



DRAWING UPON *FINNEGANS WAKE*

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Peter O'Brien has written or edited five books, including *Introduction to Literature: British, American, Canadian* (Harper & Row) and *Cleopatra at the Breakfast Table: Why I Studied Latin With My Teenager and How I Discovered the Daughterland* (Quattro). He attended Notre Dame (BA), McGill (MA) and the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts. He has published widely on art and literature. Further information on LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE can be found at tpob.me.

Abstract / Artist Statement: LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE is my six-year project to annotate / illustrate / disrupt the 628 pages of James Joyce's final book. I've been reading *Finnegans Wake* off and on for about 40 years, and I consider it to be the most multi-layered, protean, and playful collection of words that we have. As a way to explore the book's circular, recurring, enigmatic pathways, I am involved in the process of transmediation – I am turning some of its words into visual images and some of its linguistic images into words. This project is a way for me to indulge my natural inclination to connect the intellectual and the illustrative, the visual and the verbal.

Keywords: visual art; James Joyce; Finnegans Wake; transmediation; intertextuality

James Joyce's final book, *Finnegans Wake*, is the most intentionally protean and unstable work of words that we have. I would say it is more playful than Lewis Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky," more digressive and diversionary than Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy*, and even more slippery, more saturated with potentiality, than Ovid's (anti-)epic *Metamorphoses*, which traffics in "obscurities, those words whose sense is hidden" but which still manages to provide readers with navigable and directional storytelling.¹ I have been reading *Finnegans Wake* off and on for 40 years, continuously finding new shards of linguistic musicality, new historic (and many hysteric) reverberations, and new commentaries on the craft of composition each time I open and anatomize its pages.

As illuminated by the accompanying portfolio of eight pages from my project LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE² (Figures 1 – 8), I am also rendering the visual from the verbal pyrotechnics on show, and building the illustrative from the text's intellectual gamesmanship. Joyce invites us to "come into the pictures" and so I am taking him up on the suggestion.³ My 628-page project (one picturing page for each of Joyce's pages) allows me to interpret the book for myself, and to navigate, in my own fashion, its colourful, labyrinthine pathways. Butting my head against the word-based coinages and agglutinations, I'm translating the text into a form that is, perhaps, more immediate.

Marjorie Siegel, invoking educator and musician Charles Suhor, has written about the generative power of transmediation for learning.⁴ Siegel quotes Suhor's definition of the term – "translation of content from one sign system into another" (Siegel, 460) – and says that implicit in this definition is "the idea that moving across sign systems is a *generative* process in which new meanings are produced" (Siegel, 461). I am not sure that *Finnegans Wake* needs any more new meanings (we have barely dented the surface of its current meanings) but I do revel in its spawning, progenitive features. Referencing Umberto Eco – "the sign always *opens up* something new" – Siegel talks about the power of signs to set in motion "an unending process of translation and interpretation" (Siegel, 460). And isn't "art" – from the Latin, *ars* (feminine): skill; art; profession; theory; manner of acting; cunning; artifice – by definition an open, translatable and interpretive thing, enabling whatever transmediation we wish to use?

I find *Finnegans Wake* endlessly generative not just because it is circular and feeds on itself (what we call the beginning is indeed the end), and not just because it is systematically puzzling (amalgamating 80 or so languages will do that to a text), but

also because it is engulfing, intoxicating. It resists quick understanding, facile conclusions, and genteel consummation. Joyce knew the challenges that lay ahead for potential readers of his mutable book, which Hélène Cixous calls “an ark to contain all human myths and types.”⁵ In a letter to his patron Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce describes the material he had at his disposal during the writing of his previous book, *Ulysses*: “My head is full of pebbles and rubbish and broken matches and bits of glass picked up ‘most everywhere.”⁶ In *Finnegans Wake* this expanding agglomeration of intellectual fragments is put to new use in his “experiment in interpreting ‘the dark night of the soul’” (Ellmann *Letters*, 327). Joyce fostered and expanded his linguistic maze continuously throughout the 17 or so years it took him to write it, adding echoes, switchbacks, and resoundings, so that each word is “as cunningly hidden in its maze of confused drapery as a fieldmouse in a nest of coloured ribbons” (*FW*, 120:5-6). As in a dream (the immediate precursor, perhaps, to any wake, and in particular the wake of the eponymous Tim Finnegan) each image of the book has a definition, a sharpness, a clarity, even if we may not be able to explicate or connect the dots. We know there is an overarching story made up of multitudinous other stories, but we can never be sure of the contiguous logic, the sequential progression, or of how much distortion is added as the text refracts itself.

Many have called *Finnegans Wake* unreadable, and I would agree, if by the word “reading” we mean explicating, clarifying, spelling out. Christopher de Hamel, arguably the world’s most distinguished palaeographer, says that the book is to him “as unreadable as some pages of the Book of Kells itself must have been, even when the manuscript was new.”⁷ In the introduction to a recent Penguin edition of *Finnegans Wake*, Seamus Deane, one of the most insightful of Joyceans, says: “The first thing to say about *Finnegans Wake* is that it is, in an important sense, unreadable.”⁸ Joyce’s wife, Nora, née Barnacle, once asked him: “Why don’t you write sensible books that people can *understand*?”⁹

But in what way is the book unreadable? Even the most arcane texts (*Being and Time* by Martin Heidegger, *Anti-Oedipus* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Jerusalem* by Alan Moore – or at least the pages of *Jerusalem* that do not mimic *Finnegans Wake*), are all, after some effort, comprehensible, mostly. The logic may be circuitous and the intellectual path may be intentionally clogged or cloudy, but these books are puzzles that can (for the most part) be puzzled through. I believe Joyce never wanted *Finnegans Wake* to be fully understood. In *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, George Steiner says that the linguistic combinations in *Finnegans Wake* “may well be the most paradoxical, revolutionary step of which the human intellect is capable.”¹⁰ Language is, we know, forever in process, forever being infiltrated by slangy inventions, and is perpetually engendering new lexemes, new readings, new stories. I sometimes imagine Joyce asking: Why can’t a singular book do what language

itself does: remain forever in motion, continuously outside our enveloping, delimiting grasp? Why can't it remain perpetually unreadable?

