

Joyce at Tara: The True Version of the Norman Invasion (Perhaps)

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'... that the blazings of their ouldmouldy gods may attend to them we pray ... (*Finnegans Wake*, p.382).

At the end of *A Portrait of the Artist*, James Joyce makes Stephen say, 'the shortest way to Tara was via Holyhead.' [AP232]. This was a fitting epigram for an Irish artist going forth into exile to forge the conscience of his race.¹ It also turned out to be a promise which Joyce fulfilled with surprising punctiliousness when he laid the cornerstone of his last work precisely at Tara—the ancient seat of the High Kings of Gaelic Ireland. The First Fragment of *Finnegans Wake*, as 'King Roderick O'Connor' is known—though strictly *fragment* is inaccurate since nothing had been broken—deals in general with a pattern of cultural disruption typical of Irish colonial history, and in particular with the downfall of Ruaidhrí O'Connor, 'the paramount chief polemarch and ... last pre-eminent high king of all Ireland' [380.12-21], who submitted to Henry II in 1172, abdicated by the Treaty of Windsor in 1183, and died in 1196. In it, Joyce examines the impact of the Norman invasion from which the whole narrative of Anglo-Irish history flows in a kind of *exitus et reditus* between 1171 and 1921. As such the first not-quite fragmentary writing provides a clear view of the national context of the whole work, suggesting the main directions in which it was tending from the moment of its conception.²

The 'Roderick' episode may be regarded as a drama or a pantomime, acted (knowingly or unknowingly) by the characters in the Chapelizod pub where the chapter to which it is tagged on as a coda is set (2.iii). Thus, in the seedy ambience of the Mullingar Inn—here styled 'Malincurred Mansion' [380.07]—the publican Earwicker dons the guise of old King Roderick while the customers take on the trappings of sundry earlier and later invaders of Ireland. Under the form of a double narrative which adroitly combines the referents of pub and palace (especially in such phrases as 'royal spit' [381.07] and 'most regal of belches' [381.21]), these re-enact the downfall of the centralised Gaelic State of ancient Ireland. For just as King Ruaidhrí was forced to accept a lesser share of his former territory by the Normans, Earwicker here 'suck[s] up' [380.30] the unfinished drinks left by his departing customers. Next, overcome with alcohol, he 'slump[s] to throne' [382.26]), collapsing on his bed—or possibly on the toilet.

¹ An early version of this epigram can be found in the Trieste Notebook, printed Robert Scholes, ed., *The Workshop of Daedalus* (1965), p.101: 'The shortest way from Cape of Good Hope to Cape Horn is to sail away from it. The shortest route to Tara is via Holyhead.'

² In a letter of March 11th 1923, Joyce told Miss Weaver: 'Yesterday I wrote two pages—the first I have written since the last Yes of Ulysses' [SL296]. He reworked the episode in several typescripts during 1923 and then left it aside until 1938 when he revised it for inclusion in the *Wake*, where it features as the 'Roderick O'Connor' episode at the end of 'Scene in the Pub' chapter of the second part (2.iii, pp. 380-382). For copies of the early manuscript and typescripts, see David Hayman, *A First Draft Version of Finnegans Wake* (1962), *The James Joyce Archive*, 55 (Garland Press, 1979), and Richard Brown, 'In Between the Sheets,' in *James Joyce Broadsheet*, 29 (June 1989).

The use of Ruaidhrí's anglicised name-form specifies an Anglo-Irish, rather than a Gaelic, viewpoint which is constitutionally derogatory towards its royal eponym.³ (Rory', the other form, occurs in connection with the doom-laden phrase 'end to the regginbrow' on the first page of the *Wake*.) At the same time the januslike scenario, involving pub-and-palace, clearly enshrines a comic verdict on the ethos of Irish-Ireland and—more broadly—the Irish national character. In the 'Questions' chapter, Joyce amusingly describes the race from which he sprang as 'the most phillohippuc theobibbous paupulation in the world' [140.16]. In choosing 'Tim Finnegan's Wake' as the theme-tune of his last work, he effectually endorsed the benignly satirical view of the modern Irish character as being based on the spiritous enthusiasms of pub.⁴ As Kenner says, 'when King Ruaidhrí submitted to Henry that was closing time on the kingship ... after which, a king in name only, he was years finishing off the dregs.'⁵ That bitter draught was still being consumed during Joyce's days in Ireland, when politicians often seemed less like idealists and dreamers than sleep-talkers reiterating the unpurged images of their nightmare history. Accordingly, the narrative is conducted a medley of Hiberno-English idioms ranging from the colloquial to the grandiloquent, yet never far from the belligerent amalgam of pride and abasement so characteristic of the literature of stage-Irishry. The effect is an epiphany of the linguistically pie-bald area of Anglo-Irish writing as a whole, a depressing sketch alleviated only by the catharsis of mordant laughter. In this regard, the texture of the episode itself exemplifies the condition to which the Irish world had been reduced by the historical events shadowed in it: here the form is the content.⁶ It exemplifies, in particular, a Babel of unharmonious ideolects, neatly summarised in the clever phrase 'diversed tongued' [381.20] which designates Roderick O'Connor's post-lapsarian palaver.

Joyce's handling of the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland as burlesque clearly inaugurated the dominant stylistic strategy of the *Wake*. More significantly perhaps, it reveals in outline, at the very foundations of Work in Progress, Joyce's ultimate attitude to the course of Irish history, with its schizophrenic cultural and political traditions. In other terms, the underlying topic—or rather, the fundamental problematic—addressed in *Finnegans Wake* is the colonial history of the country; and it was this which had always determined Joyce's characteristic way of restructuring the epistemological framework of literary fiction in despite of the conventional and harmonious models established by the English novelists. (It is by now a truism to remark that these were not adapted to the condition of Irish society.) In departing from the Norman Invasion of Ireland, Joyce chose to give priority to the overthrow of the ancient political and cultural unity of Ireland as a formative event in the tale of confusions which he inherited as his proper constituency—a tradition in which, as F. S. L. Lyons argued, culture and anarchy have often been synonymous.⁷ Viewed in this light, *Finnegans Wake* was in fact Joyce's latest response to the reality of Irish

³ Vide 018.25: '... the nameform that whets the wits that conveys contacts that sweetens sensation that drives desire that adheres to attachment that dogs death that bitches birth that entails the ensuance of existentiality.'

⁴ Hugh Kenner describes the Irish American ballad as 'A pseudo-Irish song ... that looks down at an Irishman in America, and ... wink[s] at his weakness.' Joyce's King Roderick is clearly an Irishman of this degenerate type. See *A Colder Eye* (1984), p.279.

⁵ Hugh Kenner, *A Colder Eye* (1984), p.273.

⁶ See Samuel Beckett's celebrated remark in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification [... &c.]* (1929; rep. 1972), p.14: Here form is content, content is form ... His writing is not about something; it is that something itself.'

⁷ See F. S. L. Lyons, the chapter on 'Unity and Diversity' in *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland* (1979), together with his chapter 'The Battle of Two Civilisations,' in *Ireland Since the Famine* (1971).

experience, in its structural aspect rather than its naturalistic appearance, and not rather than the essentially modernist experiment in universal writing which it is often taken for.

The Irish subject matter of the First Fragment has of course been recognised, and efforts have been made to draw powerful inferences from it. Unfortunately, our reading of the episode has recently been skewed by flagrant guesswork as to its national inspiration. Hugh Kenner set the ball in motion by reminding us that Rory O'Connor occupied the Four Courts for the Republic in 1922 and was shot by a Free State firing squad in the following year, asserting therewith that Joyce constructed the episode around the resemblance between the Republican leader and the Irish high king on the principle of complementary names and destinies.⁸ Since then W. J. McCormack has blandly suggested that 'the proclamation of 1922 prompted Joyce to write *King Roderick O'Connor* [sic]⁹ while, most recently of all, Seamus Deane cites 'the fall of the High King Rory O'Connor [sic]' and 'the execution of Rory O'Connor in 1923' as related instances of the theme of doomed leadership so deeply inscribed on the whole book.¹⁰ Yet there is no evidence in the text or in Joyce's notebooks, nor in his letters and recorded conversations, that he had the latter-day Rory in mind at all, who was in any case still alive at the time of writing and therefore offered less destiny for Joyce to contemplate.¹¹

It is not as if the early fragments were lacking clear traces of the work's initial orientation. Taken in concert with the three other drafts of 1923 ('Tristram and Iseult', 'St. Kevin', and 'The Colloquy of St. Patrick and Archdruid Balkelly'—the last named being set at Tara also), the 'Roderick' episode convincingly suggests that Joyce was intent in enlisting a concert of themes and relationships based on early Irish history and culture when he laid out the plans for *Finnegans Wake*.¹² Partly this shows his increasing concern to reappropriate Irish culture in the latter days of his continental exile—it is well known that he became enamoured with the *Book of Kells* while planning *Work in Progress*¹³—but also it reveals his concern to trace the structures of the modern Irish mind, and with it his own artistic consciousness, back to their sources in the past.

To take an instance, the 'Colloquy of Patrick and Balkelly', mentioned above, deals with a contest of magic between Christian and Druidic clerics in the course of which Joyce represents Patrick's triumph as the advent of a glaringly authoritarian dispensation of monotheism and autocracy to Ireland. The druid's inevitable defeat is commemorated the other hand as the sad passing a mystical world of colours. It takes no special insight into early Joycean aesthetics to appreciate that he is firmly on the side of the druid and his 'panepiphanal world' [611. 05-12], or that he distrusts the spiritual hegemony of a patron saint whose vision is 'tinged uniformly, allaroundside upinandoutdown' with the 'pure hueglut [of] most intensely saturated *one*'

⁸ Hugh Kenner, *A Colder Eye* (1983), p.275.

⁹ W. J. McCormack, 'French Revolution ... Anglo-Irish Literature ... Beginnings?: The Case of Maria Edgeworth,' in Gough and Dickson, eds., *Ireland and the French Revolution* (1990), p.229-30.

¹⁰ 'Joyce the Irishman', in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge (1990), p.49.

¹¹ He died on 7 Dec. 1923. Of the War of Independence and its sequel, Ellmann does however say that the 'only incident which stirred [Joyce's] imagination was the hunger strike of Terence MacSwiney—possibly a distant relation—in October 1920. James Joyce (1977), p.547.

¹² The chronology of the early Fragments is given in Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce* (1977), p.801. The relevant dates in 1923 are: 'Roderick' (380-82), March; 'Tristram and Iseult' (384-86), 'St. Kevin' pp.604-05), and pidgin fella Berkley' (pp.611-12), July-August; and 'Mamalujo' (2. iv, pp.383-99), September.

¹³ See Margot Norris, 'Finnegans Wake', in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce* (1990), p.170.

