

“Ancient ere decrepitude” – Commodification of Language in *Finnegans Wake*

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Abstract

If anything, modernist and postmodernist aesthetics is about signs, sign systems, the nature, the possibilities and limits of signifying practices. Setting out from the premise that man cannot bear too much reality (T.S. Eliot), persuaded by the turn of the twentieth century psychologists – whether of the pragmatist, physicalist, psychoanalytic or intuitionist school – that man lives in his own, perception-dependent, dream of reality (Walter Horatio Pater), artists looked at the world as twice removed from it, that is, through the mediation of some already encoded representation thereof. From among the intertextual practices one can identify under the two period terms, the language of the media is increasingly present in fictional discourse to the extent that, in the 80s of the last century, Jean Baudrillard attributed this channel of communication an ontological dimension. According to this French philosopher, his contemporaries live in a hyperreality, which is a vicious circle turning between an indistinguishable objective reality and the culture of images that frame the former, stealing into its sphere. In the following we are taking a look at the mediatic phantasmagoria of desire in James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*.

Key Words: James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, intertextuality, mediatic discourse, modernist fiction, commodification

INTRODUCTION

Finnegan, himself the bearer of a Fin, turns his fall, aided by the very location of the mishap, Phoenix Park, into a phall whose audibility is not a cry, but a universal thunder (bababadalgharaghtakamminarronkonnbronntonneronntuonnthunntrovarrhounawnskawntooohooordenenthurnuk!) spelled out in eleven languages. The initial *alphabetical* repetition evokes the mythical creation of languages, in order to stop the builders of the Babel tower from reaching the heavens. The violent event must have left the masons thunderstruck on a “thunders day”, or Thor’s day, or perhaps on a Jupiter’s day, only to echo it in the following pages to the Muslims of the *Arafat as* and Kaaba. The thunder, as it must have been perceived by the early humans, was the passionate response to their wrongdoings of some sort of an almighty un-yet-known entity, identified by Vico as Jove. And it is a big bang that is thought to originate the universe. However, here the thunder works against Jove himself, casting him down from heavens. Thus, the thunder can also be regarded as a universal wake-up sign from an ages-long dormant fear of pursuing one’s instinctual sexuality, which had been perpetuated in most systems of belief.

“There extend by now one thousand and one stories, all told, of the same”. (Joyce, 1975, p. 5)

The primeval onomatopoeia is recreated by Joyce, whose preoccupation with experimenting with multilinguistic communication comes at a time when endeavours to convey messages using a universal language, readily available to all were fervent. Esperanto, Volapuk, and Ido to name but three of those that were intended as newly established *linguae francae* at the turn of the centuries. Joyce’s proprietary language draws on ancient and new languages alike. Egyptian and old Chinese transcend the medium of the written to those of gestures, still and moving image. The equivocal is both inescapable and desired.

“Behove thissound of Irish sense. Really? Here English might be seen. Royally? One sovereign punned to petery pence. Regally? The silence speaks the scene. Fake!” (Joyce, 1975, p. 12)

It makes little difference whether the language employed be Irish or that of the here commodified, circulating, and repenting monarch since neither have remained unaltered after their colonial clash. In Newtonian physics, for every action, there is a reaction of a similar amplitude, and as McLuhan notes, throughout history, the position of their counterpart has proved equally enticing for both colonizer and colonized.

“Just as the barbarians got to the top of the Roman social ladder, the Romans themselves were disposed to assume the dress and manners of tribesmen out of the same frivolous and snobbish spirit that attached the French court of Louis XVI to the world of shepherds and shepherdesses”. (McLuhan, 1964, p. 49)

Esperanto, an auxiliary language based on Indo-European languages, becomes part of a much greater proprietary language that is used solely for the purpose of developing *Finnegans Wake*.

“One and told of the Compassionate, called up before the triad of precocious scare makers (score taking: Spiegulo ne help as al malbellulo, Mi Kredas ke vi estas prava, Via dote la vizago rispondas fraulino) the now to the ushere mythical habiliments of Our Farfar and Arthor of our doyne.” (Joyce, 1975, p. 52)

Naturally, some of the intentions of Esperanto’s constructor, aiming to ease speech among various ethnic groups, or to promote international understanding and such were obliterated by the sheer context of its usage in the *Wake*, as here it no longer facilitates communication among speakers of different languages, but instead voices an improbable dream of maiden’s reflections on the utility of mirrors. A mirrored dream means HCE both dreams and is dreamed of.