And what do we do with an unreadable book? I think we can do whatever we want with it. Compare, disentangle, annotate, sing, illustrate, entangle, paint, wonder, wander, et cetera. Since I was a kid, I have been interested in how pictures and text intertwine. Not such a surprise there: children's picture books exist for a reason. The more I read words and the more I looked at pictures, the more I yoked together these twinning explorations of the verbal and the visual, the illustrative and the intellectual. Pictures entered my eyes, swirled around in my mind, and sometimes came out as words; text entered my brain (directly, it seemed), looked around, and then sometimes came out as drawings.

As I read *Finnegans Wake* these days, I keep a vast number of sourcebooks and electronic resources at the ready (most notable the fourth edition of Roland McHugh's *Annotations To Finnegans Wake*, and various web-based Joycean tools). I also keep an expanding assortment of other miscellaneous materials close to mind: dictionaries of slang and word origins; critical studies of marginalia; and dictionaries of Latin, German, French, and Irish (I can not be responsible for all 80 of the languages Joyce puts to use!). It is impossible to confront *Finnegans Wake* without continuously expanding one's view. As the book was a collective task (Joyce integrated a multitude of sources, from the daily newspaper to the Bible), so also the reading of it is a collective task (that is, you seek help wherever you can).

These days I have been thinking a lot about Julia Kristeva's allegorical meditation *The Old Man and the Wolves* as I make my way through *Finnegans Wake*. The main character in Kristeva's book is known variously as Septicius Clarus, the Professor, Scholasticus, and sometimes just the Old Man. As we are told, "No one knew his real name."¹¹ Kristeva leads us through, or around, or within, a "screen of dreams," (Kristeva, 112), an "interlacing of scraps of sight and sound" (Kristeva, 113), a linguistic landscape of "secret cabals, mysteries, conspiracies, desires" (Kristeva, 114), all the while invoking "my dear Ovid." (Kristeva, 115) For me, Kristeva invokes many of the central tools that Joyce put to use: the multi-named main character, an overlapping and interlacing dreamscape, and the metamorphosing, forever shifting storyline(s). Her theoretical work on intertextuality – the overlapping and interconnectedness of disparate texts – finds a canvas in her novels, and I would call *Finnegans Wake* a sui generis exemplar of intertextuality.