[612.14].¹⁴ That, in terms of literary epistemology, is the code of author-dominance—the very opposite of the method of multiple styles and phenomenologies endorsed by Joyce the writer. In pertinent sense, the colloquy is a political allegory. The effect of Patrick’s persuasive magic on King Leary is precisely to turn him from a democratic and pantheistic tribal chieftain into a Asiatic—or Carolingian—warlord who answers to the imperious title of ‘Highup Big Cockywocky Sublissimime Autocrat’ [612.12].

Yet modern Irish politics had considerable bearing on the way that Joyce addressed his material in the First Fragment. His choice of a scenario from the colonial history of Ireland inevitably invoked his attitude towards the question of Irish sovereignty, and more particularly his attitude towards the contemporary independence movement which culminated with the setting up of the Free State a year before the episode was written. For one Sinn Féin thinker at least, Darrell Figgis, the new national constitution ought to have taken the form of a revival of the Gaelic state—or, more precisely, states—of ancient Ireland,¹⁵ while other exponents of the nationalist ideology looked to it more vaguely as the fulfilment of Thomas Davis’s prophetic ballad, ‘A Nation Once Again’. Literary Revival writers under the tutelage of Yeats were involved in a valorisation of the Heroic Age of Gaelic society, and especially its heroic figures, Cuchulain and Fionn MacCumhal. Joyce, by contrast, sees a return to ‘samebold gamebold structure of our Finnius the old One’ [615.07] less as a restingplace for the troubled soul of Ireland than as part a recurrent process of cyclic alternations between the poles of an inherently unstable situation whose ‘highly charged electrons’ necessarily dance unceasingly ‘as hophazards can effective it’ [615.08] in an environment of contradictory signifiers primarily conditioned by the overlays of invading cultures.

The aspect of the ‘Roderick’ episode, with his comic enactment of the theme of Irish nationhood, which bears most emphatically on the aspirations of Irish Ireland is perhaps its treatment of the language question. Joyce does not enact the nationalist dream of resurrecting the original language of the Gaelic race (or any earlier inhabitants of Ireland); instead, he sticks to the broguish dialect of the Victorian stage-Irishman. He does so precisely because it is the post-colonial confusion languages and ideolects in Ireland which determined the Irish world that he knew and recognised in its dubious moral and intellectual character. Indeed, Shem’s celebrated version of the policy of the Language movement lower-cases English and Irish equitably, but offers only a plethora of languages in place of the cultural fantasy of revived and revivifying Irish: ‘he would wipe alley english spooker, multaphonaiksically speaking, off the face of the erse’ [178.06]. For Joyce, the historical overthrow of Gaelic centralism was the local equivalent of the biblical myth of the Tower of Babel, though characteristically he was prepared to see any invasion of Ireland as corresponding to the general pattern of confusion: ‘The *babblers* with their thangas vain have been (confusium hold them!) they were and went; thigging thugs were and houhnyrn songtoms were and comely norgels were and pollyfool fiansees ... And they fell upong one another: and they themselves have fallen.’¹⁶

¹⁴ Italics mine.

¹⁵ ‘In the eleventh century ... Ireland was almost the only country in Europe with a national State’; ‘In Ireland’s history more probably than in any other [country], the end is in the beginning and the beginning in the end.’ Darrell Figgis, *The Gaelic State in the Past and Future, or ‘The Crown of a Nation’* (1917), pp. 33 and 57-8.

¹⁶ [015.12ff] Together with the fair and dark foreigners of the Viking invasion and—more oddly—some Indian thugees, Swift’s Houyhnhnms here suggest that the epistemologically-perfect language in his rational horses is mired by association with the others.

Emphatically, Joyce did not share in the enthusiasms of the language revival movement with its implicit faith that Gaelic past would be revived when Ireland ‘recovered intellectual possession’ of its primordial culture.¹⁷ To his brother he wrote: ‘If the Irish programme did not insist on the Irish language, I suppose I could call myself a nationalist. As it is, I am content to recognise myself an exile: and prophetically, a repudiated one.’ [SL125] He believed that the Gaelic revolution-ists were facing in the wrong direction—away from Europe: ‘The Irish nation’s insistence on developing its own culture by itself is not so much the demand of a young nation that wants to make good in the European concert as the demand of a very old nation to renew under new forms the glories of a past civilization.’ In keeping with this outlook, the ‘Roderick’ episode is in one aspect a caricature of the cultural nostalgia of Irish-Ireland, though it also bears within itself a keen sense of pain and loss.

Far from presenting the Golden Age of Saints and Scholars as a sacred touchstone of the Irish nationality, Joyce served it up in *Finnegans Wake* as parody and farce. This was only to be expected, given the attitudes consistently expounded in his earlier writings and notably in the autobiographical novels, where his antipathy to the personnel of the Language Revival movement are conveyed with considerable animus. In *Stephen Hero*, at Patrick Pearse’s Gaelic class (conducted under a picture of the revivalist grammarian Father O’Growney), Stephen sardonically observes the mawkish levity of the young language enthusiasts at the Irish word for ‘love’ (*grá*),¹⁸ as well as some uncouth business with a handkerchief [SH58]. There is moreover a discernible hint of contempt in the unabashed confession that ‘[he] found it very troublesome to pronounce the gutturals but he did the best he could’ [SH58], though this phonemic snobbery was not perhaps perpetuated in more liberal philology of the later period.¹⁹

Though he regarded its the metropolitan propagandists with suspicion, Joyce was not entirely heartless about the linguistically marginalized residuum of living Gaelic culture—men and women in the West of Ireland. In ‘Ireland at the Bar’ (1907), he cited the poignant case of a native Irish speaker—one Myles Joyce of Maamtrasna—convicted of agrarian crime and deaf to the capital charges made against him as ‘a symbol of the Irish nation ... unable to appeal to the modern conscience of England and other countries’ [CW186]. Here, however, his sympathy is vitiated by the distancing-effect of his conviction that this ‘dumbfounded old man’ is ‘a remnant of a civilization not ours’ [CW198]. Joyce’s personal position was perhaps best expressed—or at least most succinctly—by Gabriel’s response to Miss Ivors in *The Dead*: ‘If it comes to that, you know, Irish is not my language’ [D216]. His own native language, though always in some sense

¹⁷ ‘[I]t was in the language of the Irish Nation that the Irish State was created; ... it was only when the language was recovered as an intellectual possession and passion that the outlines of the State could be seen clearly, the memories of which ... were struggling in the acts and deeds of a resurgent people’ (Figgis, op cit., p.83).

The opposite point of view was stated by Alfred Webb: ‘There is nothing that has come under my observation in Gaelic literature that could inspire national ideals suitable for the present age. (‘The Gaelic League and Politics’ in *Dana* (1904); see *Dana* (Hodges Figgis 1905) p.143.

¹⁸ The passage continues: ‘... or perhaps the notion of love] itself’ [SH58]. In 1904, Joyce wrote in his Trieste Notebook—a repository for *Stephen Hero*—‘One effect of the resurgence of the Irish nation would be the entry into the field of Europe of the Irish artist and thinker, a being without sexual education.’ See Robert Scholes, ed., *The Workshop of Daedalus* (1965), p.100.

¹⁹ A turning point is arguably reached at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist* [AP188] where Mulrennan’s report of his encounter with a venerable Gaelic-speaker in the West of Ireland at first sparks of a panicky sense of threat in Stephen: ‘It is with him I must struggle through all this night till day come.’ The diary-entry ends however on a more placable note: ‘Till he yield to me? No. I mean him no harm.’ [AP234]

‘an acquired speech,’—as Stephen avers in his famous interview with Father Butt [AP175]—was ineluctably English.²⁰ This implies a divided loyalty which in its working-out in Joyce’s earlier politics of culture ran strongly in favour of the anglophonic affinities of the Pale.²¹

In Stephen’s conversation with Davin in *A Portrait*, Joyce’s attitude to the Irish language movement is expressed more warmly than anywhere else: ‘My ancestors threw off their language and took another ... They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them. Do you fancy I am going to pay in my own life and person debts they made? ... I’d see you damned first’ [AP188].²² In his 1907 Trieste lecture, ‘Ireland, Isle of Saints and Sages,’ he tried to view the linguistic history of Ireland more coolly in a pointedly analytical perspective. The lecture provides the most coherent background for the First Fragment, elucidating not only its controlling attitudes but several of its specific usages. ‘The Irish language, although of the Indo-European family,’ said Joyce on that occasion, ‘differs from English almost as much as the language spoken in Rome differs from that spoken in *Teheran*’ [CW169]. In the ‘Roderick O’Conor’ episode, that phrase is echoed in the description of the culturally devastated kingdom of the fallen monarch as a ‘Taharan dynasty’ [380.21].²³ With overtones of *Tara*, *Sahara*, and *Teheran*, this conveys the sense of a linguistic culture rendered nugatory. Notwithstanding Myles Joyce, on the one hand, and Father O’Growney on the other, Joyce was convinced that the Gaelic legacy was moribund. In the context of his remarks on James Clarence Mangan in his second Trieste lecture, where he measures his own literary policy against that of the best of Ireland’s nationalist poets and the ‘last of the Irish bards,’ he said, ‘Ancient Ireland is dead just as ancient Egypt is dead. Its death chant has been sung and on its gravestone has been placed the seal.’ [CW173]²⁴

As many commentators have noted, the polemical argument formulated by Joyce in Trieste, and addressed to his stay-at-home compatriots over the heads of his Trieste audience, runs like this: “What right has Gaelic Ireland to my allegiance after it has betrayed its own culture, and accepted the tyrannies of Rome and England?” He regarded that question as chief one to be answered before the anyone had ‘the most rudimentary right’ to demand that he ‘change his position from that of an unprejudiced observer to a convinced nationalist.’ [CW162] Later, the effect of the Partition of Ireland in 1922 was to increase rather than diminish his sense that Sinn Féin policies had been misguided—although he primarily blamed ‘Brittaine and brut fierce’ [292F2]—and he refused the Free State passport offered him by the Foreign Minister, Desmond Fitzgerald in 1923,²⁵ as he later refused membership of the Irish Academy of Letters in 1932.²⁶

²⁰ The Father Butt passage in *A Portrait* has become so much a touchstone of the current Irish literary criticism of Joyce that it is worth mentioning Stephen Gwynn as the first to cite it. Gwynn comments, ‘This poignant cry of the disinherited runs all through Joyce’s writing,’ adding that the usual appeal of the Irish nationalists against the legacy of colonialism was to their Catholic religion, a force against which Joyce also revolted. See *Irish Literature and Drama* (1936), pp.194-95.

²¹ In a remarkable notebook entry of 1904, Joyce pledged to ‘take the part of England and her tradition against Irish-America.’ See Robert Scholes, ed., *The Workshop of Daedalus* (1965), p.91.

