of *Eireann* into *Aryan* is fraught with *error*. Rather than a prospect to hope for and celebrate, as it is for Yeats, Joyce treats any ‘Golden Age’ by name with bemused scepticism at best and, at worse, trepidation. *Finnegans Wake* speaks of ‘the golden age’ that ‘return[s] with its

vengeance', as prophesied by the Letter of the Hen, who 'has a heart of Arin' (112.18-19, 33). Thus at both the beginning and end of his literary career Joyce contended with Irish tradition as it related to Aryanism. While early on he steered clear of his native literary movement which at times implicated itself with Aryan ideals, later on he mockingly identifies *Eire* with *Arya* in a book which he did his best to remove from any serious outside political implication (as evidenced above by the *Mass und Werk* incident).

Not only did Irish revivalism sometimes entwine with Aryanism, it could also assume a Celtic fascism of its own. 'Celt' was originally the Greek *keltoi*. Michael Chapman notes, in *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth*, that the word was used to indicate any 'non-Greek speaking uncivilised barbarian in the north and west' (3). Though this definition deals only with linguistics (not with any other cultural or biological factors), after nearly disappearing for hundreds of years the term re-emerged in the eighteenth century as a self-affirming 'racial' identity (ibid.). Thus some Irish nationalists ironically connected their heritage both to the ancient Greeks and to the very word used by those Greeks to dissociate themselves from the Irish. Further, in 1894 Douglas Hyde put forth that the Gaelic language should proliferate in Ireland at the expense of English: 'Why should we wish to make Ireland more Celtic than it is—why should we de-Anglicise it at all? [Because] our Gaelic past . . . is really at the bottom of the Irish heart' ('Necessity...' 121).

Yeats rejects this project of Hyde's, not so much out of aversion to personal dictations about the meanings and limits of the 'Irish heart', but simply because it conflicts with his own project of furthering an Irish literary tradition written in English. Writing in English and imitating foreign authors pose no problem for Yeats, because in his view the Irish identity would still shine through nonetheless. He writes, 'It should be easy for us, who have *that wild Celtic blood*, the most un-English of all



things under heaven, to make such a literature' (my italics; *Uncollected* I 256). In this we again notice Yeats's privileging of the rural over the urban. Along with many of his literary countrymen at the time, he equates tracing Irishness back to its source with retreating from the city. As Foster puts it: 'It was important to many revivalists to think of the peasant in closer touch with spiritkind than is the rest of humanity' (209). Joyce's art, on the other hand (much like Mangan's), thrives upon the city both for its setting and place of composition.

Their differing outlooks were brought into conflict when Joyce met with Yeats in late 1902, reproving him for his dual-focus of politics and folklore. As Yeats recounts, Joyce 'began to explain all his objections to everything I had ever done. Why had I concerned myself with politics, with folklore [...]?' These things were all the sign of the cooling of the iron, of the fading out of inspiration' (qtd. in Ellmann, *Identity of Yeats* 87-88). Yeats in effect then dismissed any undue political angle on his part since, in his words, the '[f]olk imagination' by its very nature 'creates endless images of which there are *no* ideas' (my italics; *ibid.*). Years later Yeats indeed admitted that political concerns 'dominated' the Irish literary revival (*Uncollected* II 455), but in 1902 he simply believed that the younger writer misunderstood him, believing that Joyce's heightened individualism was a harmful product of urbanization:

In the towns, especially in big towns . . . you don't find what old writers used to call the people; you find instead a few highly cultivated, highly perfected individual lives . . . In the country, on the other hand, I mean in Ireland and in places where the towns have not been able to call the tune, you find people who are hardly individualized to any great extent. . . . Everything seems possible to them, and because they can never be surprised, they imagine the most surprising things. The folk life, the country life, is nature with her abundance, but the art life, the town life, is the spirit which is sterile when it is not married to nature. The whole ugliness of the modern world has come from the spread of the towns and their ways of thought, and to bring back beauty we must marry the spirit and nature again. (Qtd. in Ellmann, *Identity of Yeats* 87-88)

Once more we see a characterization of the Irish folk ('they can never be surprised') that runs contrary to the Victorian description of those primal people who possess useful and creative ignorance ('amazed by everything').

It is plain that Joyce, unlike Yeats, was more accepting of modernity and felt welcome to use not only its languages but also its settings and innovations. Yeats's rhetoric appeals to narrow blood definitions which, just as 'Celt' was used by the ancient Greeks, do more to exclude others than to encourage a productive cultural environment. For Joyce, on the other hand, while personal place of origin is important—'I was born (t)here' is what makes Joyce an Irish writer—blood origin is not, and appeals to blood purity, let alone to any privilege based on that purity, are laughable. As he wrote in 1907:

Recently, an Irish deputy, while haranguing his electorate on the eve of an election, boasted that he was of the ancient race, and upbraided his opponent for being a descendant of a Cromwellian settler. This caused general amusement in the press because it is true to say that, in the present nation, it would be impossible to exclude all those who are descended from foreign families. To deny the name of patriot to all those not of Irish stock would be to deny it to almost all the heroes of the modern movement [including] Parnell, perhaps the most formidable man to ever lead the Irish but in whose veins not a single drop of Celtic blood ran. (*OCPW* 115)

This Irish deputy evidently did not realize how few potential voters could have related to an identity so racially 'pure'. A similar lack of consideration is present in the appeals of Yeats and others for a literary tradition established by the lineage of 'that wild Celtic blood', which supposedly ran back from the cities and towns into the Irish countryside—as if that was its ultimate source, as if the folk were not the descendants of ancient invaders from other lands. Confusingly, Corkery also writes of how creative 'inbreeding', 'a disease most incident to academies', caused traditional 'poets' flock of ideas . . . to suffer' during the fall of the bardic schools; yet later he

opines the beautiful ‘homogeneity of the Gaelic world’, which was ideally ‘self-contained’ (82, 120). Corkery never makes the obvious link, that the influx of different races and the documentation of those invasions went hand in hand with poetical expansion and innovation.

#### **D. Joyce’s *Multiracial Literary Democracy***

More so than his contemporaries, Joyce’s understanding of Irish tradition significantly spotlights *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*—*The Book of Invasions* or, literally, *The Book of the Taking of Ireland*. Rather than postulating any *ab origine* Irish cultural identity for the present to aspire crudely and hopelessly back toward, Joyce stays faithful to Irish tradition not by fighting off any ‘foreign’ influence but by marking how, in large part, this very history of invasion *is* what has always been worth preserving in Irish literature. His own work will continue to explain the history of turbulent invasions while simultaneously infusing the tradition with new material and new invasions of all sorts, most apparently with linguistic innovation in the retelling:

Formoreans have brittled the tooath of the Danes and the Oxman has been pestered by the Firebugs and the Joynts have thrown up jerrybuilding to the Kevanses and Little on the Green is childsfather to the City [...] these paxsealing buttonholes have quadrilled across the centuries and whiff now whafft to us, fresh and made-of-all-smiles as, on the eve of Killallwho. (*FW* 15.5-11)

Even before *Finnegans Wake*, however, the three major characters of *Ulysses* formed an interface of ‘foreign’ identities based, Tymoczko notes, ‘on the mythic structures of *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*’ (24). The last name Dedalus suggests ancient Greece, Bloom is half-Jewish, and Molly is from Spain, the land from where the Milesians sailed. The ‘cultural alienation’ of these three figures ‘mirrors the heritage of all the island’s inhabitants as descendants of invaders: to be Irish is to be an

immigrant' (Tymoczko 35). It is clear that these characters themselves are not aware of just how emblematic of Ireland they are, by virtue of the very 'impurities' of their national identities. It is no accident, then, that when Joyce's career progresses to engage directly with ancient Irish literary tradition he calls upon the Fenian Cycle, whose attitude is largely democratic and thus receptive to the infusions, expansions, and innovations, racial and creative, which *Finnegans Wake* evokes.

By contrast, Yeats's representation of Irish mythology privileges the Ulster Cycle, which somewhat contradicts his expressed concern with ruralism. As Larminie writes in 1898, the Fenian Cycle (the stories of Fionn mac Cumhaill and his Fianna, which *Finnegans Wake* is partially based on) existed earlier, was more popular, and persisted amongst the rural folk after the Aryans invaded and held sway in the towns:

The wider prevalence . . . of the Fionn Saga would indicate that it belonged to an early race occupying both Ireland and Scotland. Then entered the Aryan Gael, and for him, henceforth, as the ruler of the island, his own gods and heroes were sung by his own bards. His legends became the subject of what I may call the court poetry, the aristocratic literature. . . . Its essentially aristocratic character is shown by the fact that the people have all but forgotten it if they ever knew it. But the Fenian cycle has not been forgotten. Prevailing everywhere, still cherished by the conquered peoples, it held its ground in Scotland and Ireland alike . . . (xxi-xxii)

Nonetheless, both Yeats and Larminie clearly favour the more impressive tales of heroes, preferring to identify more with their creators, the imperial Aryan Gaels, than with the Irish folk suppressed by them. Larminie continues:

That [the Fenian Cycle] did not deserve this wider popularity is evident enough. Interesting though it be, it is not equal in interest to the heroic cycle. The tales of the latter, though fewer in number, less bulky in amount, have upon them the impress of the larger constructive sweep of the Aryan imagination. Their characters are nobler; the events are more significant. They form a much more closely compacted epic whole. The Fenian tales, in some respects more picturesque, are less organised. It would be difficult to construct out of them a coherent epic plot; . . . they have far more numerous, more extended, more intimate connections with the folk-tale.

The Fenian cycle, in a word, is non-Aryan folk literature . . . (xxii-xxiii).

We cannot help but notice how *Finnegans Wake* vigorously utilizes this ‘less organised’ form and lack of ‘coherent epic plot’ in the Fenian Cycle. Moreover, whereas blond hair was the Aryan ideal, Joyce recognizes the irony of how the name of this *non*-Aryan material actually signifies *fair-haired, bright, or shining*: Finn himself received his name due to his prematurely white hair. The Reeses note that the distinctive feature of the Fenian Cycle (‘the tales of the ordinary people’ (124)) is the ‘camaraderie’ of the Fianna, ‘the intense pleasure found in a life shared with members of one’s own special group . . . in marked contrast with the harsh individualism and clamorous rivalry which characterizes so many of the Ulster stories’ (63). Though the Fianna may have gotten their name from *Féni*, ‘Irish people’ or ‘the body of commoners as distinct from ruling classes’ (Rees 62). Furthermore, they were not only a band of warriors but they were also poets, as the *Silva Gadelica* tells us: ‘[N]ot a man was taken until he were a prime poet versed in the twelve books of poesy’ (99).

In contrast to Finn MacCool, the captain of a troop whose members he consults and shares the spotlight with, the leader of the Ulster Cycle is Cuchulain, the single, near-invincible champion who commands no army but alone kills armies of men in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, called ‘the greatest of all these epics’ by Yeats (*Uncollected* I 163). Mahaffey writes that ‘Joyce’s decision to base the male protagonist, HCE, on the legendary figure of Finn MacCool is partly a reaction to Yeats’s lifelong fascination with Cuchulain’ (*States* 180). Cuchulain is aligned with much of the material that Joyce’s relation to Irish tradition opposes, even while it is included within his own texts as a counterpoint. In the ‘Cyclops’ episode of *Ulysses*, for instance, the narrator includes a list of ‘many Irish heroes and heroines of

antiquity', many of them bogus<sup>16</sup>, in which 'Cuchulin' is the first entry (12.176). Philip L. Marcus has linked Joyce's use of Cuchulain not only with the 'gigantism' theme of the chapter but also with Joyce's opposition to the scholarship of O'Grady, the purveyor of the Aryan bent in the Irish literary revival:

Joyce has intimated the parodic tenor of the list by his opening reference to Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn was, in the first place, the main subject of O'Grady's romantic giganticizing: he was for O'Grady 'the noblest character' in all literature . . . However, in order to idealize his subject he found it necessary to omit certain elements in his sources, particularly Cú's superhuman features; he tried to make him seem more heroic by subjecting him to human limitations. The most remarkable of those features was Cú's strange ability to inflate himself from his rather small actual stature to giant proportions . . . [Joyce's] allusion to Cú Chulainn could thus simultaneously suggest true and artificial heroism, inflation and deflation; its associations make it represent in miniature the mode of the passage and of the 'Cyclops' episode as a whole. (300-1)

Overlooked by Marcus is the fact that one of Cuchulain's typical bodily distortions quite literally transforms him into a Cyclops: 'For it was usual with him that when his hero's flame sprang forth his feet would turn to the back and his hams turn to the front and the round muscles of his calves would come on to his shins, while *one eye sank into his head and the other protruded*' (my italics; *Táin Bó Cúailnge* 171). The violence associated with Cuchulain and the Cyclops is obviously rejected by Joyce, who instead chooses Leopold Bloom and later Finn as his imperfect champions. The opposition of the Fenian Cycle itself to the Cyclops is shown in the following variant myth, retold by Lady Wilde, of how Finn received his prophetic powers:

It happened one time when he was quite a youth that he was taken prisoner by a one-eyed giant, who at first was going to kill him, but then he changed his mind and sent him to the kitchen to mind the dinner. Now there was a great and splendid salmon broiling on the fire, and the giant said—

'Watch that salmon till it is done; but if a single blister rise on the skin you shall be killed.'

