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the Wake

Edmund L. Epstein

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# The Content and Form of *Finnegans Wake*: With a Synopsis of the *Wake*

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EDMUND L. EPSTEIN

I began to read the *Wake* many years ago, and very early I realized that I needed a guide through Joyce's labyrinthine masterpiece.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, there were a few guides, but most of them were paraphrases of the text, or emphasized individual lines or paragraphs, and I needed more of a guide to the true continuity of the book. Since then, commentary on *Finnegans Wake* has increased exponentially for more than seven decades. Philosophical and genetic criticism based on studies of the book are proving indispensable in the interpretation of the *Wake*. However, I still feel the need for a guide completely through the *Wake*.<sup>2</sup>

In this guide, I try to avoid the deeper theoretical issues in favor of simple explication. Yet, no matter how hard I try to plow my way through Joyce's majestic text, the most elementary questions rise up through the details of the *Wake*'s surface and keep roiling the waters:

Does the *Wake* have a story? Is it merely a pure and simple jangle of words (see II.2.4)? Does the *Wake* provide a basic challenge to the concept of meaning itself? Is it truly the standard-bearer in Eugene Jolas's "Revolution of the Word"? What, if anything, happens in the *Wake*?

## WHAT IS *FINNEGANS WAKE* ABOUT?

### *Joyce, Language, and the World*

It is an important matter whether or not Joyce's works, including the *Wake*, are merely linguistic patterns created by a great virtuoso of language. I do not feel that Joyce's books are abstract exercises in language. Théophile Gautier once declared that for him the physical world existed. It existed powerfully for Joyce. It was the physical world, the development of human beings in the physical world, and the unfolding in space and

time of the lives of imperfect human beings that occupied Joyce for most of his life.

Paul Léon eloquently testifies to Joyce's love of the physical world and interest in how human beings perceive it:

I recall a day in late September 1930. I was leaving for a holiday and Joyce had insisted on walking with me part of the way towards the Gare de Lyon. I am a very poor walker, just the opposite of Joyce, and our strolls aroused in me only moderate enthusiasm. I believe, however, that he felt safer crossing the streets when I held his arm. But the two of us must have made a sorry pair in the streets of Paris, and, in fact, Philippe Soupault had baptized us "the halt and the blind." That day, as we walked quietly along the Boulevard Raspail, Joyce was suddenly stopped by a young girl who, somewhat awkwardly but charmingly, complimented him on his work. Joyce lifted his unfortunate eyes towards the still-sunny sky, then brought them back to the boxed trees growing along the boulevard: "You would do better," he said to the girl, "to admire the sky or even these poor trees." Should that young girl chance to read these lines, she will perhaps recognize herself, but I should like [her] to know how great a truth lay behind this apparently banal suggestion.

This was not false modesty, but a genuine admiration for the natural universe, for its colours which he could hardly distinguish, but which he appreciated all the more fully in consequence, for the constant mobility of its forms, whether pleasing or unshapely; for its sounds, to which only recently we listened together, stretched out on the grass in the Allier; for the human beings who people and quicken it with their thoughts, their passions, whether good or evil, noble or base, harmonious or discordant.<sup>3</sup>

Joyce shows his constant preoccupation with the physical world in several places in his works. For example, Stephen Dedalus speaks for Joyce on the primacy of the earth and its processes in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*. In *A Portrait*, Stephen rejects the priesthood mainly for its alienation from the imperfect physical world: "He smiled to think that it was this disorder, the misrule and confusion of his father's house, and the stagnation of vegetable life, which was to win the day in his soul" (*P* 162). The "man with the hat" digging in the soil near Stephen's shabby house seems to provide a metaphor for Stephen himself

and for Joyce—all three of them will be digging in the dirt of the earth for nourishment.

Later in *A Portrait*, Stephen enunciates his artistic credo, which is also Joyce's:

We are right . . . to speak of these things [art and beauty] and to try to understand their nature and, having understood it, to try slowly and humbly and constantly to express, to press out again, from the gross earth or what it brings forth, from sound and shape and colour which are the prison gates of our soul, an image of the beauty that we have come to understand—that is art.

(*P* 206–7)

In the library scene in *Ulysses*, Stephen, standing with his comrades outside the Reading Room, mentally attacks their misty Platonism. They had all been insisting on “formless spiritual essences,” on the Platonic unreality of the world as perceived by the senses. Stephen firmly rejects their foggy world in favor of a real world of time and space: “Space: what you damn well have to see. . . . Through spaces smaller than red globules of man's blood they creepycrawl after Blake's buttocks into eternity of which this vegetable world is but a shadow. Hold to the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past” (*U* 9.86–89).

Joyce keeps to this credo in the *Wake*: “Hold to the now, the here.” The *Wake*, despite its radical experimentation in language and form, is a hymn of praise to the imperfect world of fallen human beings. In Book IV, St. Patrick stoutly defends the rainbow-hued world of fallen human beings against a Platonic eastern sage, who acknowledges his defeat by falling on his behind with a “Thud!” as the sun blazes above the daytime world of error and glory.