²² The model for Davin was George Clancy, later Sinn Féin Mayor of Limerick, who was assassinated by the Black and Tans in 1919.

²³ The typescript draft of 1923 which Joyce presented to Miss Weaver includes a pencilled addition after ‘before him’ and before ‘King Art [sic] MacMurrough’, viz, ‘in the dienasty’. See ‘In Between the Sheets,’ *James Joyce Broadsheet*, No. 29 (June 1989), pp. 1-2.

²⁴ For a good discussion of Joyce’s view of Mangan, see Seamus Deane, ‘Joyce the Irishman,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce* (1990), pp. 32-36.

²⁵ See Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (1977), p.546-47.

In the wider context of the *Wake*, the ‘Roderick’ episode is generally seen as a set piece representing ‘Death and the Old Man’ in counterpoint to ‘Death and the Old Woman’ in the ‘Ricorso’.²⁷ In the immediate context of the First Fragment, it presents an image of shattered national unity, taking the overthrow of the Gaelic polity in Ireland by the Anglo-Normans as a metaphor for the disrupted state of modern Irish culture. The text displays, however, a distinct economy of reference in regard to such events. For the narrator at least, they are ‘*horyhistoricold*’ [382.12]—dead embers of historical record and the stuff of old men’s remembrance. Accordingly, accurate biographical information about King Roderick at the time when he went the ‘way of the Danes’ [129.11] is narrowly restricted to his age: ‘anything you say yourself between fiftyodd and fiftyeven years’ [380.15].²⁸ Some other historical personages mentioned in the episode with various degrees of comic anachronism include ‘King Arth Mockmorrow Koughenough of the leather leggions’ [380.22], an amalgam of Dermot MacMurrough who started all the trouble with Art MacMurrough Kavanagh²⁹, the 14th century Leinster king, and a 10th century high king known as ‘Muircheartach of the Leather Cloaks.’³⁰ A little later, reference is made to Dermot MacCarthy King of Desmond, who deserted O’Conor and submitted separately to Henry II at Waterford in 1171.³¹ Appropriately the Munster chieftain’s abandonment of Roderick is wryly characterised by Joyce as a shortsighted folly leading inevitably to the ultimate eviction of the Gaelic kings: ‘all of them had gone off with themselves to their castles of mud as best they cud, on footback, owing to the leak in McCarthy’s mare ... down the switchbackward slider of the landsown route of Hauburnea’s liveliest vinnage on the brain’ [380.36-382.04]. This includes an alcoholic rendering of Goldsmith’s *Deserted Village*—another *topos* of the lost national paradise. A final historical personage recognisable in the episode is Faugh MacHugh O’Bawlar’ [382.22]—that is, Fiach MacHugh O’Byrne combined with ‘*Fagh an Ballagh*’ (‘*Clear the Way!*’), a war-cry used by the Irish Brigades at Fontenoy, and the refrain of several nationalist ballads of Young Ireland. The song which celebrates his defeat of the English in the Desmond Revolt at Glanmalure in 1580, ‘Follow Me Up to Carlow’ [382.30],³² provides a musical accompaniment a little later when Roderick/Earwicker makes shipborne journey towards the land of night in imitation of the passing of King Arthur.³³

²⁶ See Stephen Gwynn, *Irish Literature and Drama* (1936), Appendix A. The fact is also cited in Monk Gibbon, *The Man and the Masterpiece: Yeats as I Knew Him* (1959), p.159.

²⁷ See Adaline Glasheen, *A Third Census of Finnegans Wake* (1977), p.lv.

²⁸ The first typescript says ‘fifty-four and fifty-five’, but McHugh’s *Annotations* opt for ‘58 & 59,’ preferring to be guided by the historical tradition which puts Roderick at about 60 at the time of his submission to Henry. Roland McHugh, *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (1980).

²⁹ Possible also hinted at is Arthur MacMurrough Kavanagh (1831-1889), an Irish MP, born with stunted arms and legs, who rode to hounds strapped to his horse and sailed a yacht called Eva after the High king’s daughter Aoife. See Harry Boylan, *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (1988) and Mark Bence-Jones, *The Twilight of the Ascendancy* (1987) p.11, et passim.

³⁰ See Roland McHugh, *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (1980).

³¹ The same sense of misguided self-interest is conveyed in Edmund Curtis’s account of the submissions. See *A History of Ireland* (1936), p.52-3.

³² By Patrick Joseph McCall (1861-1919). See Colm O Lochlainn, *Anglo-Irish Song-Writers since Moore* (1950), p.15.

³³ He departs in a kind of Viking sea-funeral for ‘Nattenlaend-er’—Norse, Land of Night. The identification of Earwicker with King Arthur recurs in various parts of the *Wake*. Art MacMurrough is suggestively called ‘Arth Mockmorrow’ in [380.22], while elsewhere Tennyson’s Morte D’Arthur is connected with Tara of the Gaels in the

No specific work of history has yet been identified as a sourcebook for the Invasion narrative in ‘Roderick O’Conor’. In *Books at the Wake*, James Atherton says that Joyce’s probably used of all the histories that he could find to write his own version of the History of Ireland, though favouring the synoptic ‘Annals of Dublin’ printed in Hely Thom’s annual *Dublin Directory*;³⁴ there are however no direct quotations from the ‘Annals’ in the episode. Another reference work that he used frequently during Work in Progress was the 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. There the impact of the first phase of the Norman invasion is stated as follows: ‘the *mailclad* knights were not uniformly successful against the natives, but they generally managed to occupy the open plains and *fertile valleys*.’ It is that sentence which shapes Joyce’s account of the unmannerly behaviour of the retiring guests, who leave the dregs (known traditionally as ‘old man’) for the innkeeper to finish: ‘sorra much[,] was left by the lazy lousers of *maltknights* and beerchurls in the different *bottoms* of the various replenished drinking utensils left behind ..’ [381.32].³⁵ This alcoholic residue, being the equivalent of the worst lands of Ireland, Roderick consumes with servile gratitude. (Adaline Glasheen has called it his cup of hemlock.)³⁶

But if the Normans are treated here as guests of gullible Irish rather than their vanquishers, they are also joined, contrary to chronological good sense, by an earlier crew of Irish invaders. According to the accepted reading of the episode ‘the last High King ... displaced by the Anglo-Norman invaders ... is made here to give a last supper to an army of earlier colonists.’³⁷ These colonists are the mythological rather than strictly historical personages whose names are given in the 12th century *The Book of Invasions (Lebor Gabhála)* and also on the first page of every Irish schoolchild’s history-book. Joyce describes them impiously as ‘the unimportant Parthalonians with the mouldy Firbolgs and the Tuatha de Danaan googs,’ to which list he adds another group of his own imagining, ‘the ramblers from Clane’³⁸ [381.06]. The Clanemen are, I think, the Jesuits Fathers of Clongowes Wood School, an Order which described in *A Portrait* as ‘extraterritorials,’ and settlers in Ireland like any other.³⁹ Thus the sum of guests at Roderick/Earwicker’s ‘beanfeast’ [380.10] are both the antecedent races and the later invaders of Ireland, comprising a cross-section of all the racial ingredients of the modern nation.

This is in keeping with the theory about the actual make-up of the Irish nation which Joyce forcefully advanced in his ‘Ireland’ lecture at the Università Popolare in Trieste in 1907. Framing, he said: ‘Our civilisation is a vast fabric in which the most diverse elements are mingled, in which nordic aggressiveness and Roman law, the new bourgeois conventions and the remnant of a Syriac religion are reconciled’ [CW166]. The context indicates that the civilization he had in mind was the European rather than the Irish one—the former entailing the latter as a local instance. With more particular reference to Ireland and the contemporary Independence Movement,⁴⁰ he went on:

phrase, ‘the Mortadarella taradition is the poorest commonoguardiant waste of time’ [151.20]. [Italics mine.] This pours cold water on any hopes of a revival of royal power in Ireland.

³⁴ James Atherton, *The Books at the Wake* (1959), p.92-3.

³⁵ Italics mine.

³⁶ Adaline Glasheen, *Third Census of Finnegans Wake* (1977), p.lvi.

³⁷ Roland McHugh, *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake* (1976), p.86.

³⁸ Also the title of a song. See Roland McHugh, *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (1980).

³⁹ The original version of this is in the Trieste Notebook: ‘The houses of the jesuits are extraterritorial.’ See Robert Scholes, ed., *The Workshop of Daedalus* (1965), p.102.

⁴⁰ In 1906, Joyce characterised the editorial policy of Arthur Griffith’s paper Sinn Féin as ‘the pap of racial hatred’ [SL111].

... no race has less right to utter such a boast [of being pure] than the race now living in Ireland. Nationality ... must find its reason for being rooted in something that surpasses and transcends and informs changing things like blood and the human word [CW166].

So much for the genetic and linguistic criteria of Irish nationhood. A national community is merely a pragmatic unity of lives, the point that Leopold Bloom asserts in his touchingly inept definition of ‘nation’ as ‘the same people living in the same place’ [U430]—a definition which includes himself, in spite of his Jewish extraction. Yet Joyce was not so naive as to overlook the unifying function of historical culture in such a composite community, though he resisted any proprietary simplification of that heritage in favour of one or other constituent racial element. Without shirking from calling the present race in Ireland ‘backward and inferior,’ he summarised the diversity of its origins and the unity of its traditions in these terms: ‘Do we not see that in Ireland the Danes, the Firbolgs, the Milesians from Spain, the Norman Invaders, and the Anglo-Saxon settlers have united to form a new entity, one might say under the influence of a local deity?’ [CW166].⁴¹

Thus in the ‘Roderick’ episode, the High King functions as the eponymous figure of Irish nationhood in spite of the numerous cuckoos in his genealogical tree. In this way he qualifies as an ‘adornment of his album and folkenfather of his familyans’ [380.18]. Here the narrator is apparently insisting on his totemic importance from the nationalist standpoint, though a nationalism of the same unconvincing species as the narrator’s in the ‘Cyclops’ episode of *Ulysses*. Significantly, Ruairdhrí O’Conor has never figured as a national hero in Irish literary tradition, attracting neither novelists or biographers, poets or playwrights—with the bizarre exception of a hysterically pro-British melodrama by Charles Shadwell.⁴² The contemporaneous stories of Devorgilla MacMurrough and Eva O’Conor have, on the other hand, elicited numerous biographical works and historical romances.⁴³ And, while Diarmuid MacMurrough (110-1171), the proto-betrayer of the Gaelic kingdoms, is listed in Harry Boylan’s *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (1988), King Roderick O’Conor is not. His story, being unleavened by villainy, self-sacrifice or love-interest, lacks the requirements for Irish historical remembrance.

