CHAPTER ONE
SOME ASPECTS OF
FINNEGANS WAKE

I: NEW IRISH STEW (190.09)

'Four fascinating best-sellers brilliantly edited and condensed for your greater enjoyment, and all bound together in one luxurious volume.' So runs a recent advertisement for a collection of 'condensed books', but it also does very well as a description of Finnegans Wake, unless four be too low a figure. Even the word 'best-sellers' is not so wide of the mark as it would have been a few years ago. The novel of which Mr. J. I. M. Stewart has written: 'it is in the main a closed book even to most persons of substantial literary cultivation' has recently been issued in a low-priced paperbound edition of 20,000 copies, and I am told that a further printing is already projected. It may be that the number and variety of the 'condensed books' contained in Finnegans Wake accounts for the growing popularity of what must by any estimate be accounted an extremely difficult work to penetrate, for once a break-through has been achieved, the reader can find in it, according to taste, a history of Ireland, a survey of English literature, a universal mythology, a naturalistic novel, an autobiography of James Augustine Joyce, a summary cosmology. Whether this impress as intriguing, pretentious, annoying, repellent, beautiful, dull or brilliant, all must agree that Finnegans Wake is a quite extraordinarily rich production. Joyce claimed to have discovered that he could do anything with language, but even more impressive than his undoubted

2 Givens, p. 13.
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linguistic capacity was his remarkable power to adapt and integrate literally any raw material that came to hand. Nothing was rejected. Deletions in the MSS are minimal; additions abound. Joyce’s development as a writer is characterised by a continuous and rapid movement away from paradigmatic art—the selection and recreation of a typical and powerfully symbolic unit of experience which illuminates things far beyond the bounds of its own context (that is, the technique which he called the ‘epiphany’) towards the all-inclusive art of Finnegans Wake where, instead of choosing the most typical and illuminating example of a theme, he attempted to present every conceivable trope. In his later years Joyce seems to have adopted as his motto Voltaire’s paradox that the superfluous is a very necessary thing. Caution and literary asceticism were abandoned and the utmost richness was allowed to replace the most ‘scrupulous meanness’. If Finnegans Wake can be contained within any one artistic mode, it must be the baroque; the great themes of death and resurrection, sin and redemption, are moulded into firm cyclic outlines, while masses of ornate particulars—a closely woven network of motifs and symbols—define, develop and embellish these thematic abstractions.

The tension inherent in Joyce’s use of the baroque mode, an interplay between classicism and romanticism, between the simplicity of his themes and the extreme complexity of their development, is reflected in the remarkable and often unstable duality of art-for-art’s-sake and personal confession in Finnegans Wake. The critics have always been slow to appreciate the true quality of the personal content in Joyce’s work—a fact which has led to a serious misunderstanding of the fundamental double-talk inherent in his symbolic language. Yet, if there has been misunderstanding, Joyce is himself very largely to blame. He obscured his own position—no doubt intentionally—by his constant championing of all that was not chauvinistic in literature, by his interest in late nineteenth century flamboyant, decorative style, and by making Stephen propound a self-sufficient aesthetic in A Portrait. Joyce’s position has been obscured because these utterances have often been thought the
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standards by which we may best judge his work. The greatest fallacy of all has been the assumption that his theories never changed, that he always thought in terms of 'lyric, epic, and dramatic', 'epiphanies', 'the thing well made'. It has variously been supposed that, in Joycean terms, A Portrait is lyric, Ulysses epic, and Finnegans Wake dramatic, or that all three are dramatic, that Finnegans Wake marks an unfortunate return to the lyric manner, and so on—the three books providing a plausible basis for neat tripartite schemes—and yet there is no evidence that by the time he was writing A Portrait Joyce held the views ascribed to Stephen, that he held such views in later maturity or, more important, that he considered his various books as forming any sort of aesthetic progress at all. There is, on the contrary, much evidence to suggest that Joyce was never seriously interested in anything other than the book on which he was engaged at the moment and that once he had completed a work he ceased thinking about it and even disliked it. He almost prevented the publication of Chamber Music,¹ and Mrs. Maria Jolas tells me that while he was busy with Finnegans Wake Joyce grew very unsympathetic to what he had done in Ulysses and talked about the book with considerable distaste: 'Ulysses? Che! Who wrote Ulysses?'

