

Dutch and Double Dutch Trouble Give in *Finnegans Wake*

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Let us make it clear “at the onset” (FW 78.25): this essay does not wish to take sides in nor offer a belated settlement of the fable of the Knuth and the Lernout who, eins within a space, fought a “boomslanging” (FW 209.01) match like “dutchunders” (FW 314.22) about what lexical items should be glossed as Belgian Dutch (Flemish), Cape Dutch (Afrikaans) or Dutch Dutch in *Finnegans Wake*.¹ Rather, it wishes to acknowledge the moral of the controversy, that one “Dutch” unit may hide another, and take it as a point of departure for the study of some of the thematic facets that Joyce associated with those doubling Dutches in his text that gave so much trouble even to native critics. That Joyce chose to double, even treble Dutch makes the language group fit within the work’s larger theme of linguistic unintelligibility and impaired semantic communication with a vengeance, and accounts for FW 430.13-16, where Jaun, “abasourdly [French *abasourdir*: to dumbfound] in his Dutcheiner’s native,” utters a sentence ... in broken Danish. While allowing him to link his Dutches in with other idioms, as was his practice, in order to build the linguistic problematic and universe of his work, this troublesomeness² of a tongue ready to split into other, even less related languages is the symptomatic “key” to Joyce’s thematic treatment of it.

1. The “Djoytsch” Complex

Joyce never had to go very far when he needed a spark for his literary creation or a convenient nail on which to peg his concerns; the idiomatic storehouse of the English language always stood him in good stead and in this case yielded, among numerous other idiomatic gems, the phrase “go dutch,” recorded in FW 244.02, with its suggestion of splitting costs and meeting half way. But other linguistic resources were resorted to in order to widen the linguistic-thematic network, as when Issy’s mirrored half or “linkingclass girl” (FW 459.04) is addressed as “poor old dutch” (FW 459.05), a subdued pun on “poor old woman” (U 1.403, 12.1377-78)³ or *Sean bhean bhocht* (cf. FW 372.30-31), whose middle element rings somewhat like Dutch *van* (hence “Ann van Vogt” in FW 54.04-05), the Gaelic poetic name given to Ireland in olden times and usually attributed to Kate on account of her age who, like Issy, symbolises a schizophrenic Erin.⁴ Splitting or doubling is also cast as a historical Belgian heresy or “bulgen horesies” (FW 376.04-05), with its Walloons and Flemings, in the “museyroom” episode of the battle of “waterloose” (FW 8.02-03). The most frequent “duplex” is underwritten by Joyce himself in the now near-proverbial “Are we speachin d’anglas landadge or are you spraking sea Djoytsch?” (FW 485.12-13); the English language is pitted against a Joycean German whose *sprechen Sie*

deutsch? also accommodates Dutch *spreken*. Similarly, “Dutchlord, Dutchlord, overawes us” (FW 135.08-09), patterned on the German anthem *Deutschland über alles*, is soon followed by a reference to the Dutch royal family of Oranje Nassau, and it is in “dootch nossow” (FW 21.20) that Jarl Van Hoother first snubs ALP as the Irish pirate Grace O’Malley who, in the Prankquean episode of book 1, chapter 1, perverts/inverts the twins’ identities. More generally, the borderline between Dutch and German source words is made elusive by Wakean distortions and could easily prime another linguistic-genetic polemic, especially in conjunction with (critics’?) original sin in a “teargarten” (see later). Fritz Senn provided a linguistic-literary antecedent for this feature when he pointed out that the context in which High Dutch is mentioned in Butler’s *Hudibras* connects it with German (*deutsch*) by a classical pun which Joyce implicitly resorted to in *Finnegans Wake* in order to handle the two languages in tandem and thematize their linguistic proximity.⁵ But there is another element in Butler’s story which makes this D(e)ut(s)ch duplex indicative not only of a Shem and Shaun-like duality but also of duplicity, betrayal and subversion, thus partaking of the *Wake*’s sexual-linguistic sin.

2. A Dutch Peep before the Fall: How German Is It?

In a letter to Miss Weaver dated 24 September 1926, Joyce, referring to S, the manservant or “Snake,” announced that “I finished my course of 64 Flemish lessons and will use bits of the language I have picked up for friend Sookerson, I think.”⁶ Though at first glance not much else than “Dour douchy [Dutch] was a sieguldson” (FW 371.06) can be found in the finished text to bear out this seemingly unmotivated association, the presence in FW 170.16-17 of Russian words for “apple” and “snake” within a Dutchified passage following a stutter, that telltale indication of sin or at least guilt in the text, tantalizingly invites a more “fruitful” thematic extension.