It is convenient to think of the setting of the ‘Roderick’ episode as Tara since this is the seat of the High Kingship founded by Tuathal Teachtmhair in the second century A.D.;⁴⁴ but strictly speaking no episode of *Finnegans Wake* has a single setting—not least because the method of the book is to include all times and places. In the ‘Roderick’ episode, the high king’s address is actually given as ‘Glenfinnisk-en-la-Valle’ [380.08]. In this Norman-sounding place-name, we hear *Phoenix* (and Irish *fionn uisce*) overlaid on Glenfisk, a valley in Co. Kerry, a province away from Ruaidhrí O’Conor’s tribal kingdom. The territory identified in this characteristic bi-location

⁴¹ Joyce added a concession to Irish national pride with the qualification, ‘it is worth taking into account the fact that it is the only race of the entire Celtic family that has not been willing to sell its birthright for a mess of pottage.’ [CW166]

⁴² Rotherick O’Connor King of Connaught, or The Distressed Princess was performed and printed in Dublin in 1720. The prologue promises to show heroes ‘nursed up in slaughter, blood, and woe/And kings that rule by arbitrary sway.’ The play represents Roderick as an impolitic tyrant who dies in single combat with Strongbow—a spurious episode—having murdered the Machievellian bishop of Tuam, Catholicus, and assaulted the virtue of Eva, Dermot’s daughter, numerous times. There is no indication that it was known to Joyce.

⁴³ For a listing of these see Stephen Brown, ‘Classified List of Irish Fiction’ [Appendix C], in *Ireland in Fiction* (1919).

⁴⁴ Darrell Figgis, *The Gaelic State* (1917), p.10.

is that of the Gaelic sept whose adventures at Bantry during the 1798 Rising Charles Lever described in his romantic novel *The O'Donoghue* (1845).⁴⁵ As Lanty Lawler, the peasant horse-dealer—who provides all of the comic relief and most of the treachery— explains: ‘Twas there the family lived these nine hundred years, whin the whole country was their own; and they wor kings here.’⁴⁶ Their tumbledown castle, ‘a strange incongruous pile,’⁴⁷ probably conditions the description of Roderick’s ‘grand old handwedown pile [380.35] in the episode. Lever himself is called to mind by the epithet ‘rollicking’ [381.11], immemorially affixed to him by Thackeray.⁴⁸

The fate of the O'Donoghue dynasty was a recurrent theme of Anglo-Irish fiction, focusing on the myth that the O'Donoghues took up residence beneath a lake, awaiting to return in better days.⁴⁹ In Joyce's works, a gathering of references to the O'Donoghue tradition is associated with glen rather than lake, viz, ‘The O'Donoghue of the Glens’ [U526] in *Ulysses*, and, in *Finnegans Wake*, ‘treubleu Donawhu’ [076.31] and ‘the wild glen, O'Donogh, White Donagh’ [106.02]. Yet, whichever tradition Joyce inherited, as romantic vestiges of the defunctive Irish chieftainships thrown like shadows on the screen of Irish political consciousness, the O'Donoghues make a fitting complement to the dethroned High King of Tara and the submission to Plantagenet centralism of the once autonomous and proud state of Ireland. Lever's story has the added interest that the plot finds its resolution in the Anglo-Irish novelists' convention of marrying the son of a Gaelic royal lineage to the daughter of an British landlord, in this case also an English banker—thus presaging a union of nations and general prosperity.⁵⁰

In Lever's novel, the final ruin of the native Irish monarchies is symbolised in the penultimate scene by the cataclysmic destruction of the O'Donoghue's ancient home in the storm that drives the French invasion fleet—Wolfe Tone aboard—out of Bantry Bay. ‘[T]he massive walls that had resisted for centuries the assault of war and time, were shaken to their foundations, and one strong, square tower, the ancient keep, was rent by lightning from the battlements to the base, which far and near might be seen fragments of timber, and even of masonry, hurled from their place by the storm.’⁵¹ Admittedly, there is no exact equivalent of this event in the ‘Roderick episode’, but the Babel-like fate that overtakes the King's ‘umbrageous house of the hundred

⁴⁵ Lever actually wrote ‘Glenflesk,’ put the map of Kerry shows Glenfisk. *The O'Donoghue* (Curry, 1845), passim.

⁴⁶ Charles Lever, *The O'Donoghue* (1845), p.11.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.25.

⁴⁸ The epithet is applied by extension to other Irish novelists in the same vein, dealing with the free-booting lives of the minor squirearchy of Anglo-Irish Ireland, such as William Hamilton Maxwell (1792-1850), a younger friend of the former. See Stephen Brown's citation on Maxwell, quoted from William Maginn: ‘Among rollicking describers of fights, campaigns, sieges, carousings, riotings, love-makings ... he decidedly hears off the bell.’ (*Ireland in Fiction*, 1919). In *Finnegans Wake*, ‘rollicking’ [355.16] is associated with the comic dialect songs of Percy French, a late example of the breed.

⁴⁹ A poem on the subject was issued by Michael John O'Sullivan in 1815 and another by Nicholas Gannon in 1873; a melodrama by Edward Groves appeared in 1832, and a comic play by Alfred Howard, entitled *The O'Donoghue of the Lake, or the Harlequin and the Leprechaun*, was performed at the Theatre Royal, Dublin, in 1840. None of these can be called sources of the O'Donoghue allusions in the ‘Roderick’ episode, though they testify to the ubiquity of a theme.

⁵⁰ As with Lever's novel *The O'Donoghue* (1845), Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee* (1812) attempts to suture the torn colonial tissues of Irish society by contriving a marriage between the Anglo-Irish landlord, Lord Colambre, and the lineal descendent of Gaelic Irish kings, Grace Nugent. See W. J. McCormack on what he calls in the notes ‘the allegorical level of the fiction,’ in *The Absentee* (1988), pp. xxii-iv and 296.

⁵¹ Charles Lever, *The O'Donoghue* (1845), p.403.

bottles' [380.15] has the same mythopoeic aspect as signifying the end of one kind of society in Ireland.⁵²

As if such decentred patterns of allusion were not sufficient, a further referential confusion is added to the episode by the doubling of Lanty's. It is the peasant genius form Samuel Lover's *Rory O'More* (1837)—also set in 1798 and celebrated for the 'the endless drollery and whimsicalities' of the title-character⁵³—who furnishes the 'Lanty Leary cant' [381.11] of Roderick O'Connor's hat (or else his dialect). Both Lantys, Lawler and Leary, incidentally, are addicted to the word 'Faix' which also occurs here [381.09].⁵⁴ The songs that Roderick/Earwicker sings include 'The Old Plaid Shawl'⁵⁵ (rendered here as 'the ould plaised drawl' [381.21]), Moore's 'The Blackbird' (otherwise called 'Blarney Castle') [381.23], and 'What the Irish Boys Can Do' [381.29]⁵⁶—all examples of a Irish musical ritual disparaged by Stanislaus Joyce: 'The singing of sentimental ballads was a backlash of that ebbing waves of romanticism, in which poetry and all it was wont to express had degenerated, Tommy Moore assisting, to a drawing-room accomplishment.'⁵⁷

Allowing for such grace-notes, we can assign the basic style of the episode to the Lover-Lever fraternity of Victorian Irish novelists, though perhaps the Hiberno-English of the episode requires no special source as being the patois of innumerable Victorian stage-Irishmen in fiction and drama. The syntactical framework of the two-and-a-half page sentence is its identificative signature. It runs like this: 'So anyhow ... after that ... wait till I tell you, what did he do ... well, what do you think he did but ... he just went ... well, what did he go and do ... if he didn't go ... and ... sure enough ... he just slumped to throne.' Within that chain of elbow-nudging complicities, the narrator makes several self-ingratiating gestures towards the standard English from which he so constantly deviates, a mark of his linguistic inferiority complex. A combination of pedantry and faux-politesse is the hallmark of his discourse: '.. or, at least, he wasn't *actually* the *then* last king of all Ireland *for the time being* for the *jolly good reason* that he was still *such as he was* the eminent king of all Ireland *himself*' [380.12ff].

Joyce was specific about the origins of the comical inadequacies of Irish-English. In a harsh judgement on the Irishman's relationship with English, he referred the national propensity to bulls and blunders back to the downfall of the Gaelic monarchy as its primal cause: '[Ireland] has abandoned her own language almost entirely and accepted the language of her conqueror without being able to assimilate the culture or adapt herself to the mentality of which this language is the vehicle.' [CW212-13] A classic example of such ineptitudes was the celebrated bull coined by

⁵² The only novel explicitly referred to in the episode is Tobias Smollett's *Roderick Random* (1748): Joyce's high king is sporting a 'Roderick Random pullon hat' [381.11]. Smollett's hero is an affectionate but combative young Scot abroad—modelled on Gil Blas and not dissimilar to Thackeray's *Barry Lyndon*—who, like the Irish Roderick, has been disinherited. James Atherton has drawn attention to a sentence at FW 028.35-029-05 in which three of Smollett's novels, *Roderick Random*, *Peregrine Pickle*, and *Humphrey Clinker*, are all named.

⁵³ Stephen Brown, S.J., *Ireland in Fiction* (1919), p.176.

⁵⁴ Lanty's patronymic rhymes with that of the Irish High King who welcomed St. Patrick, cited above. A peasant of royal lineage, he is therefore a type of Joyce's 'poor fallen kings' [CW168].

⁵⁵ By Francis A. Fahy (1854-1935). See Colm O Lochlainn, op. cit. p.14. In *My Brother's Keeper* (1957), Stanislaus Joyce recalls that this song was a favorite of John Kelly, the model for Mr. Casey, the old patriot interneer of *A Portrait*.

⁵⁶ By T. D. Sullivan (1827-1914).

⁵⁷ Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper* (1957), p.49. Stanislaus also notes that 'Tim Finnegan's Wake' was his own party piece (op. cit., p.37).

Sir Boyle Roche, made famous by Sir Jonah Barrington: ‘Why should we do anything for posterity? What has posterity done for us?’⁵⁸ Joyce’s own version of it in the ‘Roderick’ episode is happily in tune with the Wakean logic of recurrent resurrections: ‘all set for restart ... like his ancestors to this day after him’ [382.15]. Such risible locutions have been a focus of the discussion of the Irish character in life and literature from Richard and Maria Edgeworth’s *Essay on Irish Bulls* (1802)⁵⁹—in which the Roche example is actually quoted—to P. W. Joyce’s *English As We Speak It in Ireland* (1918). The Edgeworths set out to vindicate the Irish habit of illogicality as an incipient form of genius while P. W. Joyce ascribed apparent solecisms to the process of translation. Throughout the nineteenth century the tide of dialect novels, written both to ridicule and valorise the Irish dialectics of English—and often paradoxically to do both—had swelled to flood proportions.