Joyce's works are all in the nature of self-purgations. Mr. Ellmann's detailed biography has not only emphasised that everything in Joyce's books, down to the smallest matters of detail, is drawn directly from his personal experience, but has also revealed to what a remarkable extent those books are the expression of a sensibility haunted by emotional conflicts requiring the most powerful symbolic exorcism. This personal—often uncomfortably personal—art was the only kind Joyce could create or understand, and, as his letters and the partially serious theory of Hamlet reveal, he was never able to accept that the method of other artists could be anything but autobiographical. As soon as the personal experience had been externalized by committal to paper and by the open confession in the market-place which publication represented, the drives and

¹ Ellmann, p. 270.
conflicts temporarily evaporated and interest dissolved. Joyce, a little masochistic, inclined to sexual perversion, and in exile from a homeland he both loved and despised, could, of course, never rid himself for long of his deep-seated emotional conflicts, but whenever the need for artistic purgation arose again, fresh techniques were necessary; the same magic could not be made to work twice. On each occasion a more potent exorcism was called for, involving greater complexity, more difficult labyrinths from which to escape, and, above all, the objectification and rationalisation of more and more personal involvement. His imaginary, God-like artist was placed ‘within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails’ (AP 245), but this well known Dedalism by no means represents Joyce’s own position. Far from indifferent, he was possessed by an almost paranoid need to answer back; he must attack and satirise in his highly sublimated way not only the personal slights of individuals but also the personal and impersonal slights of the world at large, for Joyce was never content, as some have thought and as he liked to pretend, merely to justify the Artist’s ways to Man, but was obsessively concerned with his position in society at all levels.¹ The result of this constant involvement-exorcism process is that Joyce’s symbols, especially those of *Finnegans Wake*, are always two-faced. In his last work Joyce left Stephen’s small-scale aesthetics far behind and attempted to bring about the intimate marriage of two great and fundamentally opposed artistic unities: one of these is introverted and solipsist, continually converges on itself, is self-sustaining, has no loose ends, is a truly global whole; the other, built from exactly the same materials, is extroverted, continually moves out from its centre toward the world of men, is a mass of specific external references. Not only are Joyce’s symbols taken from life but, unlike those of Mallarmé, they lead straight back to it. (This distinction between internal and external reference is not to be confused with that between public and private levels of meaning. Both

¹ The autobiographical aspect of Joyce’s work is at present being treated exhaustively by Mrs. Ruth von Phul.
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faces of Joyce’s symbols belong to the public world. Indeed, there is very little that is private in *Finnegans Wake*, though some of the public paths followed by Joyce will rarely have been trodden by his readers.) A large part of the excitement of *Finnegans Wake* depends on the pulsating tension between the inward-looking and outward-looking aspects of every symbol and theme in the book. Joyce could always feel easy about the inner face of his materials; he was a practised craftsman with few doubts about his ability to construct a satisfying and properly ordered aesthetic whole. But when it came to the outer face, which was to make a somewhat grating contact with the world, Joyce was less comfortable. He could never be sure that he had digested his material sufficiently to integrate the conglomeration of external reference into a socially meaningful document, but suffered constantly from intellectual uneasiness akin to those intense feelings of personal inadequacy which made him so reticent, defensive, and unapproachable. Though Joyce seldom spoke about his book’s inner excellence, he needed constant reassurance of its relevance to the outside world. This relevance he tried to ensure by making its scope as wide as possible so that it might include not only all given experience but every possible permutation of experience as well. He was desperately concerned to make his difficult book intelligible to the ordinary reader; the bitter sorrow he experienced at the world’s comprehending scorn of ‘Work in Progress’ was thoroughly genuine, if imperceptive, and the despair of his last two years was deepened by the almost universal lack of interest shown in the completed *Finnegans Wake*.

Joyce intended that *Finnegans Wake* should never be out of date. He was delighted when it proved prophetic, though it would be difficult for a book which opens its arms so wide not to be prophetic in some direction or other. When the Finn awoke from oppression and shot the Russian General Joyce smiled; and in her ‘Out of My Census’¹ Mrs. Glasheen, taking Joyce at his word, has included Lord Haw-Haw (William Joyce) among the characters—a step of which the author would surely


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have approved. Had he lived to hear him, Joyce would almost certainly have claimed that his hated expatriate namesake was, in retrospect, one of the characters of Finnegans Wake. So general and vague is its potentially predictive content that one might find it tempting to compare Finnegans Wake with the resounding but woolly prophecies of the old almanackers, always certain of some measure of fulfilment—tempting, that is, if Joyce had not himself anticipated the comparison. Shem the Penman is an amalgam of Bickerstaff and his equal and opposite counterpart, Partridge. The latter, ‘killed’ by Swift yet living on as a soulless body, is of course a richly symbolic figure for Joyce—the bird-like soul of the Partridge having fled. Finnegans Wake—Shem’s sham riddle—is, like an almanack, both truth and falsehood, inspired but nonsensical; it is epitomised in almanack style on page 175.

