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"Every Telling Has a Tailing": Narrative *vs*. Narrativity in *Finnegans Wake*[1]

MÁRCIA LEMOS

Abstract

Humans are prone to storytelling. Indeed, the human brain is itself a storyteller, so says neuroscientist António Damásio. Umberto Eco suggests that our fondness for narrative is intrinsically bound up with the sense of truth it transmits. According to E. M. Forster, characters in novels provide "a more comprehensible and thus a more manageable human race." Whatever the reasons, and there are plenty of them, humanity craves for stories and storytellers, a craving often mimicked by literature. In this paper, I present Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* as a paradigmatic example of this desire to tell stories, in spite of the text's subversion of all narrative conventions. Being a metafictional text deeply immersed in its own processes of production and reception, *Finnegans Wake* is particularly challenging. More than telling stories, it explores and celebrates the manifold strategies of storytelling and its most important agents: the reader/listener and the narrator.

Keywords: narrative, narrativity, storytelling, metafiction, *Finnegans Wake*

> Well, you know or don't you kennet or haven't I told you every telling has a tailing and that's the he and the she of it.
>
> (*Finnegans Wake* 213.11-12)

Human beings are prone to storytelling. All civilisations produce their share of legends, myths, and fairytales; all civilisations reinvent their legends, myths, and fairytales in order to reinvent themselves. According to Aristotle, storytelling performs a cathartic role by freeing the individuals from their unwanted emotions and fears.[2] For neuroscientist António Damásio the human brain is itself a storyteller.[3] The truth is that storytelling subtracts humans from the contingencies of their daily life by opening windows into worlds of fantasy, heroes, and (sometimes) happy endings.[4]

Referring specifically to novels, Umberto Eco claims that our fondness for narrative fiction is intrinsically bound up with the sense of truth it transmits.[5] Indeed, the truth crystallised on the pages of a novel remains untouched, regardless of all changes operated in society; the same happens with its characters, places, and words, immortalised by the power of literature in a world of their own. Recently, a survivor of Fukushima wrote to Hiromi Kawakami, a Japanese novelist, urging her to keep publishing her daily feuilletons in *Asahi*, a Japanese newspaper, for this provided her with a sense of normalcy that everything else in her life had lost.[6] This woman's poignant plead fully illustrates the sense of truth procured by literature, as mentioned by Eco, and also by E. M. Forster who explains that novels "even when they are about wicked people, can solace us; they suggest a more comprehensible and thus a more manageable human race, they give us the illusion of perspicacity and of power."[7]

Humans need stories to dream, to reinvent their existence, to communicate, and even to survive. Let us not forget the beautiful Scheherazade, whose life depended on her ability to create and tell stories, thus forging the numerous adventures of the *Arabian Nights*.[8] This fondness for narratives is, therefore, an intrinsic human characteristic often mimicked by literature. And in this context, *Finnegans Wake* is either a paradigmatic or a paradoxical example, or both:

> Paradox would reign forever over interpretation of the *Wake*, since we could never finally disentangle what follows and or precedes what. Narratological analyses would flounder as they try to separate flashback from anticipation, analepsis from prolepsis. For whatever is to come has already happened. Narrative would be undone though maintained at the same time. The beginning would be an end (of a sentence), and the end would be a beginning (of a sentence). It is so simple an idea that it seems extraordinary no one thought of it before.[9]

Joyce's last work produces repeated proves of this desire to tell stories by a "collideorscape" (*FW* 143.28) of small narratives that assemble and dissemble in a constant move of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction. This is ever more surprising if we take into consideration that the existence in *Finnegans Wake* of a coherent and comprehensive narrative is very much contested by readers and critics alike. In fact, the *Wake*'s disrespect for all conventions of the novelistic genre –especially in regards to the development of characters, the presence and shape of the narrator, and the categorisation of time and space– represents a challenge that not all readers are willing to embrace.[10]

When talking about *Finnegans Wake*, one should then distinguish two concepts: *narrative* and *narrativity*. In *Joyce Effects –On Language, Theory and History,* Derek Attridge defines "narrative" as

> a linear (though often multileveled) account of recognizable characters and events, engaging with the readers pre-existing mental schemata to arouse expectations, and to modify, complicate, defeat, or partially satisfy those expectations,

> arriving at full satisfaction –or something like it– only at the end (thereby constituting it as the end).[11]

Bearing in mind Attridge's definition, *Finnegans Wake* shares little resemblance with a narrative: it is far from being linear; its events and characters are not easily recognisable; and it openly defies and defeats the reader's expectations for it is built around a "strategy of deception," to use Ricoeur's felicitous phrase.[12] The reader's horizon of expectations demands a coherent whole, but the text offers but bits and scraps that are far from reaching a linear, organised narrative body, able to totally or even partially satisfy the reader's expectations at the end, especially because there is no end, only a return to the beginning.

