

Between Shift and Shift (Part Two)

—The Crossover of *A Vision* and *Finnegans Wake*—

ダレン・ダグラス・モートソン

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I. Nightlessons

In a letter to Frank Budgen sent at the end of July 1939, Joyce wrote that the tenth chapter of *Finnegans Wake*, from page 260 and onward, was “the most difficult of all” (quoted in Crispi 214). This remains a contentious point as much of the whole book is extremely difficult—certain sections within Book 3 being nearly opaque, for instance—but a large part of the apparent complexity of the chapter arises as a result of its peculiar layout on the page. In his description of 2.2, Joyce continues in the same letter:

The technique here is the reproduction of a schoolboy’s (and schoolgirl’s) old classbook complete with marginalia by the twins, who change sides at half time, footnotes by the girl (who doesn’t), a Euclid diagram, funny drawings, etc. (quoted in Crispi 214)

As Joyce explains, the central commentary is flanked by occasional right and left marginal notes, each side incorporating its own distinctive style and script, and pillowed with copious cheeky and often off-colour footnotes contributed by sister Issy. The chapter itself, in the final published edition of *Finnegans Wake*, is 49 pages long with the famous geometric diagram, based on Euclid’s First Proposition, appearing after 33 pages. This “Nightlessons” chapter appropriately takes place in the evening after the three children, two twin brothers and their sister, have settled down to study before going to bed. The subjects attended to are vast, ranging from cosmology to history to mathematics—including arithmetic, geometry and algebra—as well as far more mysterious concerns, at once esoteric and erotic.

As Sheldon Brivic demonstrates, a major intertextual source of this material is from the Kabbalah, obvious references to which occur at the opening and closing of the chapter (Brivic 14), with a mention of *Ain Soph* (Ein Sof, God prior to manifestation) (*FW* 261.23) and a list of the ten *sephiroth* (holy emanations of Godhead) (*FW* 308.5-14). Brivic argues both that Joyce's knowledge of the Kabbalah is not as cursory as it might seem and, on the other hand, that Joyce did not arrive at his knowledge through traditional sources but from his familiarity with theosophical texts by Madame Helena Blavatsky and others. In addition to the Kabbalah, however, Brivic, among other critics, notes that Plato's *Timaeus* and Yeats's *A Vision* are also crucial intertexts for this chapter, each presenting systems which integrate cosmology and history with psychology.

Moreover, these are not separate systems for Joyce, but aspects of one single system. He had read in Blavatsky that the *Timaeus* was based on the same sources as the Kabbalah (I, 7-8), and was aware that when Yeats put *A Vision* together, his head was filled "with Cabbalistic imagery." (Brivic 11)

The references to the Kabbalah were inserted by Joyce into 2.2 quite late in the process of constructing *Finnegans Wake*. While Joyce initially began writing this chapter in 1926, he did not compose the opening and closing sections until 1934 and onward. And this later date is at approximately the same time he started to lay out the chapter into three columns and to embed key allusions from *A Vision* into its inner section (Crispi and Slotte 486-7). It is in this inner section of 22 pages (known as "The Triangle," as the Euclidean figure appears exactly halfway through it) that the links to *A Vision* are most thickly clustered (Atherton 290, McHugh 282-304), and it also happens to be the earliest written and most important section in the chapter.

Although this section appears toward the end of the published text ... "The Triangle" is the chapter's beginning; it was the first section written, and it remains the chapter's dramatic centerpiece. All the other sections of this chapter that Joyce wrote over the next nine years remain superfluous to the narrative climax depicted here. (Crispi 218)

It would be instructive at this stage to provide a brief account of the "dramatic" narrative. Even in the earliest handwritten draft of the section from July 1926, this narrative is present (*Joyce First-draft* 160-6). The gist of it involves a scene of two brothers, called

Michael and Nickel (quite obvious allusions to St. Michael and Lucifer, and later named Kev and Dolph, versions of Shaun and Shem), who are engaged in an evening study of mathematics, and especially geometry. Nickel/Dolph teaches or coaxes Michael/Kev to draw a Euclidean figure, shown on page 293 of *Finnegans Wake* in its final form, and the latter discovers to his great alarm that he has been tricked into sketching out a diagram of his mother's private parts, provoking him to eventually strike his cunning brother. From this narrative kernel, Joyce over nine years added layer upon layer of meaning and obscurity to the section, which in early printed versions he aptly entitled "The Muddest Thick That Was Ever Heard," before its form was fixed in the published book. Yet despite this excessive accretion of textual material the basic "narrative" remains unchanged and central.