Kingship as embodied by the Tara Monarchy is the central theme of the 1923 draft, but in the 1938 revision Joyce emphasis-ed another aspect of his socio-political critique of Ireland: democracy—or the lack of it. In his *Notes Towards A Definition of Culture*, T. S. Eliot wrote that ‘the Flight of the Wild Geese is perhaps a symbol of the harm that England has done to Ireland—more serious ... than the massacres of Cromwell, or any of the grievances which the Irish most gladly recall.’⁶⁰ The departure into exile of the Irish aristocracy (in 1603, 1650, and again in 1690) was in his view an instance of the mangling of a culture which occurs ‘when a dominant class, however badly it serves its function, is forcibly removed.’ It is tempting to imagine that Joyce too thought the political decapitation of Ireland was responsible for its woes. The point should be noted however that, in the ‘Roderick’ episode, the king shows himself brutally disdainful of his various historical guests: ‘all the notmuchers that he did not care the royal spit out of his ostensible mouth about’ [381.07]. ‘Ostensible mouth’ may be taken as meaning his ‘royal Irish arse’—a favorite expression of Simon Dedalus.⁶¹

Joyce regarded the Irish mentality as hopelessly habituated to an aristocratic world-view. Worse than that, he believed that the Catholic Church had assumed the role of the erstwhile Gaelic nobility of Ireland, telling Arthur Power: ‘we are becoming a bourgeois nation, with the Church supplying our aristocracy ... I do not see much hope for us intellectually.’⁶² This grievance, which he earnestly felt in his own person as an artist—and Stephen’s resentment against the priest who catches Emma’s ear in *A Portrait* suggests that he thought himself better suited to the eugenic role of a national upper class⁶³—is an adjunct of his sense that the development of the country was arrested at a crucial point on the march towards modern social culture. His sense that his

⁵⁸ Recounted in Sir Jonah Barrington, *Personal Sketches* (1827), and thence in Harry Boylan’s entry on Roche in *A Dictionary of Irish Biography* (1988). Another version of the blunder is attributed to Addison’s Sir Roger de Coverley in the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*: ‘We are always doing something for posterity, but I would fain see Posterity do something for us.’

⁵⁹ In his journeyman collection of *Modern Irish Anecdotes* (Routledge [1875], new edn. Gill 1913), Patrick Kennedy adverts comically to the fact that the Yorkshire Agricultural Society purchased copies of Richard Lovell Edgeworth’s *Essay on Irish Bulls* (1802) under a misapprehension about its subject-matter (p. 175). In the ‘Oxen of the Sun’ chapter of *Ulysses*, Joyce made similar hay with the Papal Bull *Laudabiliter*.

⁶⁰ T. S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), p.146.

⁶¹ I am indebted to Professor Richard Wall of Calgary University for this suggestion.

⁶² Arthur Power, *Conversations with James Joyce* (1974), p.65.

⁶³ ‘How could he hit their conscience or how cast his shadow over the imaginations of their daughters, before their squires begat upon them, that they might breed a race less ignoble than their own?’ [AP221]

own art was a necessary stage in the development of the country is epitomised in the famous letters to Grant Richards of May-June 1906: 'I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilization in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely-polished looking-glass' [SL90]. If Ireland is to have an aristocracy it ought be an artistic aristocracy, and it was natural for him to see his own exile as a latter-day version of the Flight of the Wild Geese, calling it 'a wildgoup's chase across the kathartic ocean' [185.10] in the 'Shem' chapter of the *Wake*.

In 'Ireland, Isle of Saints and Sages' (1907), he sketched the sorry remnant of the Gaelic aristocracy as follows: 'Descendants of the ancient kings ... are seen in the halls of the courts of justice, with wig and affidavits, invoking the laws that have suppressed their royal titles. Poor fallen kings, recognisable even in their decline as impractical Irishmen.' [CW168].⁶⁴ This was an illustration of his argument that Ireland had failed to establish a self-respecting consensual polity based on the example of her neighbour:

The wave of democracy that shook England at the time of Simon de Montfort, founder of the House of Commons, and later, at the time of Cromwell's Protectorate, was spent when it reached the shores of Ireland; so that now Ireland (a country destined by God to be the everlasting caricature of the serious world) is an aristocratic country without an aristocracy [CW168].

The trouble with the Ireland, therefore, was not the absence of a native dynasty, but its failure to develop the harmonious and rational community which is historically synonymous with the rise of the middle classes.⁶⁵ The absence of an independent middle-class had been the theme of several writers—Irish and English—in the Victorian period. (David Lodge has suggested that the Irish Catholic middle class was not so much small as economically insecure and therefore continually shifting.)⁶⁶ In the 1840s, Samuel Lover had lamented that there were too few of the middle rank to constitute the 'cementing portions of society,'⁶⁷ while William Makepeace Thackeray had considered that the emergence of a decently large middle class would be more beneficial than any legislation.⁶⁸ The normal political forum for such a class is a parliament, and it is this forum which Joyce evokes in the opening line of the revised version of the 'Roderick' episode:

So anyhow, melumps and mumpos of the hoose uncommons, after that to wind up that longtobechronickled gettogether thanksbetogiving day at Glenfinnisk-en-la-Valle, the anniversary of our finst homy commulion

⁶⁴ The actual descendants of Ruaidhri O'Conor include notably Charles O'Conor (1710-1791) and his grandson Charles O'Conor (1764-1828), antiquarians and writers for Catholic Emancipation, and Charles O'Conor, 'the O'Conor Don'. See Harry Boylan, *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (1988).

⁶⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty stated the relationship between a social consensus and a rationalism climate in philosophy strikingly in his *Phenomenology of Perception*: 'Human society is not a community of reasonable minds, and only in fortunate countries where a biological and economic balance has locally and temporarily been struck has such a conception been possible. The experience of chaos, both on the speculative and the other level, prompts us to see rationalism in a historical perspective which it sets itself on principle to avoid.' (Op cit., trans. Colin Smith, 1962, p.56.)

⁶⁶ Yeats Summer School Address, 1991.

⁶⁷ Samuel Lover, quoted from Rory O'More (1837) in Barry Sloan, *Pioneers of Anglo-Irish Fiction*, 1986, p.185-6.

⁶⁸ 'Too independent to be bullied by priest or squire—having their interest in quiet, and alike indisposed to servility or rebellion; may not as much be hoped from the gradual formation of such a class as from any legislative meddling? It is the want of a middle class that has rendered the squire so arrogant, and the clerical or political demagogue so powerful.' William Makepeace Thackeray, *Irish Sketchbook* ([1843]; rep. Blackstaff 1985), p.365.

after that same barbecue beanfeast was all over poor old hospitable corn and eggfactor King Roderick O'Conor [gave a] socalled last supper [380.07-15]

This passage specifies the House of Commons in an ambivalent aspect—‘our hoose *uncommons*’ denotes a lack. Such a lack may be referred for historical cause to the Act of Union which ended the separate Irish legislature in 1801, or—further back—to the the destruction of the Gaelic State.⁶⁹ In any event, it answers Bloom’s wry comment when he calls United Ireland ‘a by no means appropriate appellative’ [U576] in the awkward jargon of the ‘Eumaeus’ chapter. The question of national assemblies is treated extensively in a passage of Book 1.i [054.07-21] which lists the words for *parliament* in several countries, including Russian *Sobranje*, Norwegian *Storthing*, Tsarist *Duma*, and Italian ‘casaconcordia’ [054.10]⁷⁰, ending a remarkable spate of polylingualism worthy of the League of Nations with a Hiberno-Danish ‘thank you’—‘Gomagh, thak’ [054.21]. In Trieste, Joyce wrote to his brother: ‘I hate this Catholic country [the Austrian Empire] with its hundred races and thousand languages governed by a parliament which can contract no business and sits for a week at the most and by the most physically corrupt royal house in Europe.’ [SL49] Such polylingualism, Joyce suggests, is an essentially debilitating feature of the Irish historical experience also; and it was natural for him, in that frame of mind, to wonder if St. Patrick possessed the necessary linguistic skills on arriving in Ireland: hence hence the question: ‘A’Cothraige, thinkinthou gaily?’ [054.14]⁷¹—in Irish, ‘an tuigeann tú Gaedhilge?’ (‘do you understand Irish?’).

Irish-Ireland propagandists such as Darrell Figgis thought that the ancient councils of the tribal stateships as practised under the Gaelic Pentarchy would provide the appropriate model for a new Irish democracy. The hallmark of that system of government was that the four provinces of Ireland gave cognisance to the nominal headship of a central fifth, situated at Tara. Figgis considered that system of federalised power ‘as wise a balance as any nation has yet found between a centralised and a decentralised system.’⁷² Whether or not Joyce was aware of this strand of the constitution-framing debate within the Independence Movement, he built the five-fold system of the ancient Irish State into the ground-plan of *Finnegans Wake*. Of this there is just a hint in the ‘Roderick’ episode, where the geo-political bearings of monarchial Ireland are taken when Roderick/Earwicker comes ‘acrash’ on ‘the very boxst of all his compos’ [382.19].

The passages where Joyce invoked it most fully actually lie beyond the bounds of the First Fragment in the ‘Nightlessons’ (2.ii) and ‘Yawn’ (3.iii) chapters. The ‘Yawn’ episode is an archaeological and psycho-analytical séance concerning the hidden identity of a recumbant giant stretched out in a mesmeric trance on ‘knoll Asnoch’ [476.06]. This is the Hill of Uisneach, the site of a standing stone and circle associated with druidic culture, described famously by Giraldus Cambrensis as the *umbilicus* or navel of Ireland,⁷³ and known as the Stone of Divisions. In

⁶⁹ Perhaps Joyce meant to hint at Lords Castlereagh and Clare, the architects of the Union, in the phrase ‘Cashelmagh crooner and lerking Clare air’ [381.21]. ‘Cashelmagh’ also includes the twin sees of Ireland, Cashel and Armagh.

⁷⁰ The earlier version said simply ‘House of Parliament’. See David Hayman, *A First Draft Version of Finnegans Wake* (1962).

⁷¹ Cothraige was St. Patrick’s name when first a slave in Ireland. See Roland McHugh, *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (1980).

⁷² Darrell Figgis, *The Gaelic State* (1917), p.35.

⁷³ ‘Umbilicus Hiberniae dicitur, quasi in medio et meditullio terrae positus.’ Quoted by Mac Cana, ‘Early Irish Ideology and the Concept of Unity,’ in Richard Kearney, ed., *The Irish Mind* (1985), p.68.

