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THE INFLUENCE OF *FINNEGANS WAKE* ON ROBERT ANTON
WILSON'S MASKS OF THE ILLUMINATI

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

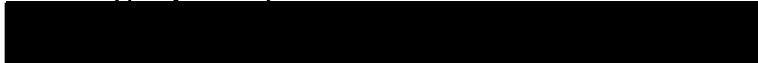
by
Eric Robert Wagner
December 2004


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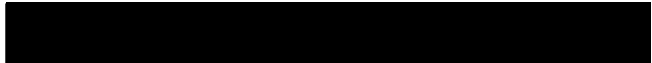
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ABSTRACT

James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* in its collision of language and history has exerted considerable influence over Irish-American novelist Robert Anton Wilson. This thesis illustrates how one contemporary novelist, Wilson, has used the techniques of the *Wake*, and integrated them with other narrative and rhetorical strategies, such as those developed by William S. Burroughs and Ezra Pound.

Wilson seems particularly interested in the multiple viewpoints used by Joyce, which he sees as parallel to the multiple observers in modern physics and the multiple perspectives in cubism, etc.

I examine how Wilson has deployed the techniques of *Finnegans Wake* and its covert rhetoric in explaining Joyce's work from a post-colonial perspective. Wilson views Joyce's writing as part of a tradition of covert writing in Irish literature, particularly in Wilde, Yeats and Joyce. I contend that Wilson himself continues this tradition, particularly in *Masks of the Illuminati*, which includes Joyce and Yeats as characters.

My contribution is to show precisely how Wilson employs the word games of *Finnegans Wake*, along with other devices, to depict dreams in his novels, as well as to

conceal and reveal a variety of levels of meaning and post-colonial insight. This thesis offers a close reading of Wilson's use of a variety of narrative techniques, integrating those of the *Wake*, including multiple viewpoints, combined words, multi-lingual puns and webs of allusions, in his novel *Masks of the Illuminati*. I examine where Wilson deploys the Wakean devices, and to what end he uses them in the novel.

To Debbie

You make all the nonsense worth it.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

According to Michael Powers, "The formation of subjects, and especially the ways in which language and history affect that process, is a central theme of *Finnegans Wake*" (102). David Hayman has discussed a number of experimental writers who have continued along the path forged by James Joyce in the *Wake*. In fact, *Finnegans Wake* in its collision of "language and history" has exerted considerable influence over Irish-American novelist Robert Anton Wilson.¹ This thesis will illustrate how one contemporary novelist, Wilson, has used the techniques of the *Wake*, and integrated them with other narrative and rhetorical strategies, such as those developed by William S. Burroughs and Ezra Pound. Jean-Michel Rabaté writes, "Joyce's systematic creation of an ideal audience has first and foremost a defensive function: the 'common or neuter'

¹ Wilson's books have influenced a variety of contemporary subcultures. *Illuminatus!*, co-authored by Wilson and Robert Shea, won the Prometheus Award in 1986 as a "classic" of science fiction. *Changing Times* magazine listed Wilson's *Cosmic Trigger* in first place among recommended books on the New Age. As of 2002 *Illuminatus!* became the best selling science fiction paperback in the U.S. and held 10th place among the top 100,000 science fiction novels sold by Amazon.com (Wilson *TSOG* 215-216).

reader is less educated than critics might wish, yet he or she (he-she) can read the book and derive 'lots of fun' from it" (58). Wilson does indeed "derive 'lots of fun' from it," and he uses Joyce's means to his own ends.

The traditional Irish drinking song "Tim Finnegan's Wake" tells of a hod carrier named Tim Finnegan who liked to have a pint of the creature (Guinness stout) each day to help him with his work. One day he falls from his ladder and passes out. His friends and family assume he has died, and they give him a funeral and a traditional Irish wake. A fight breaks out, and someone spills a drink on Tim Finnegan, awakening him. Joyce sees this as paradigmatic of the dream/waking cycle, as well as a model for the fall of man and redemption in Catholic theology, Humpty Dumpty's fall from the wall, etc.

Robert Anton Wilson has written a number of novels and nonfiction works, which some readers classify as postmodern. I find Wilson's work to explore a number of areas typical of post-colonialism and postmodernism with great wit and insight. Joyce scholar John Bishop writes that Robert Anton Wilson "has discovered in *Finnegans Wake* both the formula for the hydrogen bomb and the molecular structure of the double helix of DNA" (xii). Wilson

delights in making these sorts of connections, following in the Joycean tradition. He seems particularly interested in the multiple viewpoints used by Joyce, which he sees as parallel to the multiple observers in modern physics and the multiple perspectives in cubism, etc. Wilson wrote, "I bought the *Wake* on my 16th birthday, in 1948, started reading it, and haven't stopped yet" (*Illuminati Papers* 31). In *Prometheus Rising* Wilson writes about "the multi-level language of *Finnegans Wake*, where Finnegans is Finn--again, Finn Mac Cool of Irish legend reborn and Huck Finn again also, sailing down 'Missus Liffey,' both the river Anna Liffey in Ireland and Huck Finn's Mississippi" (201). He has written frequently about *Finnegans Wake* in his non-fiction, explaining some of what he considers Joyce's methods in the book and the ideas underlying the text.

I will examine how Wilson has deployed the techniques of *Finnegans Wake* and its covert rhetoric in explaining Wilson's work from a post-colonial perspective. Wilson views Joyce's writing as part of a tradition of covert writing, going back to Oscar Wilde's essay "The Truth of Masks." Wilson contends that this essay conceals its meanings due to the British colonial control of Ireland.

On the surface Wilde's essay discusses the importance of costuming in Shakespeare's plays, but Wilson reads the essay as a discussion of the necessity for covert behavior, or mask wearing, by some groups in society. At first, Wilson felt that Wilde's essay dealt with the masks worn by gay men in Victorian England, hiding their sexual identities. However, over time Wilson came to believe that one could also read the essay as dealing with the masks worn under the oppression of English colonialism. Wilde himself suggests that the essay may contain more than appears on the surface. In "The Truth of Masks" Wilde cryptically comments, "Not that I agree with everything that I have said in this essay. There is much with which I entirely disagree" (Wilde 1078). In an essay on *Finnegans Wake* in Wilson's *Coincidance* he refers to "the Irish people's (or any colonial people's) obsession with hiding what they are doing" (14). Wilson reads Wilde's essay "The Truth of Masks" as working on at least three levels: the importance of costuming in Shakespeare; the masks worn by homosexuals in Victorian England; and the masks worn by those under colonial oppression. Wilson sees this tradition of multilevel writing continuing in Irish writing, particularly in Yeats and Joyce. I contend that

Wilson himself continues this tradition in his writing, particularly in *Masks of the Illuminati*, which includes Joyce and Yeats as characters.

Wilson next traces this tradition to Yeats' concept of Mask in *A Vision*. Yeats wrote that automatic writing by his wife provided the basis for this text. In *A Vision* Yeats provides a complex model of the self, but Wilson sees Yeats continuing in the covert writing tradition of Wilde. At first Wilson saw Yeats' ideas as a tool for understanding the covert lifestyle Wilde lived as a homosexual in Victorian London, but as he got older Wilson came to suspect that Yeats had in mind all writers writing under the burdens of colonial oppression.

Wilson sees these ideas continuing to develop through the various stages of Joyce's career, from the "silence, exile and cunning" of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to the concealing word games of *Finnegans Wake*. My contribution is to show precisely how Wilson employs the word games of *Finnegans Wake*, along with other devices, to depict dreams in his novels, as well as to conceal and reveal a variety of levels of meaning and post-colonial insight.