The essential theme of the section is also consistent throughout Joyce's many drafts, this being, as Campbell and Robinson pithily put it in their pioneering work of *Finnegans Wake* criticism, "they [the brothers] are going to investigate the mystery of the Mother" (Campbell and Robinson 177). Campbell and Robinson's brief summary of the chapter is also helpful:

They begin with a series of arithmetic and algebra problems; and since mathematics has always gone hand in hand with the profound studies of theology and metaphysics, the sums and problems will reveal quietly the personality of HCE, and the sexual secrets of ALP. (Campbell and Robinson 177)

The inter-mixture of theology with sexuality, of higher metaphysics with base instinctual drives, of the sacred with the profane—evident throughout the whole of *Finnegans Wake*—is especially pronounced in "The Triangle" section of 2.2. And while the section has become integrated into the wider "Nightlessons" chapter, it continues to be accentuated and set slightly apart through a device that reflects its mocking scholastic and theological tone. Joyce opened and closed this section with a formula utilized by students, like himself, of Jesuit schools in their written compositions. As Epstein explains,

The central segment of the chapter—like the compositions that Stephen Dedalus, and Joyce himself, wrote for his Jesuit instructors at Clonglowes and Belvedere—is headed at 282.6 by the Jesuit motto AMDG, Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam [to the greater glory of God], and ends twenty-two pages later at 304.3 with the conventional ending of all such compositions, LDS, Laus Deo Semper [praise to God always]. (Epstein 131)

By this conventional formula the “Muddest Thick” section is framed or cordoned off into a “sacred” space, beginning with “at maturing daily gloryaims!” (*FW* 282.6), and ending with “loves deathhow simple!” (*FW* 304.3) just as Dolph gets clocked by his brother Kev. Although, as Epstein remarks, this section is certainly not “pious” in the Jesuit sense (Epstein 131), it does encapsulate profound themes and motifs found throughout the book that certainly are metaphysical in character. And it is to help illustrate and expand upon these themes that Joyce most thickly clusters references to and ideas from Yeats’s *A Vision*.

2. Critical Views

As Alistair Cormack points out, however, this is not the common view of why Joyce included *A Vision* in this section. He explains that the “orthodox” critical approach to 2.2 and its central segment is that it “represents an enlightened satire of Kabbalistic excess, in particular that of Yeats” (Cormack 161). Cormack provides an example of this “orthodox” view by quoting the eminent Joyce critic Hugh Kenner, who sees in these allusions to Yeats nothing more than subtle parody:

Joyce, always interested in popular parodies of great traditions, put this component of his Dublin’s clumsy intellectualism to delighted use... . The diagrams, the Lockean component, represent the tragic flaw in everything Yeats and his poetic brotherhood undertook. (quoted in Cormack 161)

Elsewhere, in writing of *Ulysses*, Kenner comments that “one thing Joyce was up to... was a practical joke on the Yeatsians, the most elaborate practical joke in the history of letters” (Kenner 62). Kenner and other critics have concluded that in regard to this section in 2.2 of *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce is merely perpetuating the joke at Yeats’s expense.

Luca Crispi, in a genetic study of Chapter 2.2, explains that Joyce’s incorporation of material from *A Vision* into this section occurred relatively late. Crispi argues that Joyce’s use of *A Vision*, though recognized as an important source text, is largely “superficial,” inspired perhaps by Joyce noticing that his diagram was similar to diagrams that Yeats had included in his book.