Gaelic mythology and statecraft, it functions in tandem with Tara since the kings of Connaught took possession in turn of Uisneach and the Leinster seat of kingship in Meath. At Tara stands Lia Fáil, the phallic symbol of Irish Monarchy and a monolith correspondent with the Stone of Divisions.⁷⁴ In the ‘Haveth Childers Everywhere’ episode of the *Wake* (532-554), Joyce identifies the ‘longstone erectheion of our allfirst manhere’ [539.03] as ‘Roderick’s ... mostmonolith’ [539.01], tying it in with the First Fragment. In ‘Yawn’, he plots its location accurately as lying ‘along the amber way where Brosna’s furzy’ [474.21] up on ‘the esker ridge [in] ‘Mallinger parish’ [475.22], all topographical features of Co. Westmeath where the ‘Cat Rock’ or Stone of Divisions can still be see.⁷⁵ Further specifications about Yawn’s bodily disposition make it plain that he is occupying the pentarchal landscape described in ancient Irish histories. Thus we are told that ‘one half of him [is] in Conn’s half but the whole of him [is] nevertheless in Owenmore’s five quarters’ [475.06], respectively Connaught and Ulster, the dominant kingdoms of heroic Ireland. In this spredeagle state, he is indeed ‘a class of a crossroads puzzler’ [475.04], the answer to which may readily be found in the scholarly works such as Eoin MacNeill’s chapter on ‘The Five Fifths of Ireland’ in *Phases of Irish History* from which Joyce may have derived the raw historical data.⁷⁶ A more recent account of the Pentarchy has been given by Prionsias MacCana in his ‘Celtic Concept of Unity’.⁷⁷ What is surprising is the sureness of touch with which Joyce grasped the symbolic and imaginative aspects of the Pentarchal system, a view of it not explicitly attested by Celtic scholars until Rees and Rees discovered its affinities with other examples of a widely diffused cosmographical tradition in *Celtic Heritage* (1961), though MacNeill’s researches showed the way.⁷⁸

Just when the centralist symbolism of Ireland began its nurture in Joyce’s imagination it is hard to say, but there is some evidence that he was already meditating the theme when still a student. It was not surprising in the climate of the Irish Literary Revival that he should have sought to ground his artistic claims to the possession of a monopoly of national truth in the mythic topography of Ireland, which was being so comprehensively gazetted by the Gaelic nationalists of the day.⁷⁹ When, in his college paper on ‘Art and Life’,⁸⁰ Stephen defines the poet as ‘the intense centre of the life of his age to which he stands in a relation than which none can be more vital’ and therewith a ‘poetic phenomenon signalled in the heavens’ [SH75], he strikes a note more redolent of ancient Irish astronomer-priests than modern men of letters, excepting perhaps

⁷⁴ The actual Lia Fáil, absent from Tara, is believed to be the Scone Stone at Westminster. Seán O Ríordáin clarifies: ‘... the stone over the ‘98 grave is taken to be the Lia Fáil—notwithstanding the late story in Keating of its transfer to Scotland.’ See O Ríordáin, *Tara: The Monuments on the Hill* (1954), p.14.

⁷⁵ Leo Daly, ‘A View from the Hill,’ in *Ireland of the Welcomes* (March-April 1978), p.30.

⁷⁶ Eoin MacNeill, *Phases of Irish History* (1919, rep. 1970), Chap. IV. MacNeill’s book was not part of Joyce’s library as listed in Richard Ellmann’s appendix to *The Consciousness of Joyce* (1977). The Pentarchy is mentioned in the 11th ed. Encyclopaedia Britannica article on ‘Ireland—History’, but the two-Munsters theory is favoured over the central fifth.

⁷⁷ See Mac Cana, ‘Early Irish Ideology and the Concept of Unity,’ in Richard Kearney, ed., *The Irish Mind* (1985), especially pp. 67-70.

⁷⁸ MacNeill’s contribution to the excavation of our knowledge about political system of Irish stateships is celebrated in Stephen Gwynn’s homage to his ‘divining power [which] has given intelligible reality to what was least comprehensible.’ See Gwynn, *Irish Literature and Drama* (1936), p.181.

⁷⁹ The most popular of many nationalist itineraries was William Bulfin’s *Rambles in Eirinn* (1907), which pauses at both Tara and Uisneach.

⁸⁰ An amalgam of Joyce’s own college papers, ‘Drama and Life’ (1900) and ‘James Clarence Mangan’ (1902). See Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann, eds., *Critical Writings of James Joyce* (1959), pp. 38-46 and 73-83.

the most heroically Carlylean. Later in *Stephen Hero*, he takes positive steps to effect his own ordination in the rites of the Gaelic Irish bards and *filí* by arrogating the privileges associated with druidic Uisneach to himself. The occasion in question is the visit to Mullingar, a journey made by Joyce in 1902.

The episode is handled as if a neophyte were approaching the place of initiation, or an Athenian making pilgrimage to Delphos. In it, an angular attempt is made to translocate the symbolic centre of Ireland from the midlands to the capital, or—more precisely—from Uisneach to Broadstone Station: ‘From the Broadstone to Mullingar is a journey of some fifty miles ..’ [SH209].⁸¹ The air of uneasy self-importance which attaches to Stephen derives from the awkward transition between naturalistic and symbolic modes of composition. It is responsible for some of Joyce’s worst prose: ‘This fifty mile journey is made by the train in about two hours and you are therefore to conceive Stephen Daedalus packed in the corner of a third-class carriage ..’ [SH209]. For such stagey leadenness the only excuse is that something momentous is being traced as Stephen’s epiphanic journey towards the Irish omphalos.⁸² Unfortunately the full extent of Joyce’s imaginative strategy in the Mullingar episode can never be known due to missing portions of the manuscript; yet where the text resumes the first words are ‘.. of Lough Owel’ [SH209], a reference to the adjacent stretch of water which suggests that a visit to the Hill of Uisneach has just been made. Dr. Garvin has argued that Joyce acquired his ash-plant there—the ‘augur’s rod’ [U676] which he sports in *Ulysses*—as a symbol of his new identity and powers.⁸³

According to historical tradition, the site of the Hill of Uisneach was a ritual meeting place long before Tuathal Teachtmhair, backed by the Fianna Eireann which he founded, made it the focus of a Connaught hegemony in about a.d. 150.⁸⁴ Like other megalithic monuments in Ireland, the standing stone and circle are of a pre-Celtic origin, as so also may be the division of the country into the ‘fifths’ or *cuigi* (*provinces*) associated with it.⁸⁵ The concept of harmonious yet independent kingdoms was old by the time that Tuathal—called ‘the Arriver’—hived off parts of the five contemporary kingdoms of Ireland to create a domestic kingdom for himself at Uisneach.⁸⁶ Later, the expropriation of Tara from the Leinstermen at the close of the third century by Cormac (a lineal descendent of Tuathal), together with the inauguration of the Tara dynasty, seems to have spelt the end of the equable Pentarchy as a practical dimension of Irish politics.⁸⁷ According to D. A. Binchy, the Tara high-kingship was never really more than a spurious political reality, superimposed on the conceptual unity of the country established in far

⁸¹ I am grateful to my friend John Devitt for the information that Broadstone Station was in fact known as ‘the Broadstone’ in North Dublin while still function as a railway station. (It is now a depot.)

⁸² Stephen’s reflections on the omphaloskepsis in ‘Proteus’ [U46] are occasioned by Buck Mulligan’s designating their provisional home at Sandycove as the ‘omphalos’ for a ‘new paganism’ in modern Ireland [U7]. The original form of the motif can be found under ‘Gogarty’ in the Trieste Notebook: ‘The Omphalos was to be the temple of a neopaganism.’ See Robert Scholes, ed., *The Workshop of Daedalus* (1965), p.97.

⁸³ John Garvin, *James Joyce’s Disunited Kingdom* (1976), p.29.

⁸⁴ The classical source for this information is Geoffrey Keating’s *Foras Feasa ar Eirinn*, written in 1629-31 and known in translation as the ‘History of Ireland’. Modern editions are by David Comyn, Vol. 1 (1902), and Patrick Dinneen, Vols. 2 & 3 (1908).

⁸⁵ Mac Cana explains: ‘The word for province in Irish is *cuigeadh*, Old Irish *cóiced*, literally a fifth. See ‘Early Irish Ideology and the Concept of Unity,’ in Richard Kearney, ed., *The Irish Mind* (1985), p. 67-8.

⁸⁶ Eoin MacNeill, *Phases of Irish History* (1919, rep. 1970), p.103.

⁸⁷ ‘The reign of Cormac is regarded in our earliest histories as an epoch in Irish history ... because it marked the end of the Pentarchy and the rise of the Monarchy seated at Tara.’ Eoin MacNeill, *Phases of Irish History* (1919, rep. 1970), p.124.

earlier times;⁸⁸ nevertheless, it produced the traditional association of Tara with Uisneach as twin-sites of Irish centralism in the historical tradition, conjoining to some extent political and cosmological centres of the Gaelic island. In the narrative of a late sixth century text which spuriously ascribes the origin of the Stone of Divisions to one Fintan in about a.d. 560, Uisneach and Tara are described as the lying in Ireland like the ‘two kidneys of a beast.’⁸⁹ It is this bipolar tradition which accounts for the alternation of Joyce’s *schema* between the ‘tarahan dynasty’ [380.21] and ‘knoll Asnoch’ [476.06] in the *Wake*.

The division of Ireland into provincial kingships bonded by a central monarchy is, in Eoin MacNeill’s words, ‘the oldest certain fact in the political history of Ireland.’⁹⁰ The continuing veneration of both Tara and Uisneach up to comparatively modern times is indicated by the fact that the Hill of a Monster Meeting of 1842, where Daniel O’Connell was ‘crowned’ by his supporters, while—as Leo Daly reports⁹¹—‘only yesterday ... it was felt that any politician who had not spoken from the Hill of Uisneach had not been heard by the people of Ireland.’ In his influential remarks on the Fifth Province, which first appeared in the *The Crane Bag*⁹² and was espoused in the early ‘eighties by the Field Day Directors, Prionsias MacCana has written: ‘The pattern of a central province enclosed by four others representing the cardinal points cannot be explained otherwise than as a historical reflex of an ancient cosmographic schema, and one which has striking analogies in several of the "great traditions" of the world.’⁹³ In conclusion, he attaches to this ancient symbolism a talismanic significance for modern times as representing a lost taxonomy without which Ireland is in some sense not herself:

.. the atrophy of the archetypal symbolism of the centre and the cosmographic vision of totality of which it is a part signifies the collapse of a subtle equilibrium between the cohesion and political segmentation that was, it would seem, already old when the Celtic peoples were born. This perhaps more than any other single event or innovation marks the end of traditional Irish society and—from the ideological point of view—the reversion from order to chaos.⁹⁴

Here the Pentarchy is made to serve, not as a political model for a new Irish state as in Darrell Figgis, but as a measure of the reduction of a culturally ordered world to the disrupted condition which is felt to be intrinsically the condition of modern Irish life. The cultural historian is here entering imaginatively into the spirit of the mythology he describes, and in so doing he demonstrates the fact that the quest for a centre—albeit in chastely non-political terms—is still part of the imaginative agenda in Ireland.