Then the giant threw himself down to sleep while waiting for the dinner.

So Fionn watched the salmon with all his eyes, but to his horror saw a

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<sup>16</sup> For instance, 'Captain Boycott, Dante Alighieri, Christopher Columbus' (*U* 12.182-83).

blister rising on the beautiful silver skin of the fish, and in his fright and eagerness he pressed his thumb down on it to flatten it; then the pain of the burn being great, he clapped the thumb into his mouth and kept it there to suck out the fire. When he drew it back, however, he found, to his surprise that he had a knowledge of all that was going to happen to him, and a clear sense of what he ought to do. And it came into his mind that if he put out the giant's eye with an iron rod heated in the fire, he could escape from the monster. So he heated the rod, and while the giant slept he plunged it into his eye, and before the horrid being recovered from the shock, Fionn escaped, and was soon back safe amongst his own people, the Fenian knights; and ever after in moments of great peril and doubt, when he put his thumb into his mouth and sucked it, the vision of the future came on him, and he could foresee clearly whatever danger lay in his path, and how to avoid it. (85-86)

Though much is made of salmon and prophecy in *Finnegans Wake*, it is a shame that Joyce's work seems not to have incorporated this version of the tale, with its wealth of connotations which would parallel Finn with Odysseus (and Bloom).

As noted in the opening of this section, the Shaun persona contains many of the racist features we have listed, all counterpoints to Joyce's more expansive processing of Irish tradition: Aryanism, fascism, eugenicism, narrow blood definitions of 'race', the import of Cuchulain and with him some of Yeats as well. Rather than repressing any of this material or their disagreeable notions, *Finnegans Wake* includes them—even though *they* very likely would not include Joyce's text, were they in charge of Irish tradition—consistently presenting them comically. Racial purity is treated as the absurd fiction that Joyce understands it to be, especially in the case of Shaun, whose 'opinions, properly spewing', entail 'impulsory irelitz' (*FW* 421.26-27), who would 'punch to Gaelicise it' (514.33), the 'eirest race, the ourest nation, the airest place that erstellunged' (514.36-515.1). As Platt writes, Shaun is 'certainly in his own mind, the modern Cuchulain figure foreseen by Yeats (see 455.33 where Shaun, like Chuchulain, is made to eat a griddle)' (63).

Even more so than in *Ulysses*, the core personas of *Finnegans Wake* are extremely racially mixed. Above we have noted connotations that make HCE seem

Anglo-Saxon, Greek, Phoenician, and Scandinavian, to name a few; but he is also the 'Armenian Atrocity' (FW 72.11) and 'Ruddy blond, Armenian' (559.24-25). ALP is the Russian 'Annushka Lutetiavitch Pufflovah' (207.8-9), the English Anne Hathaway (see 623.34 for one instance of many), and an Egyptian with a 'Nubian shine' (559.28)—while Issy is at one point 'Nubilina' (304.19). Shem, as we would expect since he is typically railed against by Shaun, is a 'pure blood Jebusite' (240.28) and a 'nigger bloke' (177.4), yet also the Trojan/Roman 'pious Eneas' (185.27) and the Danish 'camelot prince of dinmrk' (143.7). These lists are by no means complete, and what is more this entire 'confusioning of human races' (35.5) always possesses an underlying Irishness. To Shaun's disappointment, however, the Irish aspect, necessitated by Joyce's own birthplace if he is to be a legitimate author of continuing tradition, does not eradicate the foreignness of foreign elements. Under Bérard's theory Odysseus was Phoenician but became Greek because Homer is Greek; under Joyce, however, a returning Odysseus/Ulysses would retain his Greek and Phoenician quality while serving the very nature of Irish tradition as a history of invasions. Figures under Joyce's process simply take on whatever racial or national identities might be interesting, insightful, or amusing for them to be endowed with at any point in the text.

In closing, we should note that most of the fascistic notions mentioned in this chapter should not be ascribed to W. B. Yeats. Rather, the Irish nationalism of Yeats and others bear traits that seem a greatly diminished form of the German fascism of the time. Joyce avoided the former just as he avoided the latter, though his literary work engages with both. Though disagreeing with Yeats over the relative importance of the Ulster Cycle, Joyce nonetheless employs Shaun in *Finnegans Wake* to explore the fascistic and eugenic extremes of Irish nationalistic ideas. The text exploits these things for our amusement and enlightenment: they are an important part of the



tradition as well. Shaun's emblematic relation to Ireland must be played out just as Shem's, Stephen's, and Bloom's are. The respective strengths and weaknesses of these characters' conceptualizations of their country are investigated not only in the interest of consummate Irish tradition but also in Joyce's interest of widening and deepening an understanding of the possibilities available to the Irish author. By the time of *Finnegans Wake's* composition Joyce has become so proficient at identifying with Ireland, understanding others' identifications, and authorizing a new reformulation of Irish tradition that he does not need to sing Finn's praises so overtly, as Yeats sang Cuchulain's. Duffy notes that even in his 1924 Nobel prize acceptance speech Yeats's usage of the word 'race' is histrionic and outdated, similar to the nebulous nationality 'with archaic overtones' of Stephen's sentiment near the end of *Portrait* (43).

Joyce, however, is not bound to Stephen's formulations any more than he is bound to Shaun's. Unlike many other authors, who relate directly and hastily to their home country, Joyce spares himself from being bound to or condemned by any initial antagonism to Ireland. He does not choose any single, thus limited, relation. Instead he relates by means of his various, carefully positioned characters, who are not merely past or false masks for their author but national archetypes. Joyce's career leads toward two shared goals: learning to reconcile himself with Ireland and reinvigorating Irish literary tradition. He comes to terms with Ireland just as the tradition seems to benefit from his learned authorship being placed within it.

As Eric Havelock says of the prototypical poet of mythic tradition: 'His power derives from his [societal] function . . . He profoundly accepts this society, not by personal choice but because of his functional role as its recorder and preserver. . . . [H]e can have no personal axe to grind, no vision wholly private to himself' (*Preface* 89). Try as they might, the Irish revivalists necessarily brought personal agendas with

them, prescribing certain politics not only upon their contemporaries but upon the tradition of the past. Yeats himself effectively admits that they knew better at the start: 'We and Dr. Hyde and his movement . . . tried to be unpolitical, and yet all that we did was dominated by the political situation. Whether we wrote speeches, or wrote poems or wrote romances or wrote books of history, we could not get out of our heads that we were somehow pleading for our country before a packed jury' (*Uncollected II* 455). The distance that Joyce put between himself and the 'political situation' allows him, in addition to much else, to include such courtroom scenes within the fabric of *Finnegans Wake*, making them part of the literary tradition rather than what the tradition supposedly depends upon. Whereas Yeats at home behaves as a tourist, passionately mystifying the Irish backwoods, Joyce abroad (re)creates Ireland by infusing its literature with foreign materials that themselves become augmented by new Irish identities.

## CHAPTER 4

### WRITTEN/ORAL DICHOTOMY IN *FINNEGANS WAKE*: FOXES & RAFTERY

#### 1. THE TEXTUALIZATION OF ORAL LITERATURE

##### A. *The Offer of an Oral Finnegans Wake*

This chapter discusses the relationship between orality and writing in *Finnegans Wake*, a dynamic that has strong bearing on the text as an embodiment of mythological literary traditions, especially the Irish ones.

As chapter one noted, Joyce in the composition of his final book aligned himself with a number of premodern authorial roles, including those of bard, druid, and *file*—roles concerned with oral traditions and the power of the spoken word. Though Joyce designed *Finnegans Wake*, he said, densely enough to ‘keep the critics busy for three hundred years’, he also insisted that the work had a far less complicated side quite antithetical to bookkeeping: the work is ‘pure music’, ‘literature’ only when listened to, and hearing it is ‘meant to make you laugh’ (*JJ* 702-3). To his first readers’ puzzlement and frustration, Joyce offered the following advice: ‘It’s all so simple. If anyone doesn’t understand a passage, all he need do is read it aloud’ (*JJ* 590). Certainly, speaking the book’s strange portmanteau words can unpack their meanings, because hearing often brings out the homonymic puns. Ironically, the conception of *Finnegans Wake* as oral literature has potency precisely because Joyce did *not* create a piece of verbal music or oration. The fact that the work is actually,

inescapably a book allows Joyce to provocatively highlight the relations and degrees of transferability between various media. Insisting that a *song* was a song would not challenge anyone's habitual thinking, but pretending that a *book* is a song emphasizes how the oral and the written can imply each other, as they do especially in connection with mythic or traditional literature. To this end, *Finnegans Wake* both combats the pedantic notion that '[t]he speechform is a mere surrogate' of the written (149.29), as the 'professor' persona in I.6 has it, and utilizes written language to represent immense amounts of past, orally-transmitted material.

Joyce maintained that in *Finnegans Wake* 'the words the reader sees are not the words that he will hear' (qtd. in McLuhan, *Gutenberg* 104), a stranger statement than we might think at first glance. Especially when given a phonetic alphabet, written words *should* be understood as the equivalent of their spoken counterparts, yet Joyce suggests that our different ways of sensing words lead to differences in the very words themselves. The verb tenses of this statement are also interesting in that they posit the heard language *after* the written: the reader 'sees' now, but later on 'he *will* hear'. In reality, of course, speech *precedes* the development of an alphabet, just as (to give an example pertinent to our study) the oral tradition of Homeric poets preceded the written *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. On the other hand, *Finnegans Wake* presents itself as the textualization of a long, ideally unending, millennia-in-the-making song—but a song which, ironically, could never have been sung in the first place before Joyce wrote it.

In the night-time world of *Finnegans Wake* 'our ears [are] eyes of darkness' (14.29), yet this very proclamation reaches us in the form of words read from a page, or at best words heard when recited from the same script. This problematic, irony-inducing oral/written dichotomy serves as a touchstone for investigating the relationship between mythic traditions and those singers and/or writers—let us say

*poets*—who assume authorship of them. The examination below centres on one aspirant mythic poet, Joyce himself, who appropriated various materials of oral origin into his final text.

As we will see, the recurrent theme of the foxhunt proves especially useful in illustrating these matters of orality, writing, and would-be leaders of tradition. For instance, Anthony Raftery, a renowned Irish bard of the early nineteenth century, blind and thus necessarily an oral poet, devised the story of ‘The Hunt’, which represents his enemy poet (‘a Writer’) as a fox maliciously pursued by the folk of Galway and Mayo and their pack of hounds (Gregory, *Poets* 25). Foxes usually represent the wily, clever individual who, as a loner, is often misunderstood and hunted by the *hoi polloi*. George Gibson notes that for centuries ‘[a] fallen king or king rejected by society was known in Ireland as a “wild fox”’; and HCE, the persecuted ‘king’ of *Finnegans Wake*, first goes on a foxhunt and then becomes “Reynard” [97.28], the famous fox of medieval fable . . . hunted by an irate citizenry described as a pack of excited hounds’ (46). (Below we will note how Charles Parnell was also likened to a hunted animal, a deer and then a fox, connotations which Joyce references in some of his earlier work.) In another very old tale, St. Ciarán saves a wild fox from hounds, tames it, and uses it to transport his lessonbook back and forth to his writing instructor: the fox consumes the book and then regurgitates it (Stokes 265-66). This fox, aiding in the transmission of writing while evading the ‘wicked men’ and their hunting dogs, allows Ciarán ‘to hear what his tutor had to say as if they had been side by side’ (ibid. 266). All these fables of foxes act as paradigms, elucidating the interrelated dynamics between literature and culture, and between writing and orality, allowing us to reach a fuller understanding and appreciation of what Joyce’s role as traditional mythic poet entails.

Through this consideration of hunted foxes, we must mark Joyce’s ability to

empathize with both sides of the oral/written dichotomy. We can identify Joyce not only with the poet of oral tradition—as he recommends we do regarding *Finnegans Wake* as a song—but also with the persecuted writer, the persecuted king, and with St. Ciarán’s fox as well. Chapter two already noted a connection between Raftery and Joyce in that both used their enemies’ names in their work. Joyce in his review of Lady Gregory’s *Poets and Dreamers* extolled Raftery as ‘the last of the great bardic procession’ (*OCPW* 75)<sup>1</sup>, and he would later have been able to empathize with Raftery’s blindness as well. Yet Joyce was a writer more than he was a singer, and it is the archetypal ‘Writer’ whom Raftery rails against and pursues in his song ‘The Hunt’. Joyce too was a persecuted writer, particularly because of *Ulysses*’ alleged obscenity, and he would even cultivate that beleaguered persona through Shem. Further, regarding the association of foxes with kings or representatives of tradition, Joyce as mythic poet ‘is the tradition’ (Lord, *Singer* 147) much as the giant Finn literally embodies the ground on which the world of *Finnegans Wake* is built. Lastly, in a role similar to that of St. Ciarán’s fox, Joyce metaphorically consumes old books, brings them with him to distant places, and then for a new audience regurgitates a new book that is really the old material in a different form (‘the same returns’ (*FW* 18.5)). Thus, Joyce understands both the oral and writerly proponents of traditional literature, and—as section three below explains in greater detail—the position of the pursuer as well as the pursued.