From the beginning of his career Joyce was always least successful as an artist when attempting a direct approach to his subject-matter. Stephen’s defence of, and preference for, the dramatic genre springs ultimately from Joyce’s fundamental need to put himself at a considerable distance from anything about which he wanted to write with full emotional control, and the more immediate the experience the greater the necessary distance. Stephen’s bold and unsubtle proposition to Emma in Stephen Hero (SH 196–9) is a kind of symbolic parody of the contrasting direct approach, and proves to be a complete failure. The feeble lyricism of Pomes Penyeach—Joyce’s only attempt at unambiguous self-expression—forms an aesthetic counterpart to Stephen’s simple naivety and is equally unsuccessful. Finnegans Wake, the opposite extreme of self-assured obliquity, contains perhaps even more personal involvement than do the Pomes, and hence in writing it Joyce inevitably condemned himself to walk a giddy ridge separating the twin abysses of his nightmare—the incomprehensibility of total indirection and the sentimentality which always characterised his strong emotional commitments. Though for most of its length Finnegans Wake is delicately poised between these dangers, it is not without its weak points at which Joyce has overbalanced
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one way or the other. More disturbing than its notoriously impenetrable passages are those occasional paragraphs of unusual lucidity where Joyce seems to have capitulated all too easily to a moment of undistinguished lyricism. Such moments seem to me rather too frequent in the much-praised ‘Anna Livia Plurabelle’ (I.8) which, except for the bravura conclusion, I find less convincing than the excitingly perspicacious sketches of Anna’s counterpart, Issy (143–8, 457–61). Sentimentality was always the greatest hazard for Joyce. By consistent use of parody and satire he managed to avoid its pitfalls most of the time, though perhaps not quite often enough in Finnegans Wake. One may wonder how successful he would have been in his projected last book, which was to have been characterised by a return to lucidity. I suspect that there was rather more than a bitter jibe at the adulators in Joyce’s remark to Nino Frank: ‘Ce serait drôle que je fasse un petit roman mondain à la Bourget... Ils seraient bien attrapés, hein?’

Despite its undoubted complexity and abundant content, I believe Finnegans Wake to have been somewhat extravagantly overread by a number of recent commentators. Too often its convolutions have been treated as a kind of endless verbal equivalent of the Rorschach Ink-blot Test. The limits of relevancy have been pushed further and further back and thematic analysis has been made to depend on the most tenuous of associative links. I find it impossible to believe and fruitless to suppose, for example, that we are meant to find ‘Mallarmé’ in every three-syllable word containing two m’s, as one writer claims.2 Explication of Finnegans Wake threatens, indeed, to get altogether out of hand. It is hardly surprising that the ‘Joyce industry’ as a whole suffers the scorn of the unconverted when we have the unhappy spectacle of a critic and acquaintance of Joyce’s devoting almost a page to the proud elucidation of a word which does not, in fact, occur in the book.3 In the partial

1 N. Frank, ‘Souvenirs sur James Joyce’, La Table Ronde, no. 23, 1949, p. 1686.
exegeses which are included in this study I have always preferred to err on the side of conservatism rather than follow up unlikely allusions. I believe that some of the published overreading derives from an exaggerated idea of the book's perversity, which has in turn led to an excess of zeal in the wrestle with words and meanings. Joyce's methods of word-formation and thematic allusion are almost always very simple, and the book's denoted content is fairly easy to recognise. The reader of *Finnegans Wake* can usually be certain that if he exercises reasonable care he will have little trouble in picking up any major allusion to ideas and things with which he is familiar. The difficulty in understanding what went into the book lies mainly in the interpretation of allusions to unfamiliar material, for it is not always easy to know just where to look for the explanation of an obscurity. Although he wanted to be read and appreciated, Joyce also aimed at giving his audience the impression that there was always something more beyond what they had understood, something more to be striven for, and this is certainly one reason for the book's great load of allusion and reference. As Mr. J. S. Atherton has pointed out,¹ when Joyce attempted to create a microcosmic equivalent of God's macrocosm, he forced himself into the position of having to write a work which would reflect the ultimate inscrutability of the universe along with all its other characteristics, but this constant awareness on the part of the reader that he has not grasped everything can be irritating, and seems to account for some of the choleric outbursts against the book. I do not, however, want to reopen that tired old debate about whether it is all worth the effort and whether such intentional obscurity can be artistically justified. It must by now, I think, be evident to all that there are great literary treasures buried in *Finnegans Wake* and that potentially at any rate it is in the same class as *Ulysses*—which immediately puts it among the great books of the century—but whether the riches are sufficient to repay the considerable labour which must be expended to bring them to the surface must very likely always remain a matter of taste and