This thesis will offer a close reading of Wilson's use of a variety of narrative techniques, integrating those of the *Wake*, including multiple viewpoints, combined words, multi-lingual puns and webs of allusions, in his novel *Masks of the Illuminati*. I will examine where Wilson deploys the Wakean devices, and to what end he uses them in the novel. I will examine how he uses these devices to reveal the nature of the characters, as well as lampoon the power structure which gave rise to Irish-English tensions. My research will demonstrate the continued relevance of the *Wake*, as well as display the various colonial tensions in the book. I contend that Wilson utilizes many of the stylistic devices of *Finnegans Wake* in *Masks of the Illuminati* and puts them to new and creative use. The small amount of existing critical work on Wilson has not shown his tremendous debt to Joyce.

The critical tradition of *Finnegans Wake* has reached little consensus. Even before the publication of the complete novel in 1939, many voices had chimed in either condemning or championing Joyce's book of the night. Even old friends such as Ezra Pound thought Joyce had gone too far in his final novel. In subsequent years, a great deal of scholarship has outlined a variety of interpretations of

the novel such as that of Campbell and Robinson (1944), Tindall (1969), McHugh (1980), Bishop (1986), and Kenner (1987). Wilson has studied Joyce a great deal over more than fifty years, and he has also read a great deal of the Joyce literature. He tends to see *Finnegans Wake* as a dream where some (such as Bishop) might disagree. (Bishop sees *Finnegans Wake* as presenting the whole sleep experience, with dream as one component of that experience.) Wilson mentions Hugh Kenner more than any other Joyce scholar. Kenner has given a great deal more attention to *Ulysses* than to *Finnegans Wake*, but I suspect part of Wilson's interest in Kenner's writing comes from their shared deep interest in the work of Ezra Pound.

Masks of the Illuminati includes Joyce and Albert Einstein as characters just before the outbreak of World War I. At this time Joyce had begun thinking about the writing of *Ulysses*. In the novel Joyce and Einstein meet in a bar in Switzerland, and while there they meet an Englishman who believes in an occult conspiracy trying to kill him. Joyce and Einstein then attempt to discover the truth behind this man's fears. Using the techniques of the *Wake*, Wilson shows how some of the new literary ideas arising in the character Joyce's mind over the course of

Masks of the Illuminati blend as he prepares to write *Ulysses*. My research will show how Wilson has deployed Joyce's own devices to portray Joyce developing those very devices. Wilson also uses the techniques of the *Wake* to illustrate the English-Irish tensions in the novel. Wilson employs the techniques of the *Wake* to draw parallels between Einstein's theories of relativity and the multiple viewpoints deployed in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. In personal interviews with Wilson for my book *The Lazy Critter's Guide to Robert Anton Wilson* (New Falcon Press, forthcoming, Summer 2004), Wilson told me how Joyce's techniques helped him to add layers of depth to the meaning of his novels and to reveal the kinds of realities not accounted for by conventional thought.

Although Wilson's work has not received a great deal of critical attention, this thesis will attempt to show the continued relevance of *Finnegans Wake* to one contemporary novelist, as well as analyze the tools Joyce developed to express some of the more repressed aspects of the human experience. I also hope to demonstrate that Robert Anton Wilson's work does deserve scholarly review for its wit, its vision, and its humanity.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TECHNIQUES OF *FINNEGANS WAKE*

When Joyce published *Ulysses* in 1922 at the age of forty, he found himself at a crossroads. Some of his peers, such as T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, saw him as having written a masterpiece, perhaps the greatest novel ever written. Where should he now turn his attention? Well, he decided that since *Ulysses* told the story of a day, he ought now to tell the story of a night. He spent most of the rest of his life attempting to do so, finally publishing *Finnegans Wake* on his birthday in 1939, just two years before his death. Many of those who had praised *Ulysses* so highly had reservations about *Finnegans Wake* and the huge amount of effort Joyce put into its creation. Pound felt that Joyce had gone too far from comprehensibility and dwelt too much on scatology. This section of my thesis will explore some of the techniques Joyce developed for the shaping of this unique narrative, and hopefully will help to illuminate why he would devote so many years to the creation of such an odd book.

The sixth chapter of *Finnegans Wake* provides an interesting starting point for discussing the text. This

chapter takes the form of a radio quiz show, with twelve questions and/or riddles and their answers. The ninth question and answer pair seems to provide a general introduction to the book. William Tindall suggests that "Jimmy MacCawthelock" "quizzes Shaun, letter carrier for 'Jhon Jhamieson and Song'" (111). Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, or HCE, whom most commentators see as the dreamer of the book, or one identity of the dreamer of the book, has two sons, Shem and Shaun, also known as Shem the penman and Shaun the postman. These paired opposites run throughout the text:

9. Now to be on anew and basking again in the panorama of all flores of speech, if a human being duly fatigued by his dayety in the sooty, having plenty off time on his gouty hands and vacants of space at his sleepish feet and as hapless behind the dreams of accuracy as any camelot prince of dinmurk, were at this auctual futile preteriting instant, in the states of suspensive exanimation, accorded, throughout the eye of a noodle, with an earsighted view of old hopeinhaven with all the ingredient and egregiunt wights and ways to which in the

curse of his tory will had been having recourses,
the reverberration of knotcracking awes, the
reconjungation of nodebinding ayes, the
redissolusingness of mindmouldered ease and the
therby hang the Hoel of it, could such a none,
whiles even led comsilencers to comeliewithhers
and till intempestuous Nox should catch the
gallicry and spot lucan's dawn, byhold at ones
what is main and why tis twain, how one once meet
melts in tother watns poingings, the sap rising,
the foles falling, the nimb now nihilant round
the girlyhead so becoming, the wrestless in the
womb, all the rivals to allsea, shakeagain, O
disaster! shakealose, Ah how starring! but Heng's
got a bit of Horsa's nose and Jeff's got the
signs of Ham round his mouth and the beau that
spun beautiful pales as it palls, what roserude
and oragious grows gelb and greem, blue out the
ind of it! Violet's dyed! then what would that
fargazer seem to seemself to seem seeming of,
dimm it all? (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* 143)

This question (yes, it consists of one rather elaborate sentence) suggests beginning again, "be on anew", using all

the flowers of speech, "flores of speech to tell the tale of a person duly fatigued by his day in the city, "if a human being duly fatigued by his dayety in the sooty. Note that "sooty" suggests both the griminess of daily toil plus "dear dirty Dublin," as many inhabitants referred to Dublin in Joyce's day. When this person falls asleep, they will have plenty of time (as well as "off time") to dream about the concerns of their life. As well, they will have virtual time and space within their dream worlds to act out those concerns, "having plenxty of time on his gouty hands and vacants of space at his sleepish feet." In *Ulysses*, and to a limited extent in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce had associated the sense of vision with perception of space and the sense of hearing with the perception of time. Joyce expands these perceptions in *Finnegans Wake*. In the *Wake* he links them as space-time, taking Einstein into account. As space becomes time in the *Wake*, s becomes t, and a sailor becomes a tailor. Joyce frequently makes reference to Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartis* in this regard. One can see a bit of this play in the above passage about space-time. The hands have become "gouty" through the inactivity of sleep. In *Time and Western Man* Wyndham Lewis criticized Joyce for too great an

interest in time rather than space, and he said of *Finnegans Wake*, "You must draw the line somewhere" (Tindall 179). Joyce incorporated Lewis's criticisms in the *Wake*, showing via language how space and time flow into each other in a relativistic, post-Einsteinian world, sailor becoming tailor.