## **B. Orality vs. Writing**

Before the modern age most great works of literature concerned with mythic or religious traditions were effective textualizations of oral stories or poetry; the *Iliad*

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the inclusion of Raftery seems the only thing Joyce found praiseworthy about Gregory’s book.

and the *Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, the *Eddas* and the Bible are but a few such examples. Generally speaking, because the transcribers (wielding the more exclusive, authoritative power of writing) took their material from oral traditions, a sense of conflict if not antagonism sometimes developed between the two sides. Writing can render oral transmission of mythic literature quite obsolete while slowly stripping poets of their cultural importance. This is what happened in the case of the Homeric bards, first superseded by the rhapsodes, who memorized set scripts, and then supplanted by the advent of the Homeric epics as school texts used to teach reading and grammar. On the other hand, both insiders and outsiders of a culture often hold native oral traditions as more 'genuine' than any written documentation of their materials, since the written accounts originate from the oral. As we will see, the Irish folk tradition in particular seemed quite capable of holding its own against outside influences, sometimes even wilfully misdirecting writers and scholars.

Joyce clearly knew that the relationship between orality and writing factored heavily into his casting of *Finnegans Wake* as a piece of mythic literature or quasi-religious text, a 'third scripture' (Atherton 28). From his historical vantage point, he could see the complicated ways in which oral and literary traditions had interacted. By foregrounding in *Finnegans Wake* this interplay of the senses, the spoken sound and the written word, Joyce not only puts forth his own understanding of a matter so important to the historical development of literature, but he also addresses questions about how his literary work would function in an age of mass telecommunication.

Donald Theall advises us to

[i]magine Joyce around 1930 asking the question: what is the role of the book in a culture which has discovered photography, phonography, radio, film, television, telegraph, cable, and telephone and has developed newspapers, magazines, advertising, Hollywood, and sales promotion? What people once read, they will now go to see in film and on television . . . oral poetry will be reanimated by the potentialities of sound recording. ('Beyond...')

It has often been noted that Joyce referenced several of these new inventions in his text.<sup>2</sup> Chapter two discussed how some critics have even traced things forward, conceiving of *Finnegans Wake* as a sort of ‘cyberspace’. Our exploration of Joyce’s final work as a rearranged compendium of readymade, mythological material, however, must focus primarily on the oral/written contrast, the fundamental distinction upon which all such traditional literature is built.

Presaging these media distinctions that become so prevalent in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce from a young age developed a personal interest in the question of orality (singing especially, but also acting<sup>3</sup>) *versus* writing. The case could be made that his decision not to become a singer was one of the defining decisions of Joyce’s life, when in 1903 he declined the free training of the best voice teacher in Dublin (see *SL* 27n). For Joyce the decision of a writing career came at the expense of singing. In Joyce’s culture—unlike Homer’s or Raftery’s—one could no longer conceivably be both renowned poet *and* singer in the same occupation, and so Joyce was forced to make a choice that many of his poetic forebears did not have to make. Because writing and singing could no longer be one and the same, until Joyce chose the former at the expense of the latter his life ‘bristle[d] with contradictions’, as his brother Stanislaus described it in August 1904: ‘For instance, he practices exercises for the voice regularly; he works at his novel nearly every day saying that he wants to get his hand into such training that style will be as easy to him as singing’ (*Dublin Diary* 48).

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<sup>2</sup> Certain lines of *Finnegans Wake* resemble advertisements (for instance: ‘There are 29 sweet reasons why blossomtime’s the best’ (64.35-36), ‘Do Drumcollogher whatever you do!’ (540.9)). At one point HCE is described as if he were the star of a film (‘the reel world’ (64.25)). Throughout II.3, the taverngoers are entertained by a strange device (‘their tolvvtubular high fidelity daiddialler, as modern as tomorrow afternoon and in appearance up to the minute’ (309.14-15)). After the ‘Rowdiose [radio’s] wodhalooing’ (324.18), they watch the play of Butt and Taff acted out on the ‘bairdboard bombardment screen’ (349.8), a reference to John Logie Baird, the inventor of the television. *Television* also appears at 52.18, 150.33, and 254.22.

<sup>3</sup> In his fateful summer of 1904, Joyce wrote to Nora Barnacle: ‘A week ago I was arranging to go away as a travelling actor. I could put no energy into the plan because you kept pulling me by the elbow’ (*SL* 25).



In George Antheil's words 'Joyce's frustrated ambition' was that he had never become a professional singer (qtd. in Mikhail 122), and this immense regret should be taken into account when understanding the heavily emphasized 'oral' nature of Joyce's last masterwork. A pupil of his in Trieste, Mario Nordio, writes of Joyce, 'He confessed that if it depended on him singing would be the most important occupation in his life' (ibid. 57). Joyce did sing for his friends, however, and many who knew him would remember his tenor voice fondly. Italo Svevo relates that Nora 'hoped for a long time' her husband would become a concert singer and 'regrets' that he chose the written art instead (ibid. 46). That Joyce himself shared some of this regret is evident in several instances: in his consideration of the tenor John Sullivan as 'a kind of alter ego' (Ellmann, *SL* xxi), in his encouragement of his son Giorgio to undertake a singing career, and in his frequent remembrance of the celebrated singing voice of his father, who, like Nora, also wished Joyce had become a singer instead of a writer (see *JJ* 611).

Given this history, it is not difficult to perceive *Finnegans Wake*, in part, as Joyce's attempt to finally have it both ways, to become not only master author but master singer, the two certifications that every great oral poet possesses simultaneously. From here we might begin to take Joyce at his word and interpret almost literally his postulation that a book really can be 'pure music'. If we then consider how Joyce read his work aloud to audiences on several occasions, we might be led to declare, as James Saucedo does, that 'henceforward James Joyce will be viewed *not only as one of the twentieth century's greatest writers, but as one of its finest performers as well*' (my italics; 98)<sup>4</sup>. Such a hyperbolic tract, however, would neglect the marked sense of purpose in Joyce's decision to become a professional

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<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere we read the similarly amusing conjecture that Joyce nearly 'anticipated the guitar-playing culture of the age of Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, and Jimi Hendrix' simply because he once asked a man in London to make him a lute (to no avail), and was once photographed holding a guitar (Brown 40).

writer *instead* of a singer, a decision which is imperative to keep in mind when investigating the relationship between writing and orality in his work. Through such consideration we can better explore how the text of *Finnegans Wake* attempts to encapsulate past traditions (oral and otherwise) in ways that a song could not.

### ***C. The Metonymic Solution: The Oral within the Written***

Joyce in his final work strives to represent and celebrate as best he can the entirety of human experience and, within that, the entirety of past, often defunct traditions whose written remnants originated from oral sources. He cannot possibly succeed at this task completely, and so much as *Finnegans Wake* becomes in Finn Fordham's words an 'ironization of universal history' ('The Universalization...' 199)—pretending to contain even more information than it does—the text also becomes something like an 'ironization of song'. Again, as noted in chapter one, if the Homeric epics are '*oral-derived texts*' (Foley, *Traditional Oral* 5), then *Finnegans Wake* could be classified as an *oral-aspiring text*<sup>5</sup>. In that Joyce's book tries to be oral literature, its workings seem aligned with what Joseph Nagy defines as the *metonymic* conception of the spoken and the written, in which the 'literary and the oral represent each other as a part represents a whole . . . and one implies the other' ('Representations...' 145). This does not suggest an equivalency between the spoken and the written, however, since 'the literary form represent[s] the continuation, completion, or ultimate expression of the oral' (ibid.). Such logic would help explain why Joyce chose writing over singing, because the former can conceivably include the essence of the latter.

The *metonymic* philosophy of the oral and the written, which *Finnegans Wake* favours, is in contrast to the *metaphoric*. The latter conception implies that the two

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<sup>5</sup> This recalls the words of Walter Pater, whose work Joyce knew well, that 'All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music' (86).

modes, far from forming a whole, 'should be kept apart because they occupy different positions in a hierarchy of values or functions' (ibid.), usually with the written word holding the higher rank. In his study of Irish tradition, Nagy notes that the 'reasons behind the ascendancy of the written medium in Irish culture . . . lie in the history of Christianity in Ireland', which elevated the written word to 'sacred' status (ibid. 144). At its extreme, particularly in the folk community of Ireland, this situation caused 'on the one hand, the ire of the performer toward the scribe, and, on the other, disdain in the scribe for things so unbookishly remembered' (ibid. 148). Working both sides to establish their reconnection, Joyce's call is 'Forget, remember!' (*FW* 614.22): *forget* suggesting the transitory nature of speech, each word gone as soon as it is uttered, and *remember* indicating the ability of writing to preserve words into the future. While the text of *Finnegans Wake* certainly seems designed as if its written words were 'sacred', at the same time they are quite the opposite: 'dimmed [damned]' words (424.32) from a Dark Tongue.

Joyce knew that the sacred pre-eminence of writing comes at the expense of *voices* not being heard. His last book's very title implies the return to consciousness of Finn and his Fianna, who were banished to hell by St. Patrick. In his legendary arguments with Oisín (Finn's son), Patrick explains that he damned Finn for two primary sins, nearly equated: for teaching poetry and for hunting with hounds:

OISÍN. 'What did Finn do against God but to be attending on schools and on armies? Giving gold through a great part of his time, and another while trying his hounds.'

PATRICK. 'In payment for thinking of his hounds and for serving the schools of the poets, and because he gave no heed to God, Finn of the Fianna is held down.' (Lady Gregory, *Gods & Fighting Men* 448)

Here again *Finnegans Wake* opposes St. Patrick. If the Fianna are to return, then *writing*—'in its origin the voice of an absent person' (Freud 737)—must become the

collective voice of the Fianna, or at least it must provoke those voices. Against St. Patrick and other ‘clerk[s] of the white books’ (Murphy 211), Oisín despairs of how literature betrays the Fianna by conveying but ‘a fraction of what they used to know’ (Nagy, ‘Representations...’ 148). Only ‘the full range of that oral repertoire . . . communicated at its full strength . . . would be the equivalent of Finn and his men’s still being alive, and they would overwhelm the *status quo* and its preferred mode of communication’ (ibid.). If all past, ‘dead’ materials in *Finnegans Wake* have for their prototype the Fianna lore—much of which was oral and thus has been forgotten—then these materials would in a sense revivify if the reader interprets the text as the vast, conglomerate voice of these various traditions. As John Wilson Foster has it, Joyce ‘implied that it [*Finnegans Wake*] could be heard as the voice of an entire race rather than of an individual’ (204). Examining a sixteenth-century poem that bemoans the absence of Fenian heroes in a literate culture typified by the ‘man who readest from a bible’, Nagy contends: ‘This is virtually a revolt against textualization itself’ (ibid. 149), and the same could be said of this aspect of Joyce’s method. With the readers’ help, the text of *Finnegans Wake* strives to transcend its textual bounds, to attain and exude the freeing qualities of song, music, and orality in general.

In a myth related to those above, St. Patrick recites a spell (‘the written and spoken word working in tandem’) that transforms a pagan ‘decultured’ man, ‘fated to be lost to society entirely’, into a wild fox (Nagy, *Conversing* 106n). A ‘fox’ because he is both an outcast writer and a bearer of tradition (holding a book within him much as St. Ciarán’s fox did), Joyce seeks to break this spell, to infuse his thought into society through the production of a text that the coming culture would—hypothetically or metaphorically—recite for him.

## 2. A MULTIPLICITY OF FOXES: 'FAWKES', 'FAKES' AND 'FAXES'

The motif of the foxhunt appears throughout *Finnegans Wake*, often by way of Oscar Wilde's description of gentleman hunters chasing a fox as 'the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uneatable' (12), which Joyce's text alters on every repetition. In one instance, for example, the 'Phoenician wak[ing]' results in a foxhunt of 'so many unprobables in their poor suit of the impossable' (*FW* 608.32, 609.5-6). Wilde's quote also ties to some oral/written associations mentioned above: *unspeakable* suggesting anti-orality and *uneatable* in the sense of resistant to consumption (i.e., the opposite of St. Ciarán's book of tradition). When conflated with the Irish tales about hounds and foxes, however, the pairings seem strange. Wilde's hunters are 'the unspeakable', yet in blind Raftery's poem the very embodiment of speech, the folk themselves, pursue the enemy writer/fox: thus the ones who cannot be spoken about *are speech*. Wilde's hunted prey is 'the uneatable', yet St. Ciarán's fox eats the lessonbook: the one who cannot be eaten *does the eating*. This section will discuss how the foxhunt motif in *Finnegans Wake* blends and confuses the oral and the written even further, especially with the help of Shaun. Before that, however, there is more to investigate in the connections between foxes and assailed leaders (or would-be leaders) of tradition: Parnell, Bloom, HCE, and Joyce himself.

