Introducing the work that brought “epiphany” to Joyce’s readers, The-odore Spencer claims that “all of human history” is “epiphanised” in the *Wake* (SH 23), while Irene Hendry’s seminal essay, “Joyce’s Epiphanies,” states that “Joyce’s work is a tissue of epiphanies . . . from the briefest revelation in his lyrics to the epiphany that occupies one gigantic, enduring ‘moment’ in *Finnegans Wake*” (461). Since the 1970s, these claims have come under fire, even by authorities on the modernist epiphany, such as Morris Beja, who objects to the “common and persistent” tendency to refer to “an entire short story or even novel as ‘an’ epiphany—that *Finnegans Wake*, say, is regarded as a sudden spiritual manifestation.” Beja points out that “no one who has actually read the book will easily say that it is in itself sudden . . . and the word *sudden* is the first one in Stephen’s definition of epiphany” (1984, 719). However, Joyce’s aesthetics are not necessarily the same as Stephen’s, particularly by the time we get to *Finnegans Wake*, and even Daedalus’s account of epiphany has three phases, including analysis, which demands spatial and temporal extension; while Spencer and Hendry’s claims need qualification, they cannot be dismissed so easily. In this chapter, I reexamine the long-neglected link between Joyce’s first literary compositions and his last, showing how both works offer an epiphany of language.

In *The Aesthetics of Chaosmos*, Umberto Eco argues that, in dialectical tension with chaos, Joyce replicates the medieval order of being, whereby everything is connected to everything else: “*Finnegans Wake* is that great epiphany of the cosmic structure resolved into language” (1989, 77). A similar view is echoed in Lucia Boldrini’s study of Joyce and Dante: “In the language of the *Wake*, every word, theme, motif, and the book as a whole can be the occasion of an epiphany, the revelation of the essential nature of what is known, what pertains to everyday reality, to history,
to myth” (138). Eco’s and Boldrini’s interpretations shift the site of the \textit{Wakean} epiphany toward language, but they emphasize what it signifies (“the cosmic structure,” knowledge, “everyday reality”), rather than signifiers themselves, and are thus not fundamentally different from Spencer’s view that the \textit{Wake} “epiphane[s] . . . all of human history.”

By contrast, for Giorgio Melchiori, the \textit{Wakean} epiphany is shown forth through a “process of translation”: “The language of \textit{Finnegans Wake} is a constant epiphanisation of the current, familiar, obvious everyday language, by a process of translation that intensifies to the utmost its semantic values, so that the banal becomes memorable, the common word becomes a wonderful vocable. \textit{Finnegans Wake} is a single, gigantic epiphany, the epiphany of the human language” (4). Many readers will object to the notion that “\textit{Finnegans Wake} is a single, gigantic epiphany,” but whatever justification there may be for Melchiori’s “epiphany of . . . language” clearly depends on the nature of its “translation.” Melchiori defines this broadly as “breaking up a linguistic pattern and recreating a new one” (5). He implies that every language act is translational, suggesting that the radical linguistic transformations of the \textit{Wake} reveal something fundamental about “familiar, . . . everyday language,” opening up the startling prospect that \textit{Finnegans Wake} is not an eccentricity but “the central text in the Western literary tradition” (Attridge 1988, 233).

If it can be shown that \textit{Finnegans Wake} reveals something essential about literary language—and indeed, language per se—then there is a rational basis for the proposition that \textit{Finnegans Wake} offers an epiphany, or showing forth, of language. That is precisely what I intend to demonstrate by tracing the surprising similarities between the extraordinary language of the \textit{Wake} and the ordinariness, or “vulgarity,” of Joyce’s epiphanies. Although several critics have applied the term “epiphany” to the \textit{Wake}, no one, to my knowledge, has analyzed the way Joyce’s ur-texts shape its language. In this chapter, I explore the connection between the two texts, beginning with the manuscript epiphanies recycled in \textit{Finnegans Wake}, followed by the numerous passages that draw explicitly or implicitly on the traditional language of epiphany, before turning to \textit{Wakean} language. In doing so, I use the word “epiphany” to cover a lot of ground, from Joyce’s ur-texts, read against their classical and biblical contexts, to what I call the linguistic epiphany; but I do so of necessity, for in \textit{Stephen Hero} and the letters, Joyce uses the term with the same latitude, covering both
Daedalus’s theory and his own praxis, where epiphanies are manifestations of language.

Epiphanies in *Finnegans Wake*

Litz notes one epiphany in *Finnegans Wake* (*PSW* 273), with Beja adding two “notable similarities” (1984, 712–13). Four more can be identified, bringing the total to seven (see appendix). In some cases, these echoes are reduced to a single word, indicating that the epiphanies occupy a relatively minor place in *Finnegans Wake*, yet the fact that Joyce reused at least seven, decades after they were written, demonstrates his continued interest. Despite their fleeting presence, the gradual development, or unfolding, of the linguistic epiphany that I have traced in previous chapters continues in Joyce’s last work, manifesting the central qualities of Joyce’s epiphanies (silence, repetition, materiality, self-reflexivity) in the epiphanic language of the *Wake*.

As with *Ulysses*, the most striking epiphany in *Finnegans Wake* is “She Comes at Night,” recording a dream in which Joyce was visited by the specter of his mother (*MBK* 126). Joyce echoes the epiphany in Shem’s response (as Mercius) to Shaun (Justius) at the end of 1.7:

Pariah, cannibal Cain, I who oathily forswore the womb that bore you and the paps I sometimes sucked, you who ever since have been one black mass of jigs and jimjams, haunted by a convulsionary sense of not having been or being all that I might have been of you meant to becoming, . . . it is to you, firstborn and firstfruit of woe, to me, branded sheep, pick of the wasterpaperbaskel, . . . dweller in the downandoutermost where voice only of the dead may come, because ye left from me, because ye laughed on me, because, O me lonly son, ye are forgetting me!, that our turfbrown mummy is acoming (*FW* 193.33–194.22)

The speech heading and stage direction (“Mercius (of hisself)” [193.31]) suggests that Shem is referring to both himself and Justius (*his self*) as “Pa- riah, cannibal Cain” (193.32), in the same way that Justius speaks “(to hi- mother),” beginning “Brawn is my name and broad is my nature,” before addressing Shem directly: “Macadamson [son of Adam’s son, or perhaps his two sons, Cain and Abel], you know me and I know you” (187.24–36).
Of course, the theme of fraternal rivalry and affinity, embodied in Shem and Shaun, runs right through the *Wake*, providing one of the clearest examples of Giordano Bruno’s principle of the *coincidentia oppositorum*. But by the end of the passage, Shem’s voice begins to flow into ALP’s: “our turfbrown mother is acoming, alpilla, beltilla, ciltilla, deltilla, running with her tidings, all the news of the great big world” (194.22–24), which suggests that the next chapter, “Anna Livia Plurabelle,” is in some ways a continuation or response to the epiphanic end of 1.7. This makes good sense in relation to the original epiphany, which describes the apparition of a ghostly mother in the third person (“She comes . . . She comes . . . She knows . . .”), before turning to the first person when she speaks: “I am susceptible of change . . . Who has pity for you when you are sad among the strangers? Years and years I loved you when you lay in my womb.” Whereas these words are ostensibly spoken by the mother in the epiphany, here they are spoken by the Shem/Mercius figure who merges with both Justius/Shaun and ALP. Yet the references to “firstborn” and “O me Ionly son” in the *Wake* echo “Circe” more closely than epiphany #34 (cf. “Years and years I loved you, O, my son, my firstborn, when you lay in my womb” [*U* 15.4203–4]), which suggests that, as well as the references to Stanislaus (Shaun), and the memory of George Joyce, the brother-double figure is partly based on May Joyce’s firstborn, John Augustine Joyce, who died on December 1, 1880, little over a year before James Augustine was born. This might explain why Mercius “forswore the womb that bore you and the paps I sometimes sucked,” and why he is “haunted by a convulsionary sense of not having been or being all that I might have been of you meant to be becoming.” It may be stretching the interpretation to suggest that May Joyce’s lost firstborn is born again as James Joyce, but ultimately it doesn’t matter whether the passage is addressed to Joyce’s dead brother or not, for the specter of John Augustine Joyce is only one apparition of a general principle in *Finnegans Wake* whereby original and reproduction are indistinguishable and identity is tied to alterity. In “She Comes,” the dream-narrator is projected into the voice of his mother, while *Finnegans Wake* embodies these principles in Shem and Shaun: opposites who can exchange roles (e.g., 2.2) and are at times inseparable. Whether identical (as in *The Comedy of Errors*, which Joyce plays on), or dizygotic (i.e., two-yoked, as in Castor and Pollux), the twins are both split and doubled, reflecting on both themselves and each other, like Issy’s refracted image, which provides a figure for the language of the *Wake*.
As I have shown, there is a powerfully self-reflexive quality to this epiphany, which is preserved in *Finnegans Wake*. Indeed, 1.7 is the most self-reflexive chapter in the book. From the first line, “Shem is as short for Shemus as Jem is joky for Jacob” (169.1), the autobiographical aspect of Joyce’s self-portrait, split between Shem and Shaun, is apparent; in the epiphanic passage at the end of the chapter, “jimjams,” as well as being slang for delirium tremens, clearly points to James Joyce, and there are dozens of references of this kind. Much of the chapter consists of an amusing parody of Joyce’s life, including his early poverty, self-imposed exile, notorious drinking (not forgetting his penchant for Fendant du Valais, or “Fanny Urinia” [171.29]), and his eye problems. Joyce refers to virtually all of his own works in the chapter, including “chambermade music” (*Chamber Music*, 184.04), “eggshells” (*Exiles*, 184.04), and “a certain holy office” (190.14), as well as Shem stippling “endlessly inartistic portraits of himself” (*Portrait*, 182.19), “making believe to read his usylessly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles, *édition de ténèbres*” (*Ulysses*, 179.27–28), and his cunningly disguised list of titles from every story in *Dubliners* (185.13–186.15).

In this context, it is telling that the chapter ends by going back to the origins of Joyce’s work, the epiphanies, and that this epiphany is the only text to be substantially incorporated into Joyce’s *Wakean* autobiography.

I will return to the materiality of 1.7, epitomized by Shem writing “over every square inch of the only foolscap available, his own body,” with ink concocted from his bodily excretions (185.14.37), as well as the self-reflexivity of the text (that is, reflections in and on the language of *Finnegans Wake*, as opposed to autobiographical or biographical allusions). Before turning to these qualities, however, it will be useful to consider how the other epiphanies are reused.

In addition to “She Comes at Night,” Morris Beja identifies two “similarit[ies] worth noting” (#6 and #16 at *FW* pages 352–53 and 15–16, respectively [1984, 713]), although it would be nice to know exactly where he sees the similarity. The closest connection to “An Arctic Beast” I can find is on page 17, between the “[c]ountlessness of livestories . . . netherfallen by this plage, flick as flowflakes” (*FW* 17.26–28) and the “white mist . . . falling in snowflakes” from the start of the epiphany, but the “flowflakes” could also echo the end of “The Dead.” As for “Half-Men, Half-Goats,” there is a reference to “the mangoat” at 353.2, which, following the “sulphuring” hell and “the pungatories of sin praktice” (352.37–353.1) recalls Joyce’s “hell” epiphany, particularly as it is reused after the sermons in
Portrait; however, the same passage includes a “shittery pet,” a werewolf (“lou garou”), a “sabre tooth” tiger, a bear (“Ussur Ursussen”: Lat. ursus: bear) and “a bull in a meadows” (FW 353.29–353.13), so the satyrs of epiphany #6 are only one manifestation of these “confused forms.”

Besides these, there are several epiphanies in Finnegans Wake that have not been noted. The first is on page 10, where, as Margot Norris points out, “the big wide harse” of Wellington’s horse (10.21) may be derived from Bennett, the “whitearsed bugger” in “Circe” (U 15.4796–97; Norris 1976, 133); what she doesn’t note is that the colorful phrase from Nighttown is a direct recycling of Eva musing on her brother Fred Leslie in epiphany #35: “O, ’e’s a whoite-arsed bugger” (WD 45). Similarly, in the Games chapter, Glugg’s second guess (FW 233.21–26) recalls not only “Nausicaa,” as McHugh notes, but also the “Sweetheart” epiphany (cf. U 13.66–74; WD 48); in each case, catechistic dialogue connects infantile language and erotic secrets (sweethearts in the epiphany and Ulysses; the color of Issy’s underwear in FW 2.1), suggesting that language manifests desire, a characteristically Joycean epiphany. These are little more than passing references, a particular word or phrase Joyce echoes from his earlier work, but they are unmistakable. There may be others (e.g., an echo of “Apologise, / Pull out his eyes” from epiphany #1 in “apullajibed” [FW 317.31], the oracular hole of epiphany #19 at 323.5–6, or a rhythmical chime of “She Comes” at 548.10–12), but they are little more than echoes, of the same order as the similarities Beja notes to epiphanies #6 and 16. With the exception of “She Comes at Night,” it is clear that the epiphanies Joyce reuses in Finnegans Wake are not nearly as central to its structure, themes, or style as those in Stephen Hero, Portrait, or Ulysses. Nevertheless, the fact that Joyce used seven epiphanies in the Wake, up to thirty-five years after they were written, shows their continued importance to him, and a final example shows wherein their importance lies.

