

Chapter 2 \square

Coincidentia Oppositorum

The concept of ambivalence, of the coexistence of irreconcilables, is utterly fascinating. By brooding upon it, one comes to apprehend its psychological ubiquity. Pseudo-Dionysius considered that God transcends contraries,¹ and this dictum was taken by Nicholas of Cusa as the best definition of divinity: 'you must regard the centre and the poles as coincident, using the help of your imagination as much as possible.'² The idea expanded in the brain of Giordano Bruno, who wrote: 'Almost all things are made up of opposites. . . we shall ever find that one opposite is the reason that the other opposite pleases and is desired.'³ The pronouncements of Nicholas and Bruno are used in 163.15–28: 'Theophil' is Theophilus, Bruno's mouthpiece in such works as *De la causa, principio e uno* and *Cena de la cenere*.

FW endeavours to encompass all ambivalence by the construction of a unity, \blacksquare , which can always be construed as a duality, \square and \blacktriangle . VI.B.16.104 has '2 in 1 man \blacktriangle '. The dualistic approach becomes more frequent in book I and recedes as book III is traversed. The critical points, the nodes of I.4 and III.3, are separated by a region of perpetual enforced ambivalence. An appraisal of this occurs subsequently, in book IV:

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 of combat and when we shall have acquired the instinct of combat we shall pass back to the spirit of appeasement? (610.23–7)

¹ Mircea Eliade, *The Two and the One*, tr. J. M. Cohen (London, Harvill 1965), 206. See also 78–124 for a general discussion of ambivalence.

² *Of Learned Ignorance*, tr. Fr. G. Heron (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1954) II, xi.

³ *The Heroic Enthusiasts*, tr. L. Williams (London, Redway 1887) I, 55.

The generalization usually made to explain 'Shem and Shaun' is that Shem, \square , is the artist, Joyce himself, Stephen Dedalus, introverted sensibility, whereas Shaun, \blacktriangle , combines the traits of his enemies, as represented in *Ulysses*, with those of his brother Stanislaus. This is a naive explanation: numerous idiosyncrasies of Joyce may be found, say, in the \blacktriangle of III.2. Most of the apparent laws in *FW* include reversals; but what we require here are better criteria of distinction.

The origin of the names Shem and Shaun is of limited assistance. Richard Ellmann⁴ says that they 'were based in part upon two feeble-minded hangers-on, James and John Ford, who lived in Dublin on the North Strand. They were known as "Shem and Shaun" and were famous for their incomprehensible speech and their shuffling gait.' Dr Garvin confirms this statement. O Hehir connects the frequent victimization of \square with an Irish bias, and the name Shaun, via the derivative *Seón*, which means English soldier, with an English one.⁵ But 'Shaun the Post' of III.1 is the classical stage Irishman in Dion Boucicault's *Arrah-na-Pogue*, while Sir Charles Young's *Jim the Penman*, which concerns an English forger, is, as Mr Atherton shows, a source for 'Shem the Penman' of I.7. *FW* is not an Anglo-Irish allegory. The distinction of its protagonists has little foundation in national alignment, despite the frequent equation of \blacksquare with Protestant emblems of usurpation.

Several paired alternatives become recurrent labels for \square and \blacktriangle . The parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46) is typical: 'And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.' This becomes more apposite when we know that Syrian sheep were white and the goats black. The favoured sheep then match \blacktriangle ('the haves') and the accursed goats \square ('the havenots'). The dedication of Blake's *Jerusalem* to the sheep and goats is probably comprehended herein, for it was Blake who said that without contraries there was no progression. We can also visualize the partition of Ireland between the mythical Tuatha Dé Danann and Fomorians, who embodied the respective powers of light and darkness: *The Book of the Dun Cow* credits the Fomorians with goat worship. In his letter of 30 July 1929⁶ Joyce told Valery Larbaud that he was now hopelessly with the goats

⁴ *JJ*, 562.

⁵ *GL*, 410.

⁶ *Letters I*, 284.

and could only think and write 'capriciously'. The traditional portrayal of the Prince of Darkness as a goat is appropriate to \square as is sheepishness to \blacktriangle .