As Margot Norris opportunely points out, characters and events are shady and mysterious in Joyce's text, but "something like characters and something like narratives do emerge from the reading of *Finnegans Wake.*"[13] Since *wakean* characters are dreamlike, fluid, and metamorphic, they keep merging with each other and with nature's elements, such as trees, stones, rivers, mountains, clouds, and many other. Furthermore, the subversion of the traditional concept of character is also performed by the use of initials to identify those who might be considered the *Wake*'s main "characters": HCE (Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker) and ALP (Anna Livia Plurabelle). More than individuals, HCE –"Here Comes Everybody" (*FW* 32.18-19)– and ALP –"Annah the Allmaziful, the Everliving, the Bringer of Plurabilities" (*FW* 104.1-2)– are a universal couple, a symbol of Humanity.[14] The thesis that there is only one character deployed in many selves is as relevant to the understanding of the text as the thesis that supports the existence of individual characters. Norris, for instance, suggests that:

> The different speaking voices may therefore represent different personae of the dreamer relating different versions of the same event. For example, since a single dreamer can be a father, a son, and a brother all at once, he can play out the Oedipal drama in his dream, in which he takes the parts of Laius, Oedipus, and Creon all at once. In this way he can express many conflicting feelings simultaneously.[15]

More importantly, if *Finnegans Wake* defies the definition of "narrative" formulated by Attridge, it, in turn, illustrates perfectly his definition of "narrativity," that is "the condition of engaging with the world and the mind in the specific manner of narrative."[16] The *Wake*'s profuse narrativity[17] –visible in episodes such as "The Mookse and the Gripes," "The tale of Kersse the Tailor and the Norwegian Captain," "The Ondt and the Gracehoper," "Mutt and Juva, the dispute between St. Patrick and the Archdruid," and numerous other– hides something that is forever elusive in the global narrative pattern. Hence Jean-Michel Rabaté's conclusion:

> In the case of the *Wake* […] the real object of narratology may prove to be the gap itself: in no other text are the indeterminacies of the speaking voice so dense and overwhelming that the reader has only a blurred impression that something is being told, though he cannot ascertain what or by whom.[18]

The instability of the narrative voice and this gap mentioned by Rabaté are intimately intertwined with the prevalence of gossip in the fabric of the text. The episode of the washerwomen, who literally wash HCE's and ALP's linen in public, is particularly revealing, but it is not the only one. The alleged crimes committed by HCE in Phoenix Park are endlessly told and

retold in time and space, apparently by different voices.[19] Each time the story is told, something is changed, added or subtracted, but the uncertainty concerning the narrated (un)facts remains entirely the same:

> And aither he cursed and recursed and was everseen doing what your fourfootlers saw or he was never done seeing what you coolpigeons know, weep the clouds aboon for smiledown witnesses, and that'll do now about the fairyhees and the frailyshees. (*FW* 29.9-12)

> Thus the unfacts, did we possess them, are too imprecisely few to warrant our certitude, the evidencegivers by legpoll too untrustworthily irreperible where his adjugers are semmingly freak threes but his judicandees plainly minus twos. (*FW* 57.16-19)

> [T]he deponent […] may have been (one is reluctant to use the passive voiced) may be been as much sinned against as sinning […]. (*FW* 523.7-9)

The text goes as far as to provide a neologism to define its ruling system: "gossipocracy" (*FW* 476.4). The spreading of gossip takes entire generations; a fact that renders the indeterminacy of the *Wake*'s speaking voice (or voices), including the narrator's, far more enigmatic.

Dorrit Cohn describes novelists as "fabricators of minds" and narrative fiction as the only literary genre that can reproduce the thoughts, the feelings, and the point of view of characters.[20] Three major techniques of representation are, therefore, identified by Cohn: "psycho-narration," "quoted monologue," and "narrated monologue." These techniques report to third person narratives, but, as Cohn emphasises, they

can easily be applied to first person narratives –"psycho-narration becomes self-narration (on the analogy with self-analysis), and monologues can now be either self-quoted, or self-narrated."[21] In *Finnegans Wake*, as we shall see, the mental discourse of the "charictures in the drame" (*FW* 302.31-32) is inseparable from the narrator's discourse. Thus the technique of representation privileged by Joyce is closer to self-quoted and self-narrated monologues.