Clive Hart identifies three levels of dreaming in Finnegans Wake, followed by a mystical awakening in Book 4. These correspond to the three Viconian ages (Divine, Heroic, Civic), followed by a ricorso, and they also map onto the “microcosmic syllable,” AUM:

The four constituent parts of the word represent the four states of consciousness:
A The Waking State
U Sleep, disturbed by Dreams
Whatever one thinks of Hart’s dream-cycles, the philosophy of the Upanishads, or Theosophical mysticism, there is no doubt that Joyce was interested in the “holy syllable,” as shown by the benevolent mockery of Russell in “Circe” (“Aum! Baum! Pyjaum!” [U 15.2275]) and the extensive notes on “Om” in Joyce’s copy of Heinrich Zimmer’s *Maya der indische Mythos* (Connolly 1957, 42–47). But Hart goes further, suggesting that “Joyce was aware of these categories of consciousness very early in his career,” citing “a sentence from *A Portrait* which names the last three and implies the first: ‘Faintly, under the heavy night, through the silence of the city which has turned from dreams to dreamless sleep as a weary lover whom no caresses move, the sound of hoofs upon the road’” (97). In fact, this sentence (and the entire April 10 diary entry in *Portrait*) is taken, almost word for word, from “Hoofs upon the Dublin Road,” whose next sentence describes how “the silence is cloven by alarm as by an arrow,” while at the end of the epiphany, the hoofs echo distantly (*PSW* 37). What interests me here is the silence being sundered and reunited (cloven, in both senses) by echoes, like the fourth stage of Aum, where “the last overtone of the syllable dies away into laya (dissolution), the boundary between a faint hollow echo and true silence” (Hart 96). Whether “true silence” exists is debatable, but Hart points out that in the Hamsa Upanishad “the laya is paradoxically described as having a sound like a peal of thunder” (96), which provides an explanation for “the shocking silence” of the *Wake* (393.25). In any case, Hart convincingly demonstrates that when “Justius concludes his denunciation of Shem with the yawning religious formula: ‘Insomnia, somnia somniorum. Aumawm’ (193.29), . . . Shaun is intoning the holy syllable” (Hart 103). Indeed, the first three words “seem to represent respectively the Waking State, Sleep (with Dreams), and Deep Sleep,” while “‘Aumawm’ may also include the word maunam, meaning ‘silence’” (Hart 103). This echoing silence can be traced back to the cloven silence of the epiphany; “Aumawm” is Justius’s last word, emphasizing its physical sound and gesture through a kind of ritual incantation whose long-drawn final syllables are intoned while pointing “the deathbone” and stilling “the
quick” (193.29);³ and this speech act is immediately followed by Mercius’s reply, based on “She Comes at Night,” so that in these lines we see the key characteristics of *Finnegans Wake*’s epiphanic language: silence, repetition, materiality, and self-reflexivity. I will analyze each of these aspects after considering the importance of such passages in the *Wake*.

**Epiphanic Passages in *Finnegans Wake***

Readers drawn into the *Wake* tend to become ensnared in a mesmerizing web where “every pun and portmanteau word . . . is related to every other via a proliferating and multidimensional network of connections” (Clark 1990, 746).⁴ One consequence of this work-wide web is that specific qualities of its language, such as materiality, self-reflexivity, silence, and repetition, cannot easily be isolated from the whole (which is in any case dynamic), but in an attempt to order the “chaosmos of Alle” (*FW* 118.21), I will divide the epiphanic passages of the *Wake* into those where (a) the word “epiphany” is present, or the traditional language of epiphany is invoked, and (b) notebook passages, sometimes called “epiphanoids” (Hayman 1990, 27), which have been compared to the epiphanies. Since my primary interest is the language of epiphany, I will focus on (a), but first I want to briefly consider the case for (b).

Perhaps the most general and widespread example of Joyce’s epiphanic method in *Finnegans Wake* is his continued practice of incorporating real-life revelations, especially through “the vulgarity of speech or of gesture” (*SH* 216). In 1.7, we hear how “All the time [Shem] kept on treasuring with condign satisfaction each and every crumb of trektalk, covetous of his neighbour’s word” (172.30–31). Eugene Jolas recalls Joyce telling him, “Really it is not I who am writing this crazy book. It is you, and you, and you, and that man over there, and that girl at the next table” (400), a remark that brings to mind Gogarty’s account of Joyce “slipp[ing] politely from the snug . . . to make his secret record” of conversation. Gogarty’s objection “to be[ing] an unwilling contributor to one of [Joyce’s] ‘Epiphanies’” was not ungrounded, for Joyce wrote about him in “Is that for Gogarty,” and perhaps Gogarty’s snide remark, “Which of us had endowed [Joyce] with an ‘Epiphany’ and sent him to the lavatory to take it down?” (293–95, qtd. in *WD* 7), was not so wide of the mark, for in “Shem the Penman” we hear how Shem, “with help of the simulchronic flush in his pann” (simultaneous (and chronic) flash in the pan/flash in the brain/flush in the
toilet) “scrabbled and scratched and scribbled and skrivened nameless shamelessness about everybody ever he met” (182.11–14).

There is good evidence that Joyce continued this practice in *Finnegans Wake*, recording hundreds of similar jottings for his *Work in Progress*. David Hayman calls these moments “epiphanoids,” defined as “a brief notebook entry that records something overheard, intercepted, perceived . . . that reveals an internal (personal) dynamic of such force as to solicit its preservation in language” (1999, 27). According to Hayman, there are at least five hundred epiphanoids, some of which “are very close to the early epiphanies” (e.g., Buffalo VI.A.271, qtd. in Hayman 29), although he underlines that they are not “sudden spiritual manifestation[s]”; rather, they reveal the “quasi-realistic underpinnings” of the *Wake*, as Joyce made use of everything that came his way in “the creative manipulation of lived experience” (41). Hayman’s attempt to distinguish entries based on Joyce’s own experience from literary quotations or factual records is problematic, since many of the passages Hayman calls “epiphanoids” were in fact copied from newspapers and other texts rather than spontaneous conversation. Yet Hayman regarded “lines taken from newspapers and other printed texts as functioning for Joyce precisely as would personal observations” (27), so the distinction is not critical. Whether “fragments of colloquy” or quotations, and whether a page long or a single word, each of these notes records material for composition. One might see a difference between Joyce recycling epiphanies almost verbatim in his first novels and jotting down single lexical items for his later works, but the difference is quantitative, not qualitative: in *Finnegans Wake*, for instance, epiphanies are reduced to a single word (e.g., “apullajibed” [317.30]). Indeed, this spectrum suggests that the broad range of manuscript materials Joyce drew on, from the epiphanies to the *Finnegans Wake* notebooks, can all be regarded as “relics of the workings of the mind,” “memorable phases” and phrases from Joyce’s *Umwelt*, or “extended mind” (Van Hulle 225–27). As Van Hulle points out, the change from epiphanies to notes is gradual, not sudden, suggesting an underlying continuity, so that one can still make a case for epiphanoids. However, there are practical difficulties with this approach, because the “extended mind” of *Finnegans Wake* occupies thousands of pages of notes and drafts (*JJA* 28–63). Rather than working from manuscripts to text, therefore, I will begin with the published version, concentrating on passages that employ either the word “epiphany” or its traditional language.
The most important of these passages is the Berkeley and St. Patrick vignette in Book 4, based on the legendary contest of doctrine between saint and druid. Drafted from July to August 1923, it is one of the earliest sections Joyce composed for *Work in Progress* and a key stage in the evolution of Wakean language. The first version begins with the archdruid explaining “the illusion of the colourful world, its furniture, animal, vegetable and mineral, appearing to fallen men under but one reflection of the several iridal gradations of solar light, that one which it had been unable to absorb while for the seer beholding reality, the thing as in itself it is, all objects showed themselves in their true colours, resplendent with the sextuple glory of the light actually contained within them.” As Pierre Vitoux has shown, although the archdruid is called Berkeley in the second and fourth drafts, his theory is based on Newton’s *Opticks*, where Newton concludes, much as the druid does here, that color is not an innate property of objects but rather that “bodies become coloured by reflecting or transmitting this or that sort of rays more copiously than the rest; it is to be conceived that they stifle in themselves the rays which they do not reflect or transmit” (4.116, qtd. in Vitoux, 171). This explains “the illusion of the colourful world,” whose “furniture” (Berkeley referred to the totality of material objects as the “furniture of the earth” [McHugh]) appears as “one reflection of the several iridal gradations of solar light,” while “for the seer beholding reality, the thing as in itself it is,” objects reveal the “true colours” of the wavelengths they absorb (which are naturally invisible). “To eyes so unsealed King Leary’s fiery locks” appear “the colour of sorrel green, His Majesty’s saffron kilt of the hue of brewed spinach, the royal golden breasttorc of the tint of curly cabbage,” since orange and green are opposites, but the patriotic blinkers of the druid make a farce of his own theory as he sees everything through green-tinted glasses, including the “azure eyes” and “violet” features of King Leary.

In the fourth draft (August 1923), Joyce keeps the gist of Berkeley’s theory while adding considerable complexity:

Tunc. Bymeby, bullocky vampas tappany bobs topside joss pidgin fella Balkelly, archdruid of islish chinchinjoss in the his heptachromatic sevenhued septicoloured roranyellgreenlindigan mantle finish he show along the his mister guest Patholic with alb belongahim the whose throat hum with of sametime all the his cassock groaner fellas of greysfriaryfamily he fast all time what time all him monkafellas
The first version, written in relatively straightforward English, clearly mocks the druid, and it could be argued that the fourth draft simply dresses up the same illogical theory in borrowed raiments, but equally, Joyce’s transformation of the passage, and his multilingual additions, bring out one of the central problems in the *Wake* through the complex relationship between language, light, and color. As we have seen, Joyce drew on Dante for images of the word as an infinitely varied spectrum, “reflect[ing]” and refracting “the glowing sensible world through the prism of a language multicoloured and richly storied” (*P* 180–81; *U* 7.713–24). Lucie Léon recalls Joyce asking her for detailed information about shades and ranges of colors, saying that he intended to use them in the *Wake* (15). He did so in many ways, from Issy’s underwear to the rainbow girls, but the most striking chromatic image of all is Berkeley’s “hueful panepiphaphal world,” a phrase that reaches back to the original meaning of epiphany as literal illumination, later generalized to an apparition, manifestation, or showing forth. This suggests that the all-manifest world as it appears to us through visible light is an illusion, veil (“velamina” in Latin [611.10]), or spectral play (“spectacularum” 611.11: spectrum, spectacle, from *spectaculum*, play), whereas for the leading paradoxical seer, “the true inwardness of reality, the Ding hvad in idself id est” is shown through the “light actually retained” in “all objects.” Joyce’s transformation leaves no doubt that this is Kant’s Ding an sich, the noumenal thing in itself (as well as the Freudian unconscious, and perhaps the whatness [in Danish, *hvad* means
what] or quiditas of Stephen’s epiphany, when the object appears as “that thing which it is” \([SH\ 218]\),\(^8\) and it is obvious that the “light actually retained” \(611.23–4;\ my\ emphasis\) in the object can no more be perceived than Kant’s noumenon. Thus, the paradox of the “hueful panepiphanal world” is that, while the words suggest an all-visible, all-manifest apparition, Balkelly’s polychromatic world is a phenomenal illusion, forever hiding its “true colours.” This condition is summed up succinctly in the fourth of Joyce’s parenthetical insertions, “\((\text{obs of epiwo}),\)” which, reducing the earlier abbreviations (“furnit of heupanepi world,” etc.), condenses numerous possible meanings: the objects of the epiphanal world \((\text{cf. “objects (of panepiwor)” 611.22}),\) observation of these visible objects (whether real or illusory), and the opposite or obverse of the phenomenal world—that is, a hole in appearance.