¹ Atherton, p. 229.
temperament. Fortunately, like the lobsters devoured by H. C. Earwicker, the hardest part of *Finnegans Wake* is its shell. Beneath the massive superstructure of interwoven motifs there is a fundamental syntactical clarity and simplicity—so much so, indeed, that compared with the radical literary experiments of the 1920’s and 30’s *Finnegans Wake* is almost conventional in style. All its technical advances are developments—remarkable only in the extent to which Joyce has pushed them—of established practice. Joyce makes no attempt, for example, to break up the normal processes of word-association, nor to dispense with clause-structure, as do Stein, Jolas, or the Dadaists. This underlying conservatism is very clearly revealed in the manuscripts, where most of the first drafts, which were to be encrusted later with glittering ornamentation, prove to have been written out in the flattest communicative prose.

II: ART OF PANNING (184.24)

Joyce has been variously praised and reviled for filling his later books with literary rubbish—catch-phrases, clichés, journalese, popular songs, and the worst kind of gush from girls’ weeklies. It is undeniable that he found considerable delight in such trash, and a delight that was not always critical. Some commentators have certainly been too charitable to Joyce in implying that the bad operas, windy rhetoric, and sentimental ditties were collected purely as stylistic aunt-sallies, though as usual Joyce succeeds, by his devious methods, in making functional necessity and uncritical delight go hand in hand. The primary energy which maintains the highly charged polarities of *Finnegans Wake* is generated by cycles of constantly varied repetition—‘The sein anew’, as Joyce puts it (215.23). The stronger the pre-established expectancy, the wider can be the variations played on a word or motif. A pun is effective only when its first term is vividly prepared for by the context. By using a vocabulary and style packed with well-worn units Joyce is able to play on what the psychologists call the reader's
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'readiness'. As with the basic style, so with the more specialised motifs: if Joyce builds them up from familiar phrases he is absolved from the need to establish familiarity with their shape in the early parts of the book (which would be out of keeping in a really cyclic work) and is immediately able to make the widest punning excursions while remaining sure of his readers' powers of recognition. The majority of the motifs listed in the Appendix are in fact proverbs, catch-phrases, and the empty verbal formulae of vulgar speech.

The essential value of the pun or portmanteau-word in Finnegans Wake lies not in its elusive and suggestive qualities but in its capacity to compress much meaning into little space. Too much has been written about the suggestive, connotative aspects of Finnegans Wake and too little about the power of Joyce's new polyhedral vocabulary to accumulate denotation. In contrast to the effect created by great suggestive works like those of Mallarmé—with which Joyce's art has almost nothing in common—the more one reads Finnegans Wake and learns to recognise how all the little bricks fit into the finished structure, the less suggestive the book seems. Early impressions of mystery and hypnotic incantation begin to wear away, and the technique begins to look more like a self-conscious stylistic shorthand than an appeal direct to the unconscious mind via the ear. The manuscripts show Joyce in the process of adding to his text not music or colour or emotive overtones, but semantemes. He was certainly not indifferent to those other things, but almost everywhere the kaleidoscopic effects of imagery in Finnegans Wake and the peculiar texture of the writing are achieved, as in the best of Sir Thomas Browne, by a massive concentration of pure denotation jostling around in a confined space. Again, the puns should not be judged by the usual criterion of witty effectiveness. Mr. Arland Ussher is missing the point when he complains of the 'weakness' of a pun like 'Sea vaast a pool' (338.14).1 Sometimes Joyce writes vertically rather than horizontally, harmonically rather than contrapuntally, in which case a cluster of puns may all contain internally illuminating

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relationships. Such puns exist in their own right as self-sufficient little ideograms. A good example is the word ‘paltipsypote’ (337.24) from the ‘Scene in the Public’, which neatly integrates ‘pal’, ‘tipsy’ and ‘pote’ into the idea of ‘participating’ in a round of Guinness. But Joyce does not always write harmonically, and just as the harmonic relationships in a musical fugue may very well be irrelevant, so the vertical relationships of the two or more meanings within a Joycean pun are often unimportant, which can never be true of the everyday pun of humorous intent. What always matters most is that in each case the pun assure the horizontal continuity of the various ‘voices’ in the passage. In the example which troubles Mr. Ussher there are at least four voices, hardly related to each other (except in so far as Finnegans Wake ultimately relates all contexts), but all carrying the matrix of the ‘Butt and Taff’ episode one step further. First, there is the obvious content of the whole: ‘Sevastopol’, the scene of the shooting of the Russian General; next, the most apparent meaning of all parts taken as a clause: ‘see a vast pool’, which establishes the correspondence of the battles at Sevastopol and Dublin (‘Black-Pool’), and the horrors of the Flood; there is probably an allusion to the ‘apple’ which brought about the original Fall and all its vast consequences (the pun we are considering is placed at the beginning of the ‘Butt and Taff’ episode); and, finally, the first two words contain the name of Siva, the destroyer-god who presides over the ritualistic aspects of the battle and slaughter. The pun is therefore rich in content and economic of space so that for Joyce’s purposes it cannot in any sense be called weak.