“The waking world cannot be known by the dreamer without disintegrating the dream, yet the *Wake* constantly plays with references to this lost prior world. The framework that encloses dreams is turned inside out by the Arthur reference, because we, as functions of HCE, are dreaming him, while he is dreaming us”. (Brivic, 1991, p. 152)

In FW, we find that the laundry itself has become an recorded medium read through a “wick” by the washerwomen, which they use to extract unflattering bits of information. The soiled garments label their bearer accordingly, the silent drudgery allowing ALP’s mind to engage into basic forensic discoveries about HCE, whose sins have darkened ALP’s waters (Irish Gaelic *dubh* – dark, *linn* – pool). For ALP, or Liffey as one of her hundreds of water-naming aliases, “last wick” could also be her first wick, in the Wicklow Mountains. The days of the week however accompany ALP’s effusing stream.

“He’s an awful old reppe. Look at the shirt of him! Look at the dirt of it! He has all my water black on me. And it steeping and stuping since this time last wick. How many goes is it I wonder I washed it? I know by heart the places he likes to saale, duddurty devil! Scorching my hand and starving my famine to make his private linen public. Wallop it well with your battle and clean it. My wrists are wrusty rubbing the mouldaw stains. And the dneepers of wet and the gangres of sin in it! What was it he did a tail at all on Animal Sendai? And how long was he under loch and neagh?” (Joyce, 1975, p. 196)

We note the alliteration Ganges – “gangres of sin”, but other references to hydronyms are also present, as “mouldaw” sends to the German name for both river Vltava and the historic Romanian province, while Lough Neagh’s one of two main inflows is River Blackwater only adds to the never-ending recirculation metaphor. Cyclicity is suggested early in the novel, as HCE is lauded for

having erected rivalled the *Himmel* of the Himalayas: “a waalworth of a skyerscape of most eyeful hoyth entowerly, erigenating from next to nothing and celescalating the himals and all [...]”. (Joyce, 1975, p. 5)

The playful “Reeve Gootch was right and Reeve Drughad was sinistrous!” adds to the evil–good dichotomy, HCE, the city, the dirty, the soil, the sinful vs ALP – the river, water, the washerwomen, the purifier. The twin use of the French *rive* (riverbank) suggests the union of water and land, and thus the forging of Shem and Shaun, both left and right in a multilinguistic spectrum: French “gauche”, “droit” against the Latin in “sinister”. Shem’s posture also notably included “the wrong shoulder higher than the right”. (Joyce, 1975, p. 169) Later on, Joyce would return to the same oxymoronic capacity.

“[...] the hero, of Gaelic champion, the onliest one of her choice, her bleaueyedeal of a girl’s friend, neither big ugly nor small nice, meaning pretty much everything to her then, with his sinister dexterity, light and rufthandling, vicemversem her ragbags et assaucyeties, fore and aft, on and offsidies, the brueburnt sexfutter, handson and huntsem [...]” (Joyce, 1975, p. 384)

Mulligan’s famous first words from *Ulysses* open a ludicrous liturgical service which continues in the *Wake* with a miracle. Unlike the miraculous transformation at the marriage of Cana, here, as James Atherton prompted, the liquor is both alpha and omega.

“It will be noticed that the word Genesis has been mutated to suggest Guinness’s, in the same fashion as Genghis Khan has become “Guinnghis Khan”. The flow of the Irish stout seems to accompany the turning of the military leader into a pint serving inn (Turkish *Khan*); while honey is merely made of “hive, comb and earwax”. In a revolted, blasphemous fashion, idolatry turns from Virgin Mary to “Holly Merry”, as Essie’s uninhibited dance becomes healing for her viewers. Strict catholic morals were first renounced by Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait* as part of his refusal to serve. In *Finnegans Wake*, open sexuality is part of the commodified culture and it progresses from what once were occasional escapades followed by remorse, to part of an established system of values.

“But Essie Shanahan has let down her skirts. You remember Essie in our Luna’s Convent? They called her Holly Merry her lips were so ruddyberry and Pia de Purebelle when the redminers riots was on about her.” (Joyce, 1975, p. 27)

Eden is forced to descend to “Edenborough”, at the end of the first chapter with all the moral implications brought about by an earthly existence.

