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PHOTOGRAPHY

IDEE MONTERREY

ART FEATURE

PETER O'BRIEN'S
"LOTS OF FUN WITH
FINNEGANS WAKE"

POETRY FEATURE

KENTON OLIVER



Lots of Fun with Finnegans Wake

PETER O'BRIEN

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Peter O'Brien has been reading *Finnegans Wake* for over four decades. It is a book considered by many to be a difficult read, but O'Brien has found a unique way of making it more accessible — he uses the pages of the book to create unique illustrations that evoke a new sense of understanding of the text. People often have trouble with understanding great works of literature, but with O'Brien's art, this difficulty is greatly diminished.

The project provides O'Brien with a creative outlet to combine his love of words and illustration — it's nothing less than an intelligent, mixed media adventure! We asked Peter to kindly provide us with some background information about his project that might be of interest to our readers — we truly hope you enjoy the works featured on the following pages and find them as riveting as we have:

*I was born in New York in 1957. My dad died when I was not yet two, and my mom was left a widow with ten kids. Eight years later, she married a widower who had twelve kids, which made me one of twenty-two kids! There are a lot of contradictory, sometimes combative stories in a family that size. Maybe that is why I am so fascinated with the conflicting and incongruous tumult of stories in James Joyce's final work, *Finnegans Wake*.*

*It was forty-two years ago, and I was in Dublin when I first began reading *Finnegans Wake*. It is possible to tire of other books, but not this one. It is the most labyrinthine and arcane book and artwork ever created.*

Most readers of the book write personal or exegetical notes in the margins, or other forms of marginalia anywhere they can. I decided to create an artwork by custom printing each page, with more space between the lines, and with larger margins. Initially, I started writing my notes and annotations with coloured felt pens but then I started using other media, including graphite, gold leaf, archival glitter glue that I made myself, gel pens, acrylic paint, oil pastels, and various other found objects, including bodily fluids and humours.

I also started painting on the pages: trees, birds, rivers, pieces of plastic, drinking vessels and bowls, and well, the number of things keeps growing. I do suffer from a form of horror vacui, so that does not help (or maybe it does help, depending on how you want to interpret such an aesthetic affliction). I am always adding new details to pages that I thought I had finished three or four years ago.



Being arithmetically inclined, I have decided to see if I can finish this 628-page project in ten years. I'm 44% of the way through, so I still have a long way to go. I know that no one will ever read all my markings (all the words I have written on these pages, all the graphic elements I layer on), and I am fine with that. Most people never read the entire text of *Finnegans Wake*, so I would be especially delusional if I assumed someone, anyone, will ever read every work, and consider every mark I've articulated in this expansive and unwieldy literary folly I call: **LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE.**