In the question Joyce refers to "camelot prince of dinmurk." This phrase appears in the context of explaining the experience of dreaming, showing how different literary and mythical figures can blend in the dream world. Here Joyce conflates the Arthurian legends of Camelot with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. One can see parallels between the infidelity between Guinivere and Lancelot and the possible infidelity between Gertrude and her dead husband's brother, or with the King Mark, Tristan, and Isolde triangle. The "portmanteau" expression "dinmurk" suggests dim and murky, for the nighttime dream world of the *Wake*, as well as the synesthesia of din and murky, sound and sight. The din suggests the sound of thunder that terrifies the dreamer in the *Wake*, as well as Vico's theory of thunder as the origin of religion (Tindall 166, McHugh 143).

The dreamer, in a state "of suspensive exanimation" uses his "noodle" for "an earsighted view of old

hopeinhaven." Joyce thus creates this synesthesia of "earsighted" to show how all borders dissolve in the dream state. John Bishop has observed the importance of the role of sight and hearing in the *Wake* (Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark* 216). The dreamer, with his eyes closed becomes effectively blind, but the ears continue to function, at least in a limited fashion, throughout the night.

"Hopeinhaven" in this passage combines the Copenhagen of Hamlet's Denmark with a "hope in heaven."

"Erregiunt" suggests the medieval philosopher Scotus Erigina who greatly influenced Ezra Pound. According to Erigina "*quae sunt, omnia sunt*," which means "all things that are, are lights" (Terrell 143). This metaphysical model fits in with the *Wake's* dreamworld, even with its lack of external light. "His tory" suggests the dreamer's history as well as the domination of Ireland for 700 years by Tory England. This whole question suggests a model of the nature of dreams, as well as a model of the structure of *Finnegans Wake*.

I read "knotcracking" as suggesting the difficulties the noggin (or brain) encounters dealing with these riddles, as well as the Nutcracker ballet, another dreamstory whose magical mice and dancing candy fits in

with the *Wakeworld*. (The later "hang the Hoel of it" continues this Christmas theme, along with the holistic idea that the whole of our perceived world hangs from our models of the world.) "Nox," Latin for night, fits in with the sexual bedroom references to "comeliewithhers," which also suggests Sir Walter Raleigh's *carpe diem* poem "Come Live With Me and Be My Love," although of course Joyce suggests that we rather seize the night (McHugh 143).

"Reconjungation" suggests conjugal love, as well as the conjugations of language ("all flores of speech"). This world also contains the name of Carl Jung. Joyce took his mentally ill daughter Lucia to see Jung. Joyce commented to Jung that he played the same sort of games with language that Lucia did. Jung responded that Joyce was diving, while she was drowning. On reading Joyce's *Ulysses* Jung responded that this was the evidence of a mentally ill mind or of a whole new kind of sanity. Jung found Joyce's insights into female viewpoints in the final section simply amazing (Maddox 398). "Reconjungation" also suggests "recirculation," a term which appears in the first sentence of *Finnegans Wake*:

riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of
shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodious

vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and
Environs. (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* 3)

"Recirculation" in conjunction with "vicus" suggests the cyclic philosophy of Giambattista Vico, whose thought greatly influenced Joyce (Wilson, *Coincidence* 7). The water imagery also ties in with Jung's comment about diving and sinking.

To return to riddle nine, "why tis twain" suggests the division between all the dyads of *Finnegans Wake*, male and female, day and night, light and dark, etc. Robert Anton Wilson has suggested that each paragraph of *Finnegans Wake*'s hologramatic prose contains the essence of the whole novel (Wilson, *Illuminati Papers* 33). "Twain" suggests Mark Twain, who plays many roles at the *Wake*. He of course wrote about Huck Finn, and was married to a woman named Livy, whom Joyce associates with A. L. P., the "heroine" of *Finnegans Wake*, the goddess Anna Livia Plurabella and the river Liffey in Dublin. Twain wrote about the Mississippi, which becomes Mrs. Liffey in *Finnegans Wake*. Plus Mark suggests one of the *Wake*'s four old men: Marcus Lyons, Matt Gregory, Luke Tarpey and Johnny MacDougal. These four old gossips also associate with the four evangelists, the four bedposts of the dreamer's bed, the four men carrying Tim

Finnegan's casket, the four animals in the vision of Ezekiel, etc. (Wilson, *Coincidance* 166). Medieval Irish Catholics associated the evangelists with these animals from the Old Testament: Mark with the lion, Luke with the bull ("taur" in Latin), John with the eagle and Matthew with the angel or human (Gregory contains "ego"). Again, quiz question nine connects with many of the major themes and characters of the entire book.

Returning once again to question nine, "wrestless in the womb" suggests parallels between the experience of the sleeper and of the infant in the womb. The ego dies at night, and then after the Dark Night of the Soul and/or nine months in the womb, gets reborn with the dawn as in "lucan's dawn" from the question. The seven colors of the rainbow accompany this morning resurrection, "what roserude and oragious grows gelb and greem, blue out the ind of it! Violet's dyed!" John Bishop suggests that *Finnegans Wake's* frequent rainbow references refer to the color spectrum, the palette available to the essentially blind sleeper (Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark* 230).

Joyce gives as an answer to the riddle, "A Collideorscape" (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* 143). One can see *Finnegans Wake* as a collision of all the stuff in the

dreamer HCE's head, and/or as an attempt to escape from history, what Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses* calls a nightmare from which he is trying to escape. This collision and/or escape becomes a kaleidoscope. Of course, as McHugh points out, one can also see these "flores of speech" as flaws (McHugh 143). McHugh's *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* reveals how multivariant Joyce made *Finnegans Wake*. Each passage lends itself to interpretation after interpretation. Joyce said it would take the professors a thousand years to figure out the novel. In seventy-two years we've only begun to scratch the surface.

Finnegans Wake's resistance to interpretation ties in with Joyce's persistent water imagery. Joyce makes many parallels between the nature of water and that of dream. Both of them escape the easy grasp, flowing away easily. An expression such as "gouty hands" suggests fleshy hands afflicted with gout, but it also suggests "weekends" by its sound (McHugh 143), and "gouty" and "sleepish" suggest goat and sheep, a fundamental Christian duality. One can see why John Bishop sees *Finnegans Wake* as fountainhead for much modern critical theory. Bishop discusses "the *Wake's* interest in the utter arbitrariness of language as a sign-system infiltrated with insidious patterns of

'awethorrorry,' so to show how Joyce anticipated by decades one current academic interest in theory" (Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark* 299). Even all the flowers or flaws of speech cannot capture the watery nature of the sleeping state in any way simpler than the text of *Finnegans Wake* as a whole, even though each part of *Finnegans Wake* gives a semblance of the text as a whole, of the night as a whole (or a hole). Shakespeare's Bottom had a dream, but dreams have no bottom (Zukofsky 15). Bishop continues, "As those most influential in advancing the importance of theory have attested, Joyce was light-years ahead of attempts now being made to theorize him" (Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark* 299).

Returning to the first line of *Finnegans Wake*:

riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of
shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius
vicus of recirculation back to Howth Caste and
Environs. (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* 3)

"[R]iverrun" begins with a lower case r, suggesting that this connects with the last line of the book, "A way a lone
a last a loved a long the" (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* 628). All of the A. L. initials suggest the return of Anna Livia Plurabella (Tindall 140). One can see *Finnegans Wake* as

having a great cycle and a lesser cycle². The large cycle consists of the rain falling from clouds in the mountains, flowing downstream in the river Liffey, "from swerve of shore to bend of bay" (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* 3), eventually reaching Dublin Bay and the Irish Sea, only to evaporate into clouds, which float back over the mountains to begin the cycle again and again. One can see the book cycling this way, with the connections between the final "the" and the initial "riverrun" in that opening sentence.