Many critics, including Harold Bloom, agree that *Finnegans Wake* begins in the exact moment *Ulysses* ends: "Poldy goes to sleep, Molly broods magnificently, and then a larger Everyman dreams the book of the night. This new Everyman, Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, is too huge to have a personality […]."[22] According to Bloom's reasoning, HCE is Humanity's representative, its collective consciousness (or unconsciousness), and, consequently, too large to be encapsulated in one single personality. If HCE is the dreamer, can he also be the narrator of the dream? Part IV of *Finnegans Wake* and its only chapter may produce interesting answers to this quandary.

The chapter begins with the repetition of the Sanskrit word "Sandhyas" (*FW* 593.1), which means "twilight of dawn."[23] Its repetition in the beginning of the end, that is, in the *Wake*'s final chapter, is deeply suggestive. Indeed, HCE seems to announce, by radio, that the end is nothing but a new beginning, a new era, and a new cycle: "Calling all downs. Calling all downs to dayne. Array! Surrection. Eireweeker to the wohld bludyn world" (*FW* 593.2-3). The previous quotation indicates, on the one hand, that "bludyn" –Dublin's anagram– is the setting for the drama of Humanity and that, on the other hand, HCE is its spokesman. Yet, the problem is the stability, or rather, the lack of stability of this voice. Joycean readers know that *Finnegans Wake* ends (or rather returns to the beginning) during ALP's soliloquy. ALP is the female voice of the text, just as HCE is its male voice. However, I wonder if the two do not speak in unison?

In the beginning of the chapter, when "Eireweeker" announces a new era, an apocalyptic scenario of death and rebirth prevails and Finn MacCool, or "Foyn MacHooligan," the mythic hero, is remembered and celebrated:

> The old breeding bradsted culminwilth of natures to Foyn MacHooligan. The leader, the leader! Securest jubilends albas Temoram. Clogan slogan. Quake up, dim dusky, wook doom for husky! And let Billey Feghin be baallad out of his humuluation. Confidention to churchen. We have highest gratifications in announcing to pewtewr publikumst of pratician pratyusers, genghis is ghoon for you.
>
> A **h**and from the **c**loud **e**merges, **h**olding a **c**hart **e**xpanded. (*FW* 593.12-19, emphasis added)

This sacred rebirth addressed to the "pewtewr" –future– appears intermingled with the ad "genghis is ghoon for you" –"Guinness is good for you"[24]–, reinforcing the importance of daily life events and popular culture even in times of great change. The hand that emerges from the clouds is still the hand of HCE, whose initials are twice repeated. The chart prophesises the arrival of a new Man: "The child, a natural child, thenown by the mnames of, (aya! aya!), wouldbewas kidnapped at an age of recent probably, possibly remoter; or he conjured himself from seight by slide at hand […]; behold, he returns; renascenent; fincarnate […]" (*FW* 595.34-596.1-4). This child brings hope, renovation, and the fusion of all times: "wouldbewas." He is perfection –"freeflawforms"–, and a symbol –"parasama"– of himself, just as Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) –"Jambudvispa Vipra"– foresaw in his *New Science* and his theory of recurring cycles. (*FW* 596.24-29)[25]

Still, even in times of change there is some kind of continuity between past and present. The past heritage finds its

way into the *wakean* unconscious through the universe of dream and waking up may become a synonymous of being reborn to "a newera's day" (*FW* 623.7). Hence the narrative interrogation: "You mean to see we have been hadding a sound night's sleep? You may so" (*FW* 597.1-2). This "you" is nonetheless problematic. If HCE is the narrator, to whom is he talking to? To himself, perhaps; a fact that would explain the absence of referential language and explicit exposition; the presence of abbreviated syntax; and also the cuts, interruptions, hesitations, rhetorical questions, and the juxtapositions of temporal and spatial layers:

> **Why?** One's apurr apuss a story about brid and breakfedes and parricombating and coushcouch but others is of tholes and oubworn buyings, dolings and chafferings in heat, contest and enmity. **Why?** Every talk has his stay, vidnis Shavarsanjivana, and all-a-dreams perhapsing under lucksloop at last are through. **Why?** It is a sot of a swigswag, systomy dystomy, which everabody you ever anywhere at all doze. **Why? Such me**. (*FW* 597.16-22, emphasis added)

The questions are endless, but the answers remain sparse. The reader is left with a puzzling "Such me" that might be seen as a request –Search me!–, or an element of self-characterisation –Such is me! / This is who I am!–, a possibility reinforced by the following statement: "I yam as I yam." (*FW* 604.23)