To pursue the musical analogy a little further, Joyce often uses a group of puns to create a kind of drone-base or pedal-point with which to accompany the whole development of a section and so provide it with a general ambiance, each pun contributing its small quota of atmosphere. Once again there is no necessary connexion between this atmospheric function of a pun and the rest of its content. Thus the river-names in ‘Anna Livia’, the Norwegian vocabulary in ‘The Norwegian Captain’ episode (311–32), and the city-names in ‘Haveth
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Childers Everywhere' (532–54), while they create a rich atmosphere, rarely have any other functional relationship to the special contexts in which they are embedded.

There is much that is funny in Finnegans Wake, but the humour is usually independent of the punning, which is not often used purely to tickle our sense of the grotesque or to release the belly-laugh. Indeed, after a few readings all but a very few of the puns cease to amuse. Mr. Robert Ryf finds that their continual flow ultimately creates an atmosphere of sadness, of painful jocularity,¹ but I think that for most persistent readers of Finnegans Wake it would be truer to say that the word-play creates, in the long run, no emotionally charged atmosphere at all. It comes to be accepted, just as the ordinary reader of an ordinary book accepts the usual conventions of language. After a few hundred pages we are so saturated with puns that nothing surprises, nothing shocks; the mind’s ear takes part-writing for granted, the mind’s eye is fixed in a permanent state of multiple vision.

Joyce’s verbal success in Finnegans Wake is due in part to a simple confidence-trick. The universality of his themes and the breadth of their treatment make virtually any verbal or symbolic felicity relevant to the text so that an effect of brilliant appositeness is sometimes achieved more easily than is at once apparent. If the pieces in a jig-saw puzzle are made small enough and numerous enough, a piece of almost any shape can be made to fit—especially if the picture consists of several superimposed patterns. Joyce’s eclectic method is open not only to fairly easy imitation, but also to constant extension within Finnegans Wake itself. Many readers feel that they could improve on trifles of the text, tightening up correspondences here and there and thickening the texture still more. Mr. Niall Montgomery has made some amusing suggestions.² Finnegans Wake is in fact the most outstanding example of what can be done with objet trouvé collage in literature. Joyce was quite unimpressed

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by the visual arts, so that it is highly unlikely that he suffered any direct influence from twentieth-century painting techniques, but his method is often strikingly similar. Bits and pieces are picked up and incorporated into the texture with little modification, while the precise nature of each individual fragment is not always of great importance. If there is a confidence-trick, however, Joyce is fundamentally honest about it and even makes the trick itself a part of his grand design. As I have said above, he aimed at providing *Finnegans Wake* with as many external loose ends as possible in order to ensure a connexion with as much experience as possible. The fact that we can continue to pun ourselves into the game of writing it is one demonstration of Joyce's success in this direction. The Work is eternally in Progress.

Joyce said that the difficulties of his works lay not in the ideas they contain but in the means of presentation: 'In my case the thought is always simple'.¹ The truth of this broad assertion depends very much on what Joyce intends by 'thought'. If, with respect to *Finnegans Wake*, he means the overall world-view and the outlines of the mythic tales through which it is developed, then the comment is just enough. Beyond this, however, Joyce would seem to be deceiving either himself or his readers. The relationship of parts, the concatenation of metaphor and image, the details of argument in *Finnegans Wake* are often very subtle and extremely difficult to grasp fully. This is never so apparent to the reader as when he embarks on a short *explication de texte* of some more or less self-contained passage. No matter how thorough the linguistic analysis, no matter how many of the referential loose ends may be gathered together, the difficulties usually fail to disperse. A knowledge of Norwegian, for example, does not help him to understand the 'Norwegian Captain' story. He may build up a list of several hundred words from that language, a very few of which serve to orientate a sentence or give point to some otherwise apparently meaningless phrase, but nearly all of which are seen to have been used purely for mosaic decoration; the fundamental difficulties of

understanding the personal relationships explored in the tale, the symbolic significance of the journey, the mysterious dialogue and dénouement, remain unresolved. Indeed it must to some extent comfort the ordinary reader to discover that this is so, to be reassured that *Finnegans Wake* is not just a crossword puzzle which he will be able to solve when he has access to a long shelf of dictionaries and can afford to burn enough midnight oil. The problems that he faces are in fact very familiar: they are those involved in learning how to make an adequate analysis and resynthesis of a symbolic language.