It is not just the resonance of Joyce’s “panepiphanal world” that makes this passage so important; as Joyce told Budgen shortly after \textit{Finnegans Wake} was published, “Much more is intended in the colloquy between Berkeley the archdruid and his pidgin speech and Patrick the archpriest and his Nippon English. It is also the defence and indictment of the book itself, B’s theory of colours and Patrick’s practical solution of the problem” \((LI\ 406).\) Out of context (Budgen’s letter is lost), Joyce’s reply raises more questions than it answers: what charge is being brought against \textit{Finnegans Wake}, and what might justify it? Is Berkeley’s theory offered as the defense to Patrick’s indictment, and if not, how are the druid-priest pair related to the juridical terms? Yet perhaps it is fitting that there are no answers, leaving the significance of the colloquy to the book a question of equivocation. Seen in this light, Berkeley’s theory of colors is analogous to Joyce’s Wakean language: polychromatic, shimmering, and playful but also elusive and perhaps illusory, veiling words in a “heptachromatic mantle,” so that any interpretation we may wish to impose is as subjective as the green-tinted glasses with which Berkeley views his panepiphanal world. Indeed, the wor(l)d of \textit{Finnegans Wake} is panepiphanal in just this sense, for any hermeneutic lens will present the text in a new light; and no matter how clear one’s vision, there is always a blind spot on the retina. Once again, the ambiguity is typical of Joyce’s epiphanies, whose endless capacity for signification is founded upon referential uncertainty, so that if the book is charged with obscurity, as it so often was, then it is Joyce’s illumination of this very obscurity—like the unseen spectrum of light in all that is visible or manifest—that constitutes its epiphanic defense.
Whereas Berkeley, clad in a pure white “heptochromatic mantle,” splits white light (unity) into an infinitely varied spectrum (diversity), before challenging “guest Patholic” to see “that with pure hueglut intensely saturated,” everything is “tinged uniformly” green, Patrick’s “practical solution” is syncretic, cleverly unifying Berkeley’s nationalism and his worship of light, along with a dash of Judaism, into the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Unimpressed by Berkeley’s color theory, “the petty padre” addresses his adversary condescendingly as “Bigseer,” rejecting his prismatic theory as that of a “pore shiroskuro [Japanese shiro: white; kuro: black; chiaroscuro] blackinwhitepaddynger.” In place of the druid’s abstractions, Patrick points “aposterioprismically” to a crock of gold at the end of “Irismans rainbow” and has no hesitation in whipping out a “hand-caughtscheaf of synthetic shammyrag” (or fake chamois handkerchief in the shape of a shamrock) with which to illustrate the verdant trefoil Trinity (three in one demonstrated in the year “four three two,” when St. Patrick returned to Ireland⁹), before bowing down thrice before the “Balenoarch” (evil fire flash whale-arched rainbow [arcobaleno]). Praying to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in the rainbow (“the firethere the sun in his halo cast”: 612.30), Patrick echoes the divine light of Dante’s Paradiso (33.115), which is at once unity and Trinity, encompassing all things (33.43–145), and there is added significance in the echoes of Genesis, where God seals his covenant of peace (“Gudstruce!” [God’s truth+ truce]: 613.12) with Noah through the epiphany of the rainbow (bringing back into play Shem and Shaun as versions of Shem, Ham, and Japheth), but the immediate significance of the passage is that Patrick opportunistically turns Berkeley’s theory of light and color, including the green glow he casts over King Leary, into a totemic “sound sense sympol” ([symbol], literally meaning thrown together, as well as simple, both in its philosophical sense and its common or garden definition, as a single-stemmed, three-leafed blade of clover found “in a weedwayedwold” [612.30]).

In a letter to Olga Howe dated May 23, 1930, Paul Léon, who rarely commented on Joyce’s work, outlined a theory of Work in Progress, based on “ipsissima verba,” or the word itself:

When St. Patrick went to baptise Ireland he found some difficulty to explain the sense of the Holy Trinity when suddenly his eyes fell on the ground where he saw a most commonplace little flower, trodden by the people, dirtied by the animals which had a three-leaf forming
a single one. He took it and showed it to the people who shouted: Credimus, Credimus!

Now does not every word we use represent a Trinity: it has a sense, a sound, a power to evoke pictures. One does not feel it as rule unless “something goes wrong” i.e. either the sense is stupid, or the picture obsolete, or the sound false. (qtd. in Noël, 45)

There is no evidence that Léon’s theory originated with Joyce, but Léon, who was an accomplished linguist, as well as professor of philosophy and sociology, studied “Joyce’s process of creation” for many years, looking up “words in various languages” for his friend, and was therefore particularly well placed to judge Joyce’s “mental process and the metamorphosis of language he indulges in” (8). Now Léon’s theory is perhaps too facile and could be made more concrete by replacing the “power to evoke pictures” with the graphic form of words (yoking imagery to sense), in which case the trinity comprises the material shape and sound of words with their potential for signification (where the last leaf is self-reflexively cloven). But allowing for such adjustments, it is generally the case, as Léon points out, that ordinarily one does not notice the sound, shape, or signifying function of words unless “something goes wrong,” which is exactly what happens in *Finnegans Wake*, indicating that its strange contortions are common or garden symbols.

Berkeley’s spectrum of light and Patrick’s trefoil shamrock are both epiphanic doctrines of the manifold: the rainbow combines the Old Testament theophanies of light and cloud, which become central Wakean tropes, while New Testament epiphanies, from the coming of Jesus to the *logos* of Saint John, are revelations of the Trinity. This theological bridge, particularly through the arc of the covenant, brings their doctrines into accord, just as Patrick’s ability to reunify Berkeley’s green-tinted spectrum completes the Viconian cycle of unity-discord-diversity-unification outlined by Muta in the preceding dialogue (which poses the question Berkeley and Patrick debate): “So that when we shall have acquired unification we shall pass on to diversity and when we shall have passed on to diversity we shall have acquired the instinct to combat and when we shall have acquired the instinct of combat we shall pass back to the spirit of appeasement?” (610.23–27). However, the final word is given to neither of the antagonists; first the Kantian terms of appearance and reality are rejected—“Yet is no body present here which was not there before;” and
then the real epiphany occurs in a literal illumination, as the sun streams “benedictively” through the oriel windows “when saint and sage have had their say” (613.13–16). The importance of this moment can scarcely be overstated, because for Joyce, like John, light is the visible manifestation of the logos.

Written soon after the Roderick O’Connor and St. Kevin episodes, the Berkeley-Patrick dialogue was one of the first sections Joyce wrote for Work in Progress, and it has special significance because “it was the first piece to be written in Wakean language” (Hulle, in Crispi and Slote 2007, 442–43). In fact, the development of Wakese can clearly be traced between the first draft (quoted above), written in English, and the second draft, which begins: “Topside joss pidgin fella Berkeley, archdruid of the Irish josspidgin, in his heptachromatic sevenhued roranyellgreeblindigan mantle.” Here we see the introduction of Chinese pidgin (topside = superior; joss = God) and slang (fella), linguistic borrowings (“heptachromatic,” from the Greek heptachromatikos), and portmanteau words, such as the six-colored adjective (missing violet). Indeed, Laurent Milesi argues that with Berkeley’s Chinese pidgin and St. Patrick’s “Nippon English,” “la gamme des parlers anglais s’oriente vers un champ nouveau en s’orientalisant; on peut à juste titre considerer cet episode comme la première étape de la voie royale qui conduira l’écrivain vers sa langue universelle” (1985, 166). The tendency toward universality, exemplified by the meeting of Occident and Orient, is one aspect of the Wake’s polyglossia, but the incomprehension caused by diverse tongues is equally important.

Indeed, it has been suggested that Berkeley’s idiom, and perhaps even the language of the Wake, is an attempt to re-create the “Dark Tongue” of Ireland. Adaline Glasheen (1963) notes that Joyce made extensive use of R. A. Macalister’s The Secret Language of Ireland. Although Macalister’s book was not published until 1937, there can be no doubt about Joyce’s debt, because he took extensive notes in VI.B.46 (Crispi and Slote 2007, 240), and as Clive Hart has confirmed, “all the Shelta, Ogham, Bog Latin, and Bearlagair Na Saer” Glasheen quotes “was added to the text at the galley stage or was included in passages composed after 1937” (1963, 3). One of the most interesting correspondences is to “A darktongues, kunning” (223.28)—“a gloss to the Senchus Mor tells how two file (poets) . . . spoke ‘in a dark tongue’ so that the chieftains standing by were unable to understand them”—a legend that was turned into “The Colloquy of the Two Sages” who “confound each other with obscure allusive kennings”
This is clearly reminiscent of the colloquy between the archdruid and the archpriest, a comparison George Cinclarl Gibson takes up in “The Recovery of the Dark Tongue.” At times, Gibson’s perspective seems distorted by nationalist sympathies, but he makes a fascinating comparison between Bélra na fíled, or the “Dark Tongue,” an artificially constructed, ritualistic language of the theological poets of ancient Ireland, and Joyce’s language in the Wake. Indeed, the similarities are striking: Bélra na fíled is “nearly incomprehensible in its polyglot logorrhea,” a baffling construction “riddled with puns, neologisms, and a plethora of polysemes and portmanteaus; language literally loaded with thousands of words misspelled and malformed, bent, folded, twisted, mutilated or torn into pieces” (220–21). He goes on to note the threefold darkness of the Filidh’s tongue: *duibhe*—obscurity; *dorchatu*, its mysterious, enigmatic, or even magical quality; and *dluithe*, its arcane techniques of “semiotic and linguistic compression” (227). On this basis, it is hard to deny the resemblance to Joyce’s “writing of the night” (559). There is also an intriguing connection to the Archdruid Berkeley sketch, the first piece written in Wakese, although Gibson goes too far when he concludes that “[t]he Wake . . . is the re-creation of the Rites of Tara, and the Dark Tongue is the language of the Rites” (235).

These similarities point to the obscure, enigmatic, and ritualistic qualities of epiphany in the Wake, which are given the same importance as traditional revelation in Joyce’s epiphanic allusions. “[O]n the night of the Apophanypes” (626.4–5) combines both the revelatory and doomsday aspects of Apocalypse with the Feast of the Epiphany (the context alludes to a severe storm that struck Dublin on January 6, 1839 [McHugh]). Similarly, “the Verily Roverend Father Epiphanes” (341.27) may refer to St. Epiphanes of Besançon, Antiochus Epiphanes, the “abomination of desolation” (Daniel 11.31), or a racehorse of that name. From the context (radio or television coverage of “the worldrenounced Caerholme Event . . . given by The Irish Race and World” [341.19–20]), the latter is most likely, but as with the night of the “Apophanypes,” the figure of “Father Epiphanes” is triangulated between salvation, destruction, and fact, all of which are placed on one plane.

This humorous conflation of the sacred and the profane in the literal typifies the Wake’s epiphanies, exemplified by their curious connection to the story of Buckley shooting the Russian General. The anecdote, told
by John Joyce, was one of Joyce’s favorites, and he regarded it as typical of Irish humour (JJ 411; Glasheen 42). The story concerns an Irish volunteer named Buckley who comes upon a Russian General; first impressed by his medals and decorations, then dismayed by the undignified sight of the Russian defecating, Buckley cannot bring himself to shoot until the General wipes his backside with a sod of turf. Beckett’s verdict, “another insult to Ireland” (JJ 398 n.), brings out the comedy and political significance, but it is nonetheless difficult to see why Joyce gave this story such prominence, or why he associated it with epiphany. Yet the “Father Epiphanies” passage continues “Backlegs shirked the racing kenneldar,” and a few lines later there is “a shote of exclamation! Bumchub! Emancipator, the Creman hunter (Major Hermyn C. Entwhistle)” (341.29–30, 342.19–20). Here, the shout of exclamation includes shite (one of John Joyce’s favorite words) and excrement, while “Bumchub!” seems to be Buckley, the Emancipator and Crimean Hunter, but this is odd because it associates ECH with Buckley, whereas usually HCE is the General, as in the parenthesis that follows, in which case perhaps Emancipator, a racehorse sired in 1927 (McHugh), is the General’s steed, and “Bumchub!” refers to his exposed posterior. “[D]eretane denudation with intent to excitation,” or mooning (557.23), is one of the charges brought against HCE, and several versions of the incident in the park seem to involve indecent exposure (both frontal and rear), as in 3.4, where HCE exposes both his genitals and his backside to his children, provoking outrage and wonder. In any case, there is a clear connection between the Russian General, Earwicker, and the fall, which is linked to epiphany in HCE’s defense (“I . . . fell clocksure off my ballast” [FW 550.37–551.1]), while the curious “tail” of Willingdone being shot “on the back of his big wide harse” (FW 10.19–21; cf. epiphany #35) culminates in the Russian General dropping his pants:

—How culious an epiphany!
—Hodie casus esobhrakton? (508.11–12)

Hodie is Latin for today, casus means fall, and in modern Greek, esôbrakôn tôn means “their underpants.” Today their underpants fall: how curious, and culious (cul: ass) an epiphany! Yet, by making a humorous revelation out of the ridiculous and scatological, Joyce suggests that anything can become the subject of epiphany, exposing the anal aesthetic of indecency itself through the return of the repressed, in all its forms, which allows the
full range of human experience not only to be redeemed but placed on one level, where everything, from the sublime to the ridiculous, is made literal—which is to say, epiphanized—at least on the level of the text.