The optophone is introduced to us in the context of a “funferal”, which serves as little more than a pretext to “fadograph”, thus neither be, nor not be, to the noise of various instruments. Understanding is outsourced to machinery. Meant to translate text into an audible spectrum, thus to enable the blind to discern through the text of a book, the optophone was however not a text to speech generator, but more of a text-to-sound rendition device. The sounds produced were nonsensical as the machine required users to

learn its new alphabet, though this by no means ensured an intelligible outcome. As it appears, it also came with the terrible inconvenience of moving at an excruciatingly slow pace and distorting terribly in the process.

“With a grand funferall. Fumfum fumfum. `Tis optophone which ontophanes. List! Wheatstone`s magic Iyer. They will be tugging foriver. They will be lichening for all of. They will be pretumbling for over. The harpsdischord shall be theirs for ollaves.” (Joyce, 1975, p. 13)

All that remains is a “Iyer”: an upside-down photograph, an illiterate reading machine, an un-yet-completed piano.

The affliction spreads, as Mutt is not completely deaf nor mute, as his names suggests, he is only so in part, but sufficiently burdened to render the use of tongue inefficient, in a dialogue of the absurd. Speech seems only a different form of muteness, however, one wonders whether silence would not be more effective in this case.

“Jute. — Yutah!

Mutt. — Muck`s pleasurad.

Jute. — Are you jeff ?

Mutt. — Somehards.

Jute. — But you are not jeff mute?

Mutt. — Noho. Only an utterer. “[...] (Joyce, 1975, p. 16)

The dialogue parodies the first American comic strip, “Mutt and Jeff”, created by Bud Fisher in 1907, whose linguistic misapprehensions are key to their blunders. The influence on Beckett`s *Waiting for Godot* is also worth being mentioned.

The identity of HCE as the text progresses receives newer dimensions, the acronym ranging from a multitude of idioms as different as Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, Howth Castle and Environs, Humme the Cheapner, Esc, Here Comes Everybody, or simply HCE. To add to the myth, his name is mimed, gestured, and compressed into a hieroglyph “signlore his gesture meaning: E!”). The siglum “E” as well as siglum “Δ”, standing for HCE and ALP respectively (McHugh, 1976) incorporate each of the letters in the acronymic names. Furthermore, by rotating “E”, one would see him in different stances, phallic when with his feet up, or falling when inclined, stable and old when sustained by his three feet, against an immutable delta, an eternally flourishing Venus`s triangle, irrespective of E`s posture.

“This kinetic way of reading is no longer simply linear: it can move forwards and backwards and up and down; it is thus pretty much the same reading employed by the `Jewish` Mr. Bloom, a technique that has been shaped by in no small part by `print culture` and `the art of advertising`”. (Mahon, 2009)

The shape of these binomial signs have inspired various comparisons, “E” might a bridge to “Δ”`s inned village, a physical and symbolic abridgement of the ever-repeating history.

Each of HCE`s names expands his corporeality until this expansion becomes virtually uncontainable. It is either that that the true identity has been forgotten through the ages, or that the sheer complexity of the character is beyond the limits imposed by human knowledge. In the first case, HCE sends to JHW or

JHWH/YHWH, the God of the Jewish forefathers, whose original name was lost to uncertainty, as for centuries it was sacrilegious to inscribe it in full, with its vowels included. As reconstructed from the Tetragrammaton after a 300-year-long silence, the term became Yahweh, and more often Jehowah, according to the Old Testament. (Mensching, 1969) Derrida identifies an alternative spelling of the divinity in the recomposed letters of Yahweh`s “*he war*” declaration to the Shem, the tower builders, and since the entire plot is nothing but a letter written by Shem for Shaun to deliver, the language thence is “babeledized”.