Observing the occasional references to Kierkegaard and his *Enten-Eller* ('Either/Or') a very workable premise arises. \square seems always to be aesthetically motivated whereas \blacktriangle is ethically motivated. However, this is likely to be a consequence of parallel thought rather than of influence by Kierkegaard. The earliest allusion to the philosopher (kierkegaard', 201.31) was added in 1928.

Although \square and \blacktriangle are in essence absolutely equal and opposed, \square is accorded greater prominence in book I and \blacktriangle in book III. In fact \blacksquare in book I shares some of \square 's traits and in book III he shares some of \blacktriangle 's. The most conspicuous traits are, in the first case masochism, in the second sadism, but these are mere symptoms. The book I consciousness strives with passionate intensity for unattainable ideals until in I.7 it attains madness, whilst that of book III descends into the stultifying sanity of urban mediocrity. Joyce's way of saying this is that \square is life and \blacktriangle is death. In physical terms he represents \square as an elm tree, moaning pathetically in the wind, and \blacktriangle as a stone, pitiless and immobile as the throne of St Peter.

\square and \blacktriangle are often briefly noticed in pairs so poorly delineated that we are unable to decide which brother is which. Treacle Tom and Frisky Shorty appear in 039.14-27 but we are able to identify Tom as \blacktriangle only when we read his evidence in the reflection of 523.21-525.05, where he says that Shorty is 'uncommon struck on poplar poetry', and therefore \square , the artist and tree.

\square 's first extensive appearance is at the trial of Festy King for outrages against \blacksquare . Festy King is called 'Crowbar' and 'Meleky' (086.08). Two major ingredients in \blacksquare are the Irish high kings Roderick O'Connor and Brian Boru. Their respective successors Cathal Crobhdhearg Ó Conchobhair⁷ and Malachy II appear to be the sources of these names. The defendant is then presumably \blacksquare 's successor, as Earwicker was the successor of Finnegan. But two persons testify: which is Festy King? The first witness is an ear, nose and throat specialist, as was Dr Gogarty, the model for Mulligan, and therefore \blacktriangle . He accuses Hyacinth O'Donnell, B.A., a wordpainter (\square), of violent behaviour; but it transpires that at the time of the assault the night was too dark for the doctor to recognize anyone (087.33-088.04). He submits evidence derogating

⁷ GL, 56.

III and therefore implicates himself. Pegger Festy, evidently C, then takes the stand and emits 'a loudburst of poesy' through an interpreter (091.01-33). He declares that despite the cut-throat's depositions 'he did not fire a stone either before or after he was born down and up to that time', and that he would never ask to see the light of this or any other world if he ever raised a hand to throw a stick or stone at anyone. There are twenty-eight advocatesses, 'maidies of the bar' (barmaids, O) who after this acclaim A and deride C on 092 and 093 respectively, but the judges fail to convict anyone and lapse into inane ruminations over the intricacies of the case. The actual responsibility for the assault is discussed below, p. 92. The rest of I.4 contains a series of telegraphic reports of III's possible whereabouts, given in the pluperfect and therefore referring presumably to events before the trial.

Of I.5 J. S. Atherton says: 'In the literal sense this chapter tells how a letter was scratched up out of a "midden" (110.25) or "mud-mound" (111.34). The midden is a symbol, elaborated later, for the inhabited world in which men have left so many traces. 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, all the sacred books of the world, and also *Finnegans Wake* itself. One reason why *The Book of Kells* is included here is that it was once "stolen by night . . . and found after a lapse of some months, concealed under sods".'⁸

The narrators of I.5 are still X in search of III but they now possess only the exhumed manifesto whereby to reconstruct him. Their commentary is drier and more reserved than any so far. They explain the discovery of the document and proceed succinctly to examine its parts. Their reckoning intimates approval: they call *FW* a polyhedron of scripture (107.08) and urge its readers to cultivate patience (108.08-16) and pay attention to the enveloping circumstances of style and vocabulary. The intention is not to dazzle the student with Latin and Greek glossaries (112.36-113.02). The ciphers doubtless conceal obscenities or political secrets (115.11-116.25) but it is assuredly not gibberish and we should be grateful for the little we do understand (118.28-119.09).