The lesser cycle of *Finnegans Wake* consists of an interlude where the Guinness brewery uses water from the Liffey to make the beverage beloved by Tim Finnegan. Various Dubliners have a pint of the usual (or two or three). They eventually urinate this out, and it eventually gets evaporated up again into clouds which drift back towards the mountains, world without end.

The first sentence of the book also introduces the reversal of patriarchy explored by the novel. Note the capital letters which occur at the end of the first sentence of *Finnegans Wake*, H. C. E. This stands for Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, perhaps the dreamer of the

² Much of this discussion of the cycles in *Finnegans Wake* owes a great deal to a conversation I had with Robert Anton Wilson in 1988.

book and husband to A. L. P., father to Shem and Shaun and Isabelle. Also, the River Liffey passes the Church of Adam and Eve. In the *Wake* this becomes "Eve and Adam's."

Following Freud, Joyce suggests that whatever dominates during the day becomes dominated during the night, Adam and Eve's becomes Eve and Adam's and the goddess Anna Livia Plurabella rules the night. This expands Freud's concept of the return of the repressed.

In a similar vein, chapter five of *Finnegans Wake* begins with the prayer to HCE's wife Anna who has become the river goddess Anna Livia Plurabella:

In the name of Annah the Allmaziful, the
Everliving, the Bringer of Plurabilities, haloed
be her eve, her singtime sung, her rill be run,
unhemmed as it is uneven! (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*
104)

I find it interesting that so many of the Modernists wrote about the return of goddess worship, from *Finnegans Wake*'s Anna Livia Plurabella, to Kupris Aphrodite in Ezra Pound's *Cantos* (whom critic Hugh Kenner sees as the most important

figure in the poem³) (Wilson, *The Illuminati Papers* 104), to nearly all of Robert Graves' work⁴ and such oddities as the writings of Aleister Crowley⁵. Even Jung wrote about the return of the goddess.

In this prayer Joyce combines the Muslim prayer "To Allah the All-Merciful" with the "Our Father," "Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven." Joyce even included a reference to the Native American maize goddess in "maziful." The "unhemmed" reference fits in with the tailor theme elsewhere in the novel⁶. Joyce wanted to show that the unconscious processes revealed through dreams relate to all human belief systems. One can see Joyce's particular interest in the goddess in them in the Anna Livia chapter. Joyce devoted the whole eighth chapter to Anna Livia, the final chapter of the

³ Aphrodite permeates *The Cantos*, from her appearance in Canto I to Pound's vision of her eyes in *The Pisan Cantos* and throughout the poem.

⁴ Graves built his whole concept of poetry around historical notions of the muse. He wrote at length about this, especially in *The White Goddess*.

⁵ Crowley wrote poems to a variety of female deities, especially the Egyptian Nuit. He saw prehistory dominated by female deities, the Age of the Mother Isis, and the last four thousand years dominated by male deities, the Age of the Father Osiris. He thought the future would see a union of these forces, the Age of the Child Horus.

⁶ In the eleventh chapter of *Finnegans Wake* a sailor becomes a tailor. This s-t transformation corresponds with the space-time transformations in Einstein (Tindall 189).

first book of the *Wake*. This chapter begins with the shape of the Greek letter delta, which also suggests the delta of river and Goethe's Eternal Feminine⁷. "The flowing of the river is to carry us forward to a new book and a new age" (Campbell & Robinson 133). The river provides a model of the dream process as well as the twists, turns and flow of the novel itself:

O

tell me all about

Anna Livia! I want to hear all

about Anna Livia. Well, you all know Anna Livia?

Yes, of course, we all know Anna Livia. Tell me all. Tell me now. (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* 196)

Joseph Campbell and Henry Morton Robinson call this chapter "The Washers at the Ford" (Campbell & Robinson 10), picturing women washing laundry in the River Liffey, gossiping about Anna Livia, essentially washing dirty linen in public in two ways. They physically clean the dirty linen, and, in their gossip, they figuratively wash their dirty laundry in public (McHugh 196). Note that Joyce does not give the chapters actual titles in the book itself.

⁷ In *Faust* Goethe personifies the Eternal Feminine as the Queen of Heaven.

Joyce plays a bit with the poetry of numbers here. The first line has one word, "O." This 1 (the one word) and 0 make up the binary number system, as well as suggesting the male and the female. Joyce did not believe in the numerological systems favored by some of his contemporaries like Yeats, but he knew about them and played with them. The Golden Dawn, an occult organization which included William Butler Yeats, Arthur Machen and Aleister Crowley as members, associated the twenty-two trumps of the Tarot deck with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. They associated the first trump "The Fool" with the Hebrew letter aleph, which has the value of 1, although if you add up the Hebrew letters which spell aleph, you get 111. The Hebrew letters which spell aleph have the following values: Aleph (1) + Lamed (30) + Peh (80) = 111. Of course this also gives another A. L. P. Joyce weaves the number 111 throughout *Finnegans Wake*. (Recall that even T. S. Eliot included Tarot images in *The Waste Land*.) Joyce uses numbers kabalistically to emphasize the difference between waking logic and dream logic (Wilson, *Coincidance* 159).

As seen above, the second line of this chapter "tell me all about" contains four words, suggesting the four old

men, the gospels, the four seasons, the four bedposts, etc. The third line contains seven words, suggesting the seven colors of the rainbow, the seven dancing girls who appear throughout the novel, the seven days of the week, the seven planets of medieval astrology, etc. The delta which begins the chapter thereby contains within it some of the other systems of *Finnegans Wake*: the zero, unity, the four function and the seven function. These different functions reappear over and over again in Joyce's dream novel, functioning in a way analogous to characters in an ordinary waking world novel. One plus four plus seven yields twelve, another system of *Finnegans Wake*, associating the member of a jury, a dozen eggs (remember Humpty Dumpty), the months of the year, the twelve signs of the zodiac, the twelve customers in H. C. E.'s pub, etc.

One times four times seven yields 28, the number of classmates of A. L. P. and H. C. E.'s daughter Isabelle. It all seems "as semper as oxhousehumper" as Joyce puts it elsewhere in the *Wake*. The first three letters of the Hebrew alphabet, aleph, beth and gimel, mean "ox," "house" and "camel." "Semper as oxhousehumper becomes "simple as A, B, G." Of course, *semper* means "always" in Latin, suggesting "always as A, B, G," suggesting the Golden

Dawn's insistence on associating everything with their own Christianized kaballah, in the tradition of Raymond Lull and Giordano Bruno (Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark* 269).

This chapter contains hundreds of river names. John Bishop suggests that Joyce intended this chapter to suggest the sounds perceived by the ear in what might seem total silence. Composer John Cage, a *Finnegans Wake* enthusiast, once visited a soundproof room at Harvard. When he came out he commented that he had heard a low thumping sound and a high whining sound inside the supposedly soundproof room. His scientist friend told him he had heard the thumping of the blood in the circulatory system near his ear and the whine of his nerves firing. Bishop suggests that Joyce conceived of the sound of the sleeping body, particularly the pumping blood, as similar to the sound of waves, and that Joyce tried to capture that sound in the watery language of this chapter (Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark* 279). Bishop writes:

"[L]yne" after "lyne" in the washerwomen's dialogue simply means what the sound of human bloodstream also "meyne[s]," both as it streams through "the presence (of a corpse)" and as it moves right now, "in the present, of course"

beneath consciousness and the visible surface of
the world in the mind of the sympathetic reader.

(Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark* 346)

Elsewhere in the dream H. C. E. hears ten
thunderclaps, yielding the ten thunder words, each of which
has 100 letters, except for the last one which has 101
letters. This adds up to 1001, suggesting another book of
the night, *The Arabian Nights*. Joyce weaves this number
into his tapestry as well, because he wanted to include *The
Arabian Nights* as another book of the night. His play with
the number 1001 complements his kaballistic play with 111
and other numbers.

Interestingly, Sir Richard Burton translated *The
Arabian Nights* in the nineteenth century. He was married
to a woman named Isabelle and had a near obsession with a
river, the Nile, whose headwaters he sought to and did
find. References to him and his work crop up from time to
time in the *Wake*. From Burton Joyce gained many uncommon
terms as well as some linguistic strategies (Yared 166).

The thunder words also relate back to Giambattista
Vico, who suggested that human religion began with a fear
of thunder, noting the role of thunder gods in many
cultures, from Yahweh to Zeus and Jupiter. The novel as a

whole has four books which correspond with the four cycles in Vico's philosophy (Tindall 8). In the dream H. C. E. also hears the sound of a branch tapping against his window at various points in the book, especially in the first chapter when he has not yet entered deeply into sleep, and so continues to pay more attention to external sounds than he will later in the night. Joyce indicates this by the word "tip" which frequently interrupts the text (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* 9, etc.).

Reading an extraordinary book such as *Finnegans Wake* calls for extraordinary reading strategies. In discussing the Anna Livia chapter, John Bishop relates it to a later passage in the book:

-When your contraman from Tuwarcathay is looking
for righting that is not a good sign? Not?
-I speak truly, it's a shower sign that it's not.
-What though it be for the sow of his heart?
(Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* 490)

Bishop comments of this passage:

These lines finally suggest that not simply
"looking for writing," but falling into language
generally is a "sure sign" that one is badly
misreading the wet and "showery" "sanscreed"

(215.26)⁸ of which "Anna Livia" is composed (it's like "looking," rather than listening, for "the sound of your hear"). Where the effect of "writing" is to "right" things, by defining and limiting them according to known and "creeds" (hence "writing"), "Anna Livia's" "sanscreed" is "without creed" altogether (hence the Fr. *sans*, "without") and does exactly the opposite.

(Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark* 346)

This final "opposite" suggests the "coincidence of opposites" which Giordano Bruno thought made up our world, as the "contra" at the beginning of the passage from page 490 of *Finnegans Wake*. Bruno's philosophy also played a central role in Joyce's conception of *Finnegans Wake*. Samuel Beckett⁹ wrote about the role of Vico, Bruno and Dante in the creation of *Finnegans Wake* (Beckett 1).

This coincidence of opposites also corresponds with the "O" which begins the Anna Livia chapter suggesting both 0 and 1, both female and male. Elsewhere in the novel Joyce suggests this by writing "O!," combining O with the

⁸ Page 215, line 26, of *Finnegans Wake*.

⁹ Beckett had acted as James Joyce's secretary for a few years during the 1920's in Paris while Joyce worked on the *Wake*.

phallic exclamation point. This also suggests zero factorial, $0!$, which mathematicians define as having the value of 1.¹⁰ This provides Joyce another opportunity for relating one and zero, the male and the female, night and day, etc. He uses this to illustrate Giordano's dicta of the coincidence of opposites.

Joyce's use of "sanscreed" also echoes T. S. Eliot's use of Sanskrit in *The Waste Land*. John Bishop emphasizes the importance of the absent sense of sight and the dampened sense of hearing in decoding Joyce's text. Like Eliot and Pound, Joyce uses radical juxtapositions of a wide variety of materials from dozens of languages, using myriad viewpoints. One can see all of the concerns of modernism manifesting in the *Wake*, in its own mutated way. The horrors of war appear over and over again, such as in the "cashels aired and ventilated" (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* 4), which suggests a castle with walls "ventilated" by cannonballs, as well as the old Irish capital of Cashel. Again like Pound and Eliot, Joyce shores up the ruins of the past in this novel. Joyce does this through the dream

¹⁰ A factorial gives the multiple of all the integers up to and including the indicated number, so $1! = 1$, $2! = 1 \times 2 = 2$, $3! = 1 \times 2 \times 3 = 6$, $4! = 1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 = 24$, etc. By conventions, mathematicians have set $0! = 1$.

of a publican in the Dublin suburb of Chapalizard. Joyce shows how the past and present flow into each other in our dreams, like Bruno's coincidence of opposites, which Joyce turns into a "coincidence."

Finnegans Wake abounds with "coincidences" of opposite, of male and female, irrational and rational, night and day. Joyce does this to illustrate his conception of the logic of dreams. The reader of the *Wake* will also encounter varying extremes, the delight of discovery and a sense of becoming totally lost, a feeling of uncanny familiarity might collapse into a sense of the utterly unknown and perhaps unknowable. Joyce spent seventeen years shaping this peculiar novel, which continues to find new readers despite its formidable difficulties. The book unwinds like the River Liffey, and repeated reading allows greater familiarity, but the willful obscurity of much of the text remains. Hopefully this section of my thesis has illuminated some of the devices Joyce used to craft his book of the night, as well suggested some avenues for reaching at least a tentative understanding of the shape of the novel and some of its minute particulars. Joyce scholarship has uncovered various layers of meaning in the text of *Finnegans Wake*,

but they have only just begun their task. Each new generation of readers will cycle through the *Wake's* many cycles and uncover new ways of reading and understanding this formidable text.

In the following section I will describe how Robert Anton Wilson makes use of various techniques developed by Joyce in *Finnegans Wake* in his novel *Masks of the Illuminati*.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INFLUENCE OF *FINNEGANS WAKE*

ON THE FIRST FOUR SECTIONS OF

MASKS OF THE ILLUMINATI

James Joyce has exerted considerable influence over novelist Robert Anton Wilson. Wilson writes, "My style derives directly from Ezra Pound, James Joyce, Raymond Chandler, H. L. Menken, William S. Burroughs, Benjamin Tucker, and Elephant Doody Comix, in approximately that order of importance" (Wilson, *Illuminati Papers* 66). Wilson frequently mentions Joyce in his nonfiction as well as in his fiction. He even made Joyce a major character in his novel *Masks of the Illuminati* and Joyce shows up in various guises in other of Wilson's novels. Wilson has used stylistic devices from *Finnegans Wake* and elsewhere in the Joyce corpus, as well as structural devices from *Ulysses* and the *Wake*.

I first read Wilson's *Masks of the Illuminati* in 1982. At the time I knew next to nothing about James Joyce. Wilson's books introduced me to Joyce's personality, his techniques, and his work, all at the same time. Over the last 22 years I have continued to read Wilson's work with a

great deal of pleasure. In addition, I have delved deeper and deeper into the worlds of James Joyce, Ezra Pound and others. Wilson has served as a constant mentor. As Hugh Kenner said about *Ulysses*, "A mentor is advisable: not an unreasonable prerequisite for one of the key books of the space-time age" (Kenner, Intro to Budgen, ix). Robert Anton Wilson has mentored me and many others through the worlds of *Finnegans Wake*, *Ulysses*, Ezra Pound's *Cantos* and beyond.