“In the landscape immediately surrounding `the war`, if such a present is possible, and this place at Babel, at the moment when Yahweh declares war, HE WAR (exchange the final R and the central H in the anagram`s throat, and punishes the Shem, those who, according to the Genesis, declare their intention of building the tower in order to make a name for themselves. Now they bear the `name` (Shem). And the Lord, the Most High, be he blessed (*Lord, loud, laud...*), declares war on them by interrupting the construction of the tower, he deconstructs by speaking the vocable of his choice, the name of confusion, which in the hearing, could be confused with a word indeed signifying `confusion`. Once this war is declared, he was it (*war*) by being himself in the act of war which consisted in declaring, as he did, that he was the one he was (*war*). The God of fire assigns to the Shem the necessary, fatal, and impossible translation of his name, of the vocable with which he signs the act of war, of himself.” (Derrida, 1984, p. 155)

“And shall not Babel be with Lebab? And he war”.

But here, the deity receives spectacles and jollity “Those jehovial oye-glances!” (Joyce, 1975, p. 405), his church`s bell summons the pub rather than sermon.

“at work upon the ten-ton tonuant thunderous tenor toller in the speckled church (Coughounin`s call!) told the inquiring kiddier, by Jehova, it was twelve of em sidereal and tankard time, adding, buttall, as he bended deeply with smoked sardinish breath to give more pondus to the copperstick he presented, (though this seems in some cumfusium with the chapstuck ginger which, as being of sours, acids, salts, sweets, and bitters compompounded, we know him to have used as chawchaw for bone, muscle, blood, flesh, and vimvital,) that whereas the hakusay accusation againstm had been made, what was known in high quarters as was stood stated in Morganspost, by a creature in youman form who was quite beneath parr and several degrees lower than yore triplehydrad snake”. (Joyce, 1975, p. 35)

The same spectacles now speckle the church, as we are sent to the 10th Plague of Egypt before the Exodus. The Hydra of Lerna is implied to be the source of Satan`s embodiment as serpent, one with fewer heads but an equally repulsive breath. The first paper of the day, or the morning post, becomes the anxiety factor driving HCE to confess to rumours that have not yet been spread. (Anderson, 2011, p. 382) His sins have been processed and confessed by a professional enterprise, rhythmically rearranged according to Noah Webster`s reformed American English “in quaint anticipation of a famous phrase”.

TV and telephone start fratricidal mediatic war, whereof the less imaginative one emerges as victor.

“Television kills telephony in brothers’ broil. Our eyes demand their turn. Let them be seen! And wolfbone balefires blaze the trail most if only that Mary Nothing may burst her bibby buckshee. When they set fire then she’s got to glow so we may stand some chances of warming to what every soorkabatcha, tum or hum, would like to know.” (Joyce, 1975, p. 52)

The viewer sees it all, from Baal’s fires to a Romanian echo-located landscape by “Wildu Picturescu”. The claim seems prophetic if we are to consider the speed by which media has evolved since or radio’s takeover by the fluorescent tube. Even more so, considering the absence of television broadcast in Ireland at the time. (Horgan, 2001)

At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a clear line between popular culture and elite culture, as intellectuals were often seen as possessing a finer filter and thus able to decode subtler messages. In contrast, it was not so much the “working class” culture that was under fire, as the “middle class” commodified culture. A book which encompasses culture of all social levels could not have overlooked entrepreneurs such as John Dunlop, the pneumatic tyre re-inventor. “Greatwheel Dunlop was the name was on him: behung, all we are his bisaacles”. (Joyce, 1975, p. 58) The bicycle, a vehicle whose motion requires both ankles, alludes to a transaction whereby the Irishman sold his rights to a company owned together with Scots-born Irish national Harvey Du Cros, a cycling enthusiast. By the time the company made serious profit by taking advantage of the newly established motorcar market, Dunlop had retired from the inflated tyre business, thus he drew only small gains from his engineering ideas.

Another example of the *Wake*’s entrepreneurship is when merchants are separated from the rest of mankind “te huur out such as the Breeders’ Union, the Guild of Merchants”. (Joyce, 1975, p. 77) The stereotypy here involves associating the Dutch with commerce. Aside from the obvious guild-*geld*, “te huur” is the Dutch typical lease ad literally meaning to let. The trundle continues for “t’house” is an English equivalent of the Dutch *thuis* (at home) the Dutch have it all, from “goodbuy bierchepes” (*goedkoop* means good priced), “upyouhealthing rookworst” (rookworst are literally smoked sausages) to “inhumationary bric au brac”. The travelling “roundtheworlder” salesman would be at last afforded his dream.