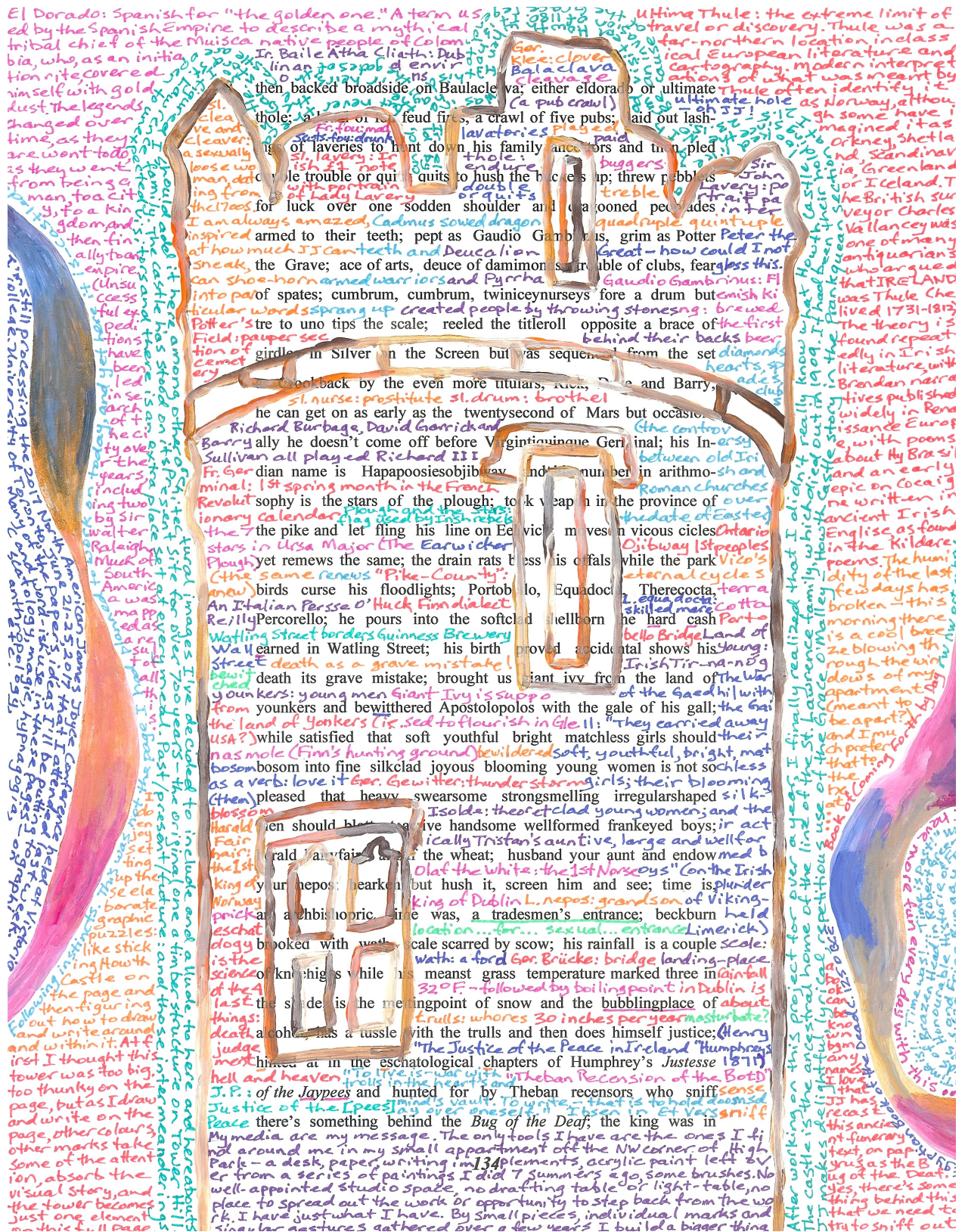


Figure 1. LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE 134

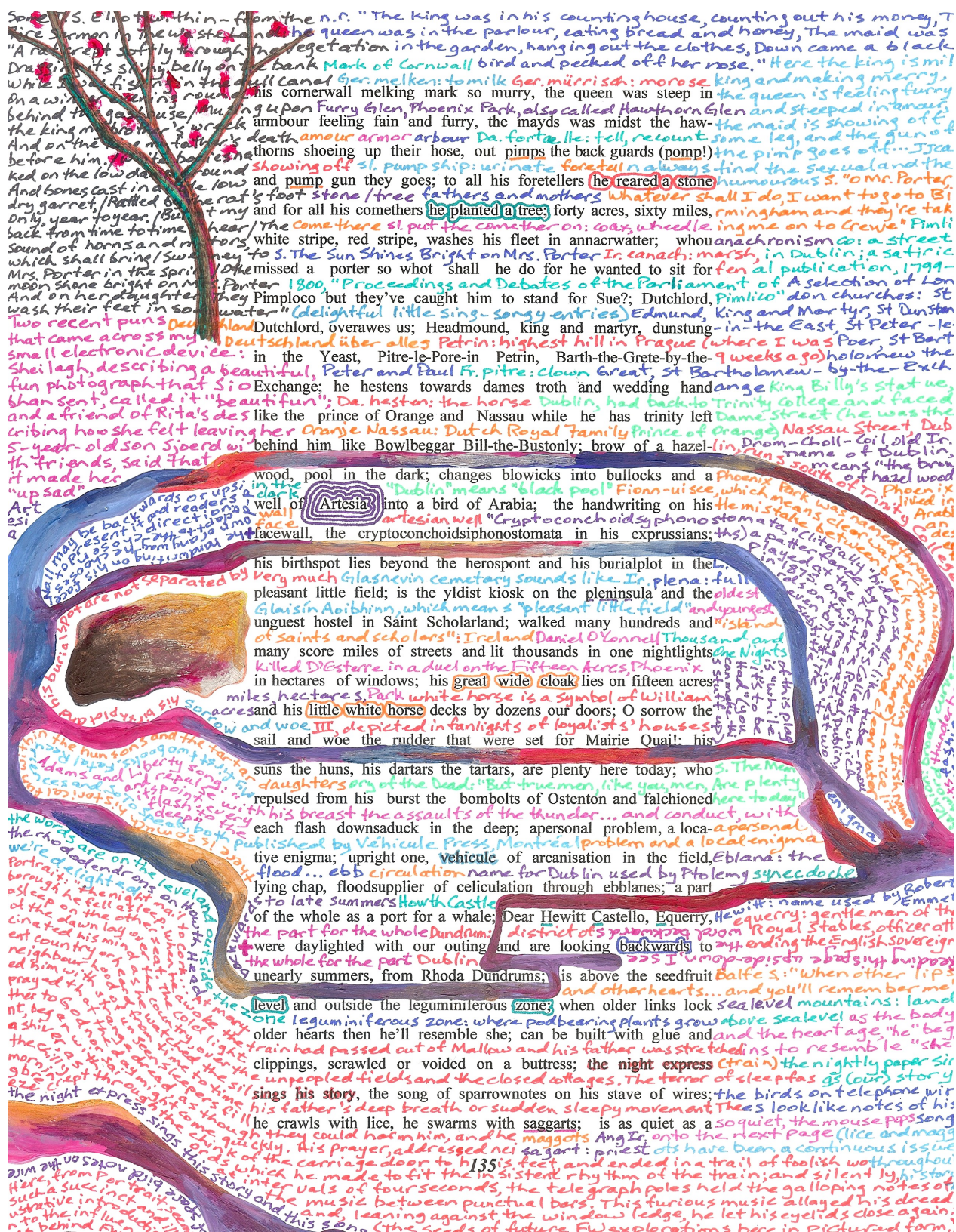


Figure 2. LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE 135



Figure 3. LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE 136



Figure 4. LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE 137



Figure 5. LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE 138

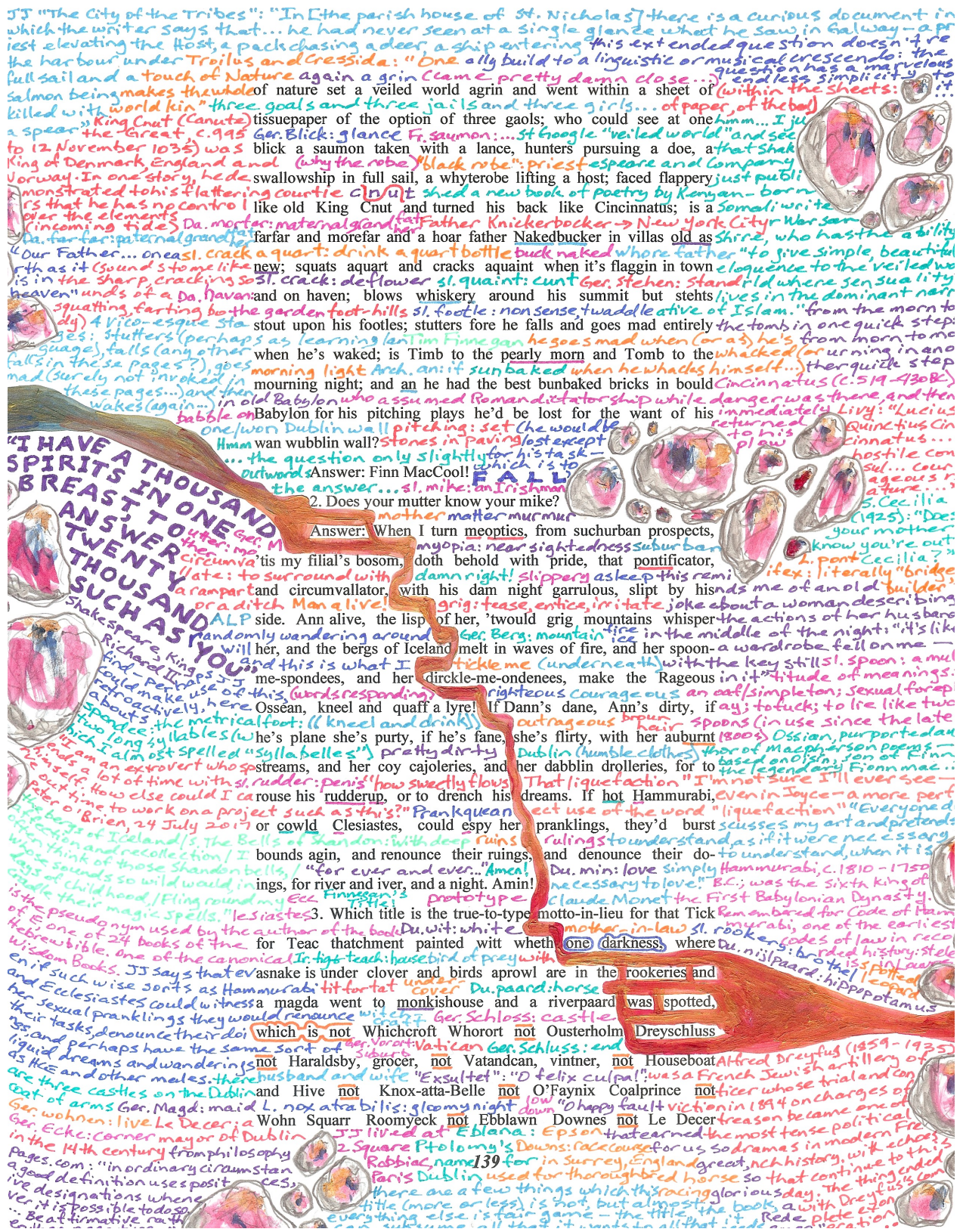


Figure 6. LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE 139

Perhaps only from a great distance will one (you!) realize Benjamin Lee Guinness and Bartholomew that there is a colourful map of Ireland Vanhomrigh both Lord Mayors of Dublin Dick Whittington: a in the midst of the darkness. JS letter to HSW 24/9/26: "Ant Lord Mayor of London Dowe define things werp I renamed Gnat werp for I was As I try and after JS decide s on the only by what they are not: devoured there to form a map of Ireland out word gnat" be backstep toward the I s that one of the thei by mosquitoes" of the word Le Mieux not Benjamin's Lea not Tholomew's Whaddingtun words JS is selling at on ether on this page, I read t le mieux: the best The Arch, a pub on Henry St., Dublin "gnat" not t e this page? he following snippet of word gnot Antwarp gnat Musca not Corry's not Weir's not the Arch Ir. cora: weir not the devil Plotsam on my hand- held device: L. musca: fly Moscow two Corry's pubs, Dublin Weir's pub, on Burgh Lucifer, but my iPhone, not the other hand- not The Smug not The Dotch House not The Uval nothing Quay, Dublin these people held device! Why is grey not The Scotch House a McHugh has nothing to Luvva: grape The Uval, a pub on Grand visual content so little, pub on Grand nothing Splendid (Grahot or Spletel) nayther Erai Est L. erat: it was middle becomes powerful? Our brains spitte Burgh Quay, Dublin Say of these two l... only gradually does the map Abbey Grahot process visuals 66000 times Erit noor Non michi sed luciphro? Michael... come a descript gnat: not st, Dublin Splend faster than text. Ninety Per L. non mihi: your fatness Dublin... by use of may the id becomes stlept cent of information tra sed Lucifer. Answer: Thine obesity, O civilian, hits the felicitude of our O. I'm having these are not nsmitted to the brain is vis not to me but to obseance: motto: O obedientia civium urbis... some fund... just le al. Visual Content is Social orb: the light- deferential... citizens' Obedience I s... with the nky dumbwps: media friendly; people oh "Ah, dearo, bringer respect" City's Happiness (and I'm sure that... positional... dea: go does: love to like, common + dear: I dear! 4. What Irish capitol city (a dea o deal) of two syllables and when JJ ing o the beginning Ir. a on and share visuals. >> need some 389.20 Celtic... saw this final word, he noticed the word... the words with a dhia: on and share visuals. six letters, with a deltic origin and a ruinous end, (ah dust oh "penis" here, and D and o god! Some years from now, non-black... Ir. ruin: letter N Delphic drake