The use of an indefinite "you" is also present in *Ulysses*. Even in the episodes that are part of its "initial style" (*Letters I* 129) –defined by Joyce as being more conventional than the rest of the text– the examples are abundant. "Proteus" is one such example. Stephen's physical ramblings equal his psychological promenades and the nebula hovering over the narrative becomes, in consequence, very dense: "Houses of decay, mine, his and all. **You** told the Clongowes gentry you

had an uncle a judge and an uncle a general in the army. Come out of them, Stephen. Beauty is not there" (*U* 49, emphasis added). The narrator seems to be Stephen who addresses his own consciousness. However, a few sentences before the text read: "**His** pace slackened. Here. Am **I** going to Aunt Sara's or not?" (*U* 47, emphasis added). The pronoun "his" indicates that Stephen and the narrator are separate entities, yet the immediate return to "I" changes everything again. Not even in a single paragraph can the reader find some constancy in the narrative voice. Nevertheless, one must add that in *Ulysses*, and most particularly in "Proteus," language always points back to its referent, that is, to Stephen's interiority; while in *Finnegans Wake* everything is much more dubious:

> Its humour is basically verbal since Joyce's universal dream is poetically conceived in terms of "echoes" rather than "images"; it is […] transliterated immediately upon perception into speech patterns capturing the many-levelled irrelevancies which dance about the central core of significance in each event.[26]

Indeed, in *Finnegans Wake,* more than voices one hears echoes from an immemorial past that the associative memory of the dreamer brings continually into the present, creating a monumental "memory monologue":

> The only temporal continuity that memory monologues present is the continuity of the spontaneously remembering mind. [T]he mind is trained exclusively on the past, the remembered events are tied only to each other, and not to a chronologically evolving time-span of silent locution.[27]

The matrix of associations in *Finnegans Wake* is thus overwhelming. In the last chapter of the book, it leads the reader away from the apocalyptic rebirth announced by HCE directly into the celebration of Saint Kevin's ritual. The narrative voice is apparently the same, and the transition from one moment to the other happens through the introduction of a powerful symbolic element: water.

The regenerative power of water is celebrated before the reference to Saint Kevin by an allusion to the Nile, in a passage of profound lyricism:

> Nuctumbulumbumus wanderwards the Nil. Victorias neanzas. Alberths neantas. It was a long, very long, a dark, very dark, an allburt unend, scarce endurable, and we could add mostly quite various and somenwhat stumbletumbling night. Endee he sendee. Diu! The has goning at gone, the is coming to come. Greets to ghastern, hie to morgning. Dormidy, destady. Doom is the faste. Well down, good other. Now day, slow day, from delicate to divine, divases. Padma, brighter and sweetster, this flower that bells, it is our hour or risings. Tickle, tickle. Lotus spray. Till herenext. Adya. (*FW* 598.5-14)

The arrival of Saint Kevin and his purification ritual is thus prepared. The ritual is performed in a small island, symbolically situated in the intersection of two rivers:

> [K]evin, lawding the triune trishagion, amidships of his conducible altar super bath, rafted centripetally, diaconal servent of orders hibernian, midway across the subject lake surface to its supreem epicentric lake Ysle,

> whereof its lake is the ventrifugal principality […]. (*FW* 605.13-17)

In an obvious allusion to Yeats's "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" –"I will arise now, and go to Innisfree, / And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made; / Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee, / And live alone in the bee-loud glade"[28]–, Saint Kevin is in the process of building of "a rubric penitential honeybeehivehut" (*FW* 605.23-24). In Russell McDonald's point of view, this reference to "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," an emblematic poem of Yeats's initial romantic naivety, represents Joyce's implicit criticism, particularly if one bears in mind that Saint Kevin, Yeats's representative, is described as being "Hydrophilos" (*FW* 606.5), contrary to Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's alter-ego, who, in *Ulysses*, is said to be "hydrophobe" (*U* 785). Furthermore, if Stephen's phobia is explained by "the incompatibility of aquacity with the erratic originality of genius" (*U* 785), one is led to conclude that Kevin/Yeats, contrary to Stephen/Joyce, does not possess "erratic originality of genius."[29]

