

# Taking apart James Joyce's final novel *Finnegans Wake*

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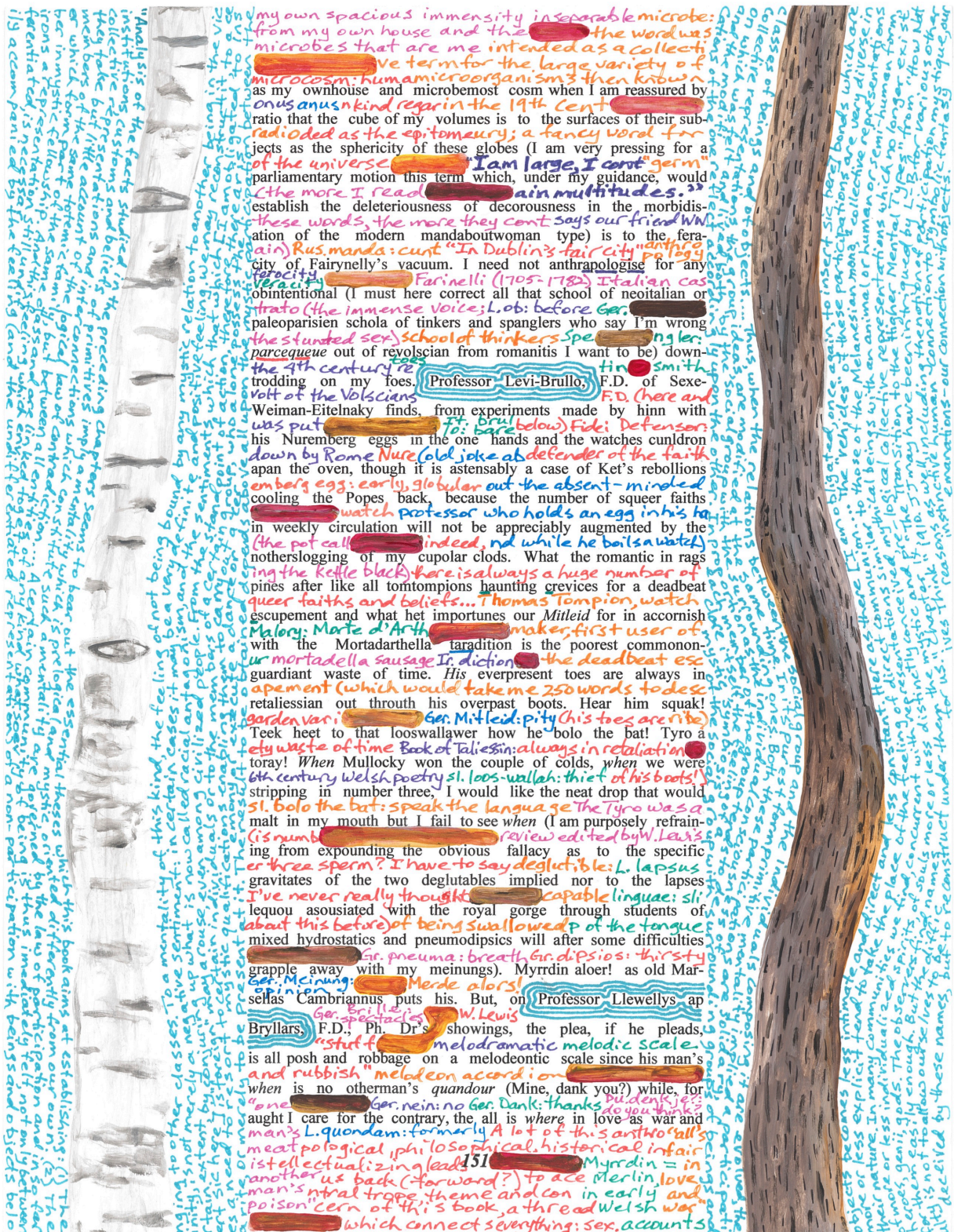
I've been butting my head against James Joyce's final novel, *Finnegans Wake*, for about 40 years. The most multilayered and unstable collection of words ever written, it's not a summertime beach read. Using about 80 different languages, and an ear fine-tuned to the musicality and mutability of language, Joyce spent 15 years composing it. Many readers, including scholars of Joyce, have called *Finnegans Wake* "unreadable," and I would agree. Challenges include making sense of the 10 100-letter "thunderwords," and appreciating its circularity – the last and the first sentence form a continuous loop. *Lots of Fun with Finnegans Wake* is my six-year project to navigate, excavate and play with the text. I'm creating one page for each of its 628 pages, using my natural impulses to connect the intellectual with the illustrative, the visual with the verbal. Perhaps my annotations and images will introduce new audiences to this endlessly fascinating text.

This page is from the beginning of the book, where the eye still has to acclimatize itself to the curious and disruptive ways that Joyce arranges letters on the page. After a while, words such as “togatherthem,” “perihelygangs” and “mousterious” begin to resonate, reveal their secrets and connect with other words in the text.