Joyce’s use of the traditional language of epiphany to create this leveling of the sacred and the profane is surprisingly frequent in *Finnegans Wake*, so I will limit my discussion to a few examples from the New Testament that can be traced back to the Greek root *phaino*. The word first occurs in Matthew 1:20: “Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared [ephane] unto [Joseph] in a dream,” announcing Mary’s immaculate conception, and is repeated in Joseph’s second dream-epiphany, which the King James Version translates using the same formula: “an angel of the Lord appeared [phainetai]” (Matt. 2:13). The phrase is also used for the annunciation and the nativity in Luke (cf. Luke 1:11, 2:9 [KJV]), and Joyce echoes it repeatedly in *Finnegans Wake*. For instance, in Book 1, chapter 3, which is largely taken up with reports of Earwicker’s crime in the park, an assailant who has allegedly tried to rob HCE claims that at the time of the incident he was on an almighty pub crawl, from “the House of Blazes” to “the Holy Lamb, . . . till the engine of the laws declosed unto Murray” (combining May Joyce’s maiden name, Murray, with her given name, Mary) “the gatestone pier,” which he mistook for a “cattlepillar” (policeman). Irreverence also shrouds HCE’s plea in 3.3, where he calls on “the oragel of the lauds” (552.25), or angel of the Lord, to protest his innocence by trumpeting his healthy sex life (“tellforth’s glory” [552.26]), to which the four bray in derision (“Hoke! / Hoke! / Hoke! / Hoke!” [31–34]). Recalling the conclusion of the “MaMaLuJo” chapter (“Mattheehew, Markeehew, Lukeehew, Johnheehewheehew! / Haw!” [399.32–33]), the third watch of Shaun ends with the four evangelists braying like asses: “Matahah! Marahah! Luahah! Joahanahanahanahana!” (554.10), and the following chapter opens with a “pal-lyollogass,” a “cuddy” (slang for donkey), a “donk,” and an “onage” (onager = wild ass [555.11–20]). These obscure references may recall Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, as blatant an example of the sacred in the mundane as his birth in a manger, but as the pun implies, the ass in *Finnegans Wake* offers a curious kind of epiphany.

There are several other echoes of “the angel of the Lord” in *Finnegans Wake*, including three in Book 4. As well as the Gospels, the first—“It is not even yet the engine of the load with haled morries full of crates” (*FW* 604.9–11)—recalls the Angelus, which begins “The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, . . . Hail, Mary, full of grace” (*Enchiridion of Indulgences*,
June 29, 1968). Traditionally recited at 6 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m., its immediate significance is to indicate the time (not yet 06:00), but it also extends the epiphanic allusions from the synoptic gospels to John, particularly in the third versicle, which passes from the Annunciation to the Incarnation: “And the Word was made flesh, And dwelt among us—Hail Mary, full of grace.” Joyce echoes John 1:14 (“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth”) repeatedly in _Finnegans Wake_ (138.08ff.), just as he echoes the opening of John’s gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (cf. _FW_ 17.22, etc.). As Atherton has shown, the first five references also allude to Genesis 1:1, while the last four refer “in the first place” to the Evangelist (1974, 177), but the opening of John is in many ways a rewriting of Genesis chapter 1, and Joyce’s allusions combine both scriptures: “In the beginning is the woid” (word/void 378.29; cf. Gen. 1:2). Thus, God’s act of creation in Genesis, beginning with heaven, earth, and light, is traced back to the Word in John, which becomes God, life, light, and Christ (John 1:1–14). Through a series of complex references to “the angel of the lord” and the Angelus (cf. 63.27–28), Joyce brings together the principal epiphanies of Matthew and Luke (the Annunciation and Incarnation), with the original, universal epiphanies of Genesis and John, allowing all four to shine through his own language, which is by turns brilliant and obscure, like Berkeley’s theory of color, or John’s epiphany of light: “And the light shineth [phainei] in darknesse, and the darknesse comprehended it not” (1:5).

Epiphany originally meant a literal illumination, and it is interesting to note that the same word is used for the revelation of Jesus Christ to John of Patmos, as it is again near the end of Revelation, where God enlightens the holy city without need of sun or moon (Rev. 1:16, 21:23). It is worth recalling that Joyce copied the entire book of Revelation at a formative stage of his career, most likely while composing his epiphanies, for in some ways _Finnegans Wake_ can be considered as Joyce’s Revelation, although his “night of the Apophanypes” is as much a revelation of darkness as of light. Alternatively, as David Spurr has shown, _Finnegans Wake_ can be considered as “Joyce’s Countergospel,” although Joyce’s purpose is not only to bear witness to the light of logos, like John (1.6–9), but also the incertitude of the “woid.”

Joyce attached great importance to being born on Candlemas (February 2), commemorated on the fourth Sunday of the Epiphany season, when
Jesus is presented in the temple as a “light” and “revelation” (Luke 2:32), but it is of course the first Sunday that Catholics celebrate as the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6). In Luke, Jesus’s revelation is announced to the shepherds by the “angel of the lord,” whereas in Matthew it is the star that guides the wise men. Intermixing the Lucan and Matthean accounts, images of the Epiphany are recurrent in the *Wake*: for instance, after the unexpected appearance of an angel, a star brings “three kings of three suits and a crowner” flocking to baby Yawn (474.17–20). As I have shown, the “angel of the lord” passages also draw on epiphanies in Luke and Matthew, but as well as echoing the Gospels, Joyce’s celestine imagery points to real heavenly bodies and Old Testament *shekinahs*.

In Book 4, “the engine of the load” refers to “the angel of the lord,” the first recital of the Angelus, and to daybreak, or more precisely, sunrise, as an astrological apparition (“Calling all downs to dayne”: 593.2). The moment is akin to Bloom and Stephen’s stargazing in “Ithaca,” with Bloom’s recollection of sunrise, except that here celestial motion is mapped onto terrestrial transportation: the “Sideral Reulthway” is a star-sent Railway (sidereal + Irish réal, star), or “vialact coloured milk train” (*Via Lactia* = the Milky Way), “with its endless gallaxion of rotatorattlers,” including the “waggonwobblers” of the Plough. Literal interpretation is possible, since stars do in fact wobble due to the gravitational effect of orbiting planets, but the allusions to fruit and husbandry suggest that the wobbling stars of the Plough, ready to fall to earth, include an echo of Revelation: “And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind” (Rev. 6:13). This verse, which Joyce alludes to in *Portrait* (121, cf. 260), provides added resonance to “the eversower of the seeds of light” at the start of Book 4, particularly in answer to the preceding line: “A hand from the cloud emerges, holding a chart expanded,” which seems to undo the Apocalyptic image of heaven departing “as a scroll when it is rolled together” [Rev. 6:14]).

The words “cloud,” “star,” and “fire” occur hundreds of times in *Finnegans Wake*, often appearing together. As with the nebulae and constellations of *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, this conjunction reflects Joyce’s literal interpretation of God leading Moses and the Israelites to freedom, going “before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light” (Ex. 13:21). As mentioned earlier, the motifs in the *Wake* are inextricably intertwined, so that it is inevitably reductive to disentangle them, but that danger becomes unavoidable
as soon as one ventures an interpretation. With this caveat in mind, I want to suggest that Joyce associates the imagery of fire, stars, and light with HCE (and, to a lesser extent, the male children, Shem and Shaun), while the cloud-rain-river-water cycle is associated with ALP and Issy. Both clusters provide an image of the book: Berkeley’s “hueful panepiphanal world” of infinitely varied appearances, where the true color of the noumenal object is always invisible, reflects the nature of Joyce’s “collideorscape”; while in the preceding dialogue, Muta describes Joyce’s “kingly work in progress” (625.13–14) as “wolk [cloud] in process.” This image is reminiscent of Stephen’s “instant of inspiration . . . reflected from all sides at once from a multitude of cloudy circumstances,” except that in Finnegans Wake the emphasis is not on the immaculate conception of the word as a unique epiphany but rather on the linguistic process, a course of becoming. As such, it represents both the illumination and the obscurity of the Wake, the “[c]umulonubulocirrhonimbant heaven” (FW 599.25) and “the fog of the cloud in which we toil” (599.30).

“[W]olk in process” also sheds lambent light on the cryptic hint Joyce gave Budgen, immediately following his comments about the Berkeley-Patrick colloquy being “the defence and indictment” of the book: “Hence the phrase in the preceding Mutt and Jeff banter ‘Dies is Dormimus master’ = Deus est Dominus noster plus the day is Lord over sleep, i.e. when it days” (LI 406). Here is the “banter” Joyce refers to:

Muta: Quodestnunc fumusiste volhvuns ex Domoyno?
Juva: It is Old Head of Kettle puffing off the top of the mornin.
Muta: He odda be thorly well ashamed of himself for smoking before the high host.
Juva: Dies is Dorminus master and commandant illy tonobrass.
Muta: Diminussed aster! An I could peecieve amonkst the gatherings who ever they wolk in process?
Juva: Khubadah! It is the Chrystanthemlander with his porters of bonzos, pompommmy plonkyplonk, the ghariwallahs, moveyovering the cabrattlefield of slaine. (609.24–34)

Muta (change) begins by asking in Latin, “what now is that smoke rolling out of the Lord?” The answer, of course, is St. Patrick’s paschal fire, lit by the “Chrystanthemlander” on the hill of Slane, in contravention of King Leary’s decree that all fires should be extinguished until the druids had kindled their sacred blaze. Legend has it the druids warned the king that
if the fire were not extinguished at once it would blaze forever, but there is more to this “smoke . . . of the Lord” than the fiery fervor of Ireland’s conversion to Christianity. *Deus est Dominus noster* (God is our Lord) probably refers to the Athanasian creed: “*Est ergo fides recta ut credamus et confiteamur, quia Dominus noster Jesus Christus, Dei Filius, Deus et homo est*” (the true faith is: we believe and profess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both God and man). In use since the sixth century, this creed offers the first explicit statement of faith in the Trinity, alluded to here because the prayer attributed to St. Patrick, supposedly composed in preparation for his victory over paganism, begins and ends with an avowal of “the Trinity in the Unity.”

This faith in the trinity as a divine manifold accounts for “Patrick’s practical solution of the problem” in the rainbow spectrum of light and the trefoil shamrock, but it is less clear what this has to do with day and night. One answer is simply that Book 4 represents the coming of day, the everyday epiphany of sunrise, when our nearest star, bringer of light and life, appears. But the “wolk in process” is also the cloud of smoke made by Patrick and his band of monks, while “Diminussed aster!” (Greek *aster* = star) picks up on “Dorminus master”: the mastery of day (Latin: *deis*) over our sleep (*dorminus*) is expressed through the transition from the diminishing star of the druids to a rising cloud of Christian smoke. Since the pagans are fireless while Patrick has ignited a paschal blaze, I think it likely that Joyce is playing again on God’s apparition by day as a pillar of cloud and by night as a pillar of fire in the Pentateuch, underscoring how Joyce’s “wolk in process” provides a nebulous image of epiphany.