a) Phoenix Park, of course, lurking within it, mtt with -ous what will people make here? Ir. ruin: letter N Delphic drake a) Phoenix Park, of course, lurking within it, mtt with -ous the phrase "love to like" (dust!) can boost of having a) the most extensive public park in JJ quite... er it an NYX... Will they think that's just facile o extensive boast... transparent here: So we don't miss these readers o wps: sation? Certainly I am elw the world, b) the most expensive brewing industry in the world, c) Guinness Brewery fope- ling extensive/ expensive/ expens... Challen 30 37m... says surprised t e (of a sort) b) Guinness Brewery fope- ling extensive/ expensive/ expens... Ges navigating 30 37m... hat when pephilihipp ikes: o c) the most expensive brewing thoroughfare in the world, d) the... the flow: 30 37m... ople look at horse- loving o) Xonell o Street o theosophical papers JJ s... hiccup... 30 37m... these pages they im tea s most phillehippuc theobibbous paupulation in the world: and... scattered a bout... 30 37m... mediate gravitat produced ilosophical hypocritical Biblical singt... b) bosis: given... the alcoholic words o un ve... mediate the im from plant... harmonise your abecedee responses? your wine in Mass, etc... lettered responses... 30 37m... mediate recogniz of the genus a) Belfast ABCD Seaded responses yell gold... Jay Gould: 30 37m... 30 37m... able. "I love/did you pain t a) Thea and Answer: a) Delfas. And when ye'll hear the gold hommers... American p... 30 37m... oh look at the: umbrella, sl. home chis shibbuilding industry sl bangers: the testicle... And financier... 30 37m... fish, tree. "Only lat to have o... of my heart, my floxy loss, bingbanging again the ribs of yer where s... 30 37m... (and some cause an orgasm) ax, and the Belfast floxy less... the sexual is the one im... 30 37m... times not at all) doresistance, and the tenderbolts of my rivets working to your... Irish the female pudente... 30 37m... they look to o read t... a linen industry... thunderbolts yer sinful... constant in text... 30 37m... he words. Perhaps I de... destruction ye'll be sheverin wi' all yer dinful sobs when we'll goor... City on slang, cunt, of course... 30 37m... should not be surprised Struction orange blossom the words have a sexual... orange worn... 30 37m... as I absorb informatio Ust... hiding acope-acurly, you with yer orange garland and me with... this but also cunny- hunter... 30 37m... in similar fash dial. dial. Cope- traditionally worn (and UP the greaseways too) Ylsta... map a lecher; cunny- cat... 30 37m... iop, but it can be conny; curly; my conny cordial, down the greaseways of rollicking into the loye... of the the penis; cunny- ski... 30 37m... a bit well, disca canny head overwedded by bride (Cork) "and sure": I can hear the Ir lists... old female pupic hair; cunni... 30 37m... rtening to realize that it heels waters of wetted life. b) Dorhqk. And sure where can you have "Thery? anywhere and the noi... count burrow: the vagina... 30 37m... is unlikely anyone will cornucop a such good old times ish li t in these words "Marsh... a sl. on mash: sl for -slang... 