If Joyce, in the *Wake*, as in his other books, celebrates the real world and its processes in space and time, what happens in space and time in the *Wake*? Do these things happen to “fictional characters,” as in standard novels? The answer to this question is possible to find: the *Wake* can be shown to be basically a narrative fiction. There is a simple test to determine whether a text is a narrative fiction or not: narrative fictions are characterized linguistically by containing *nonreferential proper nouns*, that is, nouns referring to entities that are referred to nowhere else and whose referents depend for their existence solely on the existence of the author.

Narrative fictions, unlike other types of narrative, contain characters whose existence is not independent of that of the author. In narrative fictions, the proper names of the characters are nondesignative; that is, these names are attached to characters whose existence depends entirely upon the existence of the author of the text. Napoleon existed independent of the huge numbers of historians who described his career. However, if Gustave Flaubert had never existed, Emma Bovary would ipso facto never have existed. Throughout the *Wake*, there are many such non-referring designations (HCE, ALP, Shem, Shaun, Issy, and a multitude of others), and by this test, the *Wake* qualifies as a narrative fiction—if of an unusual type.<sup>4</sup>

Yet these characters in the *Wake* who are designated with nonreferential proper nouns are not fictional “individuals,” as Emma Bovary is a fictional individual. Much of the difficulty in reading the *Wake* can be resolved by realizing that Joyce had an idiosyncratic theory of personality, in which individuals would represent archetypes in a cyclical universe. Like Stephen at the end of *A Portrait*, all of the “characters” in the *Wake* “go to encounter for the millionth time” (*P* 251–55), in a myriad of masks, the real world of cyclically recurring time.

Early in his career, in *Stephen Hero*, Joyce presented a credo to which he dedicated the work of his life. In these pages, Joyce declared that he would create a “theory of dualism which would symbolize the twin eternities of spirit and nature in the twin eternities of male and female” (*SH* 210). In all of his mature work, James Joyce would fulfill his early dreams of creation.<sup>5</sup> In this schema, there are only two “persons” in the *Wake*: the representatives, respectively, of Spirit and Nature, Man and Woman, HCE and ALP. All of the other characters in the *drame*, the dream-drama, are avatars or hypostases of stages of human life, from childhood to old age.

SPIRIT  
HCE

NATURE  
ALP

YOUNG CHILDREN

Jerry and Kevin/Glugg and Chuff  
Dolph and Kev/Cain and Abel

Twenty-eight Monthly  
Girls + Issy = Twenty-Nine  
Nightschool or Leapyear Girls

## ADOLESCENTS

Shem/Shاون/Shimar Shin

Issy/Essy

The male principle is tripartite.

The female principle is duple.

The symbolism for physical sex is three to two

The Lipoleum Boys in the Willingdone Museyroom

[L and R testicles and phallus]

[labia and vagina]

Seven Rainbow Girls

## YOUNG LOVERS

Tristan

Isolde

## THRESHOLD ADULTS

[Fallen Man]

Isabel

Shem—Below the waist

Jaun/Haun/Yawn—Above the waist

## MATURE ADULTS

Humphrey Chimpenden Earwicker, Pubkeeper

Anna Livia Plurabelle

Mr Porter/Finn MacCool/Finnegan the bricklayer

Mrs Porter

*Father/Hill of Howth**Mother/River Liffey**Husband**Wife*

## OLD PEOPLE

Four Old Men/Servant Sackerson

Kate the Hag

*Historians/Lawmakers/Police**Muse of History*

Two Washerwomen

*Time in the Works of James Joyce*

In Joyce's cyclical narrative, the narrative "actions" that occur seem to occur unevenly. As we will see, Books II and III are very active, whereas the "actions" in Book I are extremely rare and uneven, and Book IV is somewhere in the middle. Some closer analysis of the time and the events in the *Wake* seems necessary. We can begin with a close analysis of the passing of time in the other works of Joyce, to see how these works differ from the treatment of temporal sequence in the *Wake*.

In his earlier works, Joyce is as clear about the passing of time as he is about the vivid appearances in space. There is usually no difficulty in determining the time of the various sections in *Dubliners*, *A Portrait*, and *Ulysses*. Time in these works is expressed in three apparently naturalistic modes:

- 1) actual dates—days, months, years, holidays;
- 2) hours of the day and seasons of the year;
- 3) development of the characters over longer stretches of time.