Joyce keeps admonishing his puzzled reader to use his ears—'if you are looking for the bilder deep your ear on the movie-tone' (62.08)—and while it is true that he must constantly attend to prosodies and accents if the full content of the book is to be apprehended, sound and rhythm are no more than a part of the total pattern and have, I believe, been over-stressed. Most of Joyce's neologisms are more easily understood by eye than by ear. Tricks and coincidences of typography and orthography allow greater virtuosity than do their audible equivalents. Joyce is undoubtedly writing for the ear nearly all the time, but most of his attention is devoted to the appearance of the words on the page. That the greater part of the meaningful counterpoint in *Finnegans Wake* cannot be aurally communicated, is revealed by Joyce's own celebrated reading from 'Anna Livia' which, though finely orchestrated within a small compass, totally fails to convey more than one level of meaning from a representatively complex passage. In most cases a variety of pronunciations is necessary for each word, and many phrases offer several possibilities of rhythm and stress. In theory, highly controlled choral speaking by a small group would be the only satisfactory solution to the problem of how to read *Finnegans Wake* aloud, each speaker adhering to one 'voice' of the counterpoint and using the appropriate accent and stress.

For all its splendidly varied rhythms and its multitudinous parodies of all the media of aural communication, it seems difficult to justify the usual statement that *Finnegans Wake* is primarily intended to work on the auditory imagination.
Professor Harry Levin has gone so far as to make the astonishing claim that *Finnegans Wake* 'lacks visual imagery'. There are few places in it where the world of sound is not evoked, but, as in *Ulysses*, the great bulk of the imagery remains essentially visual. There never was a book more cluttered with visible symbols; the optical field is constantly crammed with every variety of stage-property, from the tiniest trifle to the most megalomaniac objects of desire. The cosmic scene is continually being reset, the characters appear in a multitude of exotic costumes, barrel-loads of knick-knacks are strewn over the floors, ships sail into view and depart as swans, trees and flowers sprout and wither in the wilderness, fireflies glitter, skyscrapers rise and fall, fires rage and the rainbow glows on the horizon. There has been rather too much easy talk about the sharpened ear of the purblind man. Such talk often seems to coincide with the superficial grasp of the text which makes it necessary for so many critics to fall back on 'suggestiveness' as a justification and explanation of Joyce's neologisms. There is, of course, an almost ceaseless background of lilting rhythm and modulating intonation in *Finnegans Wake*, but this sort of inbuilt musical setting, along the lines of which Mr. Cyril Cusack moulds his excellent recorded reading of 'Shem the Penman', is a very different thing from aural imagery. Apart from the few set-pieces where Joyce is drawing bravura sound-pictures, as in the end of 'Anna Livia', the sleeping-zoo passage (244–46), or the Nightingale-song (359–60), almost any passage taken at random will demonstrate this emphasis on visual content. For example: 'But vicereversing thereout from those palms of perfection to anger arbour, treerack monatan, scrucely out of scout of ocean, virid with woad, what tornaments of complementary rages rocked the divlun from his punchpoll to his tummy’s shentre as he displaid all the oathword science of his visible disgrace. He was feeling so funny and floored for the cue, all

2 Available on Caedmon Literary Series, TC 1086.
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over which girls as he don’t know whose hue. If goosseys gaziouς
would but fain smile him a smile he would be fondling a praise
he ate some nice bit of fluff. But no geste reveals the unconf-
nouth. They’re all odds against him, the beasties. Scratch.
Start.’ (227.19)

III: THE BREAKDOWN OF THE SENTENCE;
SELF-PARODY

‘Words. Was it their colours? . . . Or was it that, being as
weak of sight as he was shy of mind, he drew less pleasure from
the reflection of the glowing sensible world through the prism
of a language manycoloured and richly storied than from the
contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mir-
rrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose?’ (AP 190)

This is one of the most justly celebrated expressions of artistic
sensibility in Joyce’s works. At the time of its composition Joyce
was already well experienced in the writing of the type of prose
described. His concern for lucid suppleness and rhythmic
excellence in the short stories of Dubliners is noticeable from the
first page. The opening paragraph of ‘The Sisters’ is quite
remarkable for the alternation of short and long words and
phrases designed to mirror the boy’s hesitations, doubts, and
immaturities. Even at this stage of his career Joyce is writing
prose which is meant to be closely examined, not read through.¹