If the primary element of HCE, embedded in the landscape of Dublin and environs, is earth, then ALP, as the river Liffey, is water, but in *Finnegans Wake*, the earth is connected to heaven, fire, and light, while the water cycle passes through air, congealing into cloud. In a sense, this creates two images of epiphany, masculine and feminine, which are both associated with day; but it goes without saying that Joyce’s dichotomies are never so simple, and by the end of the book, they begin to converge. The cloud is initially associated with Issy as Nuvoletta (e.g., *FW* 157–59), but by the end of the book, when ALP addresses her daughter, she too seems to be projected into the cloud, so that it becomes not only Issy’s mother, but ALP’s, and by extension, everybody’s (597.26–34): “I was sweet when I came down out of me mother. My great blue bedroom, the air so quiet, scarce a cloud. In peace and silence. I could have stayed up there for
always only. It’s something fails us. First we feel. Then we fall. And let her rain now if she likes” (626.8–12). As Anna Livia approaches the sea, her tidal waters become salty, no longer the “sweet” rainwater of her origins. With the wind whipping up waves, she feels “near to faint away. Into the deeps . . . Where you meet I.” Here, “the old man in the sea” (HCE) meets “the old woman in the sky” (ALP, as riverine cloud: 599.35–36), but as the waters merge, ALP is “getting mixed,” and HCE is “changing, sonhusband, and . . . turning” into “a daughterwife,” so that the “mere [+ mer, mère, mare] size” of her “cold mad feary father,” the ocean, makes it both mother and father, masculine and feminine, like *la mer* and *il mare*. This merging of masculine and feminine is already implicit in the figure of ALP as the convergence of manifold streams and rivers (e.g., in 1.8), representing “the river of lives, . . . The untirities of livesliving being the one substance of a streamsbecoming” (597.7–8). But in the final lines, this figure of unity in diversity represented by the confluence of cloud, river, and sea becomes a counterpoint to Berkeley and Patrick’s rainbow of light (recalled through the sunrise that occurs simultaneously with the meeting of the waters), and both images are united in the traditional imagery of epiphany: like the angel of the lord appearing to Mary, ALP (as cloud and river) imagines HCE (as sun and sea) “bearing down on me now under whitespread wings like he’d come from Arkangels,” and then, remembering a cherished moment in their courtship, she invokes Moses in the reeds and the vision of the burning bush: “We pass through grass behush the bush to. Whish!”

The burning bush is another recurrent image of epiphany in the *Wake*, from “avoice from afire” bellowing “mishe mishe” (i.e., Moses: *FW* 3.9), to the “burning bush” atop HCE’s “hierarchitectititptitoploftical” tower (see *FW* 4.18–5.4), to Joyce’s irreverent admonition of Kendall Bushe (author of *Cease Your Funning*): “cease your fumings, kindalled bushies! . . . For here the holy language. Soons to come” (256.11–15). Again, this provides an image of revelation in nature, which itself becomes emblematic of the book; through a series of motifs, including thunder, trees, stones, rivers, clouds, fire, and light, Joyce seems to suggest that language, like other natural objects, is a continuous revelation. Of course, there is a traditional association between Holy Scripture and nature as the book of God, but Joyce extends this to all of language (taking John’s Gospel in the most literal sense possible), including silence. Indeed, the sense of epiphany at the end of *Finnegans Wake* is achieved not so much by its rich imagery and
lyricism but by the return to silence in the ricorso, behushing the burning bush (“Whish!”) as the text trails into white space, letting “the last half versicle repurchase[es] his pawned word” (596.31–32).

The Epiphany of Language

So much has been written on the language of *Finnegans Wake* that it is impossible to provide an adequate survey, but to situate my argument, it may help to outline three trends in the literature: early criticism, written during the composition of *Work in Progress*; critical and theoretical approaches in the decades following publication; and recent scholarship on its genesis. Although excellent work has been done in each area, rarely are the results brought together; doing so helps to bring out similarities between the epiphanies and *Finnegans Wake*. Both works combine dreamlike lyricism and enigmatic dialogue; by turns ironic, irreverent, playful, and funereal, Joyce’s early works prepare the ground for his jocoserious “funferal” (*FW* 433.8, 120.10); characterized by riddles, ambiguity, incertitude, and polyvalence, both texts evade conventional interpretation; disjunctive and interconnected, aleatory and universal, they are open to endless recombination. Any of these links could be singled out, but the many fine analyses that have already been written suggest that they form a chain connected by four linchpins: silence, repetition, materiality, and self-reflexivity. Reviewing the relevant literature, I will show how these qualities run through the language of the *Wake*.

As Sylvia Beach recorded, the first group of Joyceans consisted of “writers, friends and collaborators of Joyce” who “had the advantage of hearing the hints that he would let fall” as they composed their hortations and defenses of *Work in Progress*. Many of these appeared alongside episodes of Joyce’s novel as it appeared in the *Transatlantic Review* and *transition*. *Work in Progress* was the centerpiece of Eugene Jolas’s review, and many of the essays he published formed the backbone of *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamation of Work in Progress* (1929). In the first of these essays, “Dante . . . Bruno. Vico . . . Joyce,” Beckett introduces three key linguistic principles. First, his famous pronouncement, “form is content, content is form,” indicates the principle of imitative form: “When the sense is sleep, the words go to sleep . . . When the sense is dancing, the words dance” (14). These examples demonstrate Beckett’s dictum that “[h]is writing is not about something; it is that something itself” (14), indicating
a second aspect, the *materiality* of Joyce’s text. Beckett underlines this by describing words that “elbow their way on to the page, and glow and blaze and fade and disappear” (16); the same vision of living, physically embodied print is echoed in many of the following essays, such as Victor Llona’s description of words that “skip and prance, shout, lisp, sing or speak their lines” (95), Robert McAlmon’s “Irish Word Ballet” (105–16), or G.V.L. Slingsby’s impression of Joyce “making words serve as music” (190). For Beckett, these personified words “are alive” (Beckett 16), participating in “endless verbal germination, maturation, putrefaction, the cyclic dynamism of the intermediate,” a Viconian cycle orbiting around Jolas’s fundamental insight that Joyce’s revolutionary language “is in a constant state of becoming” (82; my emphasis).

These principles are common knowledge, as are the texts they come from, but it is worth rehearsing some of the Examiners’ seminal insights into the language of *Finnegans Wake*, because key claims have been forgotten or overlooked. The thunderous epiphany is a case in point: according to Beckett, the linguistic life cycles described above are derived from Book 2 of *La Scienza Nuova*, titled “Poetic Wisdom,” where Vico “evolve[s] a theory of the origins of poetry and language” from thunder, which inspired fear of the gods, man’s first word, religious awe, respect for authority, sexual shame, and the beginnings of society, as primitive man retreated to caves for shelter (*OE* 5). The three-part cyclical history that unfolds from these beginnings, with its recurrent theological, heroic, and civic ages, followed by a short *ricorso* (developed by Joyce into a major structural principle), is, as numerous commentators have shown, pertinent to the structure of *Finnegans Wake*, as well as to its central preoccupations: history, myth, family, religion, and language. Yet it seems to have been forgotten that in the first readings of Joyce and Vico, thunder is a divine apparition, the primordial epiphany.

It could be argued that Vico is subtler than Beckett and Gilbert suggest, but as Beach points out, Joyce’s aides and acolytes benefited from his hints, which should not be overlooked. Vico’s interest in philology is well known, but the epiphatic origins of his language deserve more attention. According to Stuart Gilbert, Vico sought to rediscover the universal antediluvian language through etymology, thereby achieving “a synthesis of history and of language, a task which . . . is being realised by James Joyce in his latest work” (54). Beckett’s derivation of *legere* (to read, originally to gather) from *Lex* (law, crop of acorns [11]) provides a good example, and
Gilbert, whose glosses were probably prompted by Joyce (much like his book on *Ulysses*), shows how Joyce developed these etymological principles into the “divertissement philologique” that is *Finnegans Wake* (*OE* 95):

For Vico, the etymology of ‘Jupiter’ is *jus* + *pater*: the sky is not merely the allfather but also the source of law and justice, of the family tie and social consciousness. But not only did the voice of the thunder inspire the brutish giants with ideas of shame and justice; the strong emotion of their fear loosened their tongues and they ejaculated the first monosyllable of the language, the name of father, that word which in all tongues has the same root. It is significant that *Work in Progress* opens with a crash of thunder. (*OE* 53)

Gilbert could not be clearer about the role of thunder, yet critics have shied away from the epiphanic nature of the thunderwords. For instance, Eric McLuhan passes over their Viconian origins, arguing that *Finnegans Wake* is a Menippean satire. I find his reading unpersuasive, but the sixty-page glossary he devotes to explicating 1,001 letters in the thunderwords offers a preeminent illustration of Stuart Gilbert’s early recognition that “as a mine of suggestion and allusion [*Work in Progress*] is practically inexhaustible” (67). This offers a more promising interpretation of the thunderwords representing the fall of (or into) language, beginning with a stuttering approximation to the fall of the tower of Babel (“bababadal . . .”).

Laurent Milesi argues that the Babelian parable lies at the origin of the *Wake’s* polyglossia (1985, 153), and, perhaps, its impulse toward a new universal language, but Joyce’s thunderwords are as Viconian as they are biblical, and both myths rest on an epiphany: the descent of God to Shinar in Genesis (11.1–9) or the “forma poetica dello spirito” (qtd. in *OE* 10). Ostensibly, Croce’s phrase means that the spirit has a poetic form, but it can also be read as the poetic form created (< poesis) by the spirit; both readings offer valid interpretations of Vico’s conclusion to *The New Science*. Returning to the first thunderclaps after the universal flood, which cause the giants to “subject themselves to a higher power which they imagined as Jove” (“s’assoggettissero ad una *Forza Superiore, ch’immaginarono Giove*”: 3.143), Vico emphasizes that the states so formed were “sotto il governo d’un ottimo Massimo, che essi stessi si finsero, e si credettero, al balenar di que’ fulmini; tra’ quali rifulse loro questo *vero lume di Dio*, ch’egli governi gli uomini” (3.143–44). Bergin and Fisch render this “under the government of a Greatest and Best whom they themselves created for their faith out of
the flash of the *thunderbolts*, in which this *true light of God* shone forth for them: that *He governs mankind,* but more than “created,” “si finsero, e si credettero” suggest that the giants *made up* and *convinced* themselves of the “*ottimo Massimo,*” while “rifurse,” from rifugere, to “glow, radiate, or shine brightly,” makes it clearer that the “true light of God” they imagine comes from the fulminations of thunder and lightning. This subtle ambiguity helps to explain Beckett’s comment that for Vico language is neither materialistic nor transcendental, neither “polite and conventional symbolism” nor “a gift from the Gods” (*OE* 10); it is, rather, an *immanent* capacity that unfolds from the “first dumb form” of language as gesture, to “Homer’s ‘language of the Gods’” (*OE* 10), to the complex expression of *Finnegans Wake*, like the primitive poets making fables of immortal gods from flashes of lightning and rumbles of thunder, revealing the divinity within their vision of nature.

This is a good description of the manner in which we are encouraged to approach the language of *Finnegans Wake*, at least in *Our Exagmination*, where the first extended passage offered for analysis “alludes to the dawn of pre-history when Vico’s thunderclap came to rescue man” (59, quoting *FW* 289.5–10). As support, Gilbert (again, most likely at Joyce’s prompting), points to “flash and crash” days, “live wire,” “Benjamin Franklin, inventor of the lightning conductor,” and “Funkling” (from the German Funke, a spark); he also notes that Benjamin means “son of the right hand” (cf. Gen. 35:18), an allusion to Lucifer that is continued with a “clear, if colloquial, allusion to the angel’s panic flight before the fires of God,” “the doom of Prometheus,” “Lucifer’s exile in the void,” “Empyre” (suggesting “Empyrean,” the highest heaven), “and the archangel’s fall from grace.”

It is interesting that Gilbert should choose this passage as a representative sample of Joyce’s work, but the general import, as Gilbert explains, is that “This passage illustrates the manner in which a *motif* foliates outwards through the surrounding text, beginning from a single word—here the ‘flash’ in ‘flash and crash’ has ‘electrified’ the words which follow. . . . All through *Work in Progress* similar foliations may be traced, outspreading, overlapping, enmeshed together; at last deciduous, as new and stronger *motifs* thrust upwards into the light” (*OE* 60). Gilbert’s arboreal metaphor suggests both the repetition of motifs and the difference between variations, the essential mechanisms of Joyce’s epiphanies. His image of electrified motifs thrusting “upward into the light” suggests the epiphanic force of Joyce’s language, and just as Beckett’s etymological tree of reading
(legere) is traced back to a lexical acorn, Lex, Gilbert’s seminal example provides a holotype for reading the epiphanic language of the *Wake*.