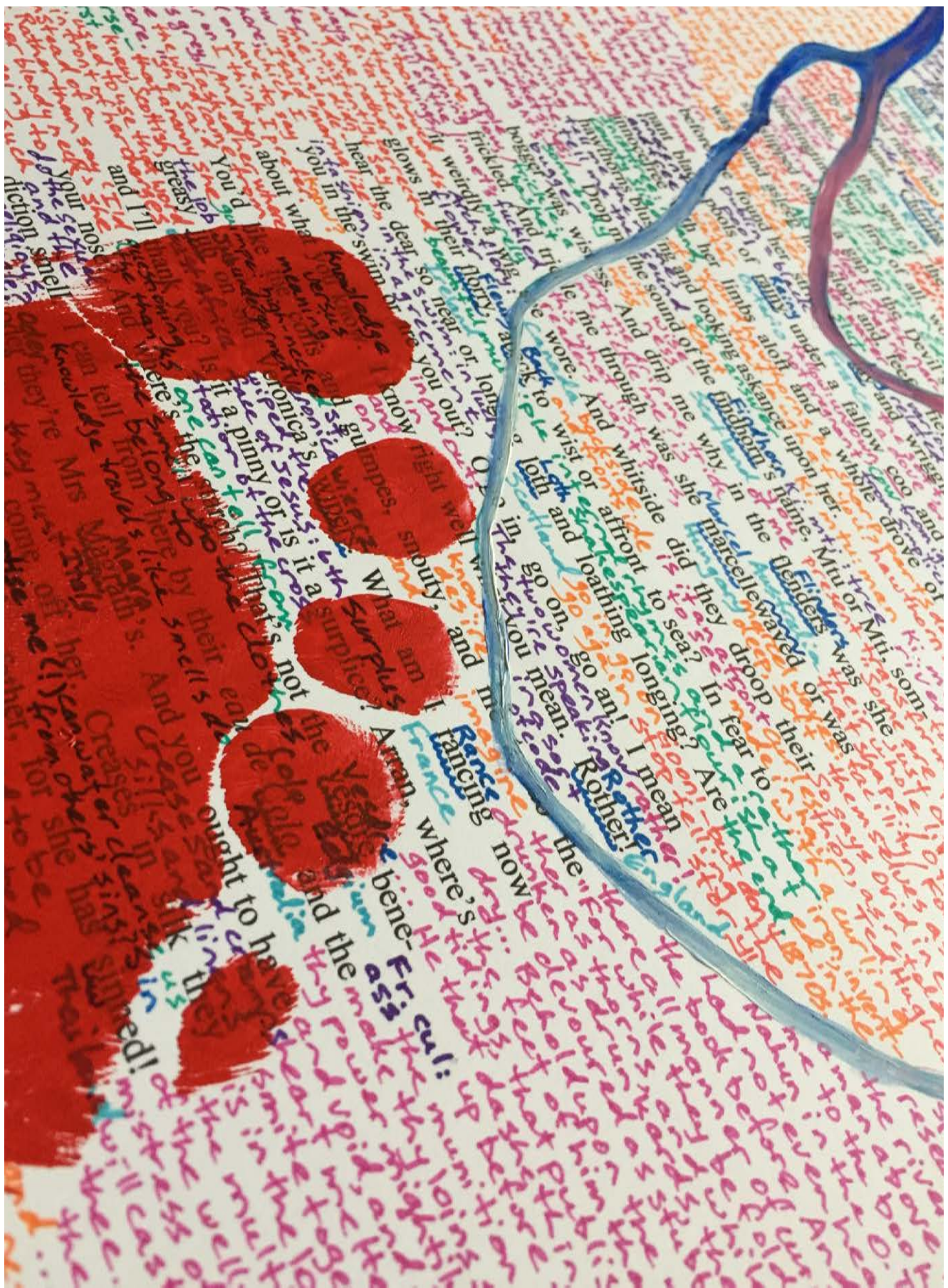
I would drop this project in a moment if I ever become bored with what Joyce was trying to accomplish. He compressed the entire world into a book (a space where different versions of history, culture, language, and belief are constantly in conflictual conversation) and so it's