The notes that Joyce had compiled are primarily an appropriation of Yeats’s vocabulary and puns on it. The superficial character of this index undercuts the critical importance of Yeats’s work as a significant intertextual source for Joyce’s

text. The relation between the source text and Joyce's fragmentary compositions is tangential: the two texts are not mutually explanatory and are dependent upon one another only in the most superficial manner. (Crispi 239)

While not nearly as dismissive as Kenner—Crispi after all accepts that *A Vision* is “a significant intertextual source”—Crispi essentially conforms to the “orthodox” position that Joyce's use of this material is superficial and likely not all that serious. Crispi, through the powerful lens of genetic criticism, is essentially arguing that as Joyce added these allusions quite late they appear as more of an afterthought than as anything that might be called structural. This may well be a valid perspective, but it will be important also to consider how much Joyce had *A Vision*, and earlier texts that may have inspired both Joyce and Yeats, in mind while constructing even the earliest drafts of this section. Other critics, however, have not expressed such certainty that Joyce's use of the material from *A Vision* is merely parodic or superficial. James Atherton, in his *The Books at the Wake*, writes that while Joyce's inclusion of Yeats's work in *Finnegans Wake* is “mostly for decoration,” that *A Vision* is largely an exception to this. He adds that Joyce treats *A Vision* “as if it were a book he had written himself, and it is one of the many books ‘subsumed’ into the ‘Night Lessons’ Chapter, where it is most apparent on the pages near the diagram (291–301)” (Atherton 113).

In the entry on Yeats in her *Third Census of Finnegans Wake: An Index of the Characters and Their Roles*, Adaline Glasheen notes that “many technical terms from *A Vision* are used” in 2.2, several of which she lists, and that it contains “an extensive quotation from *A Vision*” which “deals with a dream Yeats had about his father (295.10–14)” (Glasheen 313). While in a 1959 letter to writer Thornton Wilder, Glasheen indicates, after providing a lengthy list of annotated citations from *Finnegans Wake* (and mostly from 2.2), that she has

found all Yeats' important technical terms *except* Celestial Body and Passionate Body which go with Mask & Spirit as Creative Mind & Body of Fate go with Will & Mask. I bet they're there. Will you look for Celestial Body & Passionate Body? (Burns & Gaylord 214)

Glasheen then asks a significant question: “Is it all trimming or does it go further?” It certainly seems as if she does think that it goes quite a bit further, and she is not alone in this. John Gordon, calling 2.2 “the crossroads of *Finnegans Wake*” and the geometric diagram on page 293 its “formal centre” (Gordon 183), not only identifies terms from *A Vision*, but

suggests that a “Yeatsian *‘Dreaming Back’*” (Gordon 189) itself is being enacted within the chapter. And, as a final example, Edmund Epstein indicates that in a later chapter (3.3) Joyce uses the term “Communicator,” a title of the Yeatses’ spirit guides in *A Vision*, for a similar spiritual presence in the narrative (Epstein 211). None of these critics sound particularly convinced of the “orthodox” position that Cormack describes. It could well be that there is not as much of a consensus on this point as Cormack suggests, and indeed Cormack’s own insightful 2008 study of Yeats and Joyce, including a thorough analysis of 2.2, offers much to refute this position.

3. Cormack & Hart

Cormack’s own critical stance—that both Yeats and Joyce are advocates of a Blakean “reprobate” or outsider tradition of “heretical idealism,” largely synonymous with the Western esoteric tradition or Hemiticism—brings *A Vision* and *Finnegans Wake* into much closer interplay than has generally been accepted. Both texts, argues Cormack, reveal a perspective that is very close to William Blake’s, the English poet being a major creative influence on each of the two writers. For in disavowal of the “major” philosophical stream of the West, exemplified in the dialectical system of Hegel, Blake held that “progress is the *living* of contraries rather than the attempt to synthesize or transcend them.” As language itself reflects this process, writing a history “that is not corrupted by the workings of daytime rationality requires a new language that recognises the truth of the coincidence of opposites” (Cormack 157). This notion of “the coincidence of opposites” is the key to understanding both *A Vision* and *Finnegans Wake*, and it is precisely what aligns the two texts with the greater Western esoteric or “reprobate” tradition, a tradition wide enough to include their sources in Nicholas of Cusa, Giordano Bruno, Giambattista Vico and the Kabbalah. Both Irish writers aim at a retelling or revaluation of all history in light of these insights.