Behind this defensive concretion it seems that the paleographers understand their text less well than they think. At 113.34-114.20 they reproach the author to the following effect: 'I am a worker, anxious to please everybody; you are a bourgeois and terribly sorry

⁸ *Books*, 62-3.

when it's time to go home again. We cannot see eye to eye. Where in the waste is the wisdom?' Ultimately the narrators can be seen to possess the Λ viewpoint, and in this they accord with their equivalents in the other book I chapters.

To posit a general rule, book I is Λ 's presentation of \square and his works whilst book III is \square 's presentation of Λ and his. In both cases the narrators are \times , biased towards \square or Λ as the case may be.

As a scientist Λ reacts to enigma by focusing down in search of an ultimate cause or particle. Having read the list of titles and scrutinized the envelope he needs the loan of a lens (112.01–2), draws nearer (113.30–33) and finds the lines of writing. What is their purpose: could it be geodetic? Perhaps a polemical function can be discovered.

Individual syllables are classified by their phonetic (116.28–33) and etymological (117.12–15) characters. The paragraph 119.10–123.10 descends to the province of separate letters and we find here some specific designations of sigla (119.17–32).⁹ Finally at 124.01–3 we arrive at the ultimate minutiae, punctuation marks. Putting two and two together it becomes obvious that these were inflicted by 'that odious and still insufficiently malestimated note-snatcher . . . Shem the Penman'. Thus \times solve the problem of authorship. Mr Atherton¹⁰ notes that *The Book of Kells* was dated by Sir Edward Sullivan's analysis of its punctuation marks, and the I.5 narrator says that \square 's 'paper wounds' were made 'to = introduce a notion of time' (124.10–11).

The Notion of Time

The instillation of time makes 124 a crucial page in *FW*. \square is associated with time (the elm's growth) and Λ with space (the stone's fixity). This will permit subsequent alignments of \square with Δ (the river of time), and Λ with Π (the city as a fixed point). Time and space begin to interact in I.6.

As Edmund Epstein observes, 'Since I.6 was composed after I.5 and I.7 were drafted (in considerable detail), the end of I.5 and the beginning of I.7 still dovetail very neatly.'¹¹ The interposed I.6 is strikingly nonlinear, with its twelve questions of equal gravity and highly unequal length. In my view it constitutes the final pronouncement of science on Π and his companions, after which only the artist, \square , has licence to penetrate further.

⁹ Discussed below, p. 134.

¹⁰ *Books*, 66.

¹¹ 'The Turning Point', *CG*, 66.

A notebook in the British Museum¹² supplies the first draft of I.6 and also a list of sigla corresponding to its questions:

1	Ⓜ
2	▲
3	□
4	×
5	S
6	K
7	O
8	o
9	⊕
10	⊖
11	▲
12	⊔

I must stress the static nature of Ⓜ in I.6.1: this catalogue of attributes does not suggest any form of current activity and has not therefore been considered in the Ⓜ chapter. It is a good place to look for relatively unmodified quotation. For instance, the dubious statement that there are twenty-four Dublins in the United States (130.27-8) comes from Dillon Cosgrave.¹³ At 134.23-6 Joyce uses an account of the Irish plunder of Viking-held Limerick in 968: 'They carried away their soft, youthful, bright, matchless, girls; their blooming, silkclad young women; and their active, large, and wellformed boys.'¹⁴ 136.05-6 draws on 'Culhwch and Olwen' in *The Mabinogion*: 'as far as wind dries, as far as rain wets, as far as sun runs, as far as sea stretches.'¹⁵

I.6.2-10 will be considered in the appropriate chapters, but as ⊔'s question comprises only four words, we must turn to that of ▲ to understand the brothers at this point. I.6.11 is largely an abstruse argument against time, made by Professor Jones (▲). It draws considerably on the attack upon Joyce made by Wyndham Lewis in *Time and Western Man*.¹⁶ Lewis denounced *Ulysses* as a product of the twentieth-century 'time philosophy', which de-

¹² The portion quoted here is on Add. MS 47473, 133b.

