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The Provenance of Joyce's *Haka*

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Joyce's sister Margaret Alice (nicknamed Poppie) joined the Sisters of Mercy as Sister Mary Gertrude in 1909 and left Ireland in the same year to serve the Order in New Zealand, first in Greymouth and later at the Loreto Convent in Christchurch (where she is buried). Several scholars attempted to interview her about her favorite brother, but the only one to have published an account of such an interview is Noel Purdon, who met her on 22 August 1962 and waited more than thirty years before describing the occasion in a Sydney journal, *The Independent Monthly*.<sup>1</sup>

While Purdon's article is colorful, its accuracy is open to question. His reliability is compromised almost immediately, when he claims that May Joyce "was dying . . . on June 16 1904" (4); in fact, of course, she died on 13 August 1903. I suspect that he also misrepresents the degree of contact between Poppie and Joyce, probably because she misrepresented it to him. He recalls Poppie telling him that Joyce had contacted her only once after her departure for New Zealand: "I had nothing from him but a telegram after the earthquake when he wanted me to come back" (5).<sup>2</sup> The correspondence between Joyce and Poppie, however, must have been more extensive than a single telegram. We know, for example, that she wrote him at least one letter, since Joyce told Stanislaus in 1933 that he "had a letter from Poppie. She was operated, the usual thing, I expect, but is now better" (*Letters III* 288). Moreover, in response to a request from Professor R. G. Frean for information about any correspondence between Poppie and Joyce, Sister Eileen Burrell, Secretary to the Sisters of Mercy in Christchurch, wrote on 25 October 1979: "Unfortunately, from a historian's point of view, Sister Mary Gertrude asked just before her death that all letters and photos, including those received from her brother, be destroyed. You will understand that Sister's superior at that time felt that she must honour that wish of Sister Mary Gertrude."<sup>3</sup> A brief accompanying statement by Sister Mary Patricia—the "superior" referred to by Sister Burrell—indicates that some of these "letters and photos" came from a "sister in Dublin,"<sup>4</sup> but Sister Burrell's plural "those" indicates that James sent more than one telegram. (The context makes it clear that he is the "brother" referred to.)

Further evidence that Joyce and Poppie corresponded with some

regularity is provided by two tributes to Sister Mary Gertrude shortly after her death in Christchurch on 1 March 1964. *The Christchurch Press* carried an anonymous obituary on 4 March, one paragraph of which reads as follows: "What Sister Mary Gertrude thought of the work of the genius in the family is not known, but she had a strong affection for her brother. They wrote to each other from the time she arrived in New Zealand until he died in Zurich in 1941."<sup>5</sup>

The second tribute appeared in *The New Zealand Tablet* (a Catholic weekly) exactly a month after Poppie's death.<sup>6</sup> It is also unattributed, though there can be little doubt that it was drafted by the Christchurch Sisters of Mercy.<sup>7</sup> It makes a more specific point about the correspondence between brother and sister: "When the All Blacks first visited Paris, James Joyce attended the games and later requested that Sister Mary Gertrude send him the Maori words with translation and music of the Haka" (38).

"The All Blacks" are the New Zealand national rugby team, so called because the players' uniform is totally black, apart from a few white embellishments. They "first visited Paris" in 1925, near the end of a highly successful tour that included games in Britain, Canada, and Australia, as well as France. They played (and beat) a French Selection at Colombes Stadium (Joyce's "Parkland" perhaps?—FW 335.07) on 11 January and then traveled to Toulouse for a test match against France six days later, which they also won. So there was just one game in Paris—not "games," as the *Tablet* claims.

If Joyce was at Colombes Stadium on 11 January 1925, he would have seen the team perform a *haka* (Maori war chant), led by the famous Maori fullback George Nepia, immediately before the start of the match.<sup>8</sup> It seems likely that only the first part was performed in Paris, since the second part is directed specifically at English opponents. Joyce would not have heard anything that he would have recognized as music, incidentally; the *Tablet's* claim that he asked Poppie for this as well as the words makes no sense, since *haka* are chanted, not sung, and, to my knowledge, no way of recording the rhythms and vocal modulations of the chant has ever been devised. The *Tablet's* misrepresentation of this detail presumably derives from the fact that, even in 1964, an order of nuns located in Christchurch would probably have had little exposure to Maori culture—or to rugby.

Here are the original words of this particular *haka*, followed by a loose English translation (which may, of course, be different from any that Poppie provided), both versions reproduced from Read Masters's book about the tour:<sup>9</sup>

## First Part

Leader: Kia whaka ngawari au ia hau.  
(Let us prepare ourselves for the fray.)