Perhaps the clearest example is the portmanteau: when Gilbert differentiates Joyce’s complexity from Carroll’s portmanteaux and Lear’s nonsense rhymes, the critical exfoliations of his approach can be traced through a series of subsequent comparisons between “Dodgefather Dodgson” (VI.B.33.184h; cf. *FW* 482.1), and “ghem of all jokes” (193.9), the best of which are to be found in *Dublin’s Joyce* and *The Books at the Wake* (124–36). Atherton, in particular, identifies an impressive list of verbal tricks they have in common, from the change of a single letter (cf. Joyce’s “hesitency” and Carroll’s “Litterature”), word ladders (or “Doublets,” as Carroll calls them), spelling reversals and palindromes, and, of course, portmanteaux. Later critics have developed these studies into an extensive list of techniques that characterize Wakean language: Michael Begnal notes polysemy, puns, permutations, reversals, disguised names, proverbs and quotations, anagrams, words broken up by unorthodox spacing, acronyms, and “myriad numbers of little puzzles” (637). Nevertheless, his account is conservative in comparison to those of critics like Margot Norris and Derek Attridge, which develop sophisticated deconstructivist accounts of Joyce’s language based on general principles of iterative difference that can be traced back to the twin poles of silence and repetition in the epiphanies.27

One of the first studies of Joyce’s language, published just a few months after *Finnegans Wake*, perceptively notes that Joyce’s “polysemantic verbal patterns” run the risk “of charging the language with so many counterpointed meanings that in the end it signifies nothing,” requiring the reader “to fill in lacunae, supply links, embroider upon associations, rearrange the cunningly separated elements of a single pattern” (Schlauch 483–90). As with Gilbert, this emphasis on counterpointed verbal patterns of repetition and variation, and their inherent lacunae, set the template for the second wave of criticism in the decades following Joyce’s death, much of which is predominantly concerned with one or other of these aspects. For instance, the first words of Campbell and Robinson’s *Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake* dub the book a “[r]unning riddle and fluid answer” (3), while Tindall’s *Reader’s Guide* (1959) proclaims that “[i]n the great design of repetition with variation that the *Wake* shares with life, . . . motifs, more than devices or connective threads, become the fabric itself” (12). These works have largely been superseded by McHugh’s *Annotations* (1980–2015), but Adaline Glasheen’s three censuses of *Finnegans Wake*
(1957–1977), Atherton’s *Books at the Wake* (1959), Hart’s *Structure and Motif* (1962), McHugh’s *Sigla of Finnegans Wake* (1976), and more recently Raphael Slepon’s FWET website (2005–present) remain indispensable guides to Joyce’s last work, all of them essentially concerned with its repetitive structures of character, intertextuality, motif, sigla, word, and allusion. Conversely, some of the strongest single-thesis monographs on the *Wake*, such as Patrick McCarthy’s *Riddles of Finnegans Wake* (1980), John Bishop’s *Joyce’s Book of the Dark* (1986), and Norris’s *Decentered Universe of Finnegans Wake* (1976), concern the riddles, gaps, silences, obscurity, and uncertainty of the *Wake*.

Norris’s book also heralds what can broadly be termed a post-structuralist turn in Joyce studies, where the interrelationship between silence and repetition is brought to the fore. One of the earliest and best of these studies is Jennifer Levine’s “Originality and Repetition in *Finnegans Wake*” (1979), which argues that “throughout the *Wake*, every word makes a repetition, carries a past along with it, and as such invites the whole question of origins and originality,” even as “the reader is constantly aware of missing connections . . . , the space between words and their points of origin” (112). Describing the same effect in less fundamental terms, Colin McCabe characterizes Wakese as “a language which constantly creates new words by fusing and shortening old ones or by borrowing from the many European languages that Joyce knew,” resulting in a “deformation of language” so that “every word carries more than one meaning and each sentence opens out onto an infinity of interpretations” (1982, 29–30). Joyce did not, in fact, restrict himself to European languages, and “deformation” carries the wrong connotation (what Joyce reveals is the normal state of language), but the basic connection between linguistic difference and semantic proliferation is perceptive, and Rabaté extends the point to narrative in his well-known essay “Silence in *Dubliners*”: “The endlessness of the other narratives relies on such a victorious silence [as ‘The Sisters’], and this is the real link between the stories in *Dubliners* and those of *Finnegans Wake*” (1982, 51). More recently, David Spurr’s “Fatal Signatures” (2002) shows how forgery, understood as “a gesture of displacement and usurpation whose conditions of possibility are those of absence,” undermines the authority and authenticity of the paternal logos, leading to *Finnegans Wake*’s “language of excess,” a textual embodiment of feminine jouissance characterized by “overflow, abundant superfluity, and inexhaustible possibility” (104, 112). Similarly, in “Joyce’s Countergospel,” Spurr suggests
that the “nothingness at the heart” of *Finnegans Wake* “makes possible the language of Joyce’s book” (2015, 30–31), just as for Derrida, absolute nihility “makes possible, opens, splits, or renders infinite the other” (1996, 29, qtd. in Spurr 2015, 31). Finn Fordham sums up this basic condition of *Wakean* language in his 2013 introduction: “What prevents ‘nouns’ from being true in *Finnegans Wake* is both the potential multiplicity and nullity of their referentiality” (in Brown 2008, 76).

Lest it be thought these insights are purely theoretical, the same fundamental conception of Joyce’s language underlies the work of Fritz Senn, whose close reading of *Finnegans Wake* is second to none. For instance, when Giorgio Melchiori claims that “*Finnegans Wake* is a constant epiph- anisation of . . . everyday language, by a process of translation that intensifies to the utmost its semantic values” (4), his “process of translation” rests on Senn’s term “dislocation.” The choice is apt, for Senn’s coinage functions as an umbrella for “all manner of metamorphoses, switches, transfers, displacements,” modifications, and reversals whereby an author uses novel linguistic forms or misquotations “to exploit original semantic energy for deflected intrinsic ends” (Senn 1984, 207). Senn writes that “*Finnegans Wake* is dislocutory throughout in all possible senses. . . . Its language is everything implied in the Latin prefix *dis-*” (209). Ultimately, *dis-*, “apart,” is derived from Greek δύο, “two” (Skeat), and according to the *OED*, its primary meaning is “two-ways, in twain,” so the root implies both bifurcation and doubling, the essential properties of Joyce’s epiph- anic language.

Senn’s work on the *Wake* emphasizes these dislocations through deviations (including negations and reversals) of expected sense and forms of repetition (e.g., quotations, allusions, intertextuality, translations). A case in point is his “Reading Exercise in *Finnegans Wake*,” where the “practical demonstration” of how Joyce’s “[s]emantic potential is released” in two sentences “of medium to light opacity” from Jan’s Sermon (432.35–433.2) remains, to my mind, unsurpassed as a piece of *Wake* exegesis. Following five pages of close reading, Senn asks “Do I make this . . . up?”; recalling the imagery of Stuart Gilbert, he concedes that “[s]ome of the foregoing exfoliation is one particular reader’s imaginative weaving of the textual threads.” But that is because the writer, as poet, or “maker,” is joined by the reader, as “maker-up,” and (following the analogy of “our jocosus inkerman” in the passage under discussion), “making things up seems to be part . . . of our mission”: “*Finnegans Wake* seems to send us abroad into
far away fields (linguistic, historical, here hagiographical) . . . to engage us in our own spiritual exercises” (1984, 90–95). Such rhetorical flights are rare in Senn’s explications, but an underlying credo can usually be inferred—in the same essay, for example, he discusses how “hindsight, rather ‘culious an epiphany’ [508.11], affects the linguistic structure” of Finnegans Wake—and out of print he readily admits his substantial agreement with Melchiori, for his dissatisfaction with the term “epiphany” as it is usually employed, or Joyce’s epiphanies in themselves, is simply that he regards each of Joyce’s words as an epiphany.

Despite the paucity of criticism examining the relationship between the epiphanies and Finnegans Wake, the epiphanic qualities of silence, repetition, materiality, and self-reflexivity are central to the studies discussed, providing a missing link between their diverse perspectives. In the remainder of this chapter, I will examine each of these aspects in turn, considering silence and repetition in light of recent trends in genetic criticism, before relating these principles to the physical and reflexive properties of language in order to develop a unified theory of the epiphany.

Silence

From the first chapter of Finnegans Wake, “silence speaks the scene” (13.3). There are a number of references to silence in the notebooks: “Sylvia Silence, the girl detective” (VI.B.10.22h), first appears in the rumours chapter, 1.3, before returning in 2.3 and 3.3 (FW 61.1–11, 337.17, 523.2–4); “the sublime art of sonorous silence” Joyce cribbed from Wagner’s love letters lies behind the Wake’s “science of sonorous silence” (VI.B.3.77a; FW 230.22–23); and in VI.B.5.92b Joyce notes a fascinating contradiction: “noise or silence drove mad” (cf. FW 98.3). McHugh goes further, suggesting that the parenthetical break “(Silent.)” (14.6) in the first chapter is linked to HCE’s demise, as are the line breaks inscribed “(Silents)” and “SILENCE” at 334.31 and 501.6, which he reads as ricorsi, or gaps between ages. This silence in death makes sense, for elsewhere HCE is associated with the amplified, stuttering voice of the paternal logos. In 2.1, the fulminating, balbutient babble of “Loud,” “Clearer of the Air from on high,” is “moguphonoised” (megaphonically amplifying his mogiphonia, or difficulty in producing vocal sounds) by that strange phenomenon, or “phone-manon,” speech (cf. Gk phonema: discourse [258.20–22; cf. 257.28–259.9]), in opposition to the maternal principle of silence enacted by “Mummmum”
(259.10). The association between mothering, acting (or mumming), and silence (to keep mum) recurs frequently (e.g., “Mum’s mutyness” [53.3] or “Mum’s for’s . . . Silance” [228.15–17]), with a cluster of examples centered around “the abnihilisation of the etym” (353.22): Taff’s “momstchance ministring” (mumchance means both a hazardous venture and acting or keeping silence) produces “words of silent power” (pointing at the beer-tap) that elicit “another guidness,” or Guinness, from the barman; near the end of the chapter, the connection between “Mommerly” as mummerly, or dumbshow, and language as “Silence in thought!” emerges more clearly through allusions to Jesperson and a return to Joyce’s creationism: “In the beginning is the woid [word, void], in the muddle is the sounddance and thereinofter you’re in the unbewised again” (378.30–34). In German, unbeweisen means “unproven,” while the adjective unbewusst means “unconscious”; add the proximity between mum (or “mim”) and “Whisht” (Hiberno-English for “silence” [e.g. 366.35–337.1]) and the fact that every occurrence of the “whisht” motif, right through to the “Whish!” in the final lines (628.13), carries the double sense of silence and wish, the standard English translation of Freud’s Wunsch (désir in Lacan), and I think we can begin to see how silence in Finnegans Wake is not only a pause between speech, or the ricorso between epochs, but also the polarized tension of repressed desire from which language and subjectivity spring.30

Repetition

“[U]pon the silence of the dead, from pharoph the nextfirst down to ra-
mescheckles the last bust thing. The Vico road goes round and round to
meet where terms begin” (452.20–22). Thus does Issy remake Vico in her
own image (and that of Vico Road, Dublin), transforming “cyclewheel-
ing history” (186.2), in which the ricorso plays a minor role, into “vicous
cicles” (134.16) of repetition and variation that “repose, upon the silence.”
These patterns are familiar enough that I will limit my remarks to a single
example, the “seim anew.”

Near the end of 1.8, the washerwomen gossiping on the banks of the
river describe HCE’s bigamy and the seven dams on the Liffey in the
language of Revelation (“seven dams to wive him. And every dam had her
seven crutches. And every crutch had its seven hues . . .” [215.15–17; cf. Rev.
chs 2–16]). The seven hues are also the colors of the rainbow, paling to past-
tel as dusk falls (“pinky lemony creamy birnies and their turkiss indienne
mauves” [20–21]). “But at milkidmass”—Michaelmas, or the Day of St. Michael and All Angels, which principally celebrates the banishment of Lucifer (light)—his spouse was ALP, so “all that was was fair” (21–22). As night falls, with the last light gleaming on the river, the scene becomes elven: “Tys Elvenland! Teems of times and happy returns. The seim anew. Ordovico or viricordo. Anna was, Livia is, Plurabelle’s to be” (22–24). The run of rivers (Ty, Elv, Elfenland, Teme, Tees, Seim . . . ), a constant theme in the chapter, suggests the diversification and unification of the water cycle, just as at the end of the book, the Liffey delta branches out into Dublin Bay only to be absorbed back into the ocean. In the same way, one diurnal cycle nears an end here with the fall of night, while another begins with daybreak at the end of book 4. Both these cycles of water and light thematize the “seim anew,” embodied in HCE and ALP, the masculine and the feminine. The play on “same anew” clearly points to a fundamental principle of difference-in-repetition, but it is noteworthy that Joyce’s variation of the “seim anew. Ordovico or viricordo” takes the physical form of a river flowing toward the Ordovician rocks north of Dublin, while his Viconian cycle seems as reflexive and reversible as the grammar of vi ricordo (I remember you, or remind you of something), which is not the case for Vico’s ages.