In *Dubliners*, Joyce sets the times of his events with great care. There are many specific times and actual dates, as well as references to seasons of the year; there is also one significant absence of a time reference. “July 1, 1895,” the date of the death of Father Flynn, in “The Sisters,” is the first temporal reference. “An Encounter” takes place during the first week in June. “Araby” takes place on a Saturday night in winter, after 9:00 P.M.<sup>6</sup> “Eveline” lacks dates, as befits her stunned state. “After the Race” takes place during a night and a morning in summer. “Two Gallants” takes place on a summer evening. Mr. Doran’s ordeal in “The Boarding House” takes place on a day in early summer between 11:17 and 11:30 A.M. precisely, so that Mrs Moonan can make the twelve o’clock mass. “A Little Cloud” takes place in late autumn at sunset and during the evening. “Counterparts” takes place during a bleak February day, ending at dusk. “Clay” is centered on a Hallow Eve celebration. “A Painful Case” takes place over more than four years and ends on a November night after nine o’clock. Of course, “Ivy Day in the Committee Room” takes place on Ivy Day, October 6, and it is possible to determine the year: 1902, the year before Edward VII’s 1903 visit to Dublin. “A Mother” takes place on a rainy Saturday. “Grace” ends at a Thursday 9:30 P.M. retreat. And of course, “The Dead” takes place on and after Christmas Day.

There are longer rhythms, rhythms stretching over many years, from youth to late middle age, in *Dubliners*. The early stories relate the lives of young people and the later stories show how the young people have grown up into morally paralyzed adults. The specificity of dates in *Dubliners*, as well as its longer rhythms, also organize the later novels *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*.

Joyce, in *A Portrait*, provides a masterful chronological armature for his description of the development of a young man. The sections in *A Portrait* are most carefully organized by time, both by specific dates and seasons, and by the longer rhythms of Stephen’s development. The long rhythms in *A Portrait* emerge with great clarity from the beginning of the book to the end, each stage carefully marked for time. In fact, the elaborate chronological development of *A Portrait* prepares the way for the organization of *Ulysses* and ultimately for *Finnegans Wake*’s TIME modes. I

believe that a close analysis of time in *A Portrait* is useful for an analysis of these temporal modes in the *Wake*.

Book I: The first section of *A Portrait* is implicitly located in time by the quarrel over Parnell. Aunt Dante turns against Parnell when the liaison with Katherine O'Shea becomes an open scandal, in 1889–90. In the second section, Stephen is feverish in the dormitory when the death of Parnell appears in the newspapers, probably on October 8 or 9, 1891, seventy-seven days before the Christmas vacation. The third section takes place, of course, on Christmas Day, and the fourth section takes place during Lent, 1892, as Stephen cannot eat the blackish fish fritters served during that season.

Book II, section one, begins in September 1892 or 1893 in Blackrock. The second section takes place around moving day in summer. The third section takes place two years later, on the seventh Sunday after Easter, at Belvedere. The trip to Cork in the fourth section takes place on warm sunlit late spring days, with blossoming trees. The fifth section provides a contrast: it takes place on a cold October day at Belvedere.

Book III takes place during three days in December, during the retreat leading up to the mass on Saturday, which is the feast day of St. Francis Xavier, December 3. Other chronological facts emerge. Stephen is sixteen, and his previous confession had taken place eight months before, in April, which means that Stephen had previously gone to confession only as an Easter duty, a contrast to the dates at the end of the book, when Stephen refuses to make his Easter duty.

Book IV takes place from winter to spring, when Stephen is still at Belvedere but eagerly awaiting his entrance to the university. At the end of summer, the director offers him the priesthood, which he easily rejects. Stephen has his own ordination ceremony on the beach on a summer afternoon and evening.

Book V deals with Stephen at the university, among his debased classmates. The first section begins in October, the usual opening date of British universities. The subjectivity of Irish chronometry is comically conveyed—all the clocks tell different times—as Stephen leaves his home at 11 a.m., late for his first two classes. The second section describes the creation of Stephen's villanelle, probably early in spring, since the third section ends on March 20; the date is established by Stephen's diary entry describing his encounter with Cranly. The fourth section, the diary, is most carefully dated from March 20 to April 27. The significance of these dates is that they embrace the earliest and the latest dates that Easter can



take place in any year, and the one event that Stephen does not describe in his diary is performing his Easter duty. Having not performed his Easter duty, he is therefore technically a lapsed Catholic. He has broken free from the Church and, he hopes, from his political ties as well. He flies away from home, family, and creed as a hawklike man.

It is not necessary to describe the time sequence in *Ulysses*. That has been done many times, in great detail. Almost every hour of the day and night is occupied by the events describing the great ordeal of Stephen Dedalus and his final escape from the clutches of Leopold Bloom, who is so eager for a son. Here both the specific times and the long rhythms of development are marked out with great care from beginning to end, from the 8 a.m. mail boat clearing Kingstown harbor on June 16, 1904, to Molly Bloom looking at the rising sun after 4 a.m. on June 17, 1904, and blossoming like a flower of the mountain. Molly does not mention that she is looking at the rising sun, but Joyce carefully notes that the sun has risen at 3:30 a.m. that day and that she is looking out of the window in exactly the right direction to see the fertilizing sunlight awakening her dream of love.