unlikely I'll be getting bored with his book or this artwork. In fact, I am already fabricating in my senses a new project with *Finnegans Wake*, but that is for about five and half years in the future.

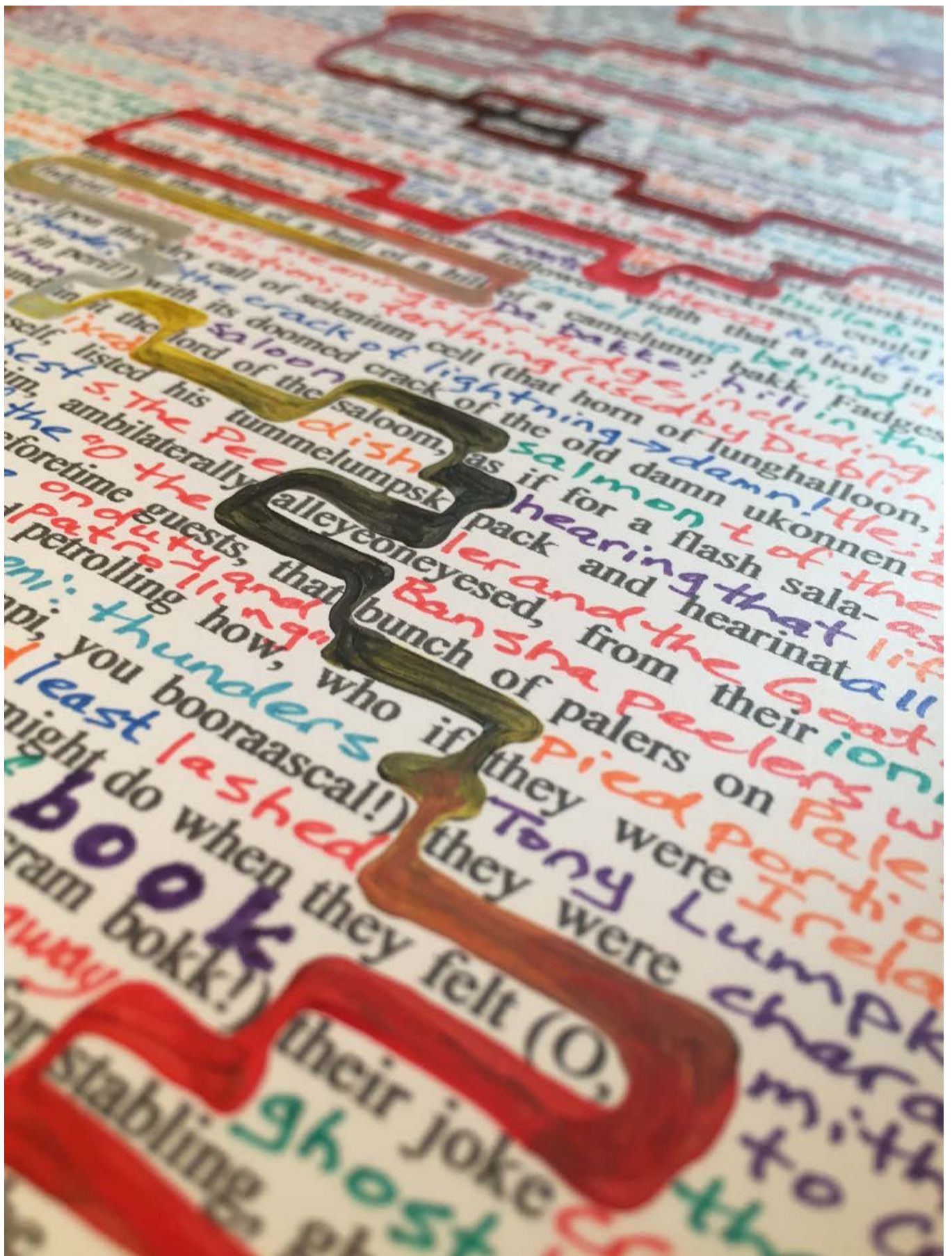
For more information, and to see more of Peter's artwork, please visit:

www.peterobrienart.com

"One great part of every human existence is passed in a state which cannot be rendered sensible by the use of wideawake language, cutanddry grammar and goahead plot." –James Joyce commenting on *Finnegans Wake*

so much work to get to a few daubs of paint and yet those daubs are the first things people see, and sometimes the only things that people see "For us, there
"Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross, / To see a fine lady uis only the trying. The rest
pon a white horse; / Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, / And she shall have music wherever she goes." 1784 hitch a cock eye: that's a w
sl. cock-eye, a squinting time only) what we knew how when we (from that point solely)
eye, dating knew and know in the Biblical sense point of penis a small, usually Cora Pearl:
from 1825 there are of were you know where? There you are! And why? Why, hitch a yokeless egg Parisian
pursue many slang usages for the word cock on the sly: privately, secretly court an who
including a fictional nar cock eye, he was snapped on the sly upsadaisyng coras pearls sl. hitch: to marry se fat
rative sold as a broad sheet in the sl. daisy: chamber pot sing chorus girls her whose the music
streets from 1840; from out of the pie when all the perts in princer street set up their
1860 it derivatively meant cock and pie! a mild oath Prince's St., Dublin I don't give a en
any incredible oops-a-datinker's humn, (the rann, the rann, that keen of old bards), with tinker's damn "The Wren
story isy: catch-phrase of consolation hum hymn the Wren, The king of all birds": Newnes,
as one picks up a child them newnesboys pearcin screaming off their armsworths. The song Pearson and Harm
who has fallen newsboys with arms full of papers (following old bards) sworth: founders of
ducks and drakes and boss made doves and raves out of his buknesst while herself "popular-style" English
ves and ravens out of his business baller's hat detective "Ol' man river, / Dat ol' man journal ism
go to Bath: to become a beg wears the bowler's hat in her bath. Deductive Almayne Rogers
far (Bath, being disquises hoar H se chest notes Epin? But don't say nuthin', / He
fashionable, a disguises his voice, bethers behind hoax chestnote from exexive
attracted many y vagrants) horse chestnuts
"Is you been redeemed? They jest keeps using. He jumps leas's rizin
Certainly? Howlong! Time during WWI to produce acet
Laud "Mard used in prim the production
Con nelly You know that tom? I certainly know. Is their barn both
Phil the nessed? Suddenly now. Has they bane redeemed? Soth nly low.
the Does they ought to buy the paperboy when he footles up their
King suit? He's their mark to foil the flouter and they certainty
Mark owe.
of Cor He sprit in his phiz (baceon!). He salt to their bis (puddent
nwall he saw to their business he took and tickled her
Ger. spritzen: spray he saw to their business he took and tickled her
he saw to their business he took and tickled her
business he took and tickled her
palm Ir. beanna
cht leat: "a ble
ssing with you
(farewell)
Dear Dirty
Dublin to wind
ship: in Naure
terms, to ta
rn her end
for end four
square meak
sl. four-leg
ged fro lie
sexual con
nection, from
the 16th cent
sl. hawk it: to be
a prostitute e
the streets; to peddle
icient. For when he turns to run away theatricals
he emits a fart with the achance I could have emptied a pan of backslap down drain by
contents of his large intestine which covers three acres. And (started three days ago; now?) ation of liquor
any tree that it reaches cat whiles of dodging a rere from the middenprivet appurtenant
ches fire. Thus he drives away his per a rear arrears appertinent private apartment the Dublin Boa
suers with noxious excre thereof, salving the presents of the board of wumps and pumps, saving the presence of W
ment." A Latin Bestiary, a liso inculpable incapable personal property prisoners the "release" orks
the "hind influences" lift I am ever incaluable, where release of prisnals properly is con- of all sorts of things / thought
Ger. abfallen: to coming up unfallen girls falling up "Which of us has not, in his moments of ambition,
desert into play girls Mad a cerned, of unlifting upfallen girls wherein dangered from them dreamed of the miracle of
and smell they're open me Bovy: unadulterated poetic prose, musical, without rhythm and without rhy
as I work "The certain sw in thereopen out of unadulterated bowery, with those hinting me, supple enough and rug
on angel, elled softly around the bed hindering Ger. hinter: behind ged enough to adapt itself to the lyrical
these pages like clouds... influences from an angel sexonism. It was merely my barely till movements of the Ir. Bearl
he let her head drop back on to the sex ism an Anglosaxon misunderstood soul, the undula; English langu
pillow, seeming to hear th their oh offs. Missa understaid. Meggy Guggy's giggag. The ations of revage (and ba
rough space the haps of the I see Marguerite "Peggy" Guggen erie, the sudden start's re lie)
seraphs playing, anolheim here, and not just because I of consciousness? It was, above all,
ulysses: "The to see seated upon a was married 363 out of the exploration of huge cities, out of the
Nanny goat: (bleats) throne of gold in a zinto the Guggen intersection of the inhum sl. gig: mouth,
Meg eggagg egg!" on off re Heaven... wings of flanchheim family fmerable interrelations door, etc.
B misunderstood some questions about leaving (as or a short time that this obsessive ideal
Bonnacon sl. off: to depart; go away implied above) sl. gag: joke, hoax was born": Baudelaire