There are numerous variations on this theme: “the same returns” (18.5), “remews [remains, renewes, re-moults] the same” (134.17), “the same renew” (226.17). In the first chapter, the Prankquean tells Jarl van Hoother “there was a brannewail [brand new fire wail] that same sabboath night of falling angles [plus angels]” (21.17–18), suggesting a somewhat epiphanic association between “starshootings” (22.12) and the renewal of the same, while the riverine motif of 1.8 is clearly echoed in 2.2: “For as Anna was at the beginning lives yet and will return after great deep sleep rerising . . . as shower as there’s a wet enclouded . . . We drames our dreams tell Bappy returns. And Sein annews” (277.22–28). Here again, fire and cloud imagery are prominent in the theme of resurrection as renewal, with HCE and ALP becoming merged in “Bappy” (Pappy), whose return is both awaited and foretold, as being (German: Sein) and dreams (sen in Czech and Polish) are renewed in the tidal Seine (“Sein annews”). The combination of long, Germanic vowel and soft, Latinate consonant permit the remaking of the sign, while the final recurrence of this theme near the end of the book, “Time after time. The sehm asnuh” (620.15–16) might suggest the same made new (cf. “semetryplace” 114.18, “seems to same” 527.1).
may be stretching things, but “sehm” is an anagram of Shem (“asnuh” = Shaun), spelled Sem in French, a root Joyce plays on when Shaun mentions the “increasing lack of interest in his semantics [including Shem’s antics]” (173.32–33). Semantics comes from Greek σῆμα, sema, but it is worth comparing the German word Sem, meaning both “sign” and “same,” particularly given the cluster of Teutonic words like sehen, to “see,” and nu, “now.” This cluster is continued in the next line, “To bredder as doffered as nors in soun,” where bredder suggests both riverbanks (from Norwegian bredder) and brothers (German Brüder), while “doffer,” “nors,” and “soun” are Dutch for pigeon, surly, and kiss/peace, respectively. Hence, the phrase suggests the brothers are as different as north and south, or the banks of a river, but in both cases, opposites are defined by the same point of reference, a difference that is doffered, or dovetailed, implying that the two are brought together like noise and sound, or surliness in peace, conjoining synonyms (the same anew) with Bruno’s coincidentia oppositorum.

**Genetics Aside**

As I have indicated, from the *Skeleton Key* to FWEET, a considerable portion of *Wake* criticism is concerned, in one way or another, with silence and repetition. Similarly, much of the best recent work in genetic criticism is devoted to detailed analysis of the changes Joyce made in each successive draft of a given section, which is to say studying the text as a series of iterations, a complex palimpsest consisting of multiple layers of repetition and variation. I have attempted to do this for the epiphanies, showing how they are reiterated in Joyce’s later texts, but there is more detailed scholarship on the genesis of the *Wake* that extends the point further. For instance, after analyzing thirteen successive stages of composition over a fourteen-year period of a single “Sentence in Progress” (449.27–450.2), David Hayman’s seminal essay concludes that *Wakean* sentences “resemble nothing more than views of a cross section of some organism seen under varying lighting conditions” (Hayman 1958, 152). Perhaps recalling the organic metaphors of *Our Exagmination,* or Campbell and Robinson’s claim that Joyce “re-enact[s] the ‘genesis and mutation of language’” in *Finnegans Wake* (14), Hayman’s characterization of evolving, mutating language is equally congruent with Kenner’s account of modernists like Pound, Eliot, and Joyce making “the slow discovery of language, a complex coherent organism . . . that can maintain its identity as it grows and
evolves in time; that can remember, that can anticipate, that can mutate” (1972, 96). Even among a generation of critics who habitually avoid such far-reaching claims, Hayman’s approach remains widely influential: Finn Fordham’s “The Writing of Growth and the Growths of Writing” (2007–2008) is a case in point.33

As well as developing the methodology of genetic criticism, Hayman can be credited with unlocking one of its most important discoveries: the “nodality” of the Wake, organized around a cluster of key scenes that recur in frequent variations. Hayman’s “epiphanoids” provide a paradigm case, and while it is not clear exactly how these “epiphanoids” are to be differentiated from other notebook entries, this apparent weakness in fact strengthens Hayman’s case for the epiphanic genesis of the Wake. Indeed, the recycling of the epiphanies themselves offers perhaps the single clearest example of the underlying structure of repetition and variation that genetic critics trace.

Materiality

Besides holograph notebooks and drafts (JJA 28–43), a vast body of proofs and typescripts await genetic inquiry (JJA 44–63). As well as revealing further stages of Joyce’s iterative composition, these texts, typed letter by letter, mark by mark, from Joyce’s almost indecipherable handwriting (or even more laboriously, set by the printer’s hand), bring home the manufactured nature of the text (see Kenner 1992). Again, the materiality of Finnegans Wake is a well-worn subject, from Our Exagmination’s formal emphasis on sound and shape over referential content, to the fascination of tonguetwisting thunderwords and other linguistic bizarreries, to the difficulty of reproducing Joyce’s “Doodles family” in print (FW 299.F4). It is also well known that Joyce thematizes the physical properties of language in the Wake. Earlier, I showed how he uses the language of nature (trees, stones, light, water, clouds, thunder) to reflect upon the nature of language, and when Shem concocts ink from his own faeces and urine to write upon his body, he graphically illustrates two of its fundamental truths: that language is a material product of the body (see Attridge 2001, 65) and that it has a body of its own. This material body of the text is more than a theme in Finnegans Wake: it is Finnegans Wake, a recognition underscored each time the letter returns.

While our fascination with Shem’s bodily emissions may seem anal,
Joyce’s scatology serves a serious, and perhaps revelatory, purpose: Clive Hart ends his book on *Structure and Motif in “Finnegans Wake”* with Joyce’s “aim of distilling universal beauty from scatology” (208); Father Boyle links the “alshemi[cal]” transaccidentations of I.7 (185.35–186.4) to the Eucharist; and Vincent Cheng argues that *Finnegans Wake*’s “god-dinpotty” (59.12) completes a bodily cycle, expressing “the word made flesh made shit made text” (in Bollettieri Bosinelli et al. 1992, 95). These interpretations emphasize Joyce’s conflation of sacred and low, God and excrement, in the literal word, underscoring the universal nature of the linguistic epiphany, indifferently present in every utterance.

The Letter

Scratched from the “midden” of history “(dump for short)” by “that original hen,” Belinda Doran (110.22–111.5), there are a number of similarities between the “letter from litter” (615.1), stained with tea (111.20), pee (“pee ess”: 111.18), or worse, and Shem’s bodily effusions, as Vincent Cheng (94–95) and Clive Hart (200–208) have shown. For Hart, there are two types of “motif-agglomeration” in the *Wake*: a simple catalog or list of “juxtaposed motifs,” on the one hand, and “the technique of amassing motifs into a matrix or complex,” on the other. The preeminent example of the latter is the letter (179–80).

While this distinction is helpful in thinking about the difference between lists like the names of HCE or the titles of the mamafesta, and motifs like the Quinet quotation (14.35–15.11, 281.4–13, 615.2–4) or the chicken and egg (81.22, 220.21, 615.10–616.21), both are the result of the same basic technique. Nevertheless, Hart is right that “the Letter must rank first among the many ‘expanding symbols’ in *Finnegans Wake*,” for it “recurs in literally hundreds of places in more or less fragmentary form, making its presence felt in the most widely divergent contexts” and touching “every theme in *Finnegans Wake*, so that it quickly comes to stand for the book itself” (200). By tracing its genesis, Laurent Milesi argues that “[t]he displacements and echoic dissemination to which the ‘Letter’ complex was subjected generated the first major example of leitmotivistic composition” in the *Wake* (1990, 96). Milesi argues for a “dual parentage” of the first variants of the letter in the narrative from the *Exiles (I)* and “Circe” sections of *Scribbledehobble* (c.1922–23: VI.A.271, 754), before showing how the composition of these passages was preceded by the
“Revered” letter (615.12–619.19), which was elaborated in December 1923 but put aside until 1938, when Joyce thoroughly revised it for insertion near the end of the Wake. According to Milesi, “this crucial step led to the discovery of the basic architecture of the book,” although his causal arrow should probably be reversed, for it is not so much the displacement and dissemination of the letter complex that generated Joyce’s method of “leitmotivistic composition” as the opposite. Indeed, the holotropic fractal that patterns Finnegans Wake extends from the cyclical structure of the book as a whole to every “blotch and void” of “penstroke, paperspace” left after the “abnihilisation of the etym.”

Patrick McCarthy raises six objections to the notion that the letter represents the book: (1) no two versions are identical; (2) each version is so ambiguous that defense turns into accusation; (3) attention constantly shifts from its contents to its form; (4) it is difficult to separate the letter from its commentaries; (5) the letter has been damaged in the course of its burial and resurrection; (6) its authorship is doubtful. Yet each of these objections points to the nature of Joyce’s epiphanic text: (1) its structure of repetition and variation; (2) Joyce’s uncertainty principle; (3, 5) the materiality of the text; (4) the role of “anticollaborators” (FW 118.25); and (6) the linked questions of origins, authenticity, and authorship. The latter are particularly revealing. Although 3.1 suggests the letter, delivered by Shaun, was dictated by ALP to Shem in defense of HCE (420.17–19), and the last epistle would appear to corroborate ALP as author, defending her husband, the earliest notebook evidence attributes the missive to Issy, with Maggy as sender (Milesi 1990). Since Maggy is both Issy’s split personality and her mirror image (420.7, 457.24–61.32), Issy emerges as writer and recipient of the “letter selfpenned to one’s other” (489.33–34), even if “a multiplicity of personalities,” including the entire Earwicker household, lies behind the slippery bordereau (107.22–23). Here again, Joyce makes possibilities proliferate from uncertainty, creating an original figure of the writer-reader split and doubled in a symmetrical siglum —II— whose implications extend beyond authorship of the letter(s) in Finnegans Wake to the “problematic origin of language” (Milesi 1990, 79).

The difficulties McCarthy raises reflect readers’ experiences of the Wake, a point he later concedes: “The letter is free—that is, irreducible to a consistent level of meaning, or even to a definitive text. In this, as in other respects, it is a model of the mysterious, compelling, kaleidoscopic work of which it is a microcosm” (732). McCarthy makes the same point in his
1984 introduction: “To a large extent, the subject of the letter is the letter, just as the subject of *Finnegans Wake is Finnegans Wake*” (577), for “the letter is, ultimately, all documents, and its subject matter is human life on all its levels” (in Bowen and Carens 1984, 576). This echoes Atherton’s comprehensive summary: “The letter stands as a symbol for all attempts at written communication including all other letters, all the world’s literature, *The Book of Kells*, all manuscripts, the sacred books of the world, and also *Finnegans Wake*” (62–63; cf. McHugh 1976, 30). The hyperbole of “human life on all its levels” and “the sacred books of the world” may rile, but the textual claim is justified, for the letter is not only a representation of *Finnegans Wake* but also a reflection of (and on) textuality.

There are, naturally, two mirrored aspects to this self-reflection: the first is the heightened attention Joyce brings to the materiality of language—its sound and shape—by emphasizing the physical form of the letter. Obviously, this is not limited to the “everyday-looking stamped addressed envelope,” its teastained, fork-punctured, “written on with dried ink scrap of paper,” or the “blots and blurs and bars and balls and hoops and wriggles” of its individual handwriting (118.29–33); rather, it is a reflection on the character of letters as graphemes, or the nature of writing itself (Rasula), which opens onto the second aspect, reflexivity.