In “Vortigern, ah Gortigern! Overlord of Mercia!” (FW 565.12), one may note the reference to Gortighern, the name of the Adamic language before the confusion of tongues at Babel according to the Irish *Book of Invasions*, behind the allusion to Vortigern (or Guorthigirn) who ruled over Britain before it was invaded by Hengest and Horsa (a unit in VI.B.27: 84, crossed in blue, mentions both). This double reading is strengthened by the occurrence of a Dutch cluster on either side of “Gortigern” since, according to *Hudibras*, High Dutch was the language Adam and Eve spoke in Eden, which might imply that Dutch, a subsequent development, can be equated with the “afterfall” (FW 78.07) state of the Adamic language which lasted until the episode of Babel where the line of clarity (*Deutlichkeit*) between Dutch and *Duits/Deutsch* (German) became blurred. Within the family nucleus of the *Wake*, the Snake would therefore be the proto- or *arch*-form of the sinner, which makes another thematic case for the relative prominence of Dutch in the book as one of the primary languages which our migratory hero, including in his earliest emanations a Scandinavian “Eyrawyggla” (FW 48.16-17) and a High Dutch snake (S) with the equally Scandinavian-sounding name of Sookerson, “the petty constable Sistersen of the Kruis-Kroon-Kraal” (FW 186.19) associated with Afrikaans, would have encountered on his way to Ireland. In “Der Fall Adams” (FW 70.05), the *genitive* case causes such a procreative fall as our protoparents’ and is *tried* accordingly (all meanings in German *der Fall*); a line before, “brockendootsch,” i.e. *gebrochenes Deutsch* as well as broken Dutch, was

being swopped with a broken Irish brogue or “brogue eeriesh,” a linguistic barter which is somewhat reminiscent of the mixed dealings of the Irish Prankquean with the offspring of a Dutch earl. The Dutch connotations of Orange Nassau haunt the *Wake*’s “initial” recycling of the original sin in *FW* 3.22-24 (which has at least one Dutch word; *rust*: rest), soon after the fall and first thunderword. There, the forbidden fruit appears as an orange, which, in Basque, has been derived by folk etymology from other Basque elements meaning “the fruit which was first eaten,”⁷ therefore an apple of sin or Dano-Norwegian *appelsin* (orange) for our guilty Scandinavian hero (cf. also the uncrossed *Scribbledehobble* note “Adam and Eve spoke Basque” in VI.A: 109⁸). This link between oranges and the original sin sheds light on the recurrent description of the midden or (Phoenix) park as an “orangery” (*FW* 110.25-30, 111.33-35, 477.36-478.02).

One of the variations on the reduplicative hesitancy of the “sinsin sinsin” motif, which in *FW* 116.18 directly ushers in one version of the letter, is the Dutchified “Zijnzijn Zijnzijn!” (*FW* 75.08) in the densest Dutch environment of the *Wake*. Set in the *ricorso* that will take us back to the first Divine Age of the Vichian scheme in Book I, the passage opens with a “teargarten” (*FW* 75.01) or German (?) zoo saddened (“tears”) by the ineradicable fault of its denizens (*FW* 75.07-08), hence a phallic inversion of paradise in *FW* 76.34,⁹ and is, not untypically, a rewrite of the basic narrative ingredients of the book in the momentarily prevailing mood (for e.g. “(insteppen, alls als hats beliefd!)” in *FW* 77.20-21 is a Dutchified reworking of Kate’s invitation to “Mind your hats goan in!” [*FW* 8.09] in the “museyroom” episode). The “teargarten” would seem to call for a German gloss, warranted by linguistic proximity, since, *pace* Danis Rose’s antediluvian ascription,¹⁰ the Dutch unit “diergaarden” in VI.B.46: 120 was entered years after the “original” zoo found its way into the drafts of *FW* I.4, though the Dutch index to which it belongs was heavily used to bring out the lowcountryish flavour of these pages. The two options are, here again—though they need not always be mutually exclusive—linguistic proximity and notebook equivalent (whether anachronistic or not). The *Wake* always tempts us, procreant geneticists and cunning linguists alike, to reach from its postlapsarian tear garden (back) to the “prefall paradise” (*FW* 30.15) of an impossible *dear garden*, even in a Dutchified “dear dutchy deeplinn” (*FW* 76.25-26), since its Lilith (Adam’s wife before Eve and, therefore, before the fall in Kabbalistic lore) has always already been contaminated by an ominous stammer (*FW* 75.05: “lililiths”) and “undeveiled,” i.e. undefiled but also unveiled ... Dutch, ironically not so “Deutsch” or *deutlich* (clear), is always ready (*klaar*) to split its identity, and it is fitting that one of its thematic functions should have been to enhance yet again the “since primal made alter in garden of Idem” (*FW* 263.20-21¹¹), alias a zoo or “fornix” (*FW* 116.18) park, and also perhaps, as the critics’ moves are preprogrammed in Joyce’s text, to prompt our lexical-genetic falls into the dangerous traps of neat identifications.