Team: I . . . au . . . E . . . Hei . . .  
(We are ready.)

Leader: Ko niu Tireni e haruru nei.  
(The New Zealand storm is about to break.)

Team: Au . . . au . . . aue . . . ha . . . hei.  
(The sound of the breaking.)

Leader: Ko niu Tireni e haruru nei.  
(The New Zealand storm waxes fiercer.)

Team: Au . . . au . . . aue . . . ha . . . hei.  
(The height of the storm.)

Leader: A . . . haha.  
(Now then.)

Team: Katu te ihi i hi.  
Katu te wanawana  
Kirunga te rangi  
E tu iho nei.  
Au au au.  
(We shall stand as children of the sun.  
We shall climb to the heavens in exaltation of spirit.  
We shall attain the zenith.  
The power! The power!)

## Second Part

Leader: Tena ipoua . . .  
O Rongo Ingarangi Hauana ite ao e  
(Remain alert.  
The strength of England is known throughout the  
world.)

Team: A . . . haha . . .  
Hora hia mai o mahi kia hau  
Hora hia mai o Tiima Kia hau  
Omahi aku mahi me hui . .  
(Now then!  
Let us see what England can do  
Bring forth your strong teams,  
Let us combine in friendly rivalry.)

Leader: Nga mahi tinihanga me kiki  
(Anything unsportsmanlike together we shall kick  
aside.)

Team: Au . . . au . . . hei.

(The strength of the kick.)  
 Leader: A . . . aha.  
 (Now then!)  
 Team: Ka mutu nga mahi haramai  
 Ki Tireni.  
 Au . . . Au . . . Aue . . . ha . .  
 (After the battles are over come to New Zealand. It  
 is ended.)

Clive Hart notes that this 1925 *haka* was a “fairly modern” one.<sup>10</sup> In fact, it was brand-new, having been composed specifically for the 1924-1925 tour (“by Judge Acheson of the Maori Land Court, and Wiremu Rangi, of Gisborne,” according to Masters—160) during the sea voyage to England at the start of the tour. Hart is wrong to call it “well-known” (79), however, since it does not seem to have been used by any subsequent All Black team or by anybody else. The phrase “niu Tireni” (a Maori transliteration of “New Zealand”) rather than *Aotearoa* (which translates as “Land of the Long White Cloud” and is the established Maori name for the country) probably rendered this particular *haka* unsuitable for use by the Maori All Blacks, who toured Britain, France, and Canada in 1926, and it was never subsequently revived.

A modified version of the first part of this *haka* can be found in Book II, Chapter iii of *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce’s text combines modified extracts from both the Maori text and an English translation (which differs somewhat from Masters’s version, reproduced above): “Au! Au! Aue! Ha! Heish! . . . Let us propel us for the frey of the fray! Us, us, beraddy! Ko Niutirenis hauru leish! A lala! Ko Niutirenis haururu laleish! Ala lala! . . . Katu te ihis ihis! Katu te wana wana! . . . Au! Au! Aue! Ha! Heish! A lala!” (FW 335.04-23).

On the same page are several other allusions to Maori and to New Zealand. The most obvious are “neuziel” and “maormaoring,” but “Wullingthund” and “Wellingthund” also refer metonymically to New Zealand, since Wellington is the country’s capital city (FW 335.13, 18, 17, 18). The first of these two references may even mimic the characteristically flattened “e” of New Zealand speech, and it is possible that “the rawshorn generand” (FW 335.20) alludes not just to the Russian general but also to the shearing of sheep, on which the New Zealand economy then depended, and perhaps even to the New Zealand male’s legendary preference for “short back and sides” haircuts.

Joyce evidently began composing this section of the *Wake* in earnest in “the mid-1930s,” and the *haka*—though anticipated by the instruction “Maori warcry here” in the “second typescript, probably December 1936” (JJA 54:vii, 301) and by the more succinct “Maori”

in the 1937 fair copy (JJA 54:335)—finally appeared in the text (along with the related phrase “vastelend hostileind, neuziel and oltrigger some”—JJA 54:371-72) only in June 1938. The *Tablet* maintains that Joyce’s request for the words of the *haka* came “later” than his attendance at the game (38). The way in which the manuscript developed suggests that his request may have been made as much as eleven years later, by which time this *haka* had fallen into desuetude. Luckily its text had been recorded in Masters’s book about the tour, published in 1928. Poppie herself may have copied the *haka* from this source, but the differences between Masters’s version and Joyce’s—especially the change from “niu Tireni” to “Niutirenis,” which seems unlikely to have been a deliberate modification on Joyce’s part—suggest that she did not.<sup>11</sup> My guess is that a careless intermediary conveyed Masters’s version to Poppie sometime between 1928 and 1936, and she then transmitted it to Joyce, who played around with the translation (“the frey of the fray,” “beraddy”) but left the Maori version in the slightly corrupted state in which he found it.