⁸⁸ Cited by MacCana, ‘Early Irish Ideology and the Concept of Unity,’ in Richard Kearney, ed., *The Irish Mind* (1985), p.67.

⁸⁹ Leo Daly, ‘A View from the Hill,’ in *Ireland of the Welcomes* (March-April 1978), p.30.

⁹⁰ Eoin MacNeill, *Phases of Irish History* (1917), p.101. Cf., ‘[t]he details of tradition, upon examination, indicate that the Pentarchy preceded the Monarchy and lasted for a long time, long enough to become the chief outstanding fact in tradition as regards the internal political state of Ireland in the early Celtic period.’ *Op. cit.*, p.102.

⁹¹ Leo Daly, ‘A View from the Hill,’ in *Ireland of the Welcomes* (March-April 1978), p.30.

⁹² Prionsias MacCana, ‘Notes on the Early Irish Concept of Unity,’ in Patrick Hederman and Richard Kearney, eds., *The Crane Bag*, Vol II, Nos. 1 & 2 (1978); also *The Crane Bag*, 1977-81 (1982), pp.205-19. The article in Kearney, *op. cit.*, is an expansion of this piece.

⁹³ The phrase is quoted from Rees and Rees, who continue: ‘Evidence ... could be quoted from many other parts of the world, leaving us in no doubt as to the cosmological significance of the four and the central fifth of Ireland.’ See *Celtic Heritage* (1961), p.148.

⁹⁴ MacCana, in Kearney, ed., *The Irish Mind* (1985), p.78.

In Joyce, a comparable preoccupation with the historical legacy of the decentred Irish universe lies at the bottom of the whole design of *Finnegans Wake*, which—in crucial paradox—he calls the ‘chaosmos of Alle’ [118.21].⁹⁵ The concept of Gaelic the Pentarchy with which he attempts to trace the *cosmos* in that *chaos* (and vice versa) plays a major part in the hermeneutics of the *Wake*, perhaps amounting to nothing less than the ‘allriddle of it’ [274.02] under the form of ‘the Five Positions’—or rather, under the aegis of ‘Dathy of the Five Positions’ [274.02-06], a historical figure who was, as the *Annotations* tell us⁹⁶, the last pagan king of Ireland, killed by lightning while crossing the Alps, and therefore a personage of some interest to James Joyce.⁹⁷

Joyce exploited the symbolism of the Irish Pentarchy in his own distinctive way, characteristically aligning it with the male-female axis which dominates the cosmological symbolism of *Finnegans Wake*. He re-mythologized the concept of cultural and political union associated with the *cúigí* by embodying ‘the fiveful moment’ [396.27] in the sexual act between Tristram and Iseult in the *Wake*’s ‘Mamalujo’ chapter which immediately follows ‘Roderick’ in the *Wake*. The four Gospellers who spy on them in that chapter are equated throughout the book with the four provinces of Ireland, each with the appropriate accent,⁹⁸ but also as the Four Masters of the *Annals*.⁹⁹ With the ass that always attends them their number is amplified to five,¹⁰⁰ and hence they are called ‘the five fourmasters’ [394.17]—a numerology which conveniently matches the arrangement of Irish provinces in four quarters with a central fifth. What they witness is a union of opposites, as much metaphysical as sexual, which answers warmly to an old aesthetic fancy of Stephen Daedalus when ‘he toyed ... with a theory of dualism which would symbolize the twin eternities of spirit and nature in the twin eternities of male and female.’ [SH188] The erotic conjugation of the sexes, when ‘quick as greased pigskin, Americas Champius, with one aragan throust, drove the massive of virilvigtoury flshpst ... rightjingbangshot into the goal of her gullet’ [395.36], brings about an *ekstasis* with strongly pantheistical overtones: ‘the allimmanence of that which is Itself Alone ... exteriorises on this ourherenow plane in *disunited* solod [with] intuitions of *reunited* selfdom in the higherdimissional selfless Allself’ [394.33-395.02]. And if this moment of interfusion between spiritual and material dimensions of being is sexual on the one hand, it is political on the other: for ‘fiveful moment’ is the code of the Gaelic Pentarchy. it is also—and above all—purely

⁹⁵ *The Decentered Universe* (1974) is the title of a structuralist study of *Finnegans Wake* by Margot Norris.

⁹⁶ Roland McHugh, *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (1980).

⁹⁷ See Roland McHugh, *Annotations for Finnegans Wake* (1980). This character is not of course so much a major personification of HCE as a irresistible trouvaille.

⁹⁸ See pp. 140-41 in the ‘Questions’ chapter of *Finnegans Wake*, where Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are identified with Belfast, Cork, Dublin, and Galway respectively. See also Adaline Glasheen, *A Third Census of Finnegans Wake* (1977), under ‘Provinces’.

⁹⁹ *The Annals of the Four Masters (Annales Rioghachta Eireann)* were compiled by Michéal O Cléirigh and three companions who returned to Ireland in 1632 to rescue material threatened in the sequel of the Flight of the Wild Geese after the Battle of Kinsale. Editions in translation were produced by Owen Connellan (1846) and John O’Donovan (1856).

¹⁰⁰ ‘.. but I, poor ass, am but as their fourpart tinkler’s donkey’ [405.06]. Adaline Glasheen comments: ‘When the old men are the Four Provinces of Ireland ... the Ass is Midhi or Meath, which is "the missing fifth" of Ireland.’ See *Third Census of Finnegans Wake* (1979), p.18. He is generally thought to be the narrator of 3.i. A further commentary on the Irish connections of the ass can be found in John Garvin, *James Joyce’s Disunited Kingdom* (1976), pp. 202-04.

Joycean, and hence his willingness to enscribed his own signature on this symbol of Irish reunion: ‘with a queeletecree of *joysis crisis* she renulited their disunited’ [395.32].¹⁰¹

In *Work in Progress*, Joyce’s structural problem was to merge the fivefold cosmography of Ireland with the sexual ontology of the *Wake*. This he did primarily in the diagram, or womb-chart at FW 293, which also serves as maps of central Dublin (the Parnell Monument and the Rotunda Hospital), and more broadly of Ireland, as centred on Dublin city. Directly beneath the diagram is a ‘Mearingstone’ [293.14] and nearby is mentioned Lough Ennel (‘enn all’ [293.15]), the Co. Westmeath lake. The Mearingstone here represents both Parnell’s phallic obelisk and the Stone of Divisions (Aill na Míreann) at Uisneach in the Druidic heart of Ireland. This is the ‘monolith’ and ‘erectheion’ [539.01-02] associated with Roderick. The symbolic function of that standing stone is described in a Middle Irish text, ‘The Disposition of the Manor at Tara’, which states, according to MacCana, that ‘a pillarstone with five ridges on it, one for each of the five provinces, was erected at Uisneach, the central province being known as Mide [or] *Middle*.’¹⁰² In the naughtier diagram of ALP’s ‘muddy old triangular delta’ [297.24] drawn by Shem for Shaun’s edification in ‘Nightlessons’ (2.ii), two orbits intersect in the common area of her pudenda. These are the cyclic itineraries of the Wakean males, Shem and Shaun, emerging, separating, and ‘reamalgamering’ in ‘our eternal geomater’ [297.01]—alternately our ‘Geamatron’ [257.05], the ‘Mother of us all’ [299.02]. No wonder that ‘we all love our annal matter’ [294.F5]. On the lower edge of the diagram is HCE, the intruding male, whose generative act sets the cycle of antagonisms in motion.¹⁰³ On the East-West axis of the diagram, Shaun and Shem are plotted respectively in the Irish midlands and on ‘Lambday’ to form the line AL [294.04]. By this arrangement, the artist Shem is rendered extraterritorial, like the Vikings of Lambay Island¹⁰⁴, while the citizen Shaun stays at Uisneach—hence the spelling ‘Asnoch’ at 476.06—in the Gaelic heartland. These are the warring brothers in all human conflicts of ‘wills gens wonts’ [004.01], though in the last analysis their identities continually ‘dunloop into eath the ocher.’ [295.32] as the diagram and Irish history—in Joyce’s version—neatly show.¹⁰⁵

In such ways, Joyce tries to show that the reality of Ireland is conglomerate, that the modern Irish ‘entity’ is essentially plural, and that no part is conceivable—literally—without the other. About modern political problems on the island he had of course no practical suggestions, except to note that the cost of the fall of Charles Stewart Parnell was a ‘price partitional’ [264.22].¹⁰⁶ In private life, he objected to the use of the whole of Ireland on the New State stamp. ‘Ireland’s split little pea’ [171.04] was for him primarily the pre-Independence complex of interdependent provinces

¹⁰¹ Italics mine.

¹⁰² Mac Cana, ‘Early Irish Ideology and the Concept of Unity,’ in Richard Kearney, ed., *The Irish Mind* (1985), p.68.

¹⁰³ Another view of the contentious relationship of Shem and Shaun as twins, orbiting in the womb of ALP, is given in the fable of Burrus and Caseous in Shaun’s professorial disquisition on the ‘climactogram’ [165.23]—itself a redaction of the sexual graffiti at FW293.

¹⁰⁴ The connection of the Vikings with Lambay is cited in D. A. Chart’s *Story of Dublin* (1907), p.27. Historical information from Chart’s book is embodied in episodes of *Ulysses*.

¹⁰⁵ See also the dialogue of ‘Jute and Mutt’ in *Finnegans Wake*, 1.i, where Viking and Gael ‘excheck a few strong verbs weak oach eacher’ [016.08].