Notes

1. Originally bearing on Leo Knuth’s three earlier pieces — “Dutch Elements in *Finnegans Wake* pp. 75-78 Compared with Holograph Workbook VI.B.46” (*A Wake Newsletter* 5.2 [April 1968]: 19-28); “Dutch in *Finnegans Wake*” (*A Wake Newsletter* 8.2 [April 1971]: 24-32; 8.3 [June 1971]: 35-43; 8.4 [August 1971]: 54-62); “Dutch in *Finnegans Wake* Holograph Workbooks VI.B.22 and VI.B.26” (*James Joyce Quarterly* 7.3 [Spring 1970]: 218-28)—the schism went through the following stages: 1° Geert Lernout’s “Dutch in *Finnegans Wake*,” *James Joyce Quarterly* 23.1 (Fall 1985): 45-66; 2°

Knuth's "Letter to the Editor," *James Joyce Quarterly* 23.4 (Summer 1986): 511-18; 3° Lernout's reply in *James Joyce Quarterly* 24.3 (Spring 1987): 375-80; 4° Knuth's "Comment on Mr. Lernout's Reply," *James Joyce Quarterly* 25.1 (Fall 1987): 167-73; 5° Lernout's "knushed" "Reply to My Reply to His Reply to My Article," also in *James Joyce Quarterly* 25.4 (Summer 1988): 541-43. Unless it has escaped my attention, Knuth's "counterknush" still has not been delivered ...

2. My *Collins English Dictionary* tells me that "in Dutch" is slang for "in trouble" ...

3. The pagination refers to *Ulysses: A Critical and Synoptic Edition*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler, 3 vols. (New York: Garland, 1986).

4. See my "The Perversions of 'Aerse' and the Anglo-Irish Middle Voice in *Finnegans Wake*," *Joyce Studies Annual* 1993, ed. Thomas F. Staley (Austin: U of Texas, 1993) 98-118.

5. See his seminal and highly informative "Dutch Interpretation," *A Wake Newslitter* 11.3 (June 1974): 54.

6. *Letters of James Joyce*, vol. 1, ed. Stuart Gilbert (London: Faber, 1957) 295.

7. See Petr Skrabanek, "Basque Beginning," *A Wake Newslitter* 15.4 (August 1978) 61.

8. In FW 102.16-17, the "analists" are seen "pelotting in her piecetag, for Handiman the Chomp, Esquoro, biskbask, to crush the slander's head," i.e. tampering with ALP's sexual parts, the *corpus delicti*, for the redeeming letter to come ... which would purportedly quash calumny. (The complex genetic associations between slander, "sneakers" and snake can be found in Laurent Milesi, "Metaphors of the Quest in *Finnegans Wake*," *European Joyce Studies* 2: *Finnegans Wake: Fifty Years*, ed. Geert Lernout [Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1990] esp. 100, and "La variante joycienne et perecquienne: études contrastives," *L'écriture et ses doubles: genèse et variation textuelle*, ed. Daniel Ferrer and Jean-Louis Lebrave [Paris: C.N.R.S., 1991] esp. 187-92.) Basque is also mentioned as one of the seventy-odd languages born from the Babelian confusion. For other sexual connotations of "orange" and further Basque developments, see my "L'idiome babélien de *Finnegans Wake*: recherches thématiques dans une perspective génétique," *Genèse de Babel: Joyce et la création*, ed. Claude Jacquet (Paris: C.N.R.S., 1985) esp. 195.

9. The first lines feature a parenthesis in Armenian. The connection between Armenian and our forefather has been spotted by Halper who reminds us that old Armenian was once spoken near the sources of the Tigris and Euphrates, one of the traditional locations offered for the garden of Eden. See Nathan Halper, "Armenian," *A Wake Newslitter* 16.2 (April 1979): 19-24, and also John Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark: Finnegans Wake* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1986) 461n29.

10. See *James Joyce's The Index Manuscript: Finnegans Wake Holograph Workbook VI.B.46*, transcribed, annotated and with an introduction by Danis Rose (Colchester: A Wake Newslitter P, 1978) 287.

11. The passage may recall the double etymology of "identity" given in Skeat and the *Oxford English Dictionary*.