Wilson's non-fiction over the last forty years has frequently focused on Joyce. These interests carry over into his fiction. Wilson has looked at Joyce's work through the lenses of various psychological theories, from those of Freud and Jung to those of Wilhelm Reich and Timothy Leary¹¹. For Wilson, Joyce brings Einstein's relativity to literature. Joyce provides a kaleidoscope of viewpoints and uses a variety of techniques in his novels, eliminating the single viewpoint narrator of nineteenth century realistic fiction. Joyce moves from the Newtonian paradigm to one more in tune with the *umwelt* of Einstein and quantum mechanics. Like the multiple viewpoints of the

¹¹ Wilson has also mentioned a variety of writers on Joyce, from Samuel Beckett to Hugh Kenner and Richard Ellmann.

cubists, Joyce presents incidents and characters from multiple viewpoints, revealing them in a dynamic ever-changing universe through literary parallax. Wilson uses these techniques in *Masks of the Illuminati* to reflect on the characters of both Einstein and Joyce, as well as to present multiple views of all of the novel's characters.

Hugh Kenner, discussing *Ulysses*, commented:

But toward the end, working on 'Penelope' and 'Ithaca' together, James Joyce seems to have gone farther, divining - no, not the cosmos of Picasso, Einstein, Heisenberg and Gödel, his visual taste being banal, his science but a smattering of terms, his very arithmetic deplorable - divining rather something of what they intuited and modeled in their own idiom, their own arts; for that the human experience is homogenous, that innovators in diverse fields are assuredly one another's contemporaries without necessity of interaction, is one of the exhilarating truths of history. (Kenner, *Ulysses* 153)

Wilson illuminates this in his novel *Masks of the Illuminati*. He makes Einstein, Joyce, Aleister Crowley,

Carl Jung, Ezra Pound, William Butler Yeats and Lenin, et al, characters whose fictitious and actual interactions reflect the parallels between their innovations. Wilson describes his "major theme . . . Relativity as illustrated by Einstein's physics, Joyce's art and Crowley's 'magic'" (Wilson, 10/20/2001 email). The title itself links the book with Wilson's vision of Joyce's Irish tradition. Wilson has frequently discussed Oscar Wilde's essay "The Truth of Masks," which he links with the notion of Mask and Counter-Mask in Yeats' *A Vision*, which Yeats saw as components of the self. Wilson even called the two parts of his *Cosmic Trigger Volume III* "The Masks of Reality" and "The Reality of Masks." Wilson links Wilde's concept of mask with Stephen Dedalus' "silence, exile and cunning." Silence seems a powerful Joycean mask, the "presence of the absent" (Wilson, *Coincidence* 87).

In his 1977 *Cosmic Trigger*, Wilson says:

"Reality" is a word in the English language which happens to be (a) a noun and (b) singular.

Thinking in the English language (and in cognate Indo-European languages) therefore subliminally programs us to conceptualize "reality" as one block-like entity, sort of like a huge New York

skyscraper, in which every part is just another "room" within the same building. This linguistic program is so pervasive that most people cannot "think" outside it at all, and when one tries to offer a different perspective they imagine one is talking gibberish. (Wilson, *Cosmic Trigger* iii)

Wilson presents myriad relative realities in *Masks of the Illuminati*, using methods derived from the relativities of Einstein, Joyce, Crowley and Pound while incorporating Einstein, Joyce, Crowley and Pound as characters. In addition, Wilson makes Einstein and Joyce into amateur detectives. Wilson had commented on the similarities between Joyce's method of almost obsessive observation with that of Sherlock Holmes in Wilson's *Schrödinger's Cat* trilogy, a work of fiction that deals with parallel worlds and includes Wilson's usual fascination with Joyce. Hugh Kenner refers to Sherlock Holmes as "our mentor" in his book on *Ulysses*, since Holmes also serves as a model for the observer looking at Joyce's fictional worlds (Kenner, *Ulysses* 143). Leopold Bloom had an overdue library book by Conan Doyle, which the "real" Dublin library declared "missing" in 1906 (ibid).

Masks of the Illuminati tells of a young man, Sir John Babcock, who becomes interested in the kaballah. He eventually joins a secret society interested in kaballistic matters and undergoes initiations into their mysteries. He becomes convinced he has become the center of a murderous conspiracy and flees from London to Zurich, where he meets Einstein and Joyce. He tells Einstein and Joyce about the supposed conspiracy, and they attempt to understand what has happened to him.

Masks of the Illuminati begins with a newspaper article dated April 23, 1914 (Shakespeare's birthday). Numbers play a poetic role in Wilson's work, especially the number 23 which haunts this and all of his novels. Using methods learned from Aleister Crowley, William S. Burroughs and Joyce (*Finnegans Wake's* 1132, 111, 1001, etc.), Wilson almost makes the numbers characters in the book. Emerson once said every word contains a fossil poem, and Joyce allowed the poems in certain numbers to blossom in the *Wake*. Similarly Wilson uses 23 as a leitmotif in *Masks*. The news article that launches *Masks of the Illuminati* also mentions Conan Doyle, anticipating Joyce's role as a detective in the novel and evoking Wilson's comparison of Joyce and Sherlock Holmes in *Schrödinger's Cat*, wherein

Joyce in a parallel universe becomes Pope Stephen and an obituary compares him with Holmes. Of course, Joyce made use of a journalistic style in one section of *Ulysses*, the first of many parallels between *Ulysses* and *Masks*. The opening section of *Masks* concludes with a fragment of a film script, a style of writing or genre Joyce didn't include in *Ulysses*, although he did write the Nighttown chapter in the form of a play. This film script fragment includes the acrostic "I nearly reached India" (Wilson, *Masks* 6), a play on the Christian I.N.R.I. Acrostics figure largely in *Finnegans Wake*, especially the interplay of the initials H.C.E. and A.L.P.

One could see *Masks* as the portrait of a magician as a young man. Sir John Babcock, the main character of the novel, becomes fascinated with the occult and eventually ends up interacting with members of the Golden Dawn such as Yeats and Crowley. Wilson uses devices from *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* to bring to life various altered states of consciousness Babcock encounters and endures during his occult adventures.

In the novel, Babcock arrives in Zurich, pursued he thinks by Satanists. He bursts into a bar where he coincidentally runs into Joyce and Einstein. They play the

role of Good Samaritans and Babcock tells them about his initiation into a secret society and how his life has turned into chaos. (Incidentally, Wilson sees the parable of the Good Samaritan underlying *Ulysses*, with Samaritan Leopold Bloom rescuing Stephen Dedalus in the Nighttown episode.) Joyce and Einstein bring their considerable observational and reasoning powers to bear on Babcock's conundrum that night and over the next two days. When they finally reach the conclusion that his nemesis Aleister Crowley has manipulated all the events which have terrified Sir John, supposedly for Sir John's own benefit, Aleister himself shows up at the door. He congratulates the scientific detectives with champagne. Then Einstein comments:

I imagine, Einstein said staring fixedly at his pipe ash glittering, that your original plan for Sir John's rite of passage had some dramatic climax. I hope we haven't ruined it by explaining the tricks to him prematurely. Have some more wine, Babcock, Crowley said pouring. As a matter of fact, the climax of the drama will be much as I planned except of course that there

will be three candidates instead of one. (Wilson, *Masks* 320)

Of course, Aleister has spiked the champagne with a psychedelic drug.