Indeed, one could argue that the underlying ‘strategy’ of *Finnegans Wake* is very similar to that of *A Vision*; the former claims to be the archetype of all texts, including all history and all knowledge, the latter that just such an ur-text is possessed by the Instructors who explain its contents, but in an unfortunately confused way. (Cormack 162)

It is readily apparent that this view diverges widely from the claim that Joyce’s inclusion of the *A Vision* material is merely satirical and superficial. Instead, Cormack is implying that the two texts exist in direct response to one another, as complementary aspects of, or

glances at, one vast and dynamic phenomenon. Cormack's suggestion that *Finnegans Wake* is the *ur*-text of Yeats's spirit Instructors is playful. However, this image of the two authors co-exploring a single transcendent and yet very immanent territory is profound and powerful. The two writers, in this great work of exploration, function as a set of Blakean "contraries," these being at once "perpetual and self-generating" (Cormack 21). Both are, according to Cormack, "reaching for the same insights," but Yeats "is more interested in the Platonic archetypal side of the coin, whilst Joyce is always more interested in the imperfect human manifestation" (Cormack 163). Cormack counters the view that Joyce's interest in the esoteric is ironic and mocking and not at all like that of Yeats by suggesting that *A Vision* itself is often "comic and self-aware," and especially in the authorized 1937 edition (Cormack 162). Cormack further argues that Joyce's own esoteric studies were both committed and passionate. Despite obvious differences in temperament, style and emphasis, each writer explores the entire cycles of history and psychology: the serious and the mocking, the sacred and the profane. Nothing has been omitted.

In a footnote, Cormack comments that a "significant exception" to the view that Yeats and *A Vision* are merely being satirized by Joyce in *Finnegans Wake* is *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake* (first published in 1959) by Clive Hart (Cormack 161). Hart, and true to the book's title, sets out to find and clarify the major structures and motifs of Joyce's universal puzzler. The structure most evident for Hart, also recognized by Cormack, is that of opposed though mutually dependent cycles, called "the coincidence of opposites" above. Hart writes that in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce

attempted to bring about the intimate marriage of two great and fundamentally opposed artistic unities: one of these is introverted and solipsist, continually converges on itself, is selfsustaining, has no loose ends, is truly a global whole; the other, built from exactly the same materials, is extroverted, continually moves out from its centre toward the world of men, is a mass of specific external references. (Hart 26)

This certainly well depicts the character and conflict of Shem and Shaun in *Finnegans Wake*, but it is also an accurate portrayal of the opposing *antithetical* and *primary tinctures* of *A Vision*, which, as we shall see, Hart also has clearly in mind. The related structure or pattern evident everywhere in *Finnegans Wake* is the pattern "underlying the mystical systems of cyclic growth, decay, and regrowth, which have always had such a strong hold on

man's imagination" (Hart 45). The dynamics of these two structures naturally flow together in the book—things arising and growing outward as other things decay and shrink back upon themselves—as one ever-present system or process. And Hart is not hesitant to say where Joyce arrived at this idea of opposing dynamic cycles: "Indeed he has taken it over virtually unchanged from Yeats and Blake—from *A Vision* and 'The Mental Traveller' in particular" (Hart 66). As with these texts, and in others including Plato's *Timaeus*, opposing cycles operate simultaneously, continually interpenetrating one another. Hart points out that in *Finnegans Wake* everything has "two versions, one exalted and one debased" (Hart 153), and that this includes the two halves of the book itself: a darkening and debased Shem-half and a more uplifted Shaun-half struggling toward the light. And as Joyce explained in a letter to Budgen describing the process of writing *Finnegans Wake*, "I am boring through a mountain from two sides. The question is, how to meet in the middle" (quoted in Hart 67).