The language that surrounds Kevin's ritual is deeply solemn and Kevin's numerous epithets are a good example of this solemnity: "poor Kevin" (*FW* 605.7), "piously Kevin" (*FW* 605.13), "holy Kevin" (*FW* 605.22), "most holy Kevin" (FW 605.25), "venerable Kevin" (*FW* 605.27), "most venerable Kevin" (*FW* 605.33-34), "blessed Kevin" (*FW* 605.36), "most blessed Kevin" (*FW* 606.2-3), "Saint Kevin, Hydrophilos" (*FW* 606.4-5).[30] However, Saint Kevin's sermon on the holy properties of water is abruptly interrupted by yet another rambling tour of Irish places, heroes, legends, and scandals:

> Bisships, bevel to rock's rite! Sarver buoy, extinguish! Nuotabene. The rare view from the three Benns under the bald heaven is on the other end, askan your blixom on dimmen and

> blastun, something to right hume about. They were erected in a purvious century, as a hen fine coops and, if you know your Bristol and have trudged the trolly ways and elventurns of that old cobbold city, you will sortofficially scribble a mental Peny-Knox-Gore. […] The first exploder to make his ablations in these parks was indeed that lucky mortal which the monster trial showed on its first day out. (*FW* 606.13-25)

In fact, this closely resembles a guided tour and the voice of the guide keeps calling attention to the view and the monuments by addressing a "you" that once again raises many questions. The constant and abrupt change of situational tableaux deepens the uncertainty that surrounds the speaking voice. In the beginning of the chapter the reader follows HCE's announcement of a new era via radio; afterwards, he or she witnesses Saint Kevin's ritual of purification; and then, suddenly, the reader goes, "by a commodius vicus of recirculation" (*FW* 3.2), on an original guided tour of Ireland's geography and history. If the narrator is still, presumably, HCE, the use of the third person when referring to himself and the ("monster") trial in which he was the defendant is rather unexpected. HCE accumulates therefore the roles of guide and tourist. This pair incorporated by HCE prepares the reader for the arrival of two other interesting duets: Muta and Juva, and also, Saint Patrick and the Archdruid.

Muta and Juva observe from a distance Saint Patrick, the epitome of Christianity and of the Catholic Church. His arrival brings many transformations and the fact that one of the observers is called Muta, the Latin word for "change," suggests that these changes are already a work in progress, whilst the profusion of sentences written in Latin indicates that this would be from then on an important language for Ireland. The dialogue between Muta and Juva introduces Saint Patrick's opponent, as well. "Bulkily" (*FW* 610.1), "Balkelly"

(*FW* 611.5) or "Bilkilly-Belkelly-Balkally" (*FW* 612.32), the druid, represents George Berkeley, "Ireland's last philosopher."[31] Embracing Berkeley's theses, the druid asserts that the objects possess no existence outside the mind that perceives them and adds that human perception depends on its participation in divine perception, which can only be reached by a true visionary, "one puraduxed seer in seventh degree of wisdom of Entis-Onton he savvy inside true inwardness of reality […]" (*FW* 611.19-21)

However, the transcendental logic of the druid is betrayed by his incapacity to see beyond the colour green: "all show colour of sorrelwood herbgreen" (*FW* 611.34). Thus, Saint Patrick's pragmatism and his rejection of the druid's theory of perception win the fight and screams of joy are heard everywhere: "Good safe firelamp!" (*FW* 613.1), that is, *God save Ireland*. The crisis is solved and a new day arises, but nothing really changes because the motto is still the old "*Fuitfiat!*" (*FW* 613.14): "As it was, let it be."[32]

With the beginning of this new day, it is time for ALP to speak. Her presence and her perfect union with HCE are feted as follows: "**H**ealth, **c**halce, **e**ndnessnessessity! **A**rrive, **l**ikkypuggers, in a **p**oke!" (*FW* 613, emphasis added). Addressing HCE, ALP's voice is first heard in a letter:

> Dear. And we go on to Dirtdump. Reverend. May we add majesty? Well, we have frankly enjoyed more than anything these secret workings of natures […] and, well, was really so denighted of his lights time. […] Yon clouds will soon disappear looking forwards at a fine day. (*FW* 615.12-18)

In her long missive, ALP renews her trust in the start of a "fine day" and joyfully remembers the devotion of her husband and the happy days they shared. She also thanks the support of those who stood by the couple in hard times[33] and she does not

forget the "Mucksrats" (*FW* 615.17), HCE's detractors. It is ALP's determination and love that render HCE's (and Humanity's) rebirth possible: "she who shuttered him after his fall and waked him widowt sparing and gave him keen and made him able […]" (*FW* 102.1-3). More importantly, the commencement of a new day and HCE's rebirth set ALP free to her long-desired meeting with the sea, but not without leaving a last word of advice –"Only look through your leather-box one day […]" (*FW* 618.12)–, which seems to be an invitation to reread *Finnegans Wake* as her letter to future generations.