Wilson patterned the scene in the Zurich pub in which the reader first encounters Einstein and Joyce after the opening of the first chapter of *Ulysses*. "Stately, plump Albert Einstein" plays the role of Buck Mulligan while Joyce once again plays Stephen Dedalus. While the first sentence in *Ulysses* begins with "Stately" and ends with "crossed," indicating the two tyrants Dedalus must escape (the state of England and the Catholic Church), *Masks* gives us Einstein who "came from the gloom-domed Lorelei barroom bearing a paleyellow tray on which two mugs of beer stood carefully balanced, erect" (Wilson, *Masks* 12). This suggests the more frankly sexual nature of this book, as well as the particular concerns of both the character Joyce and Sir John. The first sentence of *Ulysses* has 22 words, suggesting the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet and the number of trumps in the tarot deck. Wilson's parallel sentence has 24 words¹². The word "paleyellow" in the

¹² In *The Game of Life* Wilson and Timothy Leary add two new trumps to their post-modern tarot deck.

Wilson sentence suggests the style of the first chapter of *Ulysses*. Wilson has Joyce use "yellowbrown" a few pages later (Wilson, *Masks* 15).

In the next section Wilson provides a series of questions and answers about Joyce and Einstein's conversation in the style of the Ithaca chapter of *Ulysses*. Wilson suggests that:

Joyce had escaped from the normal constrictions of ego by pondering deeply what it feels like to be a woman. Einstein had escaped from the normal constrictions of ego by pondering deeply what it feels like to be a photon. Joyce approached art with the methodology of a scientist; Einstein practiced science with the intuition of an artist. (Wilson, *Masks* 14)

Wilson draws a similar parallel between Beethoven and Einstein in his *Illuminati Papers*, calling Beethoven the "World's Greatest Sound Engineer" and Einstein the "World's Greatest Intuitive Artist" (Wilson, *Illuminati Papers* 143). Joyce achieved a deeper understanding of human nature through his contemplation of life as a woman, enabling him to write Molly Bloom's section of *Ulysses*. Einstein reached a deeper understanding of the nature of physics

through his contemplation of life as a photon, enabling him to develop his revolutionary theories.

Throughout the novel Wilson has Joyce think about the possibility that his mistress Nora Barnacle had had an affair with his brother Stanislaus. In the "Scylla and Charibdis" chapter of *Ulysses* Joyce has Stephen Dedalus present the case that Shakespeare thought his wife had cuckolded him with his brother. Wilson presents an obsessed Joyce similar to the obsessed Shakespeare Joyce himself has Stephen Dedalus present. This theme occurs in the internal monologue of the character Joyce throughout *Masks of the Illuminati*, just as Leopold Bloom's thoughts return again and again to Blazes Boylan and Molly Bloom in the Leopold Bloom chapters of *Ulysses*. However, where Leopold avoids the thoughts of the (probably actual) infidelity of Molly and Blazes, the character Joyce dwells on the (probably false) infidelity of Nora and Stanislaus. This theme of Joyce's fear of Nora's infidelity first appears in the mock-Ithaca section of *Masks of the Illuminati* and continues to reappear throughout the book. Wilson models his presentation of Joyce and his jealousy on Joyce's own presentation of Bloom and his jealousy.

Also in the mock-Ithaca section of *Masks* Wilson writes a passage locating Bahnhofstrasse in space-time, similar to a passage locating Stephen Dedalus in space-time in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Wilson provides a few more scientific details in his version of this locating motif, fitting with the plethora of scientific details in the novel. The mock-Ithaca pattern of questions and answers in the text of *Masks* recurs several times in the novel. Following the Ithaca-like passage, Wilson has Joyce suggest that "all work in progress was always followed by work in regress" (19), suggesting *Work in Progress*, Joyce's working title for *Finnegans Wake*. Wilson uses these Joycean techniques to illuminate Joyce himself developing the techniques.

Many details of the novel illuminate coincidences. Samuel Beckett saw coincidence as the main theme in *Finnegans Wake*. Wilson even brings Carl Jung as a minor character to the novel. Jung writing with physicist Wolfgang Pauli called some coincidences "synchronicities," and Wilson combines the notion of synchronicity with Joyce's ideas of coincidence in *Masks*. Jung thought patients going through periods of radical change tended to experience more coincidences than average. Wilson uses

Jung's notions of synchronicity to complement his use of Joyce's techniques. Joyce came to coincidence from an angle suggested by Giordano Bruno. Bruno saw reality as a coincidence of opposites. Joyce constructed the world of *Finnegans Wake* (and to a lesser extent *Ulysses*) from these coinciding opposites. Wilson combines the Jungian and the Joycean views of coincidence. As the character Sir John Babcock in *Masks* gets deeper into his personal transformation, he encounters more and more coincidences. Babcock has become involved in a secret society similar to the Golden Dawn, which included William Butler Yeats and Aleister Crowley as members. This society aims to help him come into contact with his higher self, to awaken his inner potentials. He also comes to see the world more and more in a Brunoesque fashion, as a deeply interrelated web of coinciding opposites. However, the character Einstein discovers at the end of the novel that Babcock's initiators (those above him in the hierarchy of the secret society) have manufactured many of these coincidences. This undercutting of the proliferation of coincidences by human agency suggests the central role of human intelligence in the process of perception, one of Wilson's central themes. Wilson uses Joyce's techniques to attempt to explicitly

demonstrate the processes of perception. Of course, this also demonstrates Bruno's ideas. A web of spontaneously occurring, interrelating synchronicities coincides with a net of manufactured coincidences.

Following Joyce's example of playing with form in *Ulysses*, Wilson includes the forms of radio broadcasts, game shows and film scripts at various times in the novel. Bruno saw the world as a coincidence of opposites. Like Joyce, Wilson brings together the ridiculous and the sublime in his novel. This use of fragments of various genres follows and expands Joyce's example. Wilson even includes four pictures of tarot cards on pages 72 and 73, and a drawing of an alien (or perhaps a time-traveler) on page 165. This use of graphic images in the novel breaks the linearity of conventional narrative, as well as introducing the reader to visual representations of images described in the text of the novel.

All of the forms Wilson uses help to reveal the different perceptions his characters have from their own perspectives. When Joyce hears Sir John Babcock's narrative about his adventures with the occult, Joyce contemplates "the historical and temperamental abyss between the Anglo-Saxon and Hibernian mentalities" (45).

Sir John, "a member of the conquering and therefore probably loathed English race" (49), represents the English colonial reality while Joyce represents the Irish/Hibernian.

Among the many types of writing included in his novels, Joyce liked to make use of lists in his novels, transforming them with ludic wordplay. Similarly, when describing the contents of Sir John's library, Wilson refers to "an ova of Bacons" (54), meaning the works of Francis Bacon. The "ova," an egg, makes a bacon and eggs joke. *Finnegans Wake* contains many jokes about ham, eggs, Shakespeare's HAM-let, the theory Bacon wrote Shakespeare's plays, Shakespeare's son HAM-net and the presence of a boar on Shakespeare's coat of arms, etc.

At various points in *Masks* Wilson includes Sir John's dreams, always written in a style reminiscent of *Finnegans Wake*. This blossoms into the full blown Wakean-style prose which represents altered states of consciousness in the drug scene at the end of Wilson's novel. Of course, Wilson does not limit himself to a Joyce pastiche. He combines Joyce's use of portmanteau words, lists, puns, jokes and

acronyms with Crowleyean Golden Dawn kaballah, Burroughs' cut-up technique and Wilson's unique sense of humor¹³.

In this section I have demonstrated Wilson extensive use of Joycean techniques in the first four sections of *Masks of the Illuminati*. In the next section I will focus on Wilson's use of techniques from *Finnegans Wake* in *Masks of the Illuminati*'s final section.

¹³ (The cut-up technique involves taking pages of text, cutting them up and rearranging the pieces. Then the writer can take passages from the cut up text and use them as they see fit. Artist Brion Gysin invented this technique, and Williams S. Burroughs developed it over several decades.)