As noted above, Irish tradition gave fallen, victimized kings the moniker of 'wild foxes', and HCE, the patriarch of *Finnegans Wake*, becomes a similar tormented figure when accosted by the Twelve jurors. Another such leader, ruined by his own people and referenced throughout Joyce's oeuvre, is Charles Stewart Parnell, whose alias in his affair with Kitty O'Shea had been 'Mr. Fox'. Joyce, however, described him as a different type of animal in his essay 'The Shade of Parnell': 'He went from county to county, from city to city, "like a hunted hind" . . . the

“uncrowned king” (OCPW 196). The comparison of Parnell to a hunted deer, made in the Irish press in 1899 and later quoted by Yeats as well<sup>6</sup>, originates in a general remark that Goethe made in 1829 about Catholics: ‘They are like a pack of hounds; which bite one another, but, when a stag comes in view, all unite immediately to run it down’ (256). Further, Joyce in ‘The Holy Office’ (1904) describes himself as the same type of stag: ‘I stand, the self-doomed, unafraid, / Unfellowed, friendless and alone, /.../ I flash my antlers on the air’ (PSW 99). Glasheen does not find any explicit connections in *Finnegans Wake* between deer and leaders; Joyce, she suggests, eventually decided that whereas the ‘hunted deer is poetic, innocent, passive’, the ‘better sport . . . is hunting a trickster fox’ (99).

Joyce also plays up the trickster side of another representative man, Leopold Bloom, who in ‘Circe’ vicariously imagines himself as Ireland’s leader. Reacting to this, however, the figure of THE MOB screams: ‘Lynch him! Roast him! He’s as bad as Parnell was. Mr. Fox!’ (U 15.1761). Bloom and Parnell both faced accusations of obscene behaviour, just as HCE does throughout *Finnegans Wake* in connection with an incident in Phoenix Park, and much as Joyce himself did due to *Ulysses*’ alleged obscenity. The folk, people, jurors and MOB all suspect that the indecency of these various ‘foxes’ somehow endangers their social order. Tellingly, ‘fox’ in *Finnegans Wake* often connotes Guy Fawkes. Parnell also threatened the English Parliament with political agitation if not explosives, and then by his very presence. Because the sport of foxhunting came from Britain, the pursuing forces have overtones of imperialism as they seek retribution for the fox’s (Parnell’s) impudence.

Shaun feels threatened by how his native culture has been stolen and placed in the literature of Shem, who is his ‘shame, my soamheis [Siamese; *heiss*, “be called” in German] brother, Gaoy Fecks [Guy Fawkes; *feck*, Anglo-Irish for “steal”]’ (FW

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<sup>6</sup> See OCPW 339.

425.22-23). Shem, a *Fawkes* and a fox, steals away the past and passes it off as his own work of art; the fox literally makes *fakes*. This angers Shaun, who perceives the past as a golden age, and who considers himself to be one of the *real* people. In his jealous outrage, Shaun argues that Shem's transcription of ALP's Letter, found in the compost heap, belittles the inherited, stored debris that he (Shaun) could have better expressed in song: 'I might possibly orally have about them bagges [boxes] of trash which the mother and Mr Unmentionable (*O breed not his same* [Shem *copies*]!) has reduced to writing' (my italics; 420.2-5). This extreme notion of writing as a *reduction* mirrors the professor's equally extreme conception that '[t]he speechform is a mere surrogate' (149.29). Thus Shaun disparages writing much as the professor disparages speech.

By dubbing him 'Mr Unmentionable' Shaun makes Shem another ('Mr') fox while referencing Wilde's quote at the same time. Yet Shaun seems to make a mistake in that he blurs the line between oral and written: the word *unmentionable* connotes the 'unspeakable' hunters more than it does the 'uneatable' fox. Mixing matters still further, Shaun calls for Shem, whose crime is writing, to be 'silenced' (421.36). Similarly, with an exclamation about Shem's base or amoral nature Shaun also renders him talkative: 'The lowquacity of him!' (424.34). Later Shaun mixes media metaphors yet again, even throwing in visual art this time, when explaining his ability to produce a work superior to Shem's writing, as he said he 'might possibly orally' have done: 'I'd pinsel [German for "painter's brush"] it with immenuensoes' (425.18), he says, rather than *dictating* it to amanuenses.

Here in III.1, soon before he will take over for his father HCE, Shaun by assuming some ownership of the Letter begins to insinuate that the past tradition already belongs to him, and in a sense *is* him. 'Well it is partly my own, isn't it?' (422.23) he asks his audience (the people or jurors) rhetorically. The comment 'He

store the tale of me shur' (425.2) suggests much: that Shem stole the tale *off* Shaun, that he stole the tale *of* Shaun, and that Shem's writing *stores* this tale of past tradition, which may literally be Shaun's youth since *shirt-tail* can mean 'young' in the slang of the American South. Shem the writer is 'an unmentionable fakes [fox]' (300.3) because, Shaun says, he is a plagiarizer, 'cribibber' [cry-baby/cribber], 'imitator', and 'bogorror' [borrower or 'begorrah!'; a 'borrower by/from God'] (423.5, 10, 16). Further, Shem is like another 'jameymock farceson' [James Macpherson] (423.1), the eighteenth-century hoaxer who pretended to have discovered *Fingal*, an epic Irish poem about Finn McCool written by Oisín (or *Ossian*). Shaun continues, asserting again that Shem has perpetrated a shady, large-scale plagiarism of *his* divine culture: 'Every dimmed [damned] letter of it [Shem's writing] is a copy and not a few of the silbils [syllables; sibyls] and wholly [holy] words I can show you in *my Kingdom of Heaven*' (my italics; 424.32-34). If Joyce's work is the ultimate rearrangement of fragmented, pre-existent language, then Shem's is similarly 'The last word in stolentelling! And what's more [...] schisthematic [systematic/schismatic] robbemint!' (424.35-36). Joyce's *thematic* comes from the *rubble* of the compost heap that is actually a *mint*, a place that manufactures and stores valuables (i.e. our diverse treasure-trove inheritance). Thus Shaun's comments about Shem's writing seem to reference the sense of the readymade that permeates *Finnegans Wake* itself from its individual letters and syllables to the whole phrases taken from source texts.

Foxes in *Finnegans Wake* also suggest 'faxes' (facsimiles), which are 'hunt[ed]' over HCE's lands by 'beagles and [...] terriers' in 'Beaufort' (cf. the Beaufort Hunt of England; 567.23-25). Foxes become faxes by way of *fakes* (of which the most prominent is 'Shem [who] was a sham' (170.25)), because *fakes* gives us *facsimile* in the form of 'fake-similar' (484.34-35)). It is worth noting that Joyce's



text mentions ‘fake-similar’ just lines after ‘Ailbey and Ciardeclan’ (Ailbhe, Ciarán, Declan; ‘A-B-C-D’; 484.23), a reference to the Christian bishops in Ireland before Patrick, and St. Ciarán of the fox fable was one of these four. Just as it does so many other sound-related compounds, *Finnegans Wake* blends foxes, fakes and faxes/facsimiles. Though proper fax machines were not developed until the 1970s, these conglomerated foxes of Irish myth serve the same function: while Shem the faker *copies*, St. Ciarán’s fox swallows the writing and—dodging jealous, hungry hounds—conveys it to the reader. In reference to this fox who enables a saint to practice ‘long-distance dictation with his teacher’, Nagy writes, ‘Thus we can even find a wild fox who facilitates the exchange of writing’ (*Conversing* 106n). As with his *allforabits*, however, Joyce’s ‘faxes’ or ‘fake-similar’ indicate a more complex system of exchange. It is as if multiple copies of printed materials are sent back and forth among various cultures, while the reader of *Finnegans Wake* tries to intercept as many as s/he can by recognizing words that represent past traditions, and often single words contain multiple references.

Writing itself can be understood as the ‘fake-similar’ or fax-copy of the oral; what the oral can only deliver to those within hearing distance, the written can deliver to those at great distances. The difference between the oral and written can be expressed in terms of time as well as space: due to its permanence the written has a greater range and longer ‘life’ than the oral, which dissolves as soon as the speaker ceases utterance. Recorded speech or song resembles a book in that it transcribes oral data in a form that can be transported and accessed repeatedly. However, the recording of a book can only contain particular, already existing voices; it cannot, as the text of *Finnegans Wake* does, urge the mass response that would be necessary to metaphorically reincarnate the absent Fianna.

### 3. ANIMOSITY BETWEEN FOLKS AND FOX

We have seen how throughout Joyce's text the qualities of writing and orality intermingle, often due to the presence of fox/foxhunting imagery. The written/oral dichotomy blurs under the influence of Wilde's famous quotation and the homonymic variations of 'fox' and 'foxes'. There remains, however, one final 'fox' to locate: the *folks*. With this last connotation we see how a fox such as Joyce, or any other crafty poet, can figuratively gain the perspective of his pursuers, the folks themselves. This transference from 'fox' to 'folks' seems both especially difficult and especially important to Joyce's production. After all, the same 'rabblement' that Joyce railed against so passionately in his youth were once the wellsprings of the traditions that he as a mythic Irish poet must identify with, and much of *Finnegans Wake* is told in the voices of these antagonistic masses.

Near the end of the book, we find the words 'foxy theagues' (622.24) as part of a reference to Ali Baba and the *forty thieves*, 'Teagues' being a nickname for Irish peasants. These *foxy folks* associated with stealing recall the figure of Hosty, a side persona of Shem the plagiarizer/'bogorror', who usurps HCE in 1.2 by composing a *rann*<sup>7</sup> that represents the people's grievances against him. Hosty marshalling the people through song against an eminent figure, whom they can no longer tolerate, reminds us of Raftery—the Irish poet famous for his insults—leading the people of Galway and Mayo against the 'Writer'/fox, whom 'they couldn't abide' (O'Flynn 233) for being such a 'rogue' (Gregory, *Poets* 25). Indeed, Glasheen makes the

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<sup>7</sup> 'A *rann* is an ancient Celtic verse form,' as Campbell and Robinson note (61n). Though some *ranns* were composed in praise of kings, on the other hand '[t]here are many stories of Irish poets who revenged themselves against . . . kings by composing satires against them; and frequently (or so they say) the kings literally died of shame' (61n-62n).

general connection: 'Irish bards had power to rhyme an enemy to death, and Hosty's ballad speaks for the folk when HCE is declared dead' (xxxii).<sup>8</sup>

'Hosty' can be traced back to the Latin *hostis*, meaning 'enemy', always defined in contrast to the people's ruler. Vico tells us that the first *hostes* 'were the plebeians of heroic peoples, against whom the heroes swore eternal enmity', and both these groups 'regarded each other as foreign' (par. 685). Thus Hosty, who is also the *host* of the people, embodies the adversarial alienation that a ruler (in this case HCE, that 'famous old duke alien' (*FW* 197.3)) imposes upon his own people. Remarkably, it is Shem the writer, the 'faxe' so often decried and pursued by the folk, who transforms a part of his persona into this singer capable of representing the folk's feelings. Hosty represents a side of Shem's creativity. A portion of Joyce's authorship must take this path as well in order to reproduce, as well as possible, the full spectrum of perspectives and primal emotions within the array of myth-oriented cultures that *Finnegans Wake* evinces.

Between all of these warring sides—Hosty and the people versus HCE, Raftery and the folk versus the 'Writer', the plebeians versus the heroes of their age, and oral culture versus literature—the real point of contention is always the same: the fight is over property, to which 'foreigners' do not have a right. Put in terms of the foxhunting allegories, a 'fox' has consumed and run away with a 'fake-similar' of a

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<sup>8</sup> Yeats seemed to have used the fictional Irish bard Red Hanrahan as an alter-ego similar to how Joyce at times pretends to do work equivalent to that of an oral poet. A wandering oral poet, Hanrahan also seems very reminiscent of Raftery, and indeed Yeats in 'The Tower' ostensibly reveals his inspiration by referencing Raftery's adorations of Mary Hynes:

Strange, but the man who made the song was blind;  
Yet, now I have considered it, I find  
That nothing strange; the tragedy began  
With Homer that was a blind man,  
And Helen has all living hearts betrayed.

[...]

And I myself created Hanrahan

And drove him drunk or sober through the dawn

From somewhere in the neighbouring cottages. (*Mythologies* 303-4)

Regarding the hunting theme, in the story 'Red Hanrahan' from *The Secret Rose*, Yeats's fictional poet changes a pack of cards into a pack of hounds and then chases after them and goes into fairyland.

culture, i.e. a work of literature. Since this writing by its very nature asserts an authority over the (oral) culture's identity, the common people do not want a rogue fox to possess it, and they argue ownership over the book based on their perceived ownership of their own culture. The folk do not differentiate between their oral tradition and writing that represents it, and Joyce's equations of his difficult text with a song that everyone has written seem designed to appeal to this very perception of the masses. Further, though they consider the fox a thief, the folk or 'foxy theagues' can be understood as thieves themselves since what they want does not belong to them: namely, they want the book, which is literally a part of the fox since now it is inside him. The next chapter will discuss these ideas further, but for now let us remark that most of the folk would likely not be able to read—in the sense of *consume* or *digest*—this book anyway. (Hence the aptness of Joyce's appeal, 'Just *listen* to it!') In the other variation of the fox story, of course, the hunters strictly want the animal's body, though in this too, as Wilde tells us, they again chase the (less metaphoric) *uneatable*.