“to live all safeathomely the presenile days of his life of opulence, ancient ere decrepitude, late lents last lenience, till suffering stage, whaling away the whole of the while (*hypnos chilia eonion!*) lethelulled between explosion and reexplosion (Donnaurwateur! Hunderthunder!) from grosskopp to megapod, embalmed, of grand age, rich in death anticipated.” (Joyce, 1975, p. 78)

Death is again both inescapable and a natural part of a cycle, rather than tragic. The “hinge-worms of the hillmirks” will recycle us into another existence. Noah’s flood began with a hoodwink on behalf of a hat shop (a phonetically spelled *hoedenwinkle*), while even ALP’s watermark spells “Notre Dame du Bon Marché”.

New York, former New Amsterdam, has become “Nieuw Amsteldam” for “vine and brew”, despite the prohibition and the impeding war on the streets, “theres a spurtfire turf a’kind o’kindling”. The peaceful Irish habit of enjoying tea by the turf fire is juxtaposed over the street violence in America using a playful alliteration: “a’kind” – “o’kindling”. And TZTZ’s early case of procrastination is made public as he reads about the indebted deaths and prepares for “doomsdag”, which is either the obvious doomsday or patron saint’s day (doms + dag in Dutch), or rather both since they coincide.

“check the debths in that mormon’s thames, be questing and handsetl, hop, step and a deepend, with his berths in their toiling moil, his swallower open from swolf to fore and the snipes of the gutter pecking his crocs, hunger-striking all alone and holding doomsdag over hunselv” (Joyce, 1975, p. 199)

The prohibition years are well accounted for in the *Wake*, as customers crowd in to “spend a whole half hour in Havana”. (Joyce, 1975, p. 53)

“The historic achievement of fermentation provides a “continuum” (“the billiousness of millenions”), to parallel the cycles of war and peace, and now has resulted in the “warfare” of American prohibition, from Amsterdam to Peter Stuyvesant’s Nieuw Amsterdam to the New York of Broadway’s “No, no, Nanette!” As the historian reads the past in the landscape, the Irish peasant reads the future (emigration to America, the American Dream) in the turf fire, and newspapers record the present of rum-running and Broadway musicals.” (Bernstock, 2017) ([PAGE sau web](#))

Robinson Crusoe, the symbol of English colonialism, the resourceful, slow but solidly-witted man, in more or less Joyce’s words at a conference in Trieste, is reduced in the *Wake* to a piece of furniture, a “Peter Robinson trousseau”, while “Alphos, Burkos, and Caramis, leave Astrelea for the astrollajerries and for the love of the saunces and the honour of Keavens pike puddywhackback to Pamintul”. (Joyce, 1975, p. 64) Earth’s sweet temptations (a Romanian Earth is chosen against Romanian asters) are too much for the musketeers to resist the fall. It is remarkable to note Joyce’s masterful use of the typically Romanian name ending “escu”, as well as the sound “u”, linking the name to an agglutinated masculine definite article “l”, which is not pronounced in popular speech, hence the “u” ending names singling Romanian out from all other Romance languages. As Radu Lupan notes, we are dealing with a universal everyday bachelor.

“To be sure, ordinary man’s surname cannot be other than Duzinascu (duzina: dozen in Romanian + escu)”. (Lupan, 1986, p. 87)

Nevertheless, “machelar” is a portmanteau between a bachelor and a Romanian butcher, sending to one who possibly slaughters rams and fish while disposing of a “blanko berbecked fischial ekksprezzion” against weighty film performance on behalf of Noah Beery. In the obscurity of cinema, Duzanescu might be reenacting Bloom’s self-erotic act from *Nausicaa* – completely unprotected by an animal skin (bareback). The possible fate of the ram is

forthcoming (“berbecked” – barbecued), as he “wont be bound over the Boneless or salvation boat”.

Some ten pages earlier, the brothel-specific props is identified. Romanian writer Dan Alexe points to the: “ismene de bumbac” (cotton tights), “batiste” (handkerchiefs turned to napkins?) pulled up against “meias de portocallie” (Portuguese orange stockings – possible allusion to William of Orange) (Anderson, 2011). Two consecutive questions provide the dialogue. “Wee fee? Ung duro. Kocshis, szabad?”. (Joyce, 1975, p. 54) The price is clear, though it is unclear what it buys. The customer could be asking for a taxi. But he could also be inquiring the prostitute as to the extent of the services available (“kocshis” – coccyx). There are more explicit clues left in both Latin and Romanian that intercourse is involved, though we shall not quote them here. (Joyce, 1975, p. 288)

Conventional identification of the script is discarded by Joyce in favour of innate means of authentication. The unique rendition of every text enables its being retraced.