Here we have evidence of Joyce's great ability to express all shades of time, from the most exact and minute moments to the longest and broadest rhythms of human life.

#### *Time in Finnegans Wake*

When we start to read the *Wake* and begin to look for evidence of time, we are immediately baffled. There is no expression of time at the beginning of the *Wake*, and the reader searches through hundreds of pages in vain for such time references as minutes, hours, days, seasons, or longer units of time that occur in great detail and abundance in Joyce's previous works. The reader of the *Wake* must read *over two hundred pages—one third of the book*—to find the first actual time described in the *Wake*, only three pages before the end of Book I: "Look, look, the dusk is growing! . . . Fieluhr? Filou! What age is at? It saon is late . . . Pingpong! There's the Belle for Sexaloitez! And Concepta de Send-us-pray! Pang! Wring out the clothes! Wring in the dew!" (*FW* 213.12–13, 18–21). Here time is finally starting, with Sechseläute, the evening Angelus at 6 p.m. So what has been happening, or not happening, in the previous two hundred and twelve pages?

I believe that examination of the overall structure of the *Wake* can elucidate this enigma. I think that it can be shown that the four Books of the *Wake* are ordered in two modes: SPACE and TIME—in that order.

Since it is only at the end of Book I that orthodox clock TIME “begins,” Book I itself must be ordered on nontemporal modes; that is, the modes of Book I are SPACE modes. Almost all of Book I takes the reader on a spatial journey to a few places—notably, the Hill of Howth, the shore of Dublin Bay, the Liffey in Dublin city—and pauses to relate events that have *not yet* taken place there or that have *already* taken place there. However, nothing else takes place in real time at these locales.

Joyce hints strongly at the very beginning of the book that events in TIME have not yet begun, that things have not yet/not again happened. The first full paragraph of the book introduces seven stages of development of a narrative but carefully notes that none of these events have yet happened:

Sir Tristram, violer d’amores, fr’over the short sea, had passencore rearrived from North Armorica on this side the scraggy isthmus of Europe Minor to wielderfight his penisolate war: nor had topsawyer’s rocks by the stream Oconee exaggerated themselfe to Laurens County’s gorgios while they went doublin their mumper all the time: nor avoice from afire bellowsed mishe mishe to tauftauf thuartpeatrick: not yet, though venissoon after, had a kidscad buttended a bland old isaac: not yet, though all’s fair in vanessy, were sosie sesthers wroth with twone nathanjoe. Rot a peck of pa’s malt had Jhem or Shen brewed by arlight and rory end to the regginbrow was to be seen ringsome on the aquaface.

(3.4–14)

Not one of these past or future events has yet occurred. In reading through Book I, we wait in vain for any of them to happen. Also, when they finally begin to happen in Books II and III, the order of these events does not match the order in which they are presented in the paragraph.

This paragraph gives the clue to the SPACE mode of Book I; it is the word *passencore* that gives away Joyce’s method. *Pas encore* in French is ambiguous; it means both “not yet” and “not again.” The events described in Book I have either *not yet* taken place or, since the book is cyclical, the TIME events have *already* taken place and will again take place. Therefore, almost all the events described in Book I are presented *prospectively* or *retrospectively*; none take place in the dramatic TIME mode later described as “the pressant” early in Book II (221.17). The mode of Book I is the nontemporal SPACE mode.

To explain further: almost all of the actions in Book I feature what could be called “psychological action,” as opposed to the “dramatic action” of Books II, III, and most of IV. In Book I, it is as if we were watching characters on a stage. All that “happens” for a while is that the characters describe in great detail events that have already happened or that will happen. Only memory or anticipation operates in this SPACE mode.

The eight SPACE chapters of Book I contain only this sort of psychological action. However, the eight balancing TIME chapters of Books II and III employ true “dramatic action,” events in TIME ordered in varieties of chronological modes. In these chapters, which comprise an eight-act drama probably entitled “A Royal Divorce,” true dramatic action begins to take place. In Books II and III, the events foreshadowed in Book I begin unfolding at twilight in various modes of temporal development. The night comes on, and after midnight, the dawn begins to fill the shadows with faint light. With incipient dawn, at the end of Book III, the great eight-act play ends with “rounds” of applause (590.30). Then Book IV continues the process of dawning until the very end of the book, which begins to return to the nontemporal psychological action of Book I.

To sum up: the SPACE nontemporal mode of Book I is the mode in which psychological action is the only mode of operation. In these eight chapters, the only things that “happen” occur in a few areas, such as within the Hill of Howth and by the banks of the backward-flowing Liffey, where fables are told that elucidate the stages of the family story in the rest of the book. Then, the TIME mode takes over in books II and III and most of Book IV, where true dramatic action takes place in a “real” time.