The hostile folk no doubt believe that the fox in a sense trespasses on *their* land or property. Vico cites the following 'golden passage' from ancient Roman law: "Against any foreigner [or 'enemy'] title of ownership holds good for ever", *Adversus hostem aeterna auctoritas esto* (par. 638). In this way the folk believe that the fox by his very nature could never own the land, and Shaun believes that Shem could never own the tradition. Just as the Romans may have 'originally regarded [all] foreigners as perpetual wartime foes' (ibid.), an unending war rages between the folk and the fox, with oral poets such as Raftery able to strike back at their writerly counterparts by urging the masses against the writers.

The folk of Ireland hardly needed much encouragement. In his book *The Poor Mouth*, Flann O'Brien relates the wonderful tale of the people of Corkadoragha, a

fictitious village in western Ireland, who slyly deceive a visiting scholar 'extremely interested in Gaelic' (42). Similar to the taboo against letting one's name be included in a poet's song, these folk did not trust their visitor's gramophone, 'capable of memorising all it heard if anyone narrated stories or old lore to it' (42-43). Having sensed the machine 'unlucky', under the tavern's dim light they pass off a 'rambling pig' as 'a poor old man, drenched and wet . . . creeping instead of walking upright' (43-45). The visitor, who 'thought the Gaelic extremely difficult . . . was overjoyed that the machine was absorbing it; he understood that good Gaelic is difficult but that the best Gaelic of all is well-nigh unintelligible' (44). The scholar then leaves, and though he takes no true Irish tradition with him, his gramophone disc earns him a degree in Berlin, where the professors 'said that they never heard any fragment of Gaelic which was so good, so poetic and so obscure' (44-45). Furthermore, an entire committee develops around the study of this pig's recording, generating ever more misinformation about Irish folk culture.

Enda Duffy cites this tale when interpreting why the old milkwoman in the first chapter of *Ulysses* does not seem to recognize the Irish that Haines, the Irish folklorist from England, speaks to her: 'Is it French you are talking, sir?' (*U* 1.425) she asks. Duffy reasons that 'she might be lying to deceive the folklorist, a practice common in rural Ireland . . . where both collectors and informants were so widespread that a whole genre of folktale about tricking the folklorist actually grew up' (51). Unfortunately there is not more evidence to support this interesting interpretation; perhaps the old woman really is this wrong-headed, or perhaps Haines's Irish really is that bad. It does seem very improbable, however, that the woman could honestly mistake Haines for an Irishman ('Are you from the west, sir?' (1.429-30)), and flattering Haines could conceivably protect her culture by leading him into the false assumption that he's already 'got' it.

Falsehoods about Irish heritage are indeed told in the ‘Cyclops’ chapter, whose narrator classifies an Irish scholar as an actual poet and the bark of the Citizen’s dog as Irish poetry. ‘Growling and grousing’, through a shapeshifting act of ‘cynanthropy’ the dog exhibits a ‘recitation of verse’, which ‘[o]ur greatest living phonetic expert [...] has found [...] bears a *striking* resemblance [...] to the ranns of ancient Celtic bards’ (*U* 12.709, 714, 719-23). The narrator goes on to compare the dog’s supposed poetry to ‘the harsher and more personal [...] satirical effusions of the famous Raftery and of Donal MacConsidine’ (12.727-29). This latter figure, as Andrew Gibson points out, ‘was in fact no bard but the “fine Irish scholar” referred to fleetingly [by Douglas Hyde] in both *Love Songs of Connacht* and *Beside the Fire* as a transcriber of Gaelic poems. Once again’, Gibson continues, ‘the emphasis is on versions of the original, mediators and mediating forms’ (115), as distinct from genuine or more worthwhile extensions of poetic tradition.<sup>9</sup> MacConsidine, the text suggests, is no more a poet than the Citizen’s dog is; this satiric devaluation of living Irish poets, in relation to the Rafterys of the past, has its analogue in how the nationalistic Citizen instrumentalizes Ireland by believing that it belongs only to people like him. Joyce’s narration exposes the game taking place between Bloom, another fox, and the Citizen and his hound. Bloom will be chased from the pub after being accused, more or less, of trespassing, not being allowed on Irish property due to his ‘foreign’ (*hostem*) nature.<sup>10</sup> In fact, there was an underlying hound/fox dynamic

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Adams has discovered that Stephen Dedalus actually, and it seems inadvertently, recreates one of Hyde’s poems from *Love Songs of Connacht*. Stephen begins to compose the poem throughout the ‘Proteus’ chapter, and then it appears in full at *U* 7.522-25. In this Stephen displays an ability to recreate a small piece of Irish tradition spontaneously; he has tapped in to Irish tradition even if (unlike Shem) he is unaware of what he is doing: ‘He is not a very good poet, but he is not a plagiarist; nor is there any evident reason why he should be a plagiarist’ (Adams 121). We might say that Stephen is both derivative *and* original—original because he doesn’t realize how he is unconsciously reworking someone else’s poem.

<sup>10</sup> —What is your nation if I may ask? says the citizen.

—Ireland, says Bloom. I was born here. Ireland.

The citizen said nothing only cleared the spit out of his gullet and [...] spat [...] (*U* 12.1430-33)

from the start:

Old Garryowen started growling again at Bloom that was skeezing round the door.

—Come in, come on, says the citizen. He won't eat you. (12.408-10)

Joyce's use of the foxhunt motif in *Finnegans Wake*, the avaricious pursuit of what the chasers could not even digest if they caught it, thus has its origins in *Ulysses*, specifically in that novel's horserace model. Vicki Mahaffey writes that 'the male heroes of *Ulysses* are two dark horses in the human race who win that race against long odds' ('Love, Race...' 92). Stephen and Bloom are 'horses', though perhaps the horse identity is ascribed to each of them under protest. In the chapter of 'Nestor' (to whom Homer gave the epithet 'the Gerenian horseman'), Stephen in his argument with Deasy declares history 'a nightmare from which I am trying to awake' (2.377), *night-mare* literally meaning *dark horse*, a horse Stephen wants to evade. In 'Cyclops' Bloom gets called 'a bloody dark horse himself' (12.1558) because of a misunderstanding regarding a comment he made earlier, seemingly indicating a tip to bet on an unlikely racehorse ('Throwaway') who went on to win later that day. The general conception here is of life as a horserace in which Stephen and Bloom—and everyone else—are made to compete whether they want to or not, for we are all horses, however different our colours.

Under the more severe foxhunt model, however, the participants are differentiated: the figures in the lead can no longer—or will no longer—be treated as if they were the same species as those who dog them. Metaphorically, this transition occurs when (to the jealousy of others, who are now losers) the dark horses win the race at the completion of *Ulysses*, which coincides with the point in Joyce's career when he has proven his detractors wrong and become an entire 'literature within the compass of a single volume' (Borges 221). The fox, in other words, has devoured and

made off with an entire book in his belly. In *Finnegans Wake* there are not dark horses racing toward a goal but rather foxes running for their lives, leading their pursuers on a chase that (unlike a race) will never end if they have their way, since ending the chase would mean the dogs have caught them. A metaphor for the running of society, 'Sport's a common thing' (*FW* 51.21), but the game is very serious.

In the dire foxhunt model, the would-be leaders or bearers of tradition, consider their trailers *hostem* (as Vico tells us the heroes regarded the common people), which leads us back to Hosty, the poetic embodiment of these pursuing forces. In this perpetual struggle, however, it is the hounds and hunters who have the momentum. *Finnegans Wake* illustrates this by foregrounding the pursuit, the grievances that the people and Shaun bring against HCE and Shem. Far from *leading* the masses, the kings and great poets (those individuals who represent their cultures) do not *bear* their given tradition so much as they are *chased* while embodying it or holding it within themselves.

Whereas the horserace model possesses some 'democratic' qualities—we are all horses who compete with each other toward the same goal—the hunt differentiates its participants by species and task. Only certain leaders and artists can become foxes, and this is their onus. While fallen 'kings' such as HCE try to refute the people's grievances against them, many artist-foxes seem to enjoy being thought of (or thinking of themselves) as outsiders. We are told as much by one of the first authors to be influenced by *Finnegans Wake*, Henry Miller, who posits an incommensurable difference between human beings and the wily artists (or 'foxes') who by their nature take whatever they want from the world, rework stolen material into art, and have fun disrupting society:

Side by side with the human race there runs another race of beings, the inhuman ones, the race of artists who, goaded by unknown impulses, take the



lifeless mass of humanity and by the fever and ferment with which they imbue it turn this soggy dough into bread and the bread into wine and the wine into song. Out of the dead compost and the inert slag they breed a song that contaminates. I see this other race of individuals ransacking the universe, turning everything upside down... (229-30)<sup>11</sup>

Shem, a pursued fox because he has written licentious literature, is also a pursuer in the form of Hosty. While a poet can be pursued (especially a writer), a poet (especially a singer) can also chase and encourage pursuit. It is as if the characters play different roles in youth than in maturity, for Shem when he is young chases his father, but when Shem attains maturity—when orality develops into writing—he too will be chased. Here the significance of Raftery, the last great Irish bard and the archetypal Irish insult poet, becomes even more apparent. As noted above and in the previous chapter, the production of *Finnegans Wake* as a holistic representation of mythic traditions necessitated that Joyce empathize as much as possible with the various components, with as many sides of the design as possible. Through acts such as his identification with blind Raftery, Joyce the would-be oral poet is able to better appreciate and recreate the workings of mythic tradition from vantage points previously alien to him as a modern writer. This enables him to metaphorically *pursue* and benefit from the perspectives of not only the oral poet, whom he had so long wanted to be, but also the lamented ‘rabblement’. Though he had once decried any ‘artist [who] courts the favour of the multitude’ (*OCPW* 51); Joyce would later intimate that ‘*Finnegans Wake* was being written by all humanity’ (Saint-Amour 159) and that anyone with ears could appreciate it. In his last work Joyce does exhibit

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<sup>11</sup> Miller seems akin to Joyce not only because they both liked metaphors of ‘flowing’ (Miller 279) and the separateness of artists, but also because they were both given to stealing and reworking other authors’ texts, sometimes not very subtly. First published in 1934, five years before *Finnegans Wake*, Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer* includes a very long sentence that bears striking resemblance to *FW* 180.17-30: ‘. . . But what with the murky light, the botchy print, the tattered cover, the jigjagged page, the fumbling fingers, the fox-trotting fleas’, etc. (Miller 80). Joyce had included an early version of this passage as an extract of ‘Work in Progress’ published in the Autumn-Winter 1925-26 issue of *This Quarter*, and without permission Samuel Roth later included the same passage in *Two Worlds* the following June.

remarkable proficiency at representing the *all* of an entity if he can only identify with a *bit*. (To give perhaps the most extreme example, one feels that Joyce gives it his all in portraying the bitterness and racism of Shaun, who is a would-be oral poet, yet we do not sense that the author of *Ulysses* could empathize very much with anything about the Citizen.)

The case of Raftery, by what few details we know of him, proves that a poet can both criticize his countrymen and fellow poets (as Joyce often did earlier in his career) and also represent the culture with his poetry; these in fact were the very components of his character that made Raftery famous in nineteenth-century Ireland. As Joyce does, Raftery also included foreign mythologies in his work, often alluding to Greco-Roman gods and goddesses (see O'Flynn 51 and Hyde, *Abhráin* 111). Since Joyce described him much as he did Mangan ('Raftery . . . the last of the great bardic procession' (*OCPW* 75)), it is strange that Joyce does not seem to have referenced Raftery once in *Finnegans Wake*, at least not by name. But perhaps this snub was repayment. After all, from Lady Gregory Joyce knew that it was the oral poet Raftery who had ended the foremost mythic tradition that *Finnegans Wake* proposes to revive:

A man near Oranmore says: 'There used to be great talk of the Fianna; and everyone had the poems about them till Raftery came, and he put them out. For when the people got Raftery's songs in their heads, they could think of nothing else: his songs put out everything else. (*Poets & Dreamers* 26)

#### 4. CONDITIONS OF ORAL/WRITTEN CYCLICALITY

Though history often provides us with examples of writing and literacy supplanting oral traditions<sup>12</sup>, Raftery proves that oral poetry can 'put out' traditions as well,

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<sup>12</sup> Parry and Lord regarded themselves as very lucky to have studied the Yugoslav bards when they did,

providing it captivates the audience of the day so much that they forget tales they used to know by heart. Later Raftery's poetry died out as well, though not before the last people who still remembered it aided Hyde and others in transcribing a substantial number of poems.

Of course, the Fianna tales that Raftery's songs displaced from the heads of the Irish folk survived in other places, written down, where others in later generations would find, discuss, and be inspired by them. The oral becomes the written, is talked about, then forgotten; and later the writing is discovered, is rewritten, and tries to find popularity and become the talked-about oral again. While Joyce's various suggestions for *Finnegans Wake* to be understood as music or song blatantly promoted his difficult book to a wider audience, on a deeper level they acknowledge the oral/written cyclicity to which all genuine pieces of traditional literature must be receptive, even though it will lead to their demise as well. 'Today's truth, tomorrow's trend! | Forget, remember!' (*FW* 614.21-22).