ALP's soliloquy, "one of the great passages of all literature, is the elegy of River Liffey as she passes, old, tired, soiled with the filth of city, through Dublin and back to the sea."[34] The rhythmic and melodic quality of this extensive monologue is pure poetry from its very beginning to the suspended end:

> Soft morning, city! Lsp! I am leafy speafing. Lpf! Folty and folty all the nights have falled on to long my hair. Not a sound, falling. Lispn! No wind no word. Only a leaf, just a leaf and then leaves. (*FW* 619.20-23)

> So soft this morning ours. Yes. Carry me along, taddy, like you done through the toy fair. […]
>
> Yes, tid. There's where. First. We pass through grass behush the bush to. Whish! A gull. Gulls. Far calls. Coming, far! End here. Us then. Finn, again! Take. Bussoftlhee, mememormee! Till thousendsthee. Lps. The keys to. Given! A way a lone a last a loved a long the (*FW* 628.8-16)

The adjective "soft" is recurrently used. In the phrase "Soft morning, city!," it can be seen as a substitute for the traditional *Good Morning!*, here addressed to the city; and later, in "So

soft this morning ours," it becomes the contemplative expression of the river when approaching the sea. In the first quotation, the slow rhythm of the water is highlighted by an effect of accumulation –"only a leaf, just a leaf and then leaves"– and also by the progressive form of the verbs. The meeting with the sea is still far away and the discourse is relatively clear. The splashes of water are represented by the exclamations: "Lsp!," "Lpf!," "Lispn!" In the second quote, the rhythm changes; it accelerates, mimicking the speed of the river when the sea is in sight. Accordingly, sentences are short and suddenly interrupted. "I'm getting mixed" (*FW* 626.36), ALP confesses, and her discourse becomes progressively obscure. She longs to be remembered by others –"Bussoftlhee, mememormee!"– for her own memory is beginning to fade: "It is the softest morning that ever I can ever remember me" (*FW* 621.8-9). And then she mentions some keys, "the keys to dreamland" (*FW* 615.28), "the keys of me heart" (*FW* 626.30-31), and, perhaps, the keys to understanding the *Wake*.

Despite the sadness and the feeling of nostalgia –"I am passing out. O bitter ending!" (*FW* 627.34-35)–, the end should not be seen as a fatality. As Seamus Deane points out, in his introduction to *Finnegans Wake*, ALP "dies into a beginning" (*FW* xxxix). Death, in the *Wake*, is only a necessary step to be reborn; death is but a moment in a greater cycle of life. And the *wakean* language mimes that process of dissolution so perfectly that, as Brian Mchale suggests, ALP's soliloquy becomes the best literary example of *stream of consciousness*:

> Molly Bloom's soliloquy notoriously represents the "stream of consciousness," but Anna Livia is the thing itself: the personification of the River Liffey, she literalizes the metaphor "stream of consciousness." Just as her discourse seems to sweep all language in its stream, so it also sweeps up the projected world of this text: there

> is no stable world *behind* this consciousness, but only a flux of discourse in which fragments of different, incompatible realities flicker into existence and out of existence again, overwhelmed by the competing reality of language.[35]

Equally important to our discussion of the narrator is Brian Mchale's conclusion that there is not a stable world behind the *wakean* consciousness, a consciousness forever in transit. The "Bothallchoractors[…]" (*FW* 314.8) of the *Wake* or its narrative voices seem all facets of one same androgynous personality, whose flesh is made of discourse. Language does not point back to its referents, it keeps returning to itself. Only the supremacy of language for language's sake could justify, for example, the puzzling, but hilarious, association of the invasion of Ireland by the Vikings with HCE's courtship of ALP:

> I was the pet of everyone then. A princeable girl. And you were the pantymammy's Vulking Corsergoth. The invision of Indelond. And, by Thorror, you looked it! My lips went livid for from the joy of fear. Like almost now. How?
>
> How you said how you'd give me the keys of me heart. And we'd be married till delth to uspart. (*FW* 626.26-31)

Words rule the *wakean* universe and ALP's words prove it: "Mineninecyhandsy, in the languo of flows. That's Jorgen Jargonsen" (*FW* 621.21-22). The reference to Jorgen Jorgensen, who studies aboriginal vocabularies,[36] suggests that the *wakean* jargon is equally primitive and essential. ALP too speaks in a "languo of flows" that constantly surprises the reader. Hence her question: "But you understood, nodst?" (*FW* 621.22-23).