On Innegansweb.com I just read As I read the previous page flowing into this page: from the about FW being read aloud and set to music! It's at waywordbandmean signs.com. Says the site: "Seventeen different musicians from all around the world, each assigned to render a chapter aurally. The only requirements: the chapter's words must be audible, unbridged, and more or less in their original order." AD  
FW does, I think it is fair to say, does inspire immersive and obsessive involvement. Others do too. First Battle of the Marston. Shakespeare also knows as Dante, Dvid. Men of Letters. Blake and others, but FW gathers to itself its own curious followers, perhaps because in order to navigate it, some comment and dedication, however idiosyncratic, is required. The blond invaders (the Norse) desire the dark haired women of Ireland. "mean...pigg... low Pigg... the word 'pigg' pronounced 'high' in Ireland, as I well know... Fr. ou est tu cæcæ espæc dlimbecile? Where is your present, you complete idiot? For some, a woman's cod is a space of dumbness, illness, and Sinn Féin; Irish nationalist movement. The females seem to be saying to the males: fuck me, pluck me, make me make me wilt and blush, be true to me, and then more... shimmy and the chorus. "Whack for the dah, dance to your partner! Well the flure, yer trotters shake! Wasn't it the truth I told you? Lots of fun at Finnegan's Wake! Is this the sound and the action of spermatization? (use Rita's words) going about their normal activities? Joseph Bigger was a hunchbacked supporter of Parnell - he was a Belfast Presbyterian MP. Note various "Whya did I spell "Note" as "Noat"?) other physical (and, evidently, linguistic) abnormalities in this section: fief: an estate in land (Vico discusses fiefs in Roman history) Moustierian Men = tippie - Neanderthal Man tipsified Sacker Sen, who appears at various points in the pages to come, appears, says Finn Fordham, to be HCE's servant or his servile flip the mystery" (221.10). He serves drinks in the pup, cleans up after the customers (and perhaps on this page cleans up after the sex) and he clears out the rubbish. His job of cleaning also extends to matters of a moral or immoral nature, where as a night watchman he seems to police sexual activities. He is also blond (see relevance above) and misanthropic" says Finn. ...the first printing...



Joyce used grist for *Finnegans Wake* from wherever he found it: the Bible, drinking songs, the morning paper. I likewise use images from various sources. These two trees are side-by-side at the cottage of a friend, and I thought they would be appropriate on a page where Joyce invokes Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and his work in the growing fields of sociology and ethnology.





**PAGE 203**

As I looked at this page, I kept seeing the words “her” and “she,” so I decided to play with them. This section of the book references hundreds of rivers, so I’ve underlined each one, and then painted a small section of the Rio Grande here, which flows into, on page 204, the Yellow River.

The Great Southern "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had created." And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." Gen 2:8-9

Co Wicklow, known as Eden Quay, it was the garden of Ireland. Dublin

Wickenlow, garden of Erin, before she ever dreamt she'd have Fr. lave Brigid of Kildare, a well-known 5th-century Irish saint

Kilbride and go foaming under Horsepass bridge, with the great

southern western wind storming her traces and the midland's grain-waister asarch for her track, to wend her ways byndby, Rebecca

or worse, to spin and to grind, to swab and to thrush, for all her golden life in the barleyfields and pennylofts of Humphrey's Humphreystown Bridge near

golden life in the barleyfields and pennylofts of Humphrey's Humphreystown Bridge near

fordofhurdlestown and lie with a landleaper, willingtonorsher

Alessie, the lages of girly days! For the dove of the dunas! Was the first maps or in any books.

ut? Izod? Are yo sarthin suir? Not where the Finn fits into the

Mourne, not where the Nore takes lieve of Broom, not where the Brave divarts the Farer, not where the Moy changes her minds

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of man has never set foot? Dell me where, the fairy tree me!

there of she dwell a local hermit, Michael Arklow was his river-

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doaked, Nance the Nixie, Nanon L'Escaut, in the silence, of the sy-Sycamore Creek, in 1731, the

more Alabama nixie: female Nixie Nixie Ninon L'Escout: 13. 7th and final volume of

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feeling, he plunged both of his newly anointed hands, the core of

his cushlas, in her singamari saffron srumans of hair, parting them

and smoothing her and mingling it, that was deepdark and ample

like this red bog at sundown. By that Vale Vowclose's Lucydail

the reignbeau's, heavenarches

yellow L. galbus: emerald

dizzing galbs, her enamelled

verge violetian. Wish a wish! Why a why? Mayo! Letty Lerck's and other bodies of freshwater

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And Simba the Slayer of his Oga is slewd. He cuddle not help most dears! "Daphne, your

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Co



I asked a friend to make two footprints on this page, first at the bottom and then at the top. Only later did I see the word “Barefoot” imprinted on the page. In this section of the book we can hear two washerwomen talking to each other from opposite sides of a river, so perhaps that is why the footprints are separated by a watery divide.

[illegible]