30 37m... ever read each and every why such good old chimes anywhere, and leave you, as on the Mashd... the mash: various cumi... 30 37m... word I write here on the would I be leaves and vines plow: sl for fuck and drunk lovely of Cork... in constant workd... 30 37m... s pages. The words a ena in and how tis I would be engaging you with my plovery soft ac... cent pursui... associated with... 30 37m... nd letters on this: Cent here you... and cunt... engagement over: the root of many slang words of women flirting... 30 37m... page, for example are and consents and descanting upover the scene beunder me of your loose for ever and dre: admire sl. br... 30 37m... little more than brush below the loose, natural look: palm of the hand loose: want to drink under lostakes: female p... 30 37m... rokes to help make a map vines vines in their hairfall with them two loving loofs braceleting the O sl. brache: biz hair (from... 30 37m... of Ireland "vine leaves in a woman's waterfall (the mouth's flower in the and stinking of a female dog, Shakespeare... 30 37m... his hair: Had hair slims of your ankles and your mouth's flower rose and sinking from 1600s the mouth's sexual... 30 37m... a lecher... the phrase: sp... the Blorney stone silversouthern area (Dublin) sort of Ir... use: well, flower rising and... 30 37m... Lord cheek's sh... offer the soapstone of silvry speech. c) Nublid slsha. Why indeed sinking, closing and c... 30 37m... may ver, silence... soapstone: kind of tale Ang Ir, marvourneen: do she? rling Hebl, isha: Pening... 30 37m... s're is why would... wouldn't we be happy, avourneen, on the mills money he'll wdm an... 30 37m... siden... golden not we be happy own loaned? belonging... Brookline, Rathgar, Dublin... 30 37m... in Dub Georgian... soon be leaving you as soon as I've my own owned brooklined Brooklyn... 30 37m... lin is call... Dublin So little money! lawn is lined? my own brook-lined lawn back-lined... 30 37m... ed malect... Georgian mansion's lawn to recruit upon by Doctor Cheek's Irish whiskey... 30 37m... nsion in Hure... checky bar orders copper coins pair (Power's Distillery, E. of bum cheeks... 30 37m... use Iris Dublin know... special orders and my copper's painful of soybeans and Irish in Leinster Lawn, Le... 30 37m... hown: East win for a twisted drinker Guinness Brewery Watling Street inster House Dub... 30 37m... Dublin district... after all my east hand and a James's Gate in my west, after all the errears and lin, where... 30 37m... Irish whiskey: the errors... James Gate, CEH combative embottled history, and your arrears inter... 30 37m... Powers... Distillery and and erroriboose of combative embottled history, and your arrears inter... 30 37m... is east... boose W. of Watling Street comparative bottle history, indeed, rilled... 30 37m... of Watling... good self churning over the newleaved butter (more power to the late... 30 37m... g Street "turn over a new leaf" "more power to you!" "13th century... 30 37m... whiskey you), the choicest and the cheapest from Atlanta to Ocone,...