One should never forget that *Finnegans Wake* is above all a metafictional text, deeply involved in its own processes of production and reception.[37] Joyce, the reader, possessed a giant encyclopaedia, not only of literary references, but also of languages, maps, landscapes, historical facts, personal memories, and dreams, and the least one can expect from a Joycean reader is the desire to share Joyce's voracious and alert attitude towards the act of reading. This non-passivity may be true of all texts and all readers, but as Linda Hutcheon explains in *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*: "What is interesting here is that it is fiction itself that is attempting to bring to readers' attention their central and enabling role."[38]

Finnegans Wake is particularly challenging precisely because more than telling stories, it analyses the manifold processes and strategies of storytelling. The beginning of the novel serves, in this respect, as a good example: "riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, bring **us** by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to **H**owth **C**astle and **E**nvirons" (*FW* 3.1-3, emphasis added). After ALP's letter and soliloquy, the readers ("us") are back to HCE, whose initials are inscribed in the landscape, and we are invited to recycle a story that is far from being new: "It is the same told of all" (*FW* 18.19-20); "The sehm asnuh" (*FW* 620.16); "What will be is" (*FW* 620.32). The great novelty is, in the end, the reader's fresh look upon the text.

The *wakean* challenge is then set from the very beginning, and its coordinates thus revealed, but the map is blurred and the reader has to accumulate the roles of researcher, guide, storyteller, narrator, and co-creator of this "Tobecontinued's tale" (*FW* 626.18). The responsibility of the reader is, indeed, immense, but the reward is exactly proportional, and any "committee of amusance" (*FW* 616.18) would acknowledge that.

Notes

[1] This discussion of Joyce's subversion of narrative conventions in *Finnegans Wake* was freely adapted from the second chapter of my Master's dissertation, written in Portuguese and presented, in January 2008, at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto, under the title "'Tobecontinued's tale': Lugares do Leitor e do Narrador em *Finnegans Wake*." To serve the purposes of this essay, the subject was further developed and references added.

[2] Aristóteles, *Poética*, trans. Eudoro de Sousa (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional da Casa da Moeda, 2003) 7.ª ed, 110.

[3] António Damásio, *O Sentimento de Si: O Corpo, a Emoção e a Neurobiologia da Consciência* (Mem Martins, Europa-América, 2000) 189.

[4] It is not solely our wish for evasion that enables us to appreciate the stories that we read or those that we are told; equally important is the kind of experience that they provide us with: a vicarious experience. Children are said to learn by imitation; adults do so as well. This explains, in part, the morals taught at the end of each fable and fairytale; and it explains, moreover, the close path that literature and politics followed, particularly until the 18th century (cf. Jane Tompkins Jane, *Reader-response criticism: from formalism to post-structuralism* [London: The John Hopkins Press Ltd, 1980] 214). Paradoxically, if, on the one hand, narratives offer a privileged space for the reinforcement of conventions, rules, and proper social behaviour, on the other hand, they have always been an excellent medium for criticising and subverting these exact same codes, rules, and conventions.

[5] Umberto Eco, *Seis Passeios nos Bosques da Ficção*, trans. Wanda Ramos (Lisboa: Difel, 1997 [1994]) 2.ª ed., 97.

[6] Kawakami's reader lived through the earthquake and tsunami of March 2011 and the nuclear crisis it set off: "Continuez d'écrire, je vous en supplie, ce roman que vous écrivez me permet de croire, quand tout est détruit, que le quotidien existe encore" (in Cécile Sakai, "Répliques au séisme", *Le Magazine Littéraire* (2012) 68-69, 69.

[7] Forster *apud* Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 91.

[8] Cf. Jack Zipes (ed.), *Arabian Nights* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1997) 2-22; and Valérie Creusot (trans.), *Les Mille et Une Nuits* (Paris: Pocket, 2006) 6-7.

[9] Fordham *apud* Luca Crispi and Sam Slote, *How Joyce wrote Finnegans Wake: a chapter-by-chapter genetic guide* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007) 463.

[10] I address this subject more thoroughly in Márcia Lemos, "'So read we in must book. It tells. He prophets': A Reader's Approach to *Finnegans Wake*," *Cadernos de Literatura Comparada* 19 (2008) 251-263.

[11] Derek Attridge, *Joyce Effects: On Language, Theory and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 126.

[12] Ricoeur *apud* Tiphaine Samoyault, *Excès du Roman* (Paris: Maurice Nadeau, 1999) 30.