¹ For an extended discussion of ‘The Sisters’, see M. Magalaner, Time of

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strangely in my ears, like the word gnomon in the Euclid and the word simony in the Catechism. But now it sounded to me like the name of some maleficent and sinful being. It filled me with fear, and yet I longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work.' (D 22)

The sentence was the stylistic unit with which Joyce worked most easily in his early years. First rate paragraph writing like the example just quoted is to be found here and there in Dubliners and A Portrait, but Joyce was never a natural paragraph-writer like, say, his contemporary Paul Valéry, and his best work in this form always has something of the tour de force about it. For the first half of his career it was to the sentence above all that Joyce devoted his best powers. In Ulysses, the culmination of those years, the paragraph was virtually abandoned as a rhythmic unit, but clause-structure was brought to a very high pitch of achievement.1 Joyce told Frank Budgen of his hard work on two sentences from an episode of Ulysses2:

'The words . . . are: ‘Perfume of embraces all him assailed. With hungered flesh obscurely, he mutely craved to adore.’ You can see for yourself in how many different ways they might be arranged'.

Passages like the following depend for their whole effect on such carefully controlled organisation of the elements within the individual sentences. The sequence of sentences within the paragraph is of secondary importance, as Joyce's habit of composition by interpolation suggests:

'Christfox in leather trews, hiding, a runaway in blighted treeforks from hue and cry. Knowing no vixen, walking lonely in the chase. Women he won to him, tender people, a whore of Babylon, ladies of justices, bully tapsters' wives. Fox and geese. And in New Place a slack dishonoured body that once was comely, once as sweet, as fresh as cinnamon, now her leaves falling, all, bare, frightened of the narrow grave and unforgiven'.

(U 182)

1 For detailed analyses of sentences in Ulysses, see R. Hentze, Die protéische Wandlung im „Ulysses“ von James Joyce, Die Neueren Sprachen, no. 27, 1933, III. Teil.
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As soon as Joyce's sentence had reached its culmination, however, it began to break down. As his personal interests and the scope of his writing widened, Joyce's style became increasingly fragmented and detailed. *Ulysses* already shows a tendency to break away from the sentence as a rhythmic and formal unit, the most obvious departure being the use of those huge Rabelaisian catalogues in which all rhythmic progress is halted, so that the catalogues might go on marking time indefinitely. Some critics have objected that Joyce introduced unnecessary longueurs into *Ulysses* by his extraordinary love of all-inclusive lists. They sometimes look to the earlier books for a purer style, but even in *A Portrait* there are several embryonic examples of this tendency to write in lists. (AP 17, 189, 197)

The catalogues in *Ulysses* gradually assumed more and more importance as Joyce developed the book, but they are of course only one means by which sentence-structure is broken down. The interior monologue into which Joyce interpolated more and more associative elements is by its nature fragmentary; the expressionism of 'Circe' is too mercurial to allow sentences enough room in which to develop; the whole comic effect of 'Eumeus' derives from Joyce's ruthlessly allowing the sentences to destroy themselves by lack of discipline. This break away from the sentence means that 'lucid supple periodic prose' accounts for only a small proportion of the bulk of *Ulysses*; by the time Joyce reached *Finnegans Wake* he had abandoned his preoccupation with periodic prose almost entirely. The sentence in *Finnegans Wake* is hardly ever the unit of composition. Catalogues abound, and even in the more fluid passages individual sentences rarely have any great rhythmic vitality, taken as a whole. Indeed, an extraordinary number of its sentences are either the briefest of exclamatory comments, or else serpentine arguments of almost Proustian length in which all impression of rhythmic unity is lost. These longer sentences are broken up into Chinese puzzles of small parentheses which twist and turn and digress to such an extent that, although their logical meanings are usually as straightforward as the huge encrustations of modifiers will allow, it is nearly always
impossible to contemplate the whole structure at once. Lucid rhythms have given way to clausal chain-reactions and what was originally, in the early drafts, a straight-line point-to-point statement has often grown into a pyramidal heap of clauses and phrases. For example:
‘The scene was never to be forgotten for later in the century one of that little band of factferreters (then an ex civil servant retired under the sixtyfive act) rehearsed it to a cousin of the late archdeacon Coppinger in a pullman of our own transhibernian with one still sadder circumstance which is a prime heartskewer if ever was.’ (British Museum, Add. MS 47472, ff. 122–3)