¹³ *North Dublin, City and Environs* (Dublin, Catholic Truth Society 1909), 29n.

¹⁴ *The War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, ed. J. H. Todd (London, Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer 1869), 79-81: partially glossed by Adaline Glasheen in *AWN* XII.5 (1975), 95.

¹⁵ *The Mabinogion*, tr. Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones (London, J. M. Dent 1949), 100.

¹⁶ See Adaline Glasheen, 'Rough Notes on Joyce and Wyndham Lewis', *AWN* VIII.5 (1971), 67-75.

stroys the patterns and models created by the intellect to render tangible its environment. Joyce's interior monologue forces the reader literally to become the writer by an insidious mental invasion, leading him by its own perverse time-logic. Lewis finds the prospect unattractive.

At 148.33-149.10 Jones is asked whether he would help a beggar (☐) who sought temporary aid from him. He replies that he would not: as a spatialist he sees the futility of impulsivism. ☐'s lifestyle is a 'ridiculisatio' of the theories of Einstein, insofar as they present time as pliable. He calls ☐ an escapist (151.17-21). He denies the possibility of ☐ transferring him to a specific time by artifice: 'I fail to see *when* ... for aught I care for the contrary, the all is *where*' (151.26-36).

The exposition proceeds in the fable of the Mookse and the Gripes. The Mookse is the pope, especially Adrian IV whose bull *Laudabiliter* was used by the Anglo-Norman invaders of Ireland to justify their 'reformation' of the Church already established there. As the pope looks across the waters towards Ireland, so the Mookse looks across the Liffey from the stone he sits upon (153.23-5) and conducts a theological war with the Gripes, who is on the other side, perched on a limb of the elm. This concerns not only the bull of Adrian but also the controversy over Paschal Computation which occurred in the seventh century. At this time the Irish clergy calculated the date of Easter from the Jewish 84-year cycle, while the Roman prelates had revised their cycle to remove certain inaccuracies. The Irish were persuaded to change to the new system, which they did with great reluctance, almost a century being required for complete conversion.

This underlies the Gripes's request to know the time and the Mookse's reply 'Let thor be orlog. Let Pauline be Irene' (154.23), which includes the meanings 'let there be war' and 'let there be a clock' as well as supplying Thor's other name, Orlogg.¹⁷ It refers also to the mystic Nazarene faith which Paul modified and which later gave rise to gnosticism. The orthodox opposing movement was represented by Peter's successor Iranaeus. Thus the rivalry between Peter and Paul celebrated by Madame Blavatsky¹⁸ is extended to cover all conflict between orthodoxy and heresy. In 156.08-18 appear several theological controversies: the dual nature of Christ's body, the Immaculate Conception and the Procession of the Holy Ghost, all in the tongues of the schismatics,

¹⁷ D. B. Christiani, *Scandinavian Elements of 'Finnegans Wake'*, 124.

¹⁸ *Isis Unveiled* (London, Theosophical Publishing Society) II, 84-91.

Russian and Greek. VI.B.27.40 pinpoints the secular ambition of the papacy: 'Mookse wants temporal power.' Eventually nightfall silences the disputants.

In the rest of I.6.11, A first praises C as a person, although he is compelled to dissociate himself from the philosophy C adopts (159.24-160.24). He then resumes the terminology of his original attack. According to the system, he says (161.07-14), he cannot be transposed to a specific time by C, or have something that is in C's pockets, that is, there can be no real communication, unless they have *simultaneously* entangled themselves once in the dear dead days of by and by. So *Ulysses*, for example, could only be understood by a person who had lived in Dublin in 1904.

A represents himself here as Burrus, and C as Caseous, and discusses their rivalry in regicide and love.¹⁹ In the end he condemns the penman for his linguistic parasynthesis: 'My unchanging Word is sacred. The word is my Wife, to exponse and expound, . . . and may the curlews crown our nuptias! Till Breath us depart! Wamen. Beware would you change with my years. Be as young as your grandmother! The ring man in the rong shop but the rite words by the rote order' (167.28-33).