Therefore, the complete organization of the *Wake* would be as follows:

- Book I SPACE (psychological action)
- Books II and III TIME (dramatic action)
- Book IV TIME modulating into SPACE

### *Of Time and the River*

It is this duple mode of presentation in the *Wake*—SPACE and TIME, psychological and then dramatic action—that causes a good deal of difficulty in interpreting the book. If the reader attempts to read all four books of the *Wake* as a conventional and consistent temporal dramatic text, nothing but confusion will result. In fact, the function of Book I is

different from that of Books II, III, and IV. Book I provides in a spatial mode all the information needed by the reader to understand the time-bound dramatic events in Books II and III and in IV's final return to the beginning of the book.

Joyce helps the reader to understand the operation of SPACE and TIME by coding his text to the dual modes of the river Liffey.

Anna Livia is tidal. Twice a day, following the retreating ocean tide, she flows downstream through Dublin city to the mouth of Dublin Bay, where she flows into the Irish Sea. Then, with the turn of the tide she is borne backward by the incoming ocean tide, through Dublin Bay and Dublin city, to the weir at Island Bridge. Then the tide turns again, and the Liffey begins to flow once more to the sea. In *Ulysses*, Joyce used this estuarine rhythm as one of the empirical indications of the rhythms of time in *Ulysses*. This double rhythm governs the peregrinations of Bloom's throwaway in the course of the "Wandering Rocks" chapter. Gifford and Seidman note this turning of the tide: "High tide [on June 16, 1904] was at 12:42 P.M.; since it is now after 3:00, the tide has turned and the current in the estuary of the Liffey is east-running (note on 10.294-5)."<sup>7</sup>

The double flow of the Liffey current is noted in passing in *Ulysses* but is crucial in *Finnegans Wake*. As we will see in the following synopsis of the events in the *Wake*, the upstream flow is correlated with the retrospective and prospective counter-temporal SPACE mode in Book I, and the downstream flow is correlated with the TIME mode, the temporally coded "pressant"-tense dramatic narrative action of Books II and III. Then Book IV acts out the slowing of the Liffey's downstream flow until the river flows into the embrace of her son-husband-lover the ocean.

The TIME mode ending in Book IV provides a great climax to the *Wake*, the only successful and complete act of love in the *Wake*. Earlier in the book, Anna Livia had mournfully desired that her comatose husband would "*wake himself out of his winter's doze and bore me down like he used to*" (201.11-12). A bore is a tidal wave associated with an estuary, and it is here associated with a physical act of love. This act will eventually take place, as predicted in the song at the end of the fourth section of Book I: "*At Island Bridge he met her tide . . . The Fin had a flux and his Ebba a ride*" (103.1-2). Island Bridge is the tiding place. Here is the endpoint of the upstream flow of the Liffey—the drive up the river's bed of the sea's thrust—and it is here at Island Bridge that the flow of the Liffey begins to "come" downstream.

At the very end of the book, the Liffey flows toward her giant consort, and a great act of love begins, continues through the gap at the end of the book, and concludes through the first sentence of Book I. A true act of love takes place in the blank space between the end and the beginning of the *Wake*. Unlike the other attempts at sexual gratification in the *Wake*, it is now the authentic love between souls and bodies, of Spirit and Nature, moved by true love. Every day, twice a day, forever, the great act of love, the embrace and withdrawal of Anna Livia and the ocean, acts out an eternal love affair. Then, as the incoming ocean tide moves the Liffey back, the spatial counter-temporal mode begins: SPACE and TIME preside over the great cycles of *Finnegans Wake*.

#### SYNOPSIS OF *FINNEGANS WAKE*

##### *Space Mode*

##### **Book I, i**

The book opens on Dublin Bay under the misty morning, the “soft morning” announced at the end of the book (619.20). Nothing much is happening; nothing is moving except the river.

Joyce begins his book with the most enigmatic of the many enigmas in the book: which way is the tidal Liffey flowing? The famous opening sentence seems, to a first-time reader of the *Wake*, to be describing a seaward flow of the Liffey: “riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodious vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs” (3.1–3).

To judge by this sentence, without further reference, the Liffey seems to be flowing downstream to the sea. It appears to have passed the Franciscan church on the banks of the Liffey known to all Dubliners as “Adam and Eve’s,” entered Dublin Bay, and then circled around the shore of the bay to arrive at Howth Castle on the southwestern shore of the Hill of Howth.

However, the immediate impression of this sentence on first-time readers of the *Wake* is misleading. It is only when these readers reach the end of the book that they realize that the Liffey has not simply *reached* Howth Castle: she has gone well into the Irish Sea. Anna Livia feels the deep ocean currents welcoming her, “brightening up and tightening down,” hears the seagulls offshore, and catches sight of her bridesmaids, the Amazon and the Nile. In joy and terror, she feels the approach of her great

bridegroom and asks him to take her—“Finn, again! Take!” In the last phrase of the book, she feels herself in the arms of the ocean and is then borne backward by the oncoming rising ocean tide: “A way a lone a last a loved a long the” (626.36–627.1, 628.14, 15–16).