Occurring very near the middle of the book is Chapter 2.2, and it is in this chapter that the two ends do meet and actually cross over and change places, a chapter that Hart calls "the clearest single-chapter epitome of this overall structure" (Hart 132). Hart writes extensively of this crossover point, which happens well within the central "Triangle" section:

The central passage of II.2—where the marginal notes are allowed to dissolve into the main text before their reappearance with exchange of tone... here, in a single six-page sentence with neither initial capital nor final stop, Joyce bewilderingly fuses and confuses the personalities of the superior and inferior sons who represent in this instance the superior and inferior elements of spiritual and profane love. (Hart 132)

The two sons come close enough together that one can strike the other (Hart 131), the two sides meeting in both confrontation and love. Yet in addition to this larger structural cycle, although in inevitable relation to it, Hart writes of compressed dream-cycles. These, in turn, are themselves "molecular"-ly composed of still smaller "subsidiary dream-levels" in the four books and even within individual chapters (Hart 94). It is in the dream of HCE, occurring on several levels throughout *Finnegans Wake* and partly expressed through the conflict of his sons and its resolution, where Hart indicates that Joyce is enacting the processes of *Dreaming Back*, *Return* and the *Shiftings* from *A Vision*. I have briefly outlined Hart's thoughts on this in the first part of this study (Mortson 128–9), but Hart's position should be concisely addressed here as well. Hart interprets Shaun's *Dreaming Back*,

expressly in Book 3, as representing “a mystical pilgrimage of Earwicker’s spirit, seeking salvation through self-knowledge, working back toward an account of his own genesis” (Hart 93). These processes, at once personal and universal, reflect, echo and foreshadow other greater and lesser cyclic and mutually opposed processes occurring throughout the text.

4. Mapping the World Soul

Attempting to turn now finally from the critics to the texts themselves, the preliminary question is to what texts exactly do we turn? In the case of Yeats’s *A Vision*, two versions of the book were published, the first in 1925 and the second in 1937, with substantial differences between the two. Yet in addition to the published texts, there are almost four thousand pages of the original automatic writing and “sleep” sessions from 1917 to 1924 that have been preserved (Harper *Critical Edition* xix). These pages have now been edited into the multi-volume set of *Yeats’s Vision Papers* by George Mills Harper and team. And in the case of *Finnegans Wake*, the editors of *How Joyce Wrote Finnegans Wake: A Chapter-by-Chapter Genetic Guide* state that “more than 25,000 pages survive of the textual record of *Finnegans Wake*, a book of 628 pages” (Crispi et al. 31). Even if we limit our scope, as I have tried here, to just the influence of *A Vision* on “The Triangle” section of Chapter 2.2, we are still faced with the questions of which version of *A Vision* and which draft of the “Triangle”?

Joyce apparently read, or had read to him, both published versions of *A Vision*. In a long footnote in his biography *James Joyce*, Richard Ellmann records that in 1928 Joyce responded to a critique of *Ulysses* by Yeats written in the 1925 edition of *A Vision*. Yeats complained of “the vulgarity of a single Dublin day prolonged through 700 pages” (quoted in Ellmann *Joyce* 608). This represented, according to Yeats, an over-concern with the commonplace to the neglect of myth. Eugene Jolas recalled that Joyce “was deeply absorbed by the colossal conception” of this first edition of *A Vision*, but only regretted that “Yeats did not put all of this into a creative work” (quoted in Ellmann *Joyce* 608). Cormack repeats this account, but adds that Joyce was at the same time “copying sections to include in his *own* creative work” (Cormack 160). Cormack adds, however, that it was “only after the initial drafts of ‘Nightlessons’ were in place that Joyce had *A Vision* read to him, so the structure, including the diagram, and tone of the chapter were already well-established” (Cormack 160). It was certainly the 1937 edition of *A Vision* that Joyce retrieved most of the included allusions from.