Figure 7. LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE 140

1. He spoke the verses aloud from the first lines till the music and rhythm suffused his mind, turning it to quiet indulgence; then copied them painfully to feel them better by seeing them; then lay back on his bolster. Portrait Connacht Sl. trot: a base and ugly old Sl. trot out one's pussy: to receive a man. Sharing the names 5 Counties: woman; an old who sexually, said of a woman's place. Galway, Mark, Luke and Salway. (In use from the 1500s) thoroughgoing trotty the first down Spanish Place, Mayo I make, John with the biographers Mayo on this page as he the Tuam County Galway Sl. trots: diarrhea by Galway's grace of Christ, they are as Sligo allude to 4 old men as the four main chub, dace: fish great rums of Christian revelation, and Rep Sligo the quiz: this: Dublin. S. L. equalis: equal ical truth. Yet they are also associated with being lost in the past and (Father Prout): Galway and Belfast steepie and well go to mass on Christmas getting bloated... Their siglum With deep affection and reco Shalldoll Steepbell, and be'll go massplon pristmost speople, points to Christ's crucifixion. I often think of the Shandon beluinness to cross-examination of the Inquisition, and to the 13 / whose sounds sowild Shand praise gon ness our fayst moan neople, our prame Shan- would, in days of childhood, / Flinground Ang. Ir. moy: plain ss: Matthew's North and Ulster, Mark's South and my cradle their magic spe lls, deepen, pay name may feepence, moy nay non Aequallllllllll Munster, Luke is East and he is West. On this I ponder where'er I wand Da. hvald Slags: what sort Ang. Ir. Lochlann: Scandavian rough lads. And thus grow fonder, sweet 5. Whad slags of a loughladd would retten smuttyflesks, empty Da. anrette: Sacker son Cork, of thee, / With the bells out old mans, melk vitious geit, scareoff jackinjills fra tiddle flasks. Sacker son of Shandon, / That sound so anding, smoothpick waste papish pastures, insides man outsiders. Sacker son grand on / The pleasant waters of the river Lee. / Waste paper basket Da. fra tid til anden: from time to time. Sacker son I have heard bells chiming full anding, smoothpick waste papish pastures, insides man outsiders. Sacker son many a cline in, / Telling sublime in toothpick newspapers, tobacco, and sweets. Thsl. Jackt. Sackerman cathedral shrine; / While at a angell, sprink dirted water around village, newses, tobaggan and Jill: till Sackerson a qlib rate brass tongues would vibrate, / General: slavery, maid-of-all-work Da. kirke: churcherson Sacker son But all their music spoke nous sweeds, plain general kept, louden on the kirkpeal, foottreats Ger. Fuss-tritt: kick. Ir. is a it to thine; / Formemory dwelling on Sl. generating place: cunt pubs used to be open on Sundays to bona-f each proud swelling / of the given to malafides, outshriek hyelp hyelp nor his hair efter ide travellers only Fr. crotte. belfry knelling its bold notes free, / Malahide, town in County Dublin Da. hijelpl: help! Ger. putzen: to clean dung Made the bells of Shandon / s buggelaws, might underhold three barnets, putzpolish crotty Da. barnet: the child Lugge pound far more grand on / The bugglers burglars Da. underholde: support law: a lake in the Wicklow Mountains pleasant waters of the River bottles, nightcoover all fireglims, serve's time till baass, grind- Sl. glim: a fire, a candle Lee. / I have heard bells telling Fr. bottle: beat Da. glintfy: flashing beacon Da. til: to Ir. bas: death. Sacker son 'old Adrian's male' in, / Their Stone his kniveses, fullest boarded, lewd man of the method of Du. spoor: would appear to be thunder rolling from the Vatican. / Da. kniv: knife (full room and board) wagon: railway carriage HCE's servant or with cymbals glorious & swinging godliness, perchance he nieows and thans sits in the spoorwagen, his servile flip side... He serv uproarious / In the gorgeous turrets of YMCA see you now and then es drinks in the pub, cleans up after the Notice Dame; / But thy sounds X.W.C.A. on Z.W.C.U., Doorsteps, Limited, or Baywindawscustomers... clea wres weaker than the done of Peter / 'Y' is missing: why water closetting extends to the moral Flings o'er the Tiber, pealing Bros swobber preferred. Walther Clausetter's and Sons with the zone... Seems Solemnly, / Oh! the bells of Shandon... Da. skrive: write (don't bother to...) To police sexual activi s Poor Ole Joe, often recorde H. E. Chinnney's Company to not skreve, will, on advices, be tie and... d as 'Poor old Joe' or 'Old Black Joe' - Sl. bacon: rustic Da. begripe: understand Da. Irer: Ir's a parlor song by Stephen Foster bacon or stable hand, must begripe fullstandingly Irers' language. er (1826-1864). Foster's fictional Joe Jutlander Norwegian Joseph Biggar: the hunchbacked was inspired by a servant in-jublander or northquain bigger prefurred, all duties, kine rights, support the home of Foster's father-in-law lewd Da. jublenale: exulting North wall er of Fornell Dr. McDowell of Pittsburgh: family fewd, outings fived, may get earnst, no get combitsch, bitch 'Gone are the days when my heart professional drunkards Ger. ernst: serious combative was young and gay. Gone are professional drinklords to please obtain, he is fatherlous soun- Sou my friends from the cotton fields Du. zondig: sinful abstain aleconner: ale inspector and away. Gone from the earth to digged in moodminded pershoon but aleconnerman, nay, that must a better land I know, I have poor poor he isn't? Answer: Pore ole Joe!