“So why, pray, sign anything as long as every word, letter, penstroke, paper space is a perfect signature of its own? A true friend is known much more easily, and better into the bargain, by his personal touch, habits of full or undress, movements, response to appeals for charity than by his footwear, say”. (Joyce, 1975, p. 115)

As proof as to the superfluity of the signature, the Wake is interrupted by a nationalistic speech fragment, contrasting its coarseness against the equivocal discourse of the entire book, probably uttered in relation to Document No. 2, or the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the latter of which was signed in December 1921, or “the last of the first”.

“[...] while we in our wee free state, holding to that prestatute in our charter, may have our irremovable doubts as to the whole sense of the lot, the interpretation of any phrase in the whole, the meaning of every word of a phrase so far deciphered out of it, however unfettered our Irish daily independence, we must vaunt no idle dubiousity as to its genuine authorship and holus-bolus authoritativeness.” (Joyce, 1975, p. 118)

The excerpt was however selected after some less desirable stipulations of the treaty had come into effect, the most notable of which allowing for Northern Ireland to denounce it, which it did, leading to a painful fracture of the Free State. Thus viewed, the authority of the document is misrepresented, its boastful tone seems poorly chosen against its historical consequences.

Joyce agglutinates the misleading offensive slur “Huns”, used for German soldiers during WWI, with the ethnic group it so offensively names to come up with “germhuns”. Although apparently clear, the reference may send to either Germans or Austrian-Hungarian soldiers, as enough cause to spook “the forest but plane member of Megalopolis”, “escape master-in-chief from all sorts of holding places; if he outharrows against barkers”. Finn, an everyday man, and the archetypical hero, both suppressed and reawakened by the English (Dublin’s Phoenix Park name originates in a misspelt *Feenisk*, adorns TZTZ `s abundant posterior in a unique fashion:

“found coal at the end of his harrow and mossroses behind the seams; made a fort out of his postern and wrote F.E.R.T. on his buckler”. (Joyce, 1975, p. 127)

Notable here is the equivocal “postern”, which could be a made-up plural of poster, or a pun on poster + eternity versus the ephemeral nature of humans, thereafter remaining a “post urn”. The passions of Christ are ridiculed, TZTZ receives his own thorn crown, spelling “F.E.R.T.”. The trinity motto of House of Savoy: “FERT, FERT, FERT” turns into a buffoonery calling for Christians and Leninists alike. Adam is “Mr. Mudson, master gardiner” run down all at once with Nietzsche’s uncontained “Ubermeerschall Blowcher and Supercharger”.

Punctuation again facilitates an equivocal separation, this time it is spelled out:

“Gentes and laitymen, fullstoppers and semicolonials, hybreds and lubberds!” (Joyce, 1975, p. 152)

In terms of hegemonical discourse, things are split between rulers and followers, the few and many, aristocracy and lowbreds, colonized and semicolonials, the semicolon defining of course the whole of the *Finnegans Wake* unending flow. Though Joyce obviously constantly identifies with the second term of the comparison, comparison in itself is questioned by its very structure. Thus, the origin of aristocracy is less clear than first thought, while lubbers may well refer to the sea unworthiness of some land-owning nobility.

“A gender opposition is obvious in the half-heard phrase ‘Gentlemen and ladies’ and a class distinction is present in the appeal to ‘high-birds and low-breds’, the latter conflated with the equally derogatory ‘lubbers’. Religious difference is evoked in an allusion to ‘gentiles’ and ‘laity’, the first suggesting a Jewish classification, the second a Christian one – and both terms implying exclusion from a defined religious group, and thus the contrast between insiders and outsiders.” (Marjorie Howes, 2000, p. 1)

However, comparisons are never as simple as this, as the authors of the above-quoted study also remark. Joyce never juxtaposes black over white, contrasts are usually blurred by various mechanisms: the etymology of the terms used, their intertwined meanings, and often ambivalence (the hyphen both unites and separates).