Therefore, in the beginning of the book, the motion of the Liffey is not downstream but upstream, backward, continuing the westward movement at the very end of Book IV. The tidal Liffey, impelled by the thrust of her mighty husband, is finally borne backward. She is commencing her journey *upstream* to her eventual tiding place, the weir at Island Bridge. The first sentence of the book, therefore, does not represent the downstream journey of the Liffey but the upstream backward flow. The oddities in “riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodious vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs”—the reversal of “Adam and Eve’s,” the words “past” and “back”—give the clue to the reverse motion of Anna Livia at the beginning of *Finnegans Wake*.

This backward and countertemporal flow continues to inform the SPACE modality of Book I. This becomes clear as the text continues. The events described in the following text have *pas encore*—not yet, or not again—occurred. After some frog noises, we are diverted by a mirage of the “funferal” of the hero, but it is not an action, only “a fadograph of a yestern scene” (7.15), like everything else in Book I. We are now well within the SPACE mode, in which little actually happens but in which the reader gains much basic information with which to interpret the tale when it actually begins, in Books II and III.

In a few places, readers encounter fables that depict separated elements of the family drama. Inside the Hill of Howth, we encounter the death of the father’s power, in the Willingdone Museyroom episode, followed by commentary from Mute and Jute. Then, in letters scrawled on the beach, we read of the establishment of the family in the Prankquean fable. Note that these tales tell the family story in reverse, nontemporal order. When the TIME mode finally presents the family story in the correct order, the family is established before it is destroyed.

At the end of I, i we see the Four Old Men outside the Hill of Howth trying to keep the mound from rearing up in outrage at the news of the daughter’s doubtful activities. They tell him to calm down, since a representative will be arriving to take over his responsibilities. We are now well within the retrospective-prospective SPACE mode.

## I, ii

The retrospective-prospective *SPACE* mode now continues, with the past career of HCE, including how he got his name and how scurrilous rumors began to spread about him, concluding with a slanderous ballad sung to great acclaim by the disreputable street singer Hosty.

## I, iii

The tale of HCE continues, with the further spread of news of his evil deeds and the hunt after him, which culminates in his lying in suspended animation, cold and stiff, below the neighborhoods of Dublin.

## I, iv

The Four Old Men contribute their totally inaccurate accounts of the past deeds of the hero. We then begin to hear about the rest of the family, starting with the account of his charming and long-suffering wife.

## I, v

In this chapter, we are given an account of Anna Livia and her letter to the world, in which she attempts to exculpate her comatose husband. At the end, we are introduced to her sons, Shem and Shaun.

## I, vi

In this chapter, we gain a great deal more information about the HCE household in the form of a quiz set by Shem, with Shaun answering the questions.

We are still well within the nontemporal *SPACE* mode. However, it is in this chapter late in Book I that we encounter the beginning of the segue into the *TIME* mode. In the first sentence, “So? Who do you know tonight, lazy and gentleman?” (126.1–2), we encounter a time word, “tonight,” a significant moment in the procession to actual *TIME* narrative.

It is significant that it is here, with the activity of her two sons, that we encounter the first hint of the *TIME* narrative. It is the action of her sons that eventually causes Anna Livia to begin to “come,” to feel hours of orgasm, to flow seaward toward her great lover.

## I, vii

In this chapter, a masterpiece of invective directed by Shaun against his disreputable brother, we begin the crossover from *SPACE* to *TIME*, the

turning of the tide, as the Liffey very slowly begins her journey downstream, her journey in dramatic action, in narrative time.

At first, the text seems to be in the same impersonal SPACE mode as the previous chapters, but at the end, Shaun confronts Shem openly, in the voice of Justius, significantly entering the TIME mode in the present tense: “Stand forth, Nayman of Noland (for no longer will I follow you oblique-like through the inspired form of the third person singular and the moods and hesitencies of the deponent but address myself to you, with the empirative of my vendettative, provocative and out direct) . . .” (187.28–32).

Shaun represents the top half of the male body, which regards its lower half with loathing and hatred. Shem, on the other hand, represents the embarrassing but fertile bottom half of the body and speaks out in the merciful and tolerant voice of Mercius. It is with the speech of Mercius that the TIME mode begins: “it is to you . . . to me . . . that our turfbrown mummy is acoming . . .” (194.12, 13, 22). Anna Livia is coming *downstream* at last, excited to sexual flow by her sons, Shem and Shaun, TIME and SPACE, the two banks of her river. She is also “coming” in the sexual sense. Her seaward flow is the flow of love, an incestuous response to her two sons, following the turn of the tide of her huge ocean-husband as it begins to ebb far off on the horizon.