6. What means the saloon slogan Summon In The House. "Kater, the female equivalent to a cleaning and an energy at a dirt being left sweep Dinah? the saints of Sacker son... a busy-bee everywhere. She also prepaed with the energy dance r... there is a question of sexual between her and this is hard to HCE, but she is superstiti in a down... she leaves swear s, "you are the honey-honeysuckle, I am the bee" ous: reading tea leaves swear speak and he called by me midden name Tik. I am your honey ous: with Catholic idiom s... arrived my middle name maiden broke and las Pedalus: how could McHugh ar honeysucker phwhrtphwhrt tha Bay and who bruk the dandleass Temora was d others miss Byrne blackcurrant jam tomorrow's Gomorrah picnic Macpherson's this gloss: and who seen the blackcullen jam for Tomorrow's big pickle name for Tara I looked at The printer seems to have slipped a bit while print the word for a while, saw the I hope it'll pour prais the Climate of all Ireland I heard the word ass' looked up blandle in this line, but I like the Shadown flutter here, in my slang dictionary and Primate of all Ire above, for sack: found nothing. Only when I said a relatively obscure land 141 Isben, for Aunt: "Han er the word aloud did I see to celebrate Easter leg, it was commemorated. Ibsen, for Aunt: "Han er the word aloud did I see ar a wood at Rane leg, it was commemorated. Ibsen, for Aunt: "Han er the word aloud did I see enswood. A though a new, it was commemorated. Ibsen, for Aunt: "Han er the word aloud did I see ent in history, it was commemorated. Ibsen, for Aunt: "Han er the word aloud did I see a challenge to the native tribes towards my little self, but economical - no that it centuries afterwards He is not!!" pig-neck "I hope it'll rain, pray, climats Black Monday - 1209, Dublin - arrived, the female equivalent to a cleaning and an energy at a dirt being left hen a group of 500 recently arrived, the female equivalent to a cleaning and an energy at a dirt being left Settlers from Bristol were massive. She also prepaed with the energy dance r... there is a question of sexual between her and this is hard to HCE, but she is superstiti in a down... she leaves swear red by warriors of the Gaelic. Ibsen, for Aunt: "Han er the word aloud did I see clan, the group had left the city. Ibsen, for Aunt: "Han er the word aloud did I see city of the walked off of Dublin. Ibsen, for Aunt: "Han er the word aloud did I see to celebrate Easter leg, it was commemorated. Ibsen, for Aunt: "Han er the word aloud did I see ar a wood at Rane leg, it was commemorated. Ibsen, for Aunt: "Han er the word aloud did I see enswood. A though a new, it was commemorated. Ibsen, for Aunt: "Han er the word aloud did I see ent in history, it was commemorated. Ibsen, for Aunt: "Han er the word aloud did I see a challenge to the native tribes towards my little self, but economical - no that it centuries afterwards He is not!!" pig-neck "I hope it'll rain, pray, climats

Figure 8. LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE 141

Kristeva describes her book as “ce voyage au bout de la nuit communiste, et autre.”¹² Joyce’s book can also be seen as a communist (from the Latin *communis*: shared by, general, public) or communal text, written by the whole world, and with the whole world as grist. Of course, *Finnegans Wake* is “other” and will always remain so. It is too idiosyncratic, too expansive, too separate, to give us directions, answers, conclusions. Where do we begin, except by connecting texts and letting them speak to one another, as Joyce and Kristeva might both say? As is evident in the eight visual pages from my project that are contiguous with this paper, words flow into one another, connect by reverberations and waves, dance with one another. I continuously entwine the words on the page: sometimes with a loose ribbon of colour; sometimes by isolating clutches of them; and sometimes with an overarching graphic, as with the image of Howth Castle on page 134 of my project (Figure 1) or with the map of Ireland on page 140 (Figure 7), which serve to loosely encircle and focus.

In 1967, Marshal McLuhan sat in a rotating chair surrounded by a circling crowd of University of Wisconsin students. “I have no point of view,” he said to the students,

I’m just moving around and picking up information from many directions ... A point of view means a static, fixed position and you can’t have a static, fixed position in the electric age. It’s impossible to have a point of view in the electric age – and have any meaning at all. You’ve got to be everywhere at once, whether you like it or not.¹³

For McLuhan, and for Joyce, there is a fluid and vibrational energy evident in our electric age. Information comes at us from all directions, from distant stars and the morning paper, and the result is a flickering book, a fluttering canvas. Time is relative, but so too is history and religion and sex and myth. In its circularity, its embrace of “Teems of times and happy returns” (*FW* 215:22-23), its ability to “remember itself from every sides” (*FW* 614:20), *Finnegans Wake* has many positions, but none of them are fixed.