¹⁰⁶ Parnell is supposed to have said, ‘Be sure to get my price,’ a sentiment echoed in the *Wake* by Issy: ‘When you sell get my price!’ [500.30]. See Roland McHugh, *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (1980).

in which unity and diversity were inextricably related along both geographical and historical lines. For this the Gaelic Pentarchy was an appropriate symbol.¹⁰⁷

The ‘Roderick’ episode addresses the crisis that arose in Ireland when Gaelic centralism was ousted by the Norman invaders, setting in motion a process which led inexorably to the demise of the Irish language as the *lingua franca* of this country. The episode manages this less under the form of a ‘goahead plot’ [SL318] than by a system of allusions suspended along a continuous sentence in the Hiberno-English dialect. That the episode is funny goes without saying, but the laughter it inspires is necessarily mordant since the very narration is an example of the kind of linguistic decadence in question. This is in keeping with the principle of Joycean writing which dictates that narrative is invariably conducted in language grafted from the usage of the character or—more broadly—of the mentality that confers a stylistic identity upon it.¹⁰⁸ In this case, the Thersitic commentator of the ‘Cyclops’ chapter in *Ulysses* is an obvious antecedent for the narrator of ‘King Roderick,’ while the tawdry eloquence of ‘Eumaeus,’ with its endless succession of ill-judged metaphors, is another.¹⁰⁹

The language of the *Wake* is of course differently structured from that of *Ulysses*. Chiefly, it is polysemous, often weaving contradictory meanings together in single units of speech. Happily the ‘King Roderick’ episode coins a name for it when, in his maundering decline, the High King drunkenly croons the sentimental balladry of Ireland to himself ‘diversed tonguedes’ [381.20]. ‘Diversed tonguedes’: this denominates at once the multilingual fabric so characteristic of *Finnegans Wake*, but also the linguistic experience of a historically disrupted culture such as Ireland’s—which, in the first instance, the book was tailored to express.

It is worth dwelling on that paradoxical coinage since it summarises the epistemological sense of so much of Joyce’s technical originality as a stylist. As a scriptural allusion, ‘diversed tonguedes’ neatly combines the two stories which form the basis for the Christian theory of language, the myth of Babel and the Gospel story of Pentecostal fire. In ‘diversed tonguedes,’ the past-participle and passive mood expresses the sense of language rendered plural, as Man’s language was rendered plural on the Plain of Shinar by a jealous God so that the sons of men ‘may not understand one another’s speech.’ [Gen. 11.7] *Diverse tongues*, the more familiar phrase, connotes the tongues of fire by which the Holy Ghost’s gift of languages (*Acts*, 2. 4-6) descended on the apostles so that the Christian message (or *kerygma*) could be propagated throughout all cultures without losing any of its pristine meaning.¹¹⁰ St. Augustine’s cognate interpretations of the Fall of Man as a corruption of the perfect language of Adam, and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the Redemption of the Word, deeply inform the epistemological argument of the *Wake*, in which

¹⁰⁷ The use of the Five Fifths motif in *Finnegans Wake* was first noticed by John Garvin. See *James Joyce’s Disunited Kingdom* (1976), 147-55 et passim.

¹⁰⁸ This stylistic orientation has been characterized as the ‘Uncle Charles Principle’ in Kenner’s *Joyce’s Voices* (1978), and in others of his works.

¹⁰⁹ See Hugh Kenner, *A Colder Eye* (1984), p.279: ‘Prune the Wakeese from a Wakean sentence ... and you are apt to find a ‘Eumaeus’ sentence, nerveless, meandering, only of interest when Joyce has later contived to fill it with minute inappropriate-nesses. You find, in short, a language that has died, but that like an unembalmed corpse is full of local life. The occasion calls for a wake.’

¹¹⁰ ‘And they were filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues ... the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.’

his phrase in the Easter liturgy, signifying the paradoxical blessing of the Fall as a prelude to Salvation, appears ubiquitously: ‘felix culpa’ [‘O happy fault’].¹¹¹

Joyce had his own ideas about the significance of the Biblical myth of language; at least, as he told Frank Budgen, he thought he ‘had found the meaning of the Tower of Babel story.’¹¹² Unfortunately his interpretation is not recorded, though clearly he perceived some equivalence between the overthrow of the Babylonian ziggurat and the Norman Invasion as comparable assaults on the original order of truth and language. In the ‘Roderick’ episode, the High King gives a last supper ‘in his umbrageous house of the hundred bottles with the radio beamer tower and its hangars, chimneys and equilines.’ [380.17] This curious hostelry sounds like a cross between the domicile of the early High King Conn of the Hundred Battles—Roderick’s Connaught ancestor—and Babylon of the hanging gardens as Herodotus described it.¹¹³ (‘Equilines’ refers most probably to the horsedrawn chariots which the city walls could accommodate abreast.) It is in fact an Irish Tower of Babel waiting to be overthrown.

The high king’s home, in the ‘Roderick episode,’ is also Babelized in another way, a ‘radio tower beamer’ on its roof hinting at Joyce’s fascination with the new medium of radio and its way of gathering in all the voices of humanity. In another place, we learn that the ‘Hiberio-Miletians and Arglo-Normans’—the most important of the invaders in the ‘Roderick’ episode—have ‘donated him ... their toltubular high fidelity daidialler ... equipped with supershield umbrella ... eclectically filtered for allirish earths and ohmes’ [309.15-910.01].¹¹⁴ This modern device, here dubbed a ‘harmonic condenser enginium’ [310.01], transmits programmes ranging in origin ‘from the antidulibnium onto the serostaatarean’ [310.07]—that is, from before the Flood to the Irish Free State. The circular dials of the old ‘wirelesses’ were certainly apt to give the impression that the whole world is talking simultaneously, and could be listened to in all of its philological and phenomenological varieties. As the Wake puts it near the start, ‘the owl globe wheels in view’ [006.29]—echoing Hegel’s saying that ‘The owl of Minerva only flies at night.’ At the core of the ‘Yawn’ chapter, when the voice of humanity utters the absolute ‘SILENCE’ [501.06] upon which all languages are founded, some twiddling of the tuning knob goes on: ‘Rawth of Gar and Donnerbruck Fire? Is the strays world moving mound or what static babel is this, tell us? [499.33]; and again: ‘Now we’re getting it. Tune in and pick up the forain counties!’ [500.35].¹¹⁵

At a much earlier point in Joyce’s career, we can see how the technology of communication suggests to him metaphors for the workings of the human Logos. In *Stephen Hero*, there is an account of how the ‘thread of union’ between father and son has worsened on account of the ‘gradual rustiness [of] the upper station’ [SH101]. In *Ulysses*, Stephen imagines a phone-call to Eve along the umbilical cord—‘Put me on the Edenville’ [U46]—while in ‘Nighttown’ Elijah invites us to use a futuristic device for all divine communications: ‘You can call me up by sunphone any old time.’ [U625] This bespeaks a universe in which, as Stephen Dedalus

111 Notably, ‘O foenix culprit! Ex nickylo malo comes mickelmassed bonum’ [023. 16]. For St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas’s epistemological interpretations of Scripture see Marcia L. Colish, *The Mirror of Language: A Study of the Medieval Theory of Language* (1968).

112 Frank Budgen, ‘Resurrection,’ in Dalton and Clive Hart, eds., *Twelve and a Tilly* (1966), p.12.

113 See ‘Babylon’ in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (11th ed.), which includes the reference to Herodotus.

114 This occurs at the beginning of ‘The Scene in a Pub’ (2. ii) which the ‘Roderick O’Conor’ episode brings to completion.

115 In view of the setting, Uisneach, and the Pentarchy motif, counties is more appropriate than countries.

determines childishly, ‘though there were different names for God in all the different languages in the world and God understood what all the people who prayed said in their different languages, still God remained always the same God and God’s real name was God.’ [AP12] And that, with its radical epistemological assumptions about the primacy of one’s own language, is precisely the problematic that all the philological machinery of *Finnegans Wake* was designed to compass.

The First Fragment of *Finnegans Wake* takes the ambiguous measure of its author’s personal and national past. Modern Irish history begins at the Norman Invasion with a political and linguistic dispossession. The *Wake* begins with the local equivalent of the Tower of Babel, being set Blarney Castle on the Plain of Shinar, where the Irish polygottal experience is inaugurated. It has not been however a wholly tragic experience since the effusion of creative language in the interstitial zone between Irish and English is has been a generative factor in much of the best Irish writing of literature in English. In Ireland—as elsewhere in the universe of languages—the Tower of Babel has been blessed by Pentecostal Fire.

Underlying the linguistic strategies of *Finnegans Wake* is the paradox that the great diversity of human languages provides the basis for a countervailing vision of a single, epistemologically perfect idiom to replace and mend the ‘broken heaventalk’ [261.28] of Christian epistemology.¹¹⁶ One of the recurrent epistemological themes of the *Wake* is its play upon the quest of ‘aposteriorious tongues’ [083.11] for ‘aprioric roots’ [083.11] as a way of escaping from a history of linguistic morphologies which involves such continual corruptions of language that our current ‘Nichtian glossary’ is ‘nat language in any sinse of the world’ [083.12] at all. This aligns the breakdown of *sense* with the commission of *sins*, a theory of language which Joyce inherited as one of the chief strands of the formative intellectual culture bestowed by the Jesuits of Clongowes and Belvedere. (The more scientific view of linguistic morphology is amusingly described in another place.)¹¹⁷

The conviction that a crucial linguistic displacement had occurred was particularly intensely felt in the climate of the Language Revival Movement of Joyce’s day in Dublin, which represented Gaelic as the lost *Ursprache* of the Irish nation in the slogan, ‘gan Teanga, gan Tír’ (‘without Language, without Country’). Joyce, with a wider vision, saw the conflict of languages inside and outside of Ireland as more significant than any political and—more particularly—any nationalist resolution of that conflict. He had originally tried to grasp reality in the language of the artist through the inveterate solecism of his epiphanies, which require a single, unified sensibility for their effective communication. Subsequently—and the whole maturity of his art resides in this difference—his attempt to embrace the reality of experience under all its diverse linguistic and cultural forms led him to the so-called dreamlanguage of *Finnegans Wake*: ‘It is told in sounds in utter that, in signs so adds to, in universal, in polyguttural, in each auxiliary neutral idiom,

¹¹⁶ For epistemological traditions connected with the notion of an Edenic *Ursprache*, see George Steiner, *After Babel* (1976), especially pp. 58-59.

¹¹⁷ ‘He does not know how his grandson’s grandson’s grandson’s grandson will stammer up in Peruvian for in the ersebest idiom I have done it equals to I so shall do. He dares not think why the grandmother of the grandmother of his grandmother’s grandmother coughed Russky with suchky husky accent since in the mouthart of the solve look me now means I once was otherwise.’ [252.35-253.05] Specific philological points about the Irish grammar of tenses and Slavic semantics—the latter sustained by the glosses, suchki, R. whores, and slovo, Pan-Slavonic, word—are being made. See Roland McHugh’s *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (1980).

sordomutics, florilingua, sheltafocal, flayflutter, a con's cubane, a pro's tutute, strassarab, ereperse and anythongue athall' [117.12-16]. This was the fulfilment of an insight that he record in an early notebook when he wrote, 'Art has the gift of tongues.'- The craft of *Finnegans Wake* was also the only adequate response to the babelized condition of the Irish historical world, itself a cracked looking-glass which reveal to Joyce the perilous consistencies of the wider universe.

¹¹⁸ Pola and Trieste Notebooks, in Robert Scholes, ed., *The Workshop of Daedalus* (1965), pp. 85 and 97