The cyclical relation of oral and written knowledge becomes even clearer under the allegory of St. Ciarán's fox. The story begins when a 'fox' (a would-be bearer of tradition) comes along, and for whatever reason (perhaps a rebellious streak) finds a book appetizing and eats it. Seeing this, the hunters and hounds chase the fox like an outcast all across the land; and this metaphoric run around the kingdom recalls ALP's course around *Finnegans Wake* ('I've lapped so long' (625.27)). All the while the fox runs, the book remains in his stomach until he regurgitates it. But does the fox *digest* any of it? Certainly St. Ciarán's scripture did not decompose, for it was returned from the fox intact, and it later became renowned as the *Pólsire Ciaráin*

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since in the face of modernity and literacy that generation of poets would be the last to truly function on oral process. A similar theme runs through Delargy's study of Gaelic storytelling in the early twentieth century; word-of-mouth tradition had preserved and kept these poetic tales alive for years, but their cultural significance was now at an end even as so many scholars were taking an interest: 'Turn them into prose, and they have no longer an excuse for existing', for these 'words live in their sounds, not in their sense' (134, 137).

when ‘God’s name and Ciarán’s were magnified by [his] saving the book from the fox’ (Stokes 266).

The literature Joyce put in his belly, however, certainly does decompose. As stated, Joyce has a compost heap that breaks down and recombines elements as large as myths and as small as sentences and words. This is the ‘robblemint’ from which ‘Dame Parlet’ pulls out the Letter; and also the ‘dungheap’, the ‘wit’s waste’, from which Shem makes his special ‘synthetic ink and sensitive paper for his own end’ (*FW* 424.36, 124.23-4, 185.7-8). The compost heap is also the ‘humptyhillhead’ at Howth (3.20)—recalling Humpty Dumpty, who like Tim Finnegan also had a great fall and became incapacitated, going to pieces. HCE proudly carries this important hump of mixed contents on his back (‘hold[ing] his head as high as a howeth, the famous eld duke alien, with a hump of grandeur on him’ (197.2-4)) and later takes the role of ‘HUMP’ the father in the play that begins II.1. We find another such container in the image of Santa’s sack, which ALP carries. The gifts inside for all her children are the ‘*game* in her mixed baggyrhatty [baccarat]’ (my italics; 209.10), and McHugh identifies this as *game* in the sense of ‘meat’ (*Annotations* 209), bringing us back to the hunting motif. Shaun the Postman also carries a mailbag, another great mixed container, which Glasheen likens to a ‘womb’ (229), a harvesting or hiding place for babies, just as the dump heap of Kate and the All-Father once was. To these conceptual models we can add the digestive system of Joyce and Shem the foxes.

It is worth remarking, however, that in producing *Finnegans Wake* Joyce *qua* fox exhibits a capacity for *selective* digestion. Significantly, many pieces of the literature he ‘ate’ retain some of their pre-existent shapes after going through his digestive processes, and these distortions in turn affect the reader’s ability to recognize the source materials:

Heated residence in the heart of the orangeflavoured mudmound had partly obliterated the negative [...] causing some features palpably nearer your pecker [closer to your nose] to be swollen up most grossly while the further back we manage to wiggle the more we need the loan of a lens to see as much as the hen saw. (111.33-112-2)

This retention of certain forms is vital in the work's opposition to any so-called 'collective amnesia' (G. Gibson 82) or 'historical amnesia' (A. Gibson & Platt 15). *Finnegans Wake* does not work to restore or destroy the past, but rather its careful (re)presentation of past elements promotes a judiciously informed progress. Santayana wrote that progress, 'far from constituting in change, depends on retentiveness'; 'readaption is the price of longevity' but '[n]ot all readaption . . . is progress, for ideal identity must not be lost' (82-83). What Joyce does not (or cannot) break down and completely reform points us toward still durable, useful forms. As Parry writes of poetic verses, however, each element 'with each new generation . . . must undergo the twofold test of being found pleasing and useful' (330). Joyce has offered us 'lots of fun at *Finnegans Wake*'; the hope is that we will want to chase and consume these materials too, for our own ends. The book the fox devours is a lessonbook, but upon regurgitation it emerges as a holy book, which will eventually become another poet-fox's lessonbook in the future.

We have seen how the pretence of Joyce's book as oral literature should encourage the next stage of an oral/written cycle, which should always continue and which Joyce knows from multiple perspectives. Diarmuid Ó Giolláin writes, 'Literature has always been enriched by folklore, and the history of narratives passes from the oral to the literary and back again, and, in the twentieth century, includes narratives mediated by new technologies such as radio, cinema, television, sound recordings, the Internet, and so forth' (34). *Finnegans Wake* certainly tries to take early- and mid-twentieth-century inventions into account, and in certain cases Joyce's

book sometimes seems allied with even more recent communicative technology and practices. The next and final chapter will note how Joyce's appropriation of texts based on their sonic qualities resembles the remix processes of contemporary DJs. These postmodern musicians rearrange audio recordings in ways that often violate copyright laws. Likewise, aware of the transgressive nature of his own composition, in *Finnegans Wake* Joyce emphasizes themes of plagiarism and piracy, two practices related to what is necessary to bring about mythic, conglomeratic literature in the modern age.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION: PLAGIARISM AND PIRACY TOWARDS TRADITION

Throughout this thesis we have seen how *Finnegans Wake* can promote a greater capacity for mythic or imaginative thinking. We have also taken note of how much readymade material Joyce felt free to reuse within the work—everything from ancient and medieval sources to scraps of text from relatively recent authors (such as Mark Twain and R. A. S. Macalister) as well as conglomerated characterizations of his contemporaries (such as Lévy-Bruhl and Wyndham Lewis). The creation of myth-oriented literature—the altered return of culturally significant narratives and figures—necessarily entails the copying and incorporation of pre-existent material in acts that today might be considered plagiaristic or piratic. This concluding chapter will explore how Joyce responds to these modern conceits by cultivating the identity of a plagiarist, Shem the sham, and by adding themes of piracy to his text. Lastly, applying and extending the relation between culture-combining literature and twentieth-century media and technology, which *Finnegans Wake* references, we will compare Joyce the would-be musician with a remix DJ, replaying and remixing materials famous and obscure. Like these DJs, Joyce radically alters his sources' contexts but nevertheless makes sure that his blended composition 'is pleasing to the ear' (*JJ* 702).

Because Joyce has made artistic appropriations from an immense range of source material, reading *Finnegans Wake* can bring about increased awareness of our shared, highly heterogeneous cultural inheritance. We recognize the knowledge we have, and what we can interpret from the book, within a greater, older, varied

imaginative context. For instance, many readers of *Finnegans Wake* happen upon what appear to be references to current events or to themselves: sometimes a strange phrase or word will seem to indicate the reader's own name, or the name of one of his or her friends. Though we know Joyce could not have placed these specific, prophetic allusions in *Finnegans Wake* on purpose, we are happy to discern them from within the strange text. We may not be able to find or follow Joyce's logic in certain passages, but by exercising creative and interpretive skills we perceive ourselves as part of a vast, communal, meaningful transtextual system. Engaged in these practices, perceiving and pursuing greatly divergent elements and ideas from the nexus Joyce has provided, we are each better able to feel how our self and our world today connect with history and the art and people and even rubbish of the past.

Though composed of a strange conglomeration of fragments, the book exudes a quality of completeness, intimating that everything in the universe may be connected even though, like all the king's men regarding Humpty Dumpty, we cannot put it all back together again to form a uniform whole. As has Tim Finnegan, Humpty has fallen; but this accident proves a *felix culpa* that results in a new revival for humanity, a phoenix rising from the ashes of the great egg's demise<sup>1</sup>. By slipping<sup>2</sup>, falling and cracking up, Humpty bequeaths to us the valuable 'dumplan' (*FW* 79.29), the organized compost heap which is the clumsy All-Father Finn's body as well as the city of Dublin: 'the quare old buntz [...] Dear Dirty Dumpling [Dublin], foosterfather [first or foster father; *fooster* meaning "bungler" in Anglo-Irish]' (215.13-14). He cannot be put back together again as he was, but Humpty's dump

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1 In *A Vision* Yeats associated the 'Great Wheel' of recurrent time with the eggs of the phoenix, 'the great eggs which turn inside out without breaking the shell' (*A Critical Edition* 175). In *Finnegans Wake* Joyce combines 'phoenix' with *O felix culpa* at least three times, sometimes with an added connotation toward Dublin's Phoenix Park: 'Colporal Phailinx' (346.35), 'old phoenix portar' (406.10), and 'If you want to be felixed come and be parked' (454.34).

<sup>2</sup> Note that the jumbled language of *Finnegans Wake* resembles slips of the tongue. These apparent errors, however, are not accidental but instead 'are volitional and are the portals of discovery', just as Stephen characterizes the apparent mistakes of Shakespeare (*U* 9.229).



(also the excrement with which Shem writes), an agglomeration of already-processed texts and information, might be reformed into something more presentable, relevant or worthwhile for a modern audience. Joyce, undertaking these processes of decomposition and revision, ostensibly utilizes the dual guiding principles of alchemy: *solve* and *coagula* (analysis and reconstruction)<sup>3</sup>. After analyzing old pre-existent constructs, selectively digesting them in his fox's stomach (as explained in the previous chapter), Joyce looks over his notes and drafts and synthesizes the disassembled pieces back together in a new arrangement that can more efficiently address his more contemporary audience. Additionally, Joyce often *disassembles* what he has disassembled, hiding his sources by combining many materials or ideas together into the same word or phrase. As discussed in chapter two, this obfuscation leads the readers of *Finnegans Wake* to become like Vico's first people, (re)creating mythic material in their attempts to uncover and make imaginative sense of the partially occluded names and references to external sources.

## 1. QUOTATION AND IMITATION

*Finnegans Wake* with its wide-ranging remixings allows readers to re-experience many elements of the world, long past and recent, from myth-oriented perspectives that modernity rarely affords. In modernity, however, the author of such a reassemblage of others' work might very well be looked down upon as a copier. Joyce accepts this role, understanding that the construction of tradition-channelling art necessitates the reuse of past works often without formally quoting from them, even

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<sup>3</sup> For wider investigations of the alchemical overtones in Joyce's work, see DiBernard's *Alchemy and Finnegans Wake* and more recently Terrinoni's *Occult Joyce*.

though this omission of explicit citations may run afoul of modern writing conventions.

Joyce strongly and curiously rejected the use of quotation marks, the so-called ‘perverted commas’ (*LIII* 99)), because he considered their appearance ‘most unsightly’ and their effect to ‘give an impression of unreality’ (*JJ* 353). By introducing his characters’ words with dashes instead, Joyce—whether he intended this or not—mirrors the motif that some editors of old Irish manuscripts have used to bring attention to variant portions of text, those not found in all the copies of a story that they combine into one. For instance, see Cecile O’Rahilly’s edition of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*:

On the morrow they went over Iraird Culenn. Cú Chulainn went forward and came upon the charioteer of Órlám, son of Ailill and Medb, at a place called Tamlachta Órlám a little to the north of Dísert Lochait where he was cutting wood.

—According to another version, however, it was the shaft of Cú Chulainn’s chariot that had broken and he had gone to cut a new shaft when he met the charioteer of Órlám. But according to this version it was the charioteer who cut the shafts. . . .

—Or (according to another version), Fiacha said . . .

—(According to one version) he was a week at Áth nGreacha . . . (149, 175, 177)

Viewing the speeches of Joyce’s characters in this context would underscore their function as various, supplemental perspectives *on* and *within* a shared narrative. Each voice serves as an alternative to the others, and all of them are qualitatively different from the formulations of the narrator of any given episode, the voice which Joyce’s presentation offers as if it were the statement of record.

Moreover, as Eloise Knowlton writes, by not using quotation marks Joyce ‘signals a wider and deeper rejection of the system they implement: this distinctness, this separation, this order of containment of language and of us’ (2). Referred to as a type of ‘container’ itself and represented in Joyce’s notes by the appropriate box (‘□’)

siglum, *Finnegans Wake* allows for few distinct ‘containers’ within its text. Instead, its composition breaks down and mixes together ingredients of all sorts: historical facts blur with legends, philosophy and science with fairy tales, and various words, voices and languages also blend together. To give one example of how this ‘corruption’ transpires on the textual level: the formulation of the portmanteau ‘summonorother’ (*FW* 255.5-6) erases the borders between each word in the phrase ‘someone or other’, and also eliminates the separation between this utterance and the word *summoner*. The lack of demarcation between elements (of different sorts, from different sources) is responsible for a great deal of the difficulty we experience when reading *Finnegans Wake*; and this deliberate indiscrimination and disregard for keeping useful materials separated by their type and source is also a trope common in some mythic literature of the past<sup>4</sup>. Modernity, in contrast, has for the most part ‘drawn a line. A line around voices. A line under the past. It has circled, encompassed, enclosed voices, in order to separate them, in order to order them . . . . Modernity has invented a means by which to enact this separation, this bordering of language: quotation’ (Knowlton 15). Joyce’s techniques breach these lines of strict division, and with *Finnegans Wake* even the introductory dashes once used in place of quotation marks are for the most part absent.