[13] Margot Norris, "*Finnegans Wake*: The Critical Method" in *James Joyce: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Mary T. Reynolds (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1993 [1976]) 163-170, 163.

[14] *Finnegans Wake* thus imitates *The Book of Kells*: "Abbreviations of sacred names appear throughout the book […]. The dignity and sacredness of the names were emphasised in this way, e.g. IHS for Jesus, SPS SCS for Spiritus Sanctus (Holy Spirit), DS for Deus (God) and DNS for Dominus (Lord)" (*The Book of Kells: a selection of pages reproduced with description and notes*, by G. O. Simms [Dublin: Colin Smythe and the Library of Trinity College, 1980] vi).

[15] Norris 170.

[16] Attridge 126.

[17] Critics like David Hayman, support that "though it remains a non-narrative text, one devoted more to the advancement of verbal effects and intricate allegories than to telling stories or the elaboration of vestigial plots, the *Wake* does not lack narrativity. It is however a narrativity that challenges our attempts to unify it as a story or reconstitute it as a freestanding and suspenseful plot, as opposed to interesting and engaging artefact" ("The Manystorytold of the Wake: How Narrative was Made to Inform the Non-Narrativity of the Night," *Joyce Studies Annual* vol.8, ed. Thomas F. Staley [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997] 81-114, 112).

[18] Jean-Michel Rabaté, "Narratology and the subject of *Finnegans Wake*" in *James Joyce: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Mary T. Reynolds (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1993 [1986]) 196-205, 196.

[19] According to Catherine Whitley, "The Ballad of Persse O'Reilly" is another good example of how gossip, History, and popular culture "can be interchangeable" in *Finnegans Wake* ("The Politics of Representation in *Finnegans Wake*'s «Ballad»" in *Joycean Cultures / Culturing Joyces*, eds. Vincent Cheng, Kimberly J. Devlin, and Margot Norris [London: Associated University Presses, 1998] 163-176, 163).

[20] Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978) 67.

[21] "1. psycho-narration: the narrator's discourse about a character's consciousness; 2. quoted monologue: a character's mental discourse; 3.

narrated monologue: a character's mental discourse in the guise of the narrator's discourse." (Cohn 14)

[22] Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: the books and the schools of the ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994) 422.

[23] Roland McHugh, *Annotations to* Finnegans Wake (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991 [1980]) 593.

[24] Still on display at the Guinness storehouse in Dublin.

[25] Here evoked by the use of Greek "gigantogyroi: giant circles" (McHugh 596) or, in its *wakean* version, "gygantogyres" (*FW* 596.23).

[26] Bernard Benstock, *Joyce – Again's Wake: An Analysis of* Finnegans Wake (London and Seattle: University of Washington Press 1965) 108.

[27] Cohn 184.

[28] William Butler Yeats, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" in *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1973 [1933]) 44.

[29] Cf. Russell McDonald, "Who Speaks for Fergus? Silence, Homophobia, and the Anxiety of Yeatsian Influence in Joyce," *Twentieth Century Literature* 51.4 (2005): 391-414.

[30] The solemnity of language is also built upon a group of liturgical references and the symbolic use of number seven (cf. Eric Rosenbloom, *A Word in Your Ear: How & Why to Read James Joyce's* Finnegans Wake [Vermont: BookSurge Publishing 2005] 55). Saint Kevin brings water from the river seven times in order to fill the sand cavity that will perform the role of baptismal font for him. In addition to water, he uses oils and prayers to free himself from the original sin and achieve the purification desired. If this original sin refers to Adam and Eve, or rather to HCE's alleged crimes in Phoenix Park, remains debatable.

[31] Rosenbloom 56.

[32] McHugh 613.

[33] "Wherapon our best again to a hundred and eleven ploose one thousand and one other blessings will now concloose thoose epoostles to your great kindest, well, for all at trouble to took." (*FW* 617.3-5)

[34] Joseph Campbell and Henry Morton Robinson, *A skeleton key to* Finnegans Wake – *Unlocking James Joyce's Masterwork* (California: New World Library, 2005 [1944]) 351.

[35] McHale *apud* Christopher Butler, "*Finnegans Wake*" in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999 [1990]) 259-282, 275.

[36] McHugh 621.

[37] I address this subject more thoroughly in Márcia Lemos, "Dr. 'Jeems Joker' Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love *Finnegans Wake*" in *Weaving New Perspectives Together: Some Reflections on*

Literary Studies (Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, forthcoming).

[38] Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991 [1980]) xii.