using these pages as a sort of (graphic) diary, I sometimes wonder if I'm being too pointed, too direct: isn't, for example, the TP OB too simple, too obvious? In the Harlequinade har yoked from the previous page here Harlequin is the comedian and the romantic to give us male lead, in some versions of the original Commedia dell'arte Harlequin is Harlequinable to perform marriage combinations (of words and Sir Arthur Guinness is a lovely woman who won is nought, twigs too is nil, tricks trees makes nix, fairs fears as caught the eye of Harlequin, ought, twice two is nil, thrice three makes ar her costume often includes stoops at nothing. And till Arthur comes againus and sen pea- des the cap and apron of a serving girl four's four the legend that King Arthur n.r. This is the way the la trick's he's reformed we'll pose him together a piece, a pace. is sleep Guinness ride: "apace, apace" sl. pos, poss, poz, pozz positive ing and will return upon Eng Guinnesses sl. guineaten Shares in guineases! There's lovely the sight! Surey me, man (and's need a court'esan, a harlot with a punning asses (a lovely sight) tongue - allusion to her feet big bum weepful! Big Seat, you did hear? And teach him twisters in "The idea of milk as twisters JJMS: "Pa let me go too (aeiou)" ters of the food for man influenced tongue Irish. Pat lad may goh too. Quicken, aspen; ash and yew; early thought... The Great Mother... alphabet are names of trees: quicken (L); as was called, on certain occ willow, broom with oak for you. And move your tellabout. Not asions, the Divine Cow": Perry; ash (N); yew (I); willow (S); broom (O); oak (D) origin of magic move your nice is that, limpet lady! Spouse we try it promissly. Love all and Religion tale about tail: but love all: tennis score: 0:0 oday: suppose we try miss promiss Naytellmeknot tennis! Taunt me treatening. But do now say Manzoni: I I hear JJH in ing hean; girl; daughter here Promissiere: I love it all! Mr Eustache! Angean jumen has to hear. Whose joint is out of Sposi It. Spouse: Rus, prom jealousy now? Why, heavilybody's evillybody's. Hopping' Ocius onthly ovfull! O belessk mie, what a nerve! How a jugs in "his nose is evi, everybody's his armor we nurses know. Wingwong welly, pretty pretty Nelly out of joint, heaving body Some Paddy pitted in, will anny petty bullet out? Can Kitty in out, hoping gracious awful Kelly! Kissykitty, Killykelly! What a kissowl buzzard! But what egg, fr. sl. obelisque: penis what a nice young girl Armoria (Tristan) angels song: Pretty Kitty Kelly amour a nur laughing nice old nightingale sepu Da. ung: young ll's out the Ombrellone and his parasollieras with their black thronguards full of life winning ticket in the Irish Hosp from the County Shillelagh. Ignorant invincibles, innocents im-which cannot be perhaps removed by the sufferer alone JJal mutant! Onzel grootvater Lodewijk is hangonated before the so referencing readers er: grandfather unchan of this text the Invincibles of the bridge of primerose and his tux (as Boldmans is met the bluey- Phoenix Park murders bells near Dandeliond. We think its a gorsedd shame, these go- Welsh gorsedd: semet; with Fr. limon: sour lime goddamn shame at: seat; mount; bards; Convoc doms. A lurk of limonladies! A lurk of orangetawneymen! You're ation cursed Hilarijn is friendwijk: Lewis OF godbadly wounded Du. lurken: to suck Orangenmen the personification of Scie of Lewis Carroll: ons: English backleg wounded, budkley mister, bester of the boynel! nce in Flaubert's La Tentation de sa she played Alice (derogatory) back leg wounded wanted int Antoine, who wishes to "be in ever in an adaptation "The woovers And they leaved the most leavely of leaftimes and the mosty thing - emanate withall of Alice in of Penelope foliage us: nous destroyer mirth Jack the Ripper the odours - develop Wonderland will by their folliagenous till there came the marrer of mirth and the jangthe- myself like the plants - "And they led the Porters, oleaginous sl. jock: to coit with a woman never hear never here flow like most prohibite the poorer rapper of all, jocolarinas and they were as were they never ere, never were water - vibr pleas... terming them name Larina from L. lares: individual Roman household gods ate like sound urable marrers of Mirth "Yet had they laughed, one on other, undo the end and enjoyed who were - shine like lig of lives and the Nashe, Anatomic of Amerrey were the protectors of home andht - assume all most delectable psurditie their laughings merry was the times when so grant it High Hila-field storms - penetrate e till there came to them the Hilariious laughings ach atom - descend to the very bottom of matter; - be mad Destroyer of delights and rion us may too! Gesta Romanorum (Deeds of the Romans), a latin collect the Severel of societies and they story walk L. gestare: to bear round stories, ion of a became as though stop, please Cease, prayce, storywalking around with gestare romano- perhaps like cdotes and they had the royal Russian family, the Romanors wank romantic gestures this one tales compiled never been." Burton in his verum he swinking about is they think and plan unravil unavelarand 1300s; one Terminal Essay to L. verum: truth Arch. swink: to toil of the most popular books of its time and Arabian Nights question: what, the source, directly or indirectly, of othes, including Chaucer, John "The torpedo is a fish that lives in the Indian ocean. If touched, Gower, Boccaccio, Shakespeare it makes its body stiff. back Back to Droughty! The water of the face has flowed, - eare...; intended as a Even at a distance, or to Drogheda, Ireland... duty... blue-eyed manual for preachers if touched by a spear, the power The all of them, the sowriegueuxers, blottyeyed boys, in that Burton's Terminal Essay of the torpedo numbs even the strongest Fr. gueux: beggar to Arabian Nights describes the Rawi or arms and paralyzes sweetest feet. It is so strong that even professional storyteller: "The water its breath can affect one's limbs." sl. sowr: to 361 "The Parandrus is a beast from Ethiopia that can change its appearance, so that it beat severely Fr. gueule: mouth sl. blotho: drunk of the face can conceal itself by taking on the appearance Fr. gueulard: loud mouthed from ca 1905 is self P sorry, sow of its surroundings. It is coloured like a bear, but is the size of an ox and has long Parandrus hair. It has the head of a stag with branching horns, and has cloven hoofs." - respect



Peter O'Brien has written or edited eight books, including *A Perfect Offering: Personal Stories of Trauma and Transformation* (Mosaic), *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), the Banff School of Fine Arts, and has published extensively on writing and art. He is currently working on a ten-year art project entitled, *LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE*.