The TIME narrative, a sound film, begins slowly. Justius, her son Shaun, has pointed the deathbone, and the quick are still in SPACE; that is, all of visible life is frozen into still photographs, which make up one half of the cinema soundfilm that is about to start. Now Mercius, her son Shem, with his lifewand makes the dumb speak, providing the soundtrack for the film, a creation in TIME and SPACE narrative that is about to begin. What the dumb say is “Quoiquoiquoiquoiquoiquoi!” (195.610), which is the sound made by an old-fashioned film projector going too slowly to project the illusion of natural sight and sound. In fact, what the sound projector is trying to say is the first word of the next chapter, “O.”

#### I, viii

Time has begun to flow slowly, in the gloaming. The SPACE narrative has ended; the TIME narrative, the eight-act drama, has begun. Anna Livia, impelled by her sons, has begun to move seaward toward her great lover. However, the film is moving too slowly for “persistence of vision,” and so we have only a twilight scene. Two washerwomen continue the gossip about the family until the definitive beginning of the TIME narrative, the



ringing of the evening Angelus at 213.14–21, the fertilization of the Virgin by God the Father, which symbolizes the true beginning of every family.

### *Time Mode*

#### Book II, i–iv

In these four chapters, which present the first half of the eight-act play in the TIME mode, we see enacted out before us a family drama. This play is ordered in two versions of the TIME mode. One occupies the four chapters of Book II, which takes place during one half of a night, from twilight to midnight. The second takes place in the four chapters of Book III, which takes place during the second half of a night, from midnight to dawn.

Book II describes the lives of the young children in the family, in which they grow up to sexual maturity and thereby destroy the power of their father. They then become the young lovers Tristan and Isolde.

#### II, i

The very young children are playing a game in the early twilight. Shem is “It” and keeps guessing wrong answers. Three times he is repulsed by the little girls that he is trying to impress. Each time, he rushes away and begins to learn about poetic creation and about sex. The third time he returns with black sexual magic, with which he infects his sister Issy. Overexcited, she sings an improper song about her aging father, is spanked by her mother, and dragged into the house. However, now two of the three children are standing on the threshold of physical and psychological maturity.

#### II, ii

The three children, now somewhat older, are doing their homework upstairs in the inn. The innocent young Shaun has had difficulty with German and Algebra—two subjects that share the letters GE, as in the Greek word for mother. He now has difficulty with a third GE subject, geometry, the measurement of the mother. The crafty Shem coaches Shaun into drawing a diagram of his mother’s genitals, which infuriates Shaun. However, Shaun, no longer innocent, now joins his two siblings in an ominous Nightletter to his parents, threatening their overthrow.

## II, iii

In the pub downstairs, there are performances of three fables:

- 1) on the radio, there is the tale of the Norwegian captain, outlining the beginning of the family;
- 2) on the television, there is the tale of the Russian general, outlining the eventual destruction of the family and the loss of power of the father;
- 3) finally, there is a dear little song by Issy threatening the castration of her father.

After some nervous commentary by the publican, their father, the crowd of his adolescent children land on the seacoast, march through the streets, rush up the stairs of the pub, and assault their father in many ways. The Angelus rings again as they finish destroying him, and he is left powerless, exhausted, but curiously contented.

## II, iv

The young lovers Tristan and Isolde are now launched on their marriage voyage and on their careers are young adults. They kiss and cuddle, while their powerless father lies comatose in the hold of their honeymoon ship and four lecherous old seagulls sing salaciously of young love and mockingly of the old age of the superseded Father.

## Book III, i-iv

In these four chapters, which begin at midnight, the young man Shaun, now bearing his brother Shem uneasily between his thighs, is attempting to become a mature man, one who can truly love a woman with soul and body. Shaun is traveling downstream, from west to east, on his night journey to his rising-up place in the east as the new son-sun-husband-lover of Anna Livia.

However, Shaun is far from a truly mature lover: he has a long way to go before he becomes the entirely developed lover of his mother-wife-beloved. His development occupies all of Book III.

## III, i

In this chapter, Shaun evades the questions posed to him by his genitals, Shem, in the form of a donkey. Shaun's embarrassment is that of an

immature young man before the physical facts of life. He tumbles over and falls into the river—the First Fall of Man.

### III, ii

In this chapter, Shaun, a popular school chaplain, preaches to a night school of very young girls, which includes his sister, but what he is really doing is attempting to rouse himself to climax, to make the Shem in him rise up from “down under,” by masturbation and by evoking sadistic visions of spanking his sister. Masturbation and sadism are not mature forms of lovemaking, so Shaun is still evading the complete expression of true love. At the end of the chapter, Shaun falls once more—the Second Fall of Man.

### III, iii

In this long chapter, Shaun, transformed into Yawn, has really fallen—he is flat on his back, being examined by the Four Old Men. They find all sorts of history within him, from the Creation to the Present, but they do not find his secret self until the very end, when he turns out to contain his own father within himself. It is here that a secular resurrection takes place; HCE returns from the depths of his son.