In this same exchange with students, McLuhan was asked if he had ever taken LSD. “No,” he responded. “I’ve thought about it. I’ve talked with many people who have taken it, and I have read *Finnegans Wake* aloud at a time when takers of LSD said *that* is just like LSD. So I’ve begun to feel that LSD may just be the lazy man’s form of *Finnegans Wake*.” One can bring sundry abilities and sympathies to the reading of this perpetually expanding text, but laziness is not one of them. Observance, inquisitiveness, obsession: these qualities are more beneficial. Here’s an example of what this can look like, as I take a close look at seven words at *FW*, 137:7 (Figure 4):

“Swed Albion, likeliest villain of the place”

- This phrase is part of a 13-page question, the answer to which, on page 139 (Figure 6), is the excited two-word answer, “Finn MacCool!” the mythical Irish hunter and warrior, and one of the many versions of the central male presence in the text.
- Swed: a shortened form of Sweden. The First Viking Age in Ireland began in 795 CE, and Joyce makes continuous reference to Scandinavia throughout *FW*. Swedish is quoted at various points in the text.
- “swede talk”: Cockney slang for rural or country talk
- sweet: various slang meanings, including “drunk.”
- Albion: the oldest name of the island of Great Britain, dating from the 6th century BCE.
- Albion: William Blake’s poem “Jerusalem” is subtitled “The Emanation of the Great Albion.” The poem tells the story of Albion, which for Blake represents man, Britain, and western civilization.
- Tomaso Albinoni, the Italian Baroque composer known best for the “Adagio in G Minor” – *FW* is saturated with references to music.
- I also hear the words “bone” and “boney” poking through the text here, which have, of course, various slang sexual referents.
- So who is the likeliest villain of the place (Ireland / this text)? Perhaps religion, the Vikings, alcohol, sex, and Britain are all part of the answer.
- This passage is also a direct invocation of Oliver Goldsmith’s 1770 poem “The Deserted Village,” about the decline of pastoral life and the corruptive power of city life, which begins, “Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain.” (This Goldsmith poem is never far from my thoughts: my maternal grandfather could recite large swaths of it by heart, and he sprinkled references to it during our quotidian, familial conversations.)

(As is evident from Figure 4, I do not have enough space on the pages to include all the annotations I investigate.)

Reading *Finnegans Wake* as I do, it is natural to pick up and inspect “bits of glass” (both random and selected) from multitudinous sources. Here is Cicero on sight:

It has been sagaciously discerned by Simonides or else discovered by some other person that the most complete pictures are formed in our minds of the things that have been conveyed to them and imprinted on them by the senses, but that the keenest of all our senses is the sense of sight, and that consequently perceptions received by the ears or by reflection can be most easily retained in the mind if they are also conveyed to our minds by the mediation of the eyes, with the result that things not seen and not lying in the field of visual discernment are earmarked by a sort of image and shape so that we keep hold of as it were by an act of sight things that we can scarcely embrace by an act of thought.¹⁴

I am not willing to say, as Cicero does, that sight is the “keenest” of the senses, but I am comfortable saying that sight may be the most evident, the most manifest of the senses. Even if we have our ears open, we may not hear; even if we sniff, we may not smell; our skin needs contact to feel; our sense of taste desires substance to flourish. Sight, by contrast, is simple. Instantaneous. Open the eyelids, and see. A small flutter, and the world pops into view. For me, sight is a form of momentous (that is, of the moment) reflection or mediation. I think it works well as a complement to *Finnegans Wake*, which more naturally tends toward the textual and the intellectual. I don’t desire that the image overshadow the text, but I do think that the image can enhance the text, draw it out. Horace lamented that “educated readers no longer seemed interested in the actual writings of a poet, but had ‘transferred all their pleasure from the ear to the shifting and empty delights of the eye.’”¹⁵ I hope that my colourful musings do not replace or mask the text, but rather help to enliven it, to embroider it.

By drawing upon (both extracting from and adding to) *Finnegans Wake*, I slow down the process of my reading, my looking. I turn some words into images and some images into words. As is evident from the accompanying eight pages from my project, I leave some words and images in my wake.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated and with notes by Charles Martin (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 31.

² O'Brien, Peter. LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE. Archival felt pen, acrylic, graphite, archival glitter glue, found objects, bodily fluids and humours, on 8 ½ X 11 archival card stock. Project started 2 April 2016.

³ Joyce, James, *Finnegans Wake*, edited by Robbert-Jan Henkes, Erik Bindervoet, and Finn Fordam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 243:1. Future citations will be indicated by page and line number parenthetically in the text.

⁴ See Marjorie Siegel, "More than Words: The Generative Power of Transmediation for Learning," *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, Vol. 20, No. 4. Future citations will be indicated by page number parenthetically in the text.

⁵ See Ihab Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), 116.

⁶ Joyce, James. *Selected Joyce Letters*, edited by Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking Press, 1975), 284. Future citations will be indicated by page number parenthetically in the text.

⁷ de Hamel, Christopher, *Meetings with Remarkable Manuscripts* (New York: Penguin, 2017), 136.

⁸ Joyce, James, *Finnegans Wake*, with an introduction by Seamus Deane (New York: Penguin, 1992), vii.

⁹ Ellmann, Richard, *James Joyce*, New and Revised Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 590.

¹⁰ Steiner, George, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, Third Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 199.

¹¹ Kristeva, Julia, *The Old Man and the Wolves* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 5. Future citations will be indicated by page number parenthetically in the text.

¹² Kristeva hand-wrote these words on the inside front cover of my copy of *The Old Man and the Wolves* on October 13, 1999.

¹³ Marshall McLuhan's interview can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Jlj0Bqbdhk>

¹⁴ Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De Oratore*, translated by J. S. Watson (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855), 327.

¹⁵ Manguel, Alberto, *A History of Reading* (New York: Viking, 1996), 249.