**Self-Reflection**

There is an intimate connection between materiality and self-reflexivity, because “within the inbuilt critical dimension of Joyce’s texts representation ‘itself’ . . . is exposed, beyond its canonisable techniques and resources, to a reflexion on representability and representativity” (Milesi 2003, 9). Milesi signals how the materiality of Joyce’s language constitutes nothing other than the thin sheet of tinfoil behind the glass: “The mirror traditionally held up to nature has revealed the tain that enables its (self-) reflexions” (9). This observation clearly recalls Rodolphe Gasché’s *The Tain of the Mirror*, specifically his “General Theory of Doubling,” which argues that Derrida’s philosophy of reflection emerges from the notion of “originary doubling,” whereby repeated and repetition come into being simultaneously (225–39). This central *brisure* is already inscribed in “the alteration of the originary iteration” that constitutes “repetition, reproduction, representation” (Derrida 1976, 209), but the theory of originary doubling is most fully developed in “Plato’s Pharmacy,” where the privilege
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accorded to living speech over dead writing is not simply overturned but also deconstructed, as both speech and writing are shown to originate in a self-othering act of repetition (1981, 63–171). Split and doubled at the source, the traces of this cloven language underwrite Derrida’s cryptic comment that “the whole of *La Pharmacie de Platon* was only ‘a reading of *Finnegans Wake*” (in Attridge and Ferrer 1984, 150), because a reproductive chain reaction of dividing and doubling is exactly what Derrida describes as the “paradigm” of Joyce’s “fission”: “[Joyce] tries to make outcrop, with the greatest possible synchrony, at great speed, the greatest power of the meanings buried in each syllabic fragment, subjecting each atom of writing to fission in order to overload the unconscious with the whole memory of man: mythologies, religion, philosophies, sciences, psychoanalysis, literatures” (149). “Joyce’s ghost is always coming on board,” because “everything we can say after [*Finnegans Wake*] looks in advance like a minute self-commentary with which this work accompanies itself,” Derrida writes (1987, 149); in this case, his remarks on fission and the *pharmakon* look like a commentary on the first page, where Dublin is doubled in Georgia (motto: “Doubling all the time!”—or in Joyce’s words, “doublin their mumper all the time” [3.8–9]). Doubling all the time is precisely what we get in *Finnegans Wake*, although much of it occurs almost indistinguishably within the original apparition, as in 1.4, where “[t]he boarder incident prerepeated itself” (81.33). In this incident, “man may not say” (nor woman neither) whether the antagonists represent Napoleon engaging Wellington, Buckley reconnoitering the Russian General, the Cad attacking his “Adversary” (81.18–20), Shem and Shaun, warring brothers, or any son fighting his father, because ultimately they stand for every pair in *Finnegans Wake*, showing how in Joyce’s “leitmotivistic composition,” repetition is always prerepeated.

These self-echoing pairs can be conceived as identical twins, split and doubled from a single egg, or as a figure of union-in-opposition, like the fusion of Shem-Shaun, but the most powerful example of Joyce’s fission is the doubling of Issy. Of the myriad examples, I will concentrate on 3.3, where Issy, appearing as a witness in HCE’s trial, gazes in the mirror and addresses her own reflection: “Listenest, meme mearest” (527.3). The play on *même* (same) and the doubling of me-me is repeated more than once: “Listen, meme sweety” (527.21), “It’s meemly us two, meme” (527.24), opening the cleft in which Issy and her image are doubled and redoubled (“joyfold,” no less [527.22]). The origins of this cleft have been
traced back to 1927, when Joyce split Issy into Isolde la Belle and her rival, Isolde Blanchemains (Tristan’s wife); hence the split siglum for question 10 in the Quiz chapter, and the difficult relationship between “me . . . his belle” and “your extensions to my personality” in that section (144.12–145.2). But this split is not simply between Issy and her reflection, as Henkes and Bindervoet state (§10), because in 3.3 we find allusions to both “Blanchemain[s]” and Bédier’s “Fairhair[ed]” La Belle (“my arms are whiter”: 527.20–21) before the mirror, while the two Maggies, “Sester Maggy” and “Madge, my linkingclass girl” (458.10, 459.4), appear in the mirror, like the earlier reflection of “two Madges on the makewater” (420.7). In fact, both schisms are more complex than this. First, Issy’s narcissistic self-gaze, figured as the girlish (self-)love of mon beau for ma belle, conjures up a Carrollesque production (Isa Bowman played Alice in a famous stage adaptation) that becomes iridescent: “How me adores eatsother simply (Mon ishebeau! Ma reinebelle!) [double rainbows are inverted].” Like the twenty-eight dancing girls (days of February, lunar month, menstrual cycle, $4 \times 7$), the rainbow is consistently associated with Issy throughout Finnegans Wake, showing how an original split generates unlimited variation, like light refracted into seven bands of an infinite spectrum.

As shown, in the Patrick-Berkeley vignette, the manifold nature of light reflects the “panepiphanal” language of the Wake, here traced back to the originary doubling of Issy’s self-reflection, but the split in the image also becomes epiphanic through the prism of Maggy and Mary. Addressing her fading image (“meme nearest . . . I’m fading”) as “esster” (Swift’s two Esthers, dubbed Vanessa and Stella), Issy promises to “be clue” to “who knows you, pray Magda, Marthe with Luz and Joan” (528.10–15). Joyce’s grammar is ambiguous: on one reading, Maggy splits into a transgender MaMaLuJo; on another, she is known by them. In either case, she becomes associated with Mary (Mary Magdalene or the sisters Mary and Martha of Bethany [see Luke 10:38–42, John 11:20–27]). Moreover, since the mirror has already been associated with the litany of the Blessed Virgin, remembered from Portrait (“Mirror do justice, taper of ivory, heart of the conavent, hoops of gold!” [527.22–23]), Issy’s reflection, Maggy, is also Mary, mother of God. Once conjured, this mirror image epiphazizes the magical trick of doubling: “Think of a maiden, Presentacion. Double her, Annupciacion. Take your first thoughts away from her, Immacolacion. Knock and it shall appall unto you. Who shone yet shimmers will be e’er
scheining” (528.19–22). On one level, the maiden is Issy (or any number of her personalities), doubled in the mirror, but the language is that of a stage-trick, employing Marian symbolism, while its interpretation is neo-Kantian. Derived from the Protoevangelium of James, in the Liturgy the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (November 21) celebrates Mary’s precocious devotion to God “under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who filled her with grace at her Immaculate Conception.” Hence, “take your first thoughts away from her” is partly addressed to Joseph (or any doubtful husband), but the mystery of paternity can also be read as a comment on authorship: if “in the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh” (P 236), then “where do thots come from?” (FW 597.25).

“Immacolacion” clearly refers to the immaculate conception, but it seems to contain a pure or immanent collation (bringing together) or colation (straining, as in riddling or sieving) as well; “Knock” refers to the apparition of the Virgin at Knock, County Mayo, in 1879, as well as “Knock and it shall be opened unto you” (Matt. 7:7, Luke 11:9). But a knock can also cant (German kanten), so that from the appalling aperture of the initials I. K. (“Immacolacion. Knock”), Immanuel Kant seems to appear. If this canting apparition upsets the lifeboat of mariolatry, the entry is at least licensed by “e’er scheining”: Mary who shone once and shimmers still will always shine, because the “thing in such” (528.15) or the Ding an sich (i.e., the noumenon) will always keep appearing (Kant’s term for the phenomenon is Erscheinung, meaning “apparition”). What makes this example so powerful is that the very opposition between the thing-in-itself and its appearance is in the process of being deconstructed as it is played out by Issy gazing in the mirror. Here Issy is the noumenon, yet she can see herself only as a reflection, whereupon she is inevitably split; yet the phenomenon in the mirror also possesses physical properties that appear in different lights (“fading,” “fay,” it “appal[.]”), like a Ding an sich. Thus, the Kantian split occurs on both sides (ambi-) of the doubling: Issy has “an ambidual act herself in apparition with herself” (528.25).

The implications of this “ambidual act” are profound. By representing Issy’s self-reflection in the Wake, Joyce reflects upon the self-reflexivity of the Wake, or indeed, reflexivity in general. Already doubled on both sides of the reflection (ambidual), Issy provides the perfect illustration of Derrida’s notion of originary doubling, whereby repetition does not repeat some preexisting whole but comes into being together with the thing as it is presented. Another way to understand this is that, contrary to Gasché,
there is no tain of the mirror; the tain is the mirror, all metal and no glass. Put differently, the signifying function of language, its referentiality, is inseparable from its materiality; the two are inscribed as one, and each is double: shape and sound always signify, and signification is always embodied. Indeed, this is precisely what self-reflexive language reveals: by drawing heightened attention to itself, it makes manifest the strange, often opaque form of graphemes and phonemes, their irreducible materiality, while simultaneously asking us to reflect on the phenomenological associations they evoke.

The Linguistic Epiphany

Recalling that the primary senses of “epiphany” are manifestation and appearance, this mirror held up to (or rather, in) self-reflexivity reveals the epiphanic nature of language. Joyce helps us see that language is always both: the physical manifestation of a bodily production, and the endless appearances it generates through reflection. Again, there are connections between the material manifestation of language, on the one hand, and its appearance as “repetition, reproduction, representation” (Derrida 1976, 209), on the other, just as there are between silence and repetition, or materiality and reflexivity. These connections can be traced all the way back to the epiphanies that prefigure the language of the \textit{Wake}, manifesting the self-reflexive nature of language.

Any passage from either text could serve as an example, for language is inherently self-reflexive, but \textit{Finnegans Wake} is exceptional in the extent to which it manifests this recognition, making metatextuality its dominant mode as “the book of Doublends Jined” doubles back on itself (\textit{FW} 20.15–16). Early on, readers are invited to bend down for a closer look at its strange textual objects, stooping or submitting to the text even as it voices resistance: “(Stoop) if you are abcedminded, to this claybook, what curios of signs (please stoop), in this allaphbed!” (18.18–19). When the curious sign of a Greek alphabet consecrated to Allah is as familiar as the Old English word abecede, “Can you rede”—a variant of read, meaning “rule,” “direct,” “guide,” “deliberate,” “resolve,” “advise,” and much else besides—“its world?” Both writing and reading have been defamiliarized, yet the tale of the \textit{Wake} “is the same told of all” (18.19–20). We “may have our irremovable doubts as to the whole sense” of its “variously inflected, differently pronounced, otherwise spelled, changeably meaning vocable
scriptsigns” (117.35–118.28), especially when referred back to a mutating palimpsest of drafts, typescripts, and proofs “very like a whale’s egg farced with pemmican . . . , calling unnecessary attention to errors, omissions, repetitions and misalignments” (120.9–16), but at least if “You is feeling like you was lost in the bush,” without “the poutriest notions what the farest he all means” (112.3–6), there’s “Mr. Himmyshimmy” to fall back on, “unconsciously explaining, . . . with a meticulosity bordering on the insane, the various meanings of all the different foreign parts of speech he misused” (173.27–36).

These examples illustrate how Joyce’s self-reflexive text is composed with conscious, and explicit, awareness of its own textuality and how metatextual recognition invites readers to reflect on their own reading. The heightened attention Joyce brings to this process of making meaning shows how language offers a continuous epiphany as the manifestation of thought. It might be objected that these remarks apply, if at all, to *Finnegans Wake*, not language as a whole, but here again the letter is instructive. Given that it stands for *Finnegans Wake*, the letter is inherently self-reflexive, but if it is also true that it stands for all documents, then it reveals the epiphanic, self-reflexive nature of textuality. This synecdochal relation to literature (understood in the broadest sense) is often implied in the *Wake* (e.g., “every letter is a hard but yours sure is the hardest crux ever” [623.33–34]), as is the corollary reading it demands: “Leave the letter that never begins to go find the latter that ever comes to end” (337.11–13). Appearing between “a beautiful thought” called or “cull[ed]” “sub silence” (337.16–17) and the “semeliminal salmon” of knowledge caught on the ladders of the Liffey (337.9–10), “end” (13) is both noun and verb: the “latter” (ladder, last, literature) always comes to fruition. As Derek Attridge has shown, the portmanteaux in *Finnegans Wake* “help make the book conceivable as a central, rather than a peripheral, literary text” because they shatter “any illusion that the systems of difference in language are fixed and sharply drawn, reminding us that signifiers are perpetually dissolving into one another” (1988, 204); “semeliminal” (a seminal, subliminal, liminal sign) epitomizes this *Wakean* conception of language as an interrelated system of differences. I have tried to isolate two related movements of this structure, silence and repetition, tracing their interplay from the epiphanies to *Finnegans Wake*, but the location of meaning in the slippage between mutually defined differences has a venerable history from Saussure to Derrida, illustrating why, for many readers, the *Wake* “may offer
itself as the central text in the Western literary tradition” (Attridge 1988, 233). Although it “can no more be intrinsically central” to the canon “than it can be intrinsically on the edge” (237), by presenting readers with “an extreme version of what we do with all literary texts” (Attridge 1990, 21), the *Wake* reveals the twin principles not only of literature but of language, which is why Derrida could write with no real contradiction that “Plato’s Pharmacy” is an indirect commentary on *Finnegans Wake*, a network of difference in repetition, or *différance*, that “repeats and mobilises and babelises the (asymptotic) totality of the equivocal.” In the particular is contained the universal.