Until three or four centuries ago, works of art in the Western world frequently imitated not only nature but, unscrupulously, other works of art as well, for these productions were seen to exist naturally as features of an imitable cultural landscape. The ancient Greeks and Romans considered *imitatio* (imitation or mimesis) and *aemulatio* (emulation) to be positive aspects of the creative process, and this

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<sup>4</sup> As noted in chapter one, medieval Irish bards especially would combine history with myth and past legend with more contemporary occurrences.

philosophy of art came into prominence again in the Renaissance.<sup>5</sup> ‘Unoriginal’ foundations, premises, plots, characters and materials that audiences already knew and believed valuable, almost seem the very basis for many of the most lauded works in the Western tradition, beginning with the epics of Homer and Vergil and continuing at least through Shakespeare’s plays.<sup>6</sup>

The emergence of copyright laws as well as the invention and widespread use of the printing press and photography changed all this, yet certain prominent Modernist artists and writers at times spoke audaciously about the value of artistically appropriating or even ‘stealing’ others’ work. T. S. Eliot famously wrote, ‘Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different’ (153). Echoing this, Picasso said that ‘Good artists copy, great artists steal’ (qtd. in Linzmayer 137). Similar to how Joyce when composing *Finnegans Wake* kept notebooks full of variations of other authors’ ideas and phrases, Picasso too filled many notebooks with ‘copies of other [artists’] work’ in attempts to ‘reconceive the originals he copied . . . rework[ing] diverse influences into a single work’ of his own (Walther 44, 73). Picasso is said to have ‘learnt . . . by copying’ (ibid. 59), and Joyce told Arthur Power that the best way to evaluate or ‘test a work of art is to copy a page of it’ (*JJ* 609n).

Like Picasso (‘If there is something to steal, I steal it!’ (qtd. in Scarborough 37)), Joyce was opportunistic in his artistic appropriations, always alert and aware that the thing he was reading or overhearing might prove useful within his own writing:

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<sup>5</sup> See in particular Conte’s *The Rhetoric of Imitation*, which discusses Vergil and other Latin poets; DellaNeva’s ‘Reflecting Lesser Lights: Imitation of Minor Writers in the Renaissance’, which discusses Petrarch and his contemporaries; and Muller’s ‘Rubens’s Theory and Practice of the Imitation of Art’. Knowlton, in her study of Joyce and citation, writes that the ‘classically condoned Aristotelian principle of imitation’ served as ‘the guiding principle of artistic practice’ until ‘the seventeenth century’ (23), but I find this to be too generalized.

<sup>6</sup> Aware of the precedent for the English literary tradition to build upon foreign readymade structures, Joyce himself once pointedly referred to the *Canterbury Tales* as ‘a version of the *Decameron*’ and *Paradise Lost* as ‘a puritanical transcript of the *Divine Comedy*’ (*OCPW* 164).

‘Chance furnishes me with what I need. I’m like a man who stumbles: my foot strikes something, I look down, and there is exactly what I’m in need of’ (qtd. in Mercanton 24)<sup>7</sup>. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce was in need of an assortment of established ideas and figures to synthesize, and snatches of source texts to reconfigure, all of which he was happy to take and alter to fit his own text’s needs. ‘Everything Joyce reads is up for grabs . . . for mutation,’ Knowlton writes. ‘Everything he reads, just as everything he experiences, is grist for his mill . . . At play among the stacks, Joyce enacts a gleeful and utterly rapacious dismemberment of the texts and figures of the past. Joyce’s attitude toward books will mirror his attitude toward people: they exist to serve him in his writerly quest’ (37). Samuel Beckett seems to agree with these sentiments, but is not as harsh: ‘He was a great exploiter. Not perhaps an exploiter of his friends. . . . Joyce was a synthesizer, he wanted to put everything, the whole of human culture, into one or two books . . . [He] was a greedy writer’ (45, 47, 49).

Joyce takes whatever he finds valuable from the wealth of sources he comes in contact with, and to a large degree shows no guilt, behaving as if no crime were being committed against the perceived owners of the desired material. Though Shem may have shame and guilt written all over him, in *Exiles* an exchange between the appropriately named *Robert* (a writer) and *Richard* (another writer and a man whose wife Robert covets) appears to play out the dynamic of free plagiarism, with the woman in question standing as a metaphor for art:

ROBERT. [...] I love her and I will take her from you, however I can, because I love her.

RICHARD. [...] Do you mean by stealth or by violence? Steal you could not in my house because the doors were open: nor take by violence if there were no resistance. (62)

In much the same way as *Robert*, Joyce would be able to appropriate whatever

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<sup>7</sup> I use Richard Ellmann’s English translation, given in *JJ* 661n.

material he chooses, whether others would deem the actions morally or even legally wrong, because the texts he found were as good as open to him, and because he was met with no resistance.

Joyce even works into *Finnegans Wake* the inevitable rebuff of all this literary theft: that by modern standards it seems quite like plagiarism. As shown in the passage quoted below, the text remarks that we cannot figure out how much (or how little) of Shem's literary output is his own since we cannot discern all of the original source texts after Shem has borrowed and altered phrases from them, rewriting (or writing over) them. It seems too difficult to compare Shem's phony text with the status quo his work disrupts and conceals:

One cannot even begin post figure out a statusquo ante as to how slow in reality the [...] nate Hamis [Latin and Hungarian: 'false-born'], really was. Who can say how many pseudostylic shamiana, how few or how many of the most venerated public impostures, how very many piously forged palimpsests slipped in the first place by this morbid process from his pelagiarist [plagiarist/Pelagius] pen? (181.34-182.3)<sup>8</sup>

The word *palimpsests* refers to manuscripts written on more than once, each revision transcribed over the last—a frequent practice when vellum was a valuable commodity. The last item, the 'pelagiarist pen', references Pelagius, a monk from the British Isles born in the fourth century, who denied original sin. In other words, the pen of Shem denies plagiarism as inherently sinful. This is how Joyce's composition process worked as well; without this sort of opportunistic cribbing we would not have *Finnegans Wake*, nor would we have had much of the other traditional literature of the past.

Later in the book, one of the people denounces HCE with these words: 'Tallhell [To hell] and Barbados wi ye and your Errian coprulation [Aryan/Irish

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<sup>8</sup> In 'Circe' Bloom too is accused of being 'A plagiarist. A soapy sneak masquerading as a *littérateur*' (U 15.822-23).

coprophilic copulation]! Pelagiartist!' (525.6-7). We thus find another reference to Pelagius near a connotation of excrement, the material from which Shem the plagiarist makes ink for his 'pelagiartist pen', used to transcribe a remixed or 'copulated' text of Irish heritage. A dozen lines below, on the same page, HCE is compared to a fish or '*salmoner*' who has been caught in a 'fishnoo' [fishnet; Vishnu, a god half-man, half-fish] (525.21, 27). While '*salmoner*' obviously references Finn McCool, who received wisdom by touching a salmon with his thumb, the 'noo'/net proves another reference to plagiarism, which comes from the Latin *plaga*, meaning 'net' or 'snare'. ('Noo' connotes *new* as well: a plagiarized text presents itself as something new, though a closer inspection would reveal it to be 'the same returns' (18.5).) Indicating a trap, *plaga* also gives us *plagium*, 'kidnapping', and the next section will examine the kidnapping pirate of Irish history and folklore who inhabits Joyce's text.

## 2. PIRACY AND THE 'PRANKQUEAN' IN *FINNEGANS WAKE*

Unlike spoken words, which are transient, written words exert a degree of possession over their referents. Writing by its very nature is piratic. Accordingly, the language of *Finnegans Wake* is represented by the Jolly Roger, whose colours are connoted by the blackness of ink and the whiteness of paper. These two opposing colours somehow reciprocate, watching each other's back to keep vigil over the cultural material their thievish alliance stores away, wrapped within their text: 'black looking white and white guarding black [two "blackguards"], in that siamixed [Siamese] twoatalk used twist stern [Laurence Sterne, and the rear of a ship] swift [Jonathan Swift; also the ship's speed] and jolly roger' (66.19-21). Sailing fast under the pirate flag, Joyce's writing takes on board and converts to its enterprise any piece of language it chooses,

whether these be mythological concepts, pre-existent characters, names of real people, full sentences or individual words or letters.

Joyce includes a well-known historical pirate in his amorphous narrative as well, a woman from sixteenth-century Ireland whose story soon entered Irish folklore: Grace O'Malley, who becomes the 'prankquean' (*FW* 21.15). The mischievous character's name seems derived from the Irish *praiscin* ('pranshkeen' in Anglo-Irish), meaning 'apron' (Glasheen 238). Furthering the etymological links between *plagiarism* and *piracy* to include the pirate prankquean, *apron* suggests fabric—as does *text* in the sense of *textile*—and the Latin *plaga* has an ancient Greek stem that meant 'weave or entwine' (see Whitaker & White). These connotations and more appear when Grace O'Malley links with the *mailbag* of Shaun the Post: '*Daily Maily, fullup Lace* [more fabric]! *Mothelup* [Mother of] *Joss* [Chinese for "God"]!' (177.5-6). With the religious overtones here befitting her first name, Grace O'Malley becomes Mary the Virgin Mother, while the *quean* within 'prankquean' makes her also a whore by Medieval English slang (and during her life O'Malley had been decried as promiscuous<sup>9</sup>). Joyce again references O'Malley along with Shaun's sack (which contains the letters of the world) in another reworked prayer toward the end of *Finnegans Wake*: 'Bring us this days our maily bag!' (603.7-8).

The main prankquean episode occurs at *FW* 21.5-23.16 and is based on an incident said to have taken place in 1576, when Grace O'Malley stole an earl's son away from Howth Castle because she was not granted entry. Legends sprang up about this occurrence, and Joyce works the story even further away from historical fact, changing it into a fairy tale in which the prankquean steals male twins away, one at a time, until she prompts Finn, as the castle's lord 'Jarl van Hooother' (the Earl of

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<sup>9</sup> O'Malley's history is recounted in many places, one of the best and most recent being *Ireland's Pirate Queen* by Anne Chambers.



Howth; 21.10)<sup>10</sup>, to action upon her third visit. The two stolen brothers of course correspond to Shem and Shaun: Tristopher and Hillary, respectively, melancholy (*triste*) and jocular (*hilarity*)<sup>11</sup>. The prankquean takes each one in turn back to her own castle and corrupts/educates them.

What O'Malley's character does to Tristopher/Shem is of particular interest to us in this chapter: 'she had her four owlers masters for to tauch him [touch him/teach him] his tickles and she convorted him to the onesure allgood and he became a luderman' (21.28-30). The 'four owlers masters' who school Shem, and simultaneously tickle him, are the Four Masters who wrote the Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland in the early seventeenth century. The prankquean thus makes Shem a *luder*: in some sense a Lutheran, but also a 'whore' in Danish and a 'scoundrel' in German. Further, in Latin *ludicer* means 'playful', and Shem is also made into someone who alludes, an '*alluder-man*', as he will be in his jocular plagiaristic writing. According to Campbell and Robinson's account, Tristopher/Shem 'became a blackguard' under the prankquean's care (51). Thus Shem's writing is a sham in the same way that he himself is a sham: we will recall that that Shem's favourite materials, black ink and white paper, which he makes out of his excrement, were themselves likened to blackguards at *FW* 66.20. Moreover, the English word *owlers* refers to people who smuggle wool—hence more fabric and more underhandedness. By converting Shem to 'the onesure allgood' the prankquean dissuades him from viewing the world in terms of apparent divisions and separations, forecasting the philosophy evident in Joyce's work of remixings and conglomerations.

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<sup>10</sup> Since Jarl is a guise of Finn, and Finn in turn is associated with Huckleberry *Finn*, throughout this episode Joyce identifies the master of the house with Mark Twain: 'Mark the Wans', 'Mark the Twy', 'Mark the Tris' ('Mark the 1-2-3'; 21.18, 22.5, 29).

<sup>11</sup> Tristopher contains 'Tristan', the nephew of King Mark (Twain) of Ireland, and *Hillary* foreshadows how Shaun will take over for his humpbacked father. This pair of names also aligns with Giordano Bruno's idea, so favoured by Joyce, that everything recognizes itself through its opposite: '*sese ipsum per aliudpiam agnoscere contrarium*' (*FW* 287.26-27).

Perhaps most significantly, Shem learns to *like* the Irish heritage and the notion of rewriting it, which become his pursuits: he is taught ‘his tickles’, i.e. the interests that will invigorate him.