Earlier than this, Poppie (or another New Zealander) seems to have sent him other New Zealandisms, including the phrase “All Black” (FW 59.04) and bits and pieces of the Maori language. Maori placenames appear at least twice in the Buffalo Notebooks (JJA 34:271, 36:27). More important, the word “[p]ukkaru” in the “Willingdone Museyroom” episode, written in 1926 (FW 10.17, 8.10), is presumably derived from the Maori word that is now usually spelled “pakaru” (sometimes “puckeroo”). It means “broken” and may have come into the Maori language as an imitation of the English word “buggered,” there being no voiced plosives in Maori. One assumes that Poppie was not familiar with that putative etymology, but she would almost certainly have known the word itself, since it is one of a very few Maori terms (other than the names of places, flora, and fauna) that had entered everyday English from Maori in her lifetime. (The first recorded usage is 1843.)

If “pukkaru” is the Maori “pakaru,” then “Willingdone” may be the capital of New Zealand again, in which case the battle between Wellington and Napoleon, which permeates the *Wake*, may reflect, among other things, the 1925 match between New Zealand and the French. Moreover, since this particular All Black team has always been known as the “Invincibles,” there may even be a rugby pun involved every time that word, in its various guises, appears in the text. On pages 81-82, for example, we find in close proximity a series of puns on “Invincibles” (for instance, “if invisible is invincible”—FW 81.01), references to “Nippoluono” and “Wei-Ling-Taou” (“whethertheywere Nippoluono engaging Wei-Ling-Taou”—FW 81.33-34), “Christchurch,” the city where Poppie died (“Christchurch organ”—FW 82.19), and some rugby jargon (“severe tries to convert”—FW

82.15). It may not be too impudent to suggest that Colombes Stadium is as significant a site in the *Wake* as the Phoenix Park.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Noel Purdon, "Bloomsday with Poppie," *The Independent Monthly* (4 June 1993), 4-5. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>2</sup> The powerful Murchison Earthquake, centered to the north of Greymouth, occurred on 17 June 1929.

<sup>3</sup> This letter is in my possession, along with a copy of the letter from R. G. Freaan that occasioned it.

<sup>4</sup> A copy of this statement, together with a tribute by Sister Mary Berchmans (who belonged to the Sisters' Greymouth Community), was attached to the letter of 25 October 1979 from Sister Burrell to Freaan.

<sup>5</sup> "James Joyce's Sister Dies," *The Christchurch Press* (4 March 1964), 12.

<sup>6</sup> Obituary, *The New Zealand Tablet* (1 April 1964), 38. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>7</sup> What is almost certainly a copy of the manuscript submitted to the *New Zealand Tablet* was attached to the letter of 25 October 1979 from Sister Burrell to Freaan. It is dated "March, 1964" and differs only in a few details from the *Tablet's* April 1964 obituary.

<sup>8</sup> A *haka* is always performed by the All Blacks prior to the start of a match. In recent times, the particular *haka* chosen has been the one attributed to the great nineteenth-century chief Te Rauparaha, whose famous opening line is: "Ka mate! Ka mate! Ka ora! Ka ora!" ("I die! I die! I live! I live!"). Further information is available at <<http://waiata.maori.org.nz/haka/>>. This site does not, however, make any reference to the *haka* used by the Invincibles in 1924-1925.

<sup>9</sup> Read Masters, *With the All Blacks in Great Britain, France, Canada and Australia 1924-25* (Christchurch: Christchurch Press, 1928), pp. 160-61. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>10</sup> Clive Hart, "A Haka," *A "Wake" Digest*, ed. Hart and Fritz Senn (Sydney: Sydney Univ. Press, 1968), p. 79. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>11</sup> Maori words must end in a vowel, so Joyce's "Heish," "Niutirenis," and "leish" are either deliberate modifications of the original or faithful copies of inaccurate transcriptions forwarded from New Zealand. On the whole, the latter explanation seems more likely to me, though the development of "hauru leish" into "haururu laleish" the second time round looks like deliberate tinkering.