The newly arisen HCE reveals himself to be a great creator, the originator of a flawed, titanic creation—the modern city, which is just beginning to reveal itself in the growing dawn light. Although Shaun-HCE is a true creator, his way of showing his love to his bride-mother is to imprison her within the stone embankments of Dublin and overawe her with threats of violence. Therefore, true, complete love still evades Shaun.

### III, iv

In this chapter, there is a good deal of dawn light in the sky, and a naturalistic scene reveals itself: the home of the Porter family.

The parents respond to a cry from Shem, who has had a nightmare; in fact, he has been frightened by the events of the previous *TIME* narrative. His mother consoles him, but then the children are treated to a spectacular view of the genitals and behind of their father, who has forgotten to don his pajama bottoms. Then the parents return to their bedroom, having left behind three enlightened children beginning their own journey to sexual maturity and, eventually, true love. The aged parents try to make love but they fail, the fourth example of failure in the complete experience of true love.

*End of TIME Mode and Transition to SPACE Mode*

## IV

Book IV, which has only one chapter, is a masterpiece. In it Joyce essentially recreates the physical world. He depicts a magnificent sunrise that recreates the flawed physical world in all of its multicolored glory. Many things are revealed, including the complete text of Anna Livia's letter to the world about the innocence of her husband, whom she knows in her heart is really guilty of all crimes.

Book IV ends with the superb "Soft morning, city!" section, in which Anna Livia flows past to Howth Castle and Environs, and out into the Irish Sea. As she leaves the city and the bay, she rebels against her husband's repressive tactics and welcomes the blazing wildness of her son-husband-father-lover. She flows out into the face of the risen sun and dies down before the mystery of true love. The outward-flowing tide stops, she "dies," in every sense of the word, and then she is borne backward by the mighty love of the sea—this time the only successful act of true love in the book.

Then *Finnegans Wake* begins again.

*Queens College, CUNY Graduate Center*

## NOTES

1. Much of the material in this paper is derived in part from the introduction to my book *A Guide Through Finnegans Wake*, forthcoming from the University of Florida Press.

2. See, for example, John Bishop, introduction to *Finnegans Wake* (New York: Penguin, 1999); Anthony Burgess, *Here Comes Everybody: An Introduction to James Joyce for the Ordinary Reader* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965; reprinted as *ReJoyce* [New York: Norton, 2000], reprint edition cited); Joseph Campbell and Henry Morton Robinson, *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake* (New York: Harcourt, 1944, 1961; London: Faber and Faber, 1947; reprint, Novato, Calif.: New World Library, 2005, edited with an introduction by E. L. Epstein [reprint edition cited]); Adaline Glashen, *A Third Census of Finnegans Wake: An Index of the Characters and Their Roles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); John Gordon, *A Finnegans Wake Plot Summary* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986); Clive Hart, *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1962); Patrick A. McCarthy, "The Structures and Meanings of *Finnegans Wake*," in *A Companion to Joyce Studies*, ed. Zack Bowen and James F. Carens (New York: Greenwood Press, 1982), especially 588–632; Danis Rose and John O' Hanlon, *Understanding*

*Finnegans Wake: A Guide to the Narrative of James Joyce's Masterpiece* (New York: Garland Press, 1982).

3. Nola Tully, ed., *yes I said yes I will Yes* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 49.

4. What happens if, in a text, there are both nonrepresentative proper names and also the names of actual people? For example, in *War and Peace*, there occur the names of Napoleon, General Kutuzov, Mayor Rostopchin of Moscow and so on, as well as the names of fictional characters. I believe that the presence of *any* fictional characters in a text make the text a fiction, regardless of the presence of the names of real people. It is as if fictional characters “taint” any text in which they appear. Ancient texts, such as the works of Homer, provide a slightly different problem. We have no reason to believe that the audiences of Homer regarded the characters in his epics as fictional. For them, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are populated with historical characters, that is, characters whose existence is not contingent upon that of Homer. Even the Cyclops would not rely for his existence upon that of Homer. However, some characters in these works—for example, Thersites, Eumaeus, Philoetius, Melanthius, Melantho—may be fictional characters in the sense that we are using the word. Here we may have characters contributed to the text by Homer. However, they are all servants or other subservient characters whose names would not have survived in any case. These characters have “transparent names”—Thersites, an animal-like creature; Eumaeus and Philoetius, two “good” characters; and Melanthius and Melantho, two “dark, evil” characters.

5. See Frank Budgen, “Resurrection,” in *Twelve and a Tilly*, ed. Jack Dalton and Clive Hart (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), II.

6. This event actually took place in the spring, on May 14–19, 1894, but Joyce made it a winter event to emphasize the bleakness of the young boy’s disappointment.

7. Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses*, rev. and exp. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 265.