“This strategy of evoking and simultaneously complicating oppositions is entirely characteristic of Joyce’s writing and of his attitude to political and ethical issues. Philosophically he could be said to have been both a separatist and a unionist, thinking constantly in terms of oppositions and that which dissolves (or reverse oppositions). He even extended his preference for undecidability of hybridity to the very opposition between separation and union as distinct principles of thought (as well as practical policies), so that even these terms cannot finally operate in isolation of each other”. (Howes, 2000, p. 2).

HCE the bricklayer becomes a geological vehicle of manifestation for geological ages through which history attends to our pleas and reveals its “superimposed claylayers of eocene and pleastoseen

and the gradual morphological changes in our body". (Joyce, 1975, p. 165) Pleistocene, time of glaciations and early extinctions is also the period when humans evolved into standing or erect beings, thus seeing more through their new stance. Proof-based Darwinism replaces creationism. With his erection, man receives his reason, his godlike ability to tell good from bad, "pleasetoseen" the forbidden fruit. Man thus becomes not just his own god, but also an ageing geological entity, bodies burdened with time and knowledge.

Language materializes into Margarine, a cheaper butter, which is licked and lacked, to feed the French soldiers and the masses. The same product then anthropomorphisizes into a prostitute, its function being purely to serve a consumer-created demand, a surrogate to replace something in which comes in short supply, a produce labelled cheap by its originally intended purpose.

"Margareena she's very fond of Burrus but, alick and alack! she velly fond of chee." (Joyce, 1975, p. 166)

Caught up in a multiple relationships, Margareena's favourable attitude lacks something and falls short of Burrus's expectations, but goes well with imported herbal drink (chee = chai + tee). As Shaun recovers his word and with that, his wife, the whore stigmata extends over the entire language, serving the purpose of those who master it, regardless of their intentions.

"The word is my Wife, to exponse and expound, to vend and to velnerate, and may the curlews crown our nuptias! Till Breath us depart! Wamen." (Joyce, 1975, p. 167)

Not far off, Shem's measure of lowness is given by Shaun through another French troop-appeasing invention, canned food. Here, Joyce skillfully parallels nationalism and treachery with a gastronomic derisive allegory.

"Shem was a sham and a low sham and his lowness creeped out first via foodstuffs. So low was he that he preferred Gibsen's teatime salmon tinned, as inexpensive as pleasing, to the plumpest roeheavy lax or the friskiest parr or smolt troutlet that ever was gaffed between Leixlip and Island Bridge and many was the time he repeated in his botulism that no junglegrown pineapple ever smacked like the whoppers you shook out of Ananias' cans, Findlater and Gladstone's, Corner House, England. None of your inchthick blueblooded Balaclava fried-at-belief-stakes [...]" (Joyce, 1975, p. 170)

Those in favour of the home rule should not by any means resort to fish from overseas, as they may become infected with botulism. The plague, still deadly when the *Wake* was published, manifested itself of course more often in the early days of the food processing industry as food was insufficiently heated, however, it not clear whether it targeted primarily country traitors. To make things worse, Shem even prefers "Ananias" to pineapple. Here too, much like in Ulysses, the "greekenhearted yude!" fails during his beef-eating exam. A rare visual depiction of an equally repulsive Shem the penman allows for miscellaneous ready-made to be piled onto the floor.

"The warped flooring of the lair and sound conducting walls thereof, to say nothing of the uprights and imposts, were persianly literature with burst loveletters, telltale stories, sticky back snaps, doubtful eggshells, bouchers, flints, borers, puff ers, amygdaloid almonds, rindless raisins, alphybettyformed verbage, vivlical viasses, ompiter dictas, visus umbique, ahems and ahahs [...]" (Joyce, 1975, p. 183)

The improbable splutter goes on for another page siding "once current puns, quashed quatoes, messes of mottage, unquestionable issue papers". Only an avant-garde collage would allow for such juxtaposition. Joyce, the supreme "punman" himself, doubles an oxymoron with an alliteration to give us a piece of his mind on the press of the day.

"As penman and punman, Shem's role is to gobble up these quashed quatoes into the gigantic maw of *Finnegans Wake*. He devours other people's words in order to excrete them into writing, producing "from his unheavenly body a no uncertain quantity of obscene matter not protected by copirright – an allusion to Joyce's tribulations with the censors and pirates of his former works." (Ellmann, 2009, p. 340)

In the *Wake*, words are heard rather than read, thus we are instructed to hear the text, but also to lend our ear to gossip. Movietone technology meant that the "newseryreel" now had a voice.