This is from the first fair copy of I.3. In the final version it becomes:
‘The scene, refreshed, roused, was never to be forgotten, the hen and crusader everintermutuomergent, for later in the century one of that puisne band of factferreters, (then an excivily (out of the custom huts) (retired), (hurt), under the sixtyfives act) in a dressy black modern style and wewere shiny tan burlingtons, (tam, homd and dicky, quopriquos and peajagd) rehearsed it, pippa pointing, with a dignified (copied) bow to a namecousin of the late archdeacon F. X. Preserved Coppinger (a hot fellow in his night, may the mouter of guard have mastic on him!) in a pullwoman of our first transhibernian with one still sadder circumstance which is a dirkandurk heartskewerer if ever to bring bouncing brimmers from marbled eyes.’ (55.10)

The revised punctuation makes it evident that the impression of endless interpolation, far from being an undesirable concomitant of richness, is deliberately sought after. The brief qualifying and elaborating phrases have become Joyce’s fundamental units, and in the long run they are usually more important for the sense than is the skeletal meaning of the sentence to which they were annexed. Poised, fluent prose-writing of the type to be found so often in Ulysses figures only occasionally in Finnegans Wake; when it does appear it usually coincides with simplicity of vocabulary and a comparatively direct approach
to the subject-matter, while the denser the sense the more difficult Joyce chooses to make it for his reader to come to grips with the prose rhythms.

Whenever Joyce had developed an aspect of his art as far as he could take it, he seems to have felt compelled to turn on himself and parody his own achievement. It is as if he could never allow himself to be committed to anything that might be called 'his' style. One already senses a tendency to self-parody in the imitative form of A Portrait, where Joyce allows style to reflect Stephen's literary attitudes and theories in a very unflattering light. Not only does Joyce enjoy pillorying his personality and foibles throughout the works—Stephen, Richard, Shem—but his own writing also comes in for as much harsh treatment as he dealt out to that of anybody else. This is true not only of the sustained satire of Finnegans Wake, but also of much of Ulysses, in which the prose is continually spilling over into self-parody, so that in the most stylistically self-conscious passages the reader is never quite sure on which side of the watershed Joyce is sitting.

It seems that Finnegans Wake was originally intended to include a thorough parodic reworking of all the stylistic attitudes Joyce had struck in his earlier books. The 'Large Notebook' in the Lockwood Memorial Library¹ is filled mainly with notes for Finnegans Wake, classified under the titles of the various chapters of all his books up to and including Ulysses. Among them are a number of sentences of very broad and obvious parody such as the following, in which the stylistic virtues and vices of 'Sirens' are given the full treatment:

'Congedo, decided most decidedly, her steel incisive keen dugs rung trim as from him she marched, slim in decision, prim, & precisely as she marched from him for whom decisively as she decided, she arched herself from brow to heels, hips less incisively supple and slim in indecision.' (P. 621)

¹ I am grateful to Miss Anna Russell, of the Lockwood Memorial Library, Buffalo, N.Y., who made it possible for me to consult a microfilm of the 'Large Notebook', now edited and published by T. E. Connolly as Scribble-dehobble, Evanston, 1961.
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A Portrait is parodied, rather more kindly, in the following passage which, but for the disproportion between an inherent bathos and the over-attention given to balance and consonance, might be good, straight, middle-period Joyce:

'it expanded the bosom of George Stanislaus Dempsey to expound to a narrow classroom the expanse of the riverful lakerich mountainmottled woodwild continent of North America by him lately but not too late discovered.' (P. 192)

This notebook is of early date (ca. 1924), and by the time Joyce had worked out the structure of Finnegans Wake in more detail parody of the early books seems largely to have been replaced by narcissistic self-parody within Finnegans Wake itself. A few phrases from the early works survive, such as the well known deflation at 53.01 of a sentence from A Portrait (AP 190), but on the whole Joyce seems to have come to the conclusion that it would be a much wittier and more effective proceeding progressively to parody the Work in Progress. Finnegans Wake is thus a kind of infinite regress of self-parody. The constant variation of the motifs ultimately gives the impression that Joyce does indeed refuse to accept any one way of saying anything. Continual restatement is a very convenient way of denying involvement without renouncing self-expression, and in fact Joyce is usually careful to dissociate himself from his more emotionally direct motif-statements by means of savage parody elsewhere in the book. Thus the gentle 'hitherand-thithering waters of' motif is thoroughly deflated when it is put to the lowly task of describing micturition (76.29, 462.04), while in the zoo-passage (245.22) its eloquence is mocked at with the accent of a Dublin jakeen. This is the kind of balanced, uncommitted, internally illuminated series of statements with which, for sixteen years, Joyce strove to fill Finnegans Wake. Grounded on a conflict of creation and self-destruction this most involuted of all books sets up attitudes and denies them in a whirl of shifting tones which was Joyce’s best answer to his need for an art-form that would be at once an intimate personal testament and a resilient autonomous world of interacting forces.

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