I.7 is C's biography as furnished by A. It is the most autobiographical episode in *FW* and its 'low hero' shares numerous morbid symptoms with Joyce. He exhibits megalomania, paranoia, masochism, alcoholism and physical infirmity, including an eye disease which occasions scopolamine treatment and the wearing of a black patch. Joyce spent part of his youth living in Drumcondra: C is an 'excommunicated Drumcondriac' (181.35) and the domestic flashback of 169.20-170.24 travesties the Joyce household. Like Joyce, C emigrates to Europe, staying at the Hotel Cornelle in Paris (173.20), and importunes his brother for support (172.22-6). Like Stephen, he is subjected to personal violence near a brothel. Messrs Hart and Knuth²⁰ point out the relationship of the address to that of Bella Cohen's establishment in 'Circe'. C also resembles the Triestine Joyce when he works as a tutor in model households (181.03-26), surreptitiously transcribing their conversation. Finally he is boycotted by publishers and printers but contrives to propagate his obscenity notwithstanding.

The biographer incessantly derogates C. His essential accusation is that C is a *sham*, a plagiarist. The epiphanic distillation from nature is forgery, the craft of Jim the Penman (181.12-16). *Ulysses*,

¹⁹ Examined below, p. 92.

²⁰ Clive Hart and Leo Knuth, *A Topographical Guide to James Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (Colchester, A Wake Newslitter Press 1975) I, 34.

although 'unreadable' (179.26), is for \square a stimulant to fantasy and escape. Every mark on its page prognosticates limitless wealth, happiness, inebriation and sexual satisfaction, an entire opera-house of naked heiresses enraptured by the top note which \square , the tenor, holds, just like a bird, for five minutes, 'infinitely better than Baraton McGluckin' (179.24-180.08).

\square lives in a 'secret cell' (182.34-5), where he contemplates a panoply of ephemera, much of it evidently hallucinated (183.08-184.02). When he looks out of the keyhole through a telescope it turns into a gunbarrel threatening him (178.26-179.08). He is 'noondayterrorised to skin and bone by an ineluctable phantom' (184.08-9). Consumed by the overweening thirst for innovation he excises everything fortuitous from his scripture and avoids every commitment, as with Joyce's own fanatical neutrality in politics. In the Latin passage 185.14-26 the familiar Freudian equation of creativity with defecation is conspicuous.

I.7 terminates with speeches by Justius (\blacktriangle) and Mercius (\square). Justius resolves to quit the philosophy of \square and in four long paragraphs accuses him of perversion, ingratitude, vindictiveness and embezzlement, and offers as remedy 'a little judas tonic'. In the end he will not follow \square for fear of divine retribution and he dismisses him with a ceremonial curse.

The reply of Mercius accords with the prophecy that he will need all the elements in the river to clean him over it (188.05-6). Time's flux exonerates genius, as the Mookse knew when he told the Gripes that after a thousand years he would be 'belined to the world' (156.19-20). In 'belined' we see 'blind' plus 'delineated'. VI.D.5.60²¹ proclaims ' \square writes an immense letter to posterity'. When posterity recovers the letter all its vilifying adjuncts have dissolved in the middenheap. \square makes a magical gesture complementing that of \blacktriangle and the liquid eternal utterance of I.8 issues from the elm. Even this may derive from *Time and Western Man*, for we read there²² 'A useful figure under which to imagine this temporalizing process of "intensive abstraction" would be to consider it as an act of bringing *the dead* to life. That is indeed the miracle that is contemplated. . . . The materialist of today is still obsessed with the wish to make this dead matter *real*: only he is more subtle, and he knows very well that it cannot be

²¹ The VI.D notebooks were copied by Mme Raphael into the VI.C ones and the originals subsequently lost. VI.D.5 begins on VI.C.8.217, so 'VI.D.5.60' is VI.C.8.276.

²² P. Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (London, Chatto and Windus 1927), 170.

“real” if it remains “dead” and “matter”. So he brings it to life, by pumping it full of “time”, until it is a quicksilver beneath his hand.’