"If you are looking for the bilder deep your ear on the movietone" (Joyce, 1975, p. 62)

And after Shaun's defamatory tirade, Shem (now Mercius) lauds the silent cinema of his youth:

"[...] and thank Movies from the innermost depths of my still attrite heart, Wherein the days of you youth are evermixed mimine, now ere the compline hour of being alone athands itself and a puff or so before we yield our spiritus to the wind [...]" (Joyce, 1975, p. 194)

The object of both brothers' lust, Margarine (the language) is copulated by Shem, whose appropriation of his father's pen capacitates him to do so. Here again, the son's virility is dependent on his willingness to confront his father.

"Shem the Penman is lambasted by his jealous brother Shaun the Postman. The battle of these 'doubleparalleled twixtytwins' takes many forms within the *Wake*, where the brothers metamorphose into Justius and Mercius, Dolph and Kev, Burrus (butter) and Caseous (cheese), and many other wrangling duos. (Ellmann, 2009, p. 338)

To blur the identities of the two brothers beyond the obvious paronymity of Shem – Sham – Shaun, penman – punman – postman, the duo receive a commune name and fitting presents: "[...]including the sword and stamps, for Shemus O'Shaun the Post [...]"

The sword, whose might is repeatedly compared to that of a pen, and the secret password to the Irish mailboxes are unofficial props for the Mime, the play featuring the two competing brothers, now

as Glugg and Chuff, staged on an evening basis, “time: the pressant”.

The series of stamps in question, the first emissions of the Irish Free State, bear political significance, featuring an outlined map of Ireland as one without the recently created border with Northern Ireland, another issue showing the British monarch’s head overprinted with a message which translates “Provisional Government of Ireland”. (Nash, 2006) Thus Shaun, although “in his majesty’s service” (Joyce, 1975, p. 408), is enabled to use the nationalistic stamps as a subliminal message of a Home Rule goal. As the popularity of avant-garde fragments was insufficient to fund the printing of such, state intervention was vital to circulate the texts. It can also be assumed that the stamps carrying overlapping messages of the British king defaced by the New State are a metaphor for Joyce’s creation, who used His Majesty’s Post to disseminate his literary manifestos.

“[...] because modernist magazine readerships were too small for most bookshops and newsstands to carry, artists like Joyce needed an extensive, government-subsidized distribution system to bring subscribers together. It was the Post Office that made it possible for avant-garde texts to circulate cheaply and openly to wherever their kindred readers lived. The Post Office was also the institution that could inspect, seize, and burn those texts”. (Birmingham, 2014, p. 7)

CONCLUSIONS

A product of the industrial revolution, shaped by the technological advancements thereof, the advertisement poster, both parodied and imitated by Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*, is essentially a blown-up classifieds entry which rapidly changed the scenery in European metropolises, opening them for added commercial value to spaces whose primary function creates opportunity for advertising. The success of such selling techniques has involved blending in an imaginative message with eye-catching graphics, placing both the educated and illiterate on equal footing. As advertisers cared little for the refinement of their audience, as far as their selling strategies were successful, they soon employed established artists to design posters. This led to an abrupt surge in the popularity of the medium, posters becoming themselves a solvable product, as noted by Elizabeth Guffey.

“Whether perceived as civic art or public nuisance, nineteenth-century illustrated posters were unequivocally capitalist, urging consumption even as they were themselves consumed. As posters grew in popular appeal, dedicated collectors began saving, trading, and buying them for ever-increasing sums. The poster was perceived as both public image and physical object: posters still wet with paste were pulled off the sides of buildings, unpeeled from railway carriages, and even bought directly from printing houses.” (Guffey, 2015, pp. 13-14)

Wollaeger observes a vicious cycle, as the already streetscape-dominating illustrated poster increased its influence after being sought after by collectors. (Wollaeger, 2006, p. 170)

Notably, the relationship between sex and successful business was strong, thus the canvassed associations between women and

products were an essential part of this magic of “turning emptiness into gold” and “it was not lost on observers, too, that women seductively touting chocolate and bicycles most often sold products”. (Guffey, 2015, p. 69)

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