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FINAL SECTION OF *MASKS OF THE ILLUMINATI*

Using a variety of Joycean techniques, Wilson presents the climactic drug scene of *Masks of the Illuminati* in language reminiscent of *Finnegans Wake*. As the next step in Sir John Babcock's initiation, Aleister Crowley (now revealed as a high ranking member of the same secret society as Sir John) had intended to surreptitiously give Sir John a hallucinogenic drug. When Crowley discovered Sir John in the company of such remarkable minds as Einstein and Joyce, Crowley decided to drug all three of them.

In the context of a psychedelic drug experience, Wilson has the opportunity to bring all of his tools to bear, especially those derived from the techniques of *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce developed these techniques to present the shimmering and ever changing details of the unconscious processes of the sleeping mind. Wilson now brings these techniques into play to present the altered states of mind encountered and endured by his characters under the effect of the drug. This scene in the novel provides a climax to the ordeal and initiation of Sir John

Babcock. Wilson uses the opportunity of the drug session to examine the character, not only of Babcock, but of Einstein, Joyce and Crowley as well.

Wilson uses the drug scene to explore Joyce's jealousy and other emotions, as well as to reveal the kaleidoscopic nature of his consciousness. Wilson shows Joyce coming to understand the shifting nature of his perceptions, and Wilson then shows Joyce integrating these perceptions with his still unformed ideas about how to write *Ulysses*. Wilson uses the drug scene to present a fictional picture of the genesis of Joyce's massive, rule-breaking novel:

Hawk-like man, Joyce reflects. Ascending from the
labyrinth old father old artificer the
moocow in the beginning.

Come back to Erin, mavourneen.

Merde, said General Canbronne. A toll telled
of shame and scorn. (Wilson, *Masks* 326)

The "labyrinth" points to its builder Daedalus, who of course links with Stephen Dedalus. The "old father" suggests the Christian God as well as Daedalus' relationship with Icarus. It seems to me the "moocow" points to the first line of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: "Once upon a time and a very good time it

was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo . . .” (*Portable Joyce*, 245). Of course the character Stephen Dedalus hallucinates the beginning of *Portrait* while sick in the hospital, whereas the character James Joyce hallucinates this allusion to the *Portrait* while intoxicated at the end of *Masks of the Illuminati*.

General Canbronne replied “merde” when asked to surrender at Waterloo. This anecdote recurs many times in *Finnegans Wake*, illustrating the link between Freud’s anal stage and fights over territory. “A toll telled of shame and scorn” echoes the *Wake*’s refrain “a tale told of Shaun and Shem.” This climatic drug scene lasts thirty pages, filled with this sort of Joycean wordplay.

Part five of *Masks of the Illuminati* begins with the quote “All material things are but masks” (317) from *Moby Dick*. Wilson has a fascination with the ideas associated masks. In his latest book *TSOG: The Thing That Ate the Constitution* he writes,

After all, modernism really dawned with Wilde’s

"The Reality of Masks"¹⁴ and Yeats's hermetic mystique that the world we know emerges from interactions of Mask, Anti-Mask, Self, and Anti-Self: which may or may not fit all of us or all the world but certainly fits the world of spooks and snoops that Angleton¹⁵ created. (35-36)

Wilde's essay "The Truth of Masks" dealt with costuming in Shakespeare, but Wilson also reads it as a commentary of the double life Wilde led as a homosexual in Victorian London. On another level Wilson reads Wilde's essay as a commentary on the masks worn by colonial people to hide their reality from the colonizers. In the final section of *Masks of the Illuminati* he peels away the masks of day to day existence. He peels away the masks of Irishman, Englishman and German, poor novelist, nobleman and physicist to reveal the human beings underneath. Wilson demonstrates the dynamics involved in the interactions of all the different masks maintained by the characters and the difficulty of maintaining them. The

¹⁴ Wilde actually called the essay "The Truth of Masks."

¹⁵ James Jesus Angleton, director of counterintelligence for the CIA from 1954 to 1974, who appears in many contemporary conspiracy theories (Wilson *Everything Is Under Control* 42).

above quote refers to James Jesus Angleton, head of counter-intelligence for the C.I.A. for many years. In *TSOG* Wilson wrote, "modernist tendencies, which also appeared in science and philosophy at the same time, blossomed into obsessions and, perhaps, raging madness when Angleton systematically applied them to the spy-game" (Wilson, *TSOG* 35). Spying, which attempts to penetrate the masks put forward by foreign governments, seems one model for the behaviors provoked by the post-colonial realities of oppression and intrigue, or as Stephen Dedalus observed in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, "silence, exile and cunning" (Joyce, *Portrait* 247).

In hierarchical structures, people at the bottom sometimes withhold information from those above them. Wilson sees this communication jab as typical of colonial situations, where the colonized individuals do not communicate in total honesty with the colonizers. The colonized individuals develop masks to facilitate their existence under the oppression of the colonial rule. Wilson traces the idea of mask from Wilde to Yeats and to Joyce as a description of the sorts of false identities Irish people have had to develop over the centuries of English oppression. In their work on *Finnegans Wake* Derek

Attridge and Marjorie Howes refer to "the variety of binary oppositions that divide human communities" (1). Joyce developed the language of *Finnegans Wake* to demonstrate these oppositions and, following Giordano Bruno, attempt to unify them. Vincent Cheng calls late-colonial Ireland "a culture of imposture, adulteration, and inauthenticity" (258), or what Wilson might call a culture of masks.

As a grand finale, the novel ends with Einstein looking at his watch when asked the time, replying, "Exactly thirty-two minutes after eleven" (Wilson, *Masks* 355). Of course, the number 1132 will show up over and over again in *Finnegans Wake*, giving rise to dozens of theories over the decades¹⁶. Here Wilson gives a fictional origin to the mystery which also corresponds with all the discussion of time, clocks and relativity in his novel. The novel began with the date April 23, often regarded as Shakespeare's birthday and the day on which Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea's novel *Illuminatus!* begins as well. (Wilson and Shea filled *Illuminatus!* with numerical play

¹⁶ One can find some theories about Joyce's use of 1132 in Tindall page 41, McHugh page 13, and Wilson's *Coincidence* page 10. Wilson hypothesizes the number refers to the time 11:32 A.M. when the dreamer retired to the bushes in Phoenix Park and two young girls accidentally saw him there.

around the number 23, influenced in part by *Finnegans Wake's* 1132s and 111s). Wilson bounds *Masks of the Illuminati* with a date and a time, tying in the Einsteinian themes of the measurement of time and pointing hypertextually both to his own fiction with the 23 at the beginning and to *Finnegans Wake* with the 11:32 at the end. Of course, Wilson learned many techniques of using numbers poetically in the body of text from *Finnegans Wake*.

Wilson uses this poetry of numbers to show how the human correlates things by methods other than the ordinary sense of rationality. The mind sometimes functions by rationality like that of dreams, which Wilson sees as parallel to the odd processes of the mind undergoing hallucinogenic drugs or initiation by an occult society.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

At the novel's end the character Joyce feels he has a better idea of the huge novel he wants to write, patterned on the *Odyssey* and *Hamlet* as well as the Bible story of the Good Samaritan (*Ulysses*). Wilson has employed Joyce's methods to help him shape his narrative, incorporating various Wakean devices into his own prose style. Wilson has also created the character Joyce in the novel to unravel those narrative strands of Sir John's initiation and the apparent conspiracy to kill him, and to piece together the underlying patterns. Wilson has taken and expanded Joyce's methods to present the character Joyce, and he has presented the character Joyce to better understand the writer James Joyce, both as an artist and as a human being.

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