If I.6 comprises Λ 's terminal assessment of Π , I.8 comprises \square 's terminal assessment of Δ . Once Λ has formally disclaimed or excommunicated him, \square raises his lifewand, augur's rod or pen in the exercise of his legitimate function. VI.D.2.48 (VI.C.3.225) has:

\square not mystical—
saying world
is stronger but in
saying I understand
why

Detailed commentary on I.8 is retained for chapter 5 below, but it is convenient here to examine its function in book I. In notes on a copy of *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, apparently made during a conversation with Joyce, Professor E. R. Curtius wrote ‘1st 8 episodes are a kind of immense shadow’.²³ I have already indicated the deterioration of weather in the earlier parts of book I: in the latter parts this is assisted by the onset of nightfall. Darkness inhibits interchanges between \square and Λ by limiting their weaker faculties. According to VI.B.20.74:

\square head ear
 Λ heart eye

Thus in the dusk of I.6 (158.06–159–05) ‘The Mookse had a sound eyes right but he could not all hear. The Gripes had light ears left yet he could but ill see. He ceased.’ Passing through the gloomy chamber of I.7 we find a parallel situation in I.8. One woman calls out ‘My sights are swimming thicker on me by the shadows to this place’ (215.09–10). The other, who has been questioning her about Π and Δ , complains that she cannot hear the answers for the noise of waters and small life. They cease also, and this suppression of external communication heralds the interior world of book II.

Let us compare further the dusks of I.6 and I.8:

Then there came down to the thither bank a woman of no appearance (I believe she was a Black with chills at her feet) and she gathered up his hoariness the Mookse (158.25–7)

²³ Breon Mitchell, ‘Marginalia from Conversations with Joyce’, in *A Wake Digest*, ed. Clive Hart and Fritz Senn, 81.

My foos won't moos. I feel as old as yonder elm. (215.34-5)

And there came down to the hither bank a woman to all important (though they say that she was comely, spite the cold in her heed) and . . . she plucked down the Gripes (158.31-5)

Myhohead halls. I feel as heavy as yonder stone. (215.36-216.01)

I think we are obliged to recognize the women who gather up the Mookse and the Gripes as identical with the washerwomen who spread laundry in I.8. The attribution of **□**-ness and **▲**-ness to female rather than to male persons is unusual in *FW*. From 213.21-6 we observe that the woman who asks, and who will become a stone, places stones on the hostel sheets, whilst she who answers, and will become a tree, hangs up a butcher's apron to dry, on the other bank. The items of washing must themselves be paradigmatic of **□** and **▲**.

C. K. Ogden's apparently authorized commentary on his recording of Joyce reading from I.8 includes a gloss on 'My branches lofty are taking root' (213.13): 'At the end of the story, one woman is turned into a tree and the other into a stone. At this point the woman who is to be turned into a tree sees herself pictured upside down in the water, in the form that she later takes.'²⁴ Metamorphosis has been anticipated from 196.05-06: 'You'll die when you hear.' The women turn shadowy ('we're umbas all') and begin to speak of departures. Ogden 'translates' 215.10-11 'I'll go home slowly now by my way, to Moyvalley. And so will I, to Rathmines.' Moyvally (see figure 2) is on the Royal Canal, and Rathmines just south of the Grand Canal, which are thereby linked to **□** and **▲** respectively, as the elm speaks first, and then the stone. The canals circumscribe the Liffey, and were originally operated by rival companies. **□**-**▲** polarity is usually left-right polarity, which keys with the positions of the canals, the Royal on the left bank, the Grand on the right.

The women try to keep one another alive ('Ho, talk save us!') but the widening river pulls them seaward and its roar blankets their voices. The elm discovers her feet rooted, the stone that her head is too heavy to support. Unable to communicate they disappear into a wintry night of total unknowing.

²⁴ *Notes in Basic English on the Anna Livia Plurabelle Record*, reprinted in *joycenotes* 2 (September 1969), 10.



Figure 2 Localities in the Dublin region used in *Finnegans Wake*.