The place where the prankquean would have taken the kidnapped boys was O’Malley’s castle on the Lough Corrib, which the historical pirate had captured from—of all families—the Joyce clan. Previously nicknamed ‘Cock’s Castle’, the Joyces renamed it ‘Hen’s Castle’ because the woman leader defended it against them, and later against the English, so well (see Chambers 49). The prankquean is another aspect of ALP, also known as the Hen. In *Finnegans Wake* Jarl van Hoothe’s dwelling is his ‘*homerigh, castle and earthenhouse*’ (an ‘HCE’ chain; my italics; 21.13). Thus Shem, to become the next transcriber of a highly heterogeneous tradition, is taken from the domain of Homer (the prototypical traditional poet), transported and re-educated in Joyce’s house, and then returned after having learned the art of plagiarism. Shem’s education in the ways of Irish tradition, blackguardism and allusion corresponds to his having taken dictation from ALP: these instructions by way of the female prepare and prompt him to write the Letter.

This eventual ‘semposed’ (‘Shem-composed’ (*FW* 66.19)) writing process, however, will make it hard for readers to trace many of the appropriated elements: ‘these will not breathe [...] the secrest of their soorcelossness [“the secrets of their sourcelessness”]’ (23.19). Just as a man is not a man ‘when he is a [...] Sham’ (170.23-24), the secret of the writing’s apparent uniqueness, or originality, is that it is *not* source-less at all: the ‘all-riddle of it’ is ‘That that is allruddy with us’ (274.2-3). And though many sneaky, perhaps underhanded tactics have gone into the book’s production, and though many seedy stories occur within it, from these downcast evil things (o happy fault!) comes a compost heap of goodness: ‘O foenix culprit! Ex nickylow [the Devil = Old Nick] malo [Latin for ‘evil’] comes mickelmassed [a

mound of the Archangel *Michael* (= Finn *McCool*)] bonum' (23.16-17).

Upon arriving at Howth Castle a third time, the prankquean by yet again knocking on the door finally rouses the master of the house to action. Finn/Jarl van Hooter runs to the door and commands that this business be closed down: 'he clopped his rude hand to his eacy hitch [a reverse "ECH" chain to bookend the "HCE" near the start of the episode] and he ordurd and his thick spch spck for her to shut up shop' (23.3-6). The fairy tale thus seems to end quite anticlimactically, with Jarl van Hooter's mere command apparently defeating the prankquean. A deeper investigation, however, suggests that the story does not stop here. '[O]rdurd' expresses not only 'order' and 'ordured' (that is, to have made filth) but also *ord*, Norwegian for 'word'. Order does not seem conducive to the elimination of borders that *Finnegans Wake* entails, and *ord/order* cannot have so clearly triumphed if this story has been 'the first peace [piece] of *illiterative* porthery [alliterative poetry] in all the flamend floody flatuous world' (my italics; 23.9-10). Illiteracy seems an enemy of *ord/order*, and as 'ill-literature' it corresponds to the immoral nature that Joyce is pleased to associate with the Letter and its scribe, Shem. Perhaps the prankquean goes away at Jarl van Hooter's bidding because she knows that she has already won by having kidnapped, corrupted and returned the children—particularly Shem, who, like a cuckoo raised in another's nest, will endow a 'homerole' ('Homer' and 'Home Rule'; 445.32) tradition with the techniques he learned at Joyce/Hen's Castle, much as Joyce endows his native tradition with foreign materials.

Even though the prankquean causes Jarl van Hooter to perform the actions that end the episode, these very actions will soon return him to another period of inaction. The ending of one story marks the beginning of another, as the intermittent rising or waking of Finn only marks his next fall and the start of the next cycle. Glasheen sees a parallel between the prankquean's provocations and the function of

Hilda Wangel (215), who provokes Solness, Ibsen's *Master Builder*, from a passive state to climb up his tower, from which he falls to his death. Joyce assimilates Solness the Master Builder with Finn ('Bygmester Finnegan' (*FW* 4.18)<sup>12</sup>), and the thunder-like sound of Tim Finnegan's fall is synonymous with the slamming shut of the clapper on Jarl van Hooother's door: i.e., the hundred-letter word at 23.5-7. As we noted in chapter two, the narrative world of *Finnegans Wake* depends on Finn remaining unconscious; in the prankquean episode the pirate queen effectively causes Finn/Jarl van Hooother to knock himself out again, which figuratively presses the reset button of that cycle.

### 3. JOYCE AS LITERARY REMIX DJ

Leo Bersani has described Joyce in his later career 'as a kind of open switchboard picking up voices from all over', and has stressed that Joyce's function as a conduit for text he did not originate 'deserves more attention' ('Against...' 210). This 'switchboard' model, however, would suggest that Joyce's role was of a relatively passive nature, when we know that (in his final book especially) an immense amount of conscious effort went into his acts of searching out sources, following up on 'voices' after he overheard them, and working and reworking the various strands together through multiple drafts to produce multifarious textual tapestries. 'Picking up' and deciding to appropriate certain readymade influences merely presages the active composition process that follows.

To better illustrate the usefulness and the appeal of his appropriations, Joyce can be more profitably likened to a contemporary remix DJ—not a disc jockey who

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<sup>12</sup> The original, Norwegian title of Ibsen's play was *Bygmester Solness*.

dutifully replays one record at a time for an audience, but rather a figure who alters how other musicians' records are heard, choosing to play only certain sections from certain songs, changing their tempos or pitches, and often playing multiple recordings in unison. As a musician, a remix DJ treats entire readymade, pre-recorded soundscapes as if each were but a singular note to be played by pressing one button on a computer or by letting one record spin on a turntable. These DJs can easily cut back and forth between various records and also play multiple recordings together. Similarly, the effect of Joyce's writing has long been characterized as the production of 'chords' of meaning through confluences of words that, as 'notes', underscore the musical resonance of language. Stephen Dedalus learned the binding power of recalled readymade expression in *A Portrait*, for when he 'drew forth a phrase from his treasure . . . [t]he phrase and the day and the scene harmonised in a chord. Words' (147). In *Ulysses*, and in 'Sirens' in particular<sup>13</sup>, Joyce presses the technique further, 'endeavor[ing]', writes David Daiches, 'to use words like musical chords, saying several things at once in one instant' (129). In *Finnegans Wake* this synaesthesia occurs not (or not only) in the reader's mind, through combinations of words and ideas, but directly on the page itself, as Michael Kaufmann explains: 'The layers of narrative and character . . . are laid out directly on top of one another in *lexical space*, the *iconic space* of the word' (70). Daniel Melnick writes that Joyce's eventual goal was to use 'whole works' of literature as he once used words, 'like musical chords' (58) in his own symphony. Comparably, as noted, remix DJs can play whole songs and even albums of music simultaneously, as if each were a musical note in a chord.

Though Joyce has a greater degree of control over the details, able to alter individual letters of words easily, there are manifold analogues between *Finnegans Wake*'s 'oral-aspiring' literary remix of various texts, languages, histories and myths,

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<sup>13</sup> See A. Walton Litz's seminal investigation, in *The Art of James Joyce*, of the 'overture' of 'Sirens'.

and the techniques of postmodern DJs. *Finnegans Wake* seems just as likely to reuse familiar material as it is to reference the most obscure facts and expressions. By playing different records or (as is just as common today) by using computer sampling techniques to replay select portions of recorded sounds, the best DJs make it a point to mix together well-known and little-known songs, often including sound bites from other sources (newscasts, political speeches, television or film dialogue) as well. In this way popular songs from the past are perceived anew in different contexts, combined with other songs or sounds with which they sound appealing. The obscure records thus receive more attention and consideration once the listeners figure out their titles and the musicians behind them. In turn, many listeners search out the complete songs or the other audio sources from which these previously unknown beats and pieces of dialogue were pulled. Obviously Joyce's obscurantism also strongly encourages readers to track down his references. The more recognizable elements, on the other hand, such as the great cultural myths, are perceived anew, having been altered and placed in unfamiliar contexts. For example, 'Gran Geamatron' (257.4-5) combines the figure of Mother Earth with the ancient Greek equivalent Gaia, the study of geometry (literally 'earth-measure'), a nod to the great tetragrammaton (YHWH), and the facts that *gran* is 'great' in Italian and *mêtêr* is 'mother' in German. As mentioned, Joyce frequently blends elements according to a sound-based logic, which aligns quite well with the guiding principle for remix DJs: whatever clever meaning any particular assortment of records may suggest, ultimately the mix must simply sound good.

The members of a listening audience experience a binding sensation between their contemporary sensibilities and their cultural roots when they perceive various sounds, songs and overall styles of music blended together. Any older unknown song that did not previously seem a part of the listener's heritage would indeed become part

of it, to an extent, as soon as the DJ plays it in conjunction with more familiar songs. All songs within the DJ's mix become infused into a contemporary tradition, yet they also remain intact as parts of their respective prior musical traditions as well. This recalls an effect of *Finnegans Wake* discussed at the end of chapter three: the many foreign elements referenced in the text become part of Joyce's heavily Irish-flavoured mythos, yet each one retains its own cultural identity, which the reader still has the capacity to identify no matter how many extra connotations of other nationalities Joyce applies to it.

In the following long excerpt from *Finnegans Wake* Joyce describes his almost magical composition process as if it were Shem, in a foreign land, cooking the eggs of various countries according to the instructions of Irish tradition. Most of the major themes of this thesis can be found in his passage, and for easier readability Joyce's words have been set in bold type:

**[O]ur low hero was a self valeter by choice of need** [Shem/Joyce had no choice but to work through tradition quite alone] **so up he got** [...] **for the sake of akes** (the umpple [Humpty] **does not fall very far from the dumpertree** [Dumpty]) **which the moromelodious** [*moro*: 'black' in Italian] **jigsmith, in defiance of the Uncontrollable Birth Preservativation (Game and Poultry) Act** [against destroying eggs], **brooled** [broiled; *brûler*: 'burn' in French] **and cocked** [cooked] **and potched** [poached] **in an athanor** [a furnace used in alchemical digestion], **whites and yolks and yilks and whotes to the frulling** [*frullino*: 'egg whisk' in Italian] **fredonnance** [*fredonner*: 'to hum a tune' in French] [...] **and [with] Huster's micture** [*Huster*: 'cougher' in German; Irish 'Mc'-mixture; to *micturate* is to *urinate*] **and [...], acuredent to Sharadan's Art of Panning** [Sheridan's *Art of Punning*; *sharing* material; frying *pan*], **chanting, for all regale to the like of the legs** [= 'legacy' in French] **he left behind** [as Joyce left the land of his native tradition] [...], **his cantraps** [*cantrip*: trick or witchcraft; cf. the etymological chain of plagiarism-net-fabric-*trap*] **of fermented words, abracadabra calubra culorum** [= 'snake of the buttocks' in Latin], **(his oewfs** [*oeufs*: 'eggs' in French] [...], **his avgs** [*avga*: 'eggs' in Greek] [...], **his eiers** [= 'eggs' in Dutch] **Usquadmala** [*usque ad mala*: 'up to apples (or

evils)' in Latin; 'from eggs to apples' = 'from beginning to end'] **à la pomme de ciel** [= 'apples of the sky' in French], **his uoves** [*uovo*: 'egg' in Italian], **oves** [*ova*: 'eggs' in Latin] and **uves** [*ubh*: 'egg' in Irish] [...], **his ochiuri** [= 'poached eggs' in Rumanian] **sowtay** ['sowing' seeds + 'sauté'] **sowmmonay** [*saumon*: 'salmon' in French] [...], **his Frideggs** [fried eggs] [...] **Ah ho! If only he had listened better to the four masters that infanted him [...]**! (184.11-34)

When he was young, the Four Masters took Shem and *enchanted* (literally 'chanted into') or *infanted* ('without-speeched') him. Shem may spend his time 'chanting' the language of *Finnegans Wake* within his 'Haunted Inkbottle' (182.33) house—in a way similar to how Joyce chanted it in his mind during the years of its composition—but ultimately Shem, like Joyce, is a writer, not a singer or oral poet. Though his instinct was to 'have quilled seriph [= *seraph*: 'angel'] to sheepskin' parchment with 'borrowed plumes', modernity and its laws ('the pulpic dictators, on the nudgement of their legal advisers') have prevented him from recording his art in any straightforward or wholesome manner (182.11, 183.32, 185.2). Unable to use the sanctioned 'romeruled [Catholic/Irish Home Rule] stationery' or the 'mutton-suet' (185.4-5) ink, he instead must cultivate a darker, clandestine art which he learned from the sheep-stealing *owlers* Masters. Henceforth he transcribes a 'costive Satan's antimonian [*antimony*, a metal used in alloys; *antinomian*: 'lawless'] *manganese*' by using his 'wit's waste' (my italics; 184.36). This excrement is both the product of the selective digestion process of his fox's stomach as well as the treasure found in the communal compost heap, the 'Sam[e] Hill' (185.7-8) from which so many other authors have taken materials in the past, and from which our imaginations can still take materials today.

As readers of *Finnegans Wake* we should not only 'whet our wits' (18.25) by tracing all the references we can, perceived from our partial recognition of obscured nameforms, but we should also appreciate how these disparate elements, narratives



and figures—each of which once functioned in its own cultural environment—now live again within this mythic- and material-oriented text. For over sixteen years of toil on a book that many considered senseless and antithetical to our era, Joyce made great effort to prove how even one writer, craftily using a ‘pelagiarist pen’, could revivify various inactive traditions and infuse them into a strange work of literature that, in turn, could awaken the imaginative skills and latent mythic thinking of a modern readership.

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