However, this is not to say that he was uninfluenced by Yeats’s “system” while

composing the earliest drafts of “The Triangle.” Joyce, who according to his brother Stanislaus “read everything that Yeats had written in prose or verse, so far as it was procurable” (quoted in Gandolfo 215), had in his Paris library a copy of Yeats’s *The Wild Swans at Coole*, published in 1919. This collection includes “The Phases of the Moon,” a very important poem that Yeats reprinted in both versions of *A Vision*. By reading this poem, Joyce would have been aware of how Yeats was applying the symbol of the phases of the moon, in its opposing cycles of light and darkness, to progressions of history and the individual soul. The very core of Yeats’s system, later explicated fully in the two editions of *A Vision*, would have been available for his consideration, albeit in a condensed and somewhat cryptic form. And if Joyce was such a thorough reader of Yeats’s work, and there is every indication that he was, he may have read and wondered about the symbolism of solar and lunar influences that Yeats wrote about in his 1904 introduction to Lady Gregory’s *Gods and Fighting Men*.

When we have drunk the cold cup of the moon’s intoxication, we thirst for something beyond ourselves, and the mind flows outward to a natural immensity; but if we have drunk from the hot cup of the sun, our fullness awakens, we desire little, for wherever we go our heart goes too. (Gregory 18)

Here already in embryonic form are the *antithetical* and *primary tinctures*, Yeats’s “circuits of sun and moon” (Yeats *A Vision* 24). Joyce would also have been familiar with related ideas expressed in the exegetical “Symbolic System” section of Ellis and Yeats’s 1893 edition of Blake’s poetry, which Joyce read early on in his life (Gandolfo 215). And he might have read, too, of the inner workings and cycles of the *Anima Mundi* or World Soul in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, published in 1918 and according to Yeats a text familiar to his instructors (Yeats *A Vision* 8,72). At whatever stage Joyce became aware of the ideas that Yeats developed into the system of *A Vision*—and certainly the allusions in “The Triangle” were mostly added quite late—traces or anticipations of these may be present in the earliest draft. The word “whereapool,” for instance, appears in this draft (Joyce *First-draft* 165) and it seems to foreshadow a passage from the 1937 edition of *A Vision*:

Life is no series of emanations from divine reason as the Cabalists imagine, but an irrational bitterness, no orderly descent from level to level, no waterfall but a whirlpool, a gyre. (Yeats *A Vision* 40)

Appearing just a few lines later in the earliest draft of this section is “godolphing” (Joyce *First-draft* 165), and as Thornton Wilder points out in a letter to Adaline Glasheen, Yeats went to Godolphin School as a boy (Burns & Gaylord 456). In the final published version, Joyce seems to confirm this link by expanding the passage containing “godolphing” to include obvious references to *A Vision* such as “booty of fight” [body of fate], “creative mind” [creative mind], “spirals’ wobble” and others (*FW* 300.20–28). Whether these early references are consciously placed or merely coincidental, it is clear that Yeats and Joyce do share what Ellmann calls a “simultaneous perception” (quoted in Cormack 21). And much of this perception derives from each writer’s extensive reading of esoteric and occult literature. Hart explains that in Marsh’s Library (in Dublin) and elsewhere, Joyce

had read Joachim de Flora..., had probably read Boehme’s *Signatura Rerum*..., shows a general knowledge of Plato, Sir Thomas Browne, and Eliphas Lévi (244.35), was well read in Blake, Swedenborg... and Blavatsky, and was, of course, familiar with Baudelaire and Rimbaud. (Hart 150)

Compare this list with an account in *A Vision* of Yeats’s own esoteric reading:

I had once known Blake as thoroughly as his unfinished confused Prophetic Books permitted, and I had read Swedenborg and Boehme, and my initiation into the “Hermetic Students” had filled my head with Cabbalistic imagery, but there was nothing in Blake, Swedenborg, Boehme or the Cabbala to help me now. (Yeats *A Vision* 12)

Arguably, the most significant author to appear in the two lists is William Blake, who turns up by name, although in typical Joycean fashion with other meanings overlaid, as “Blake-Roche” a page after the central diagram (*FW* 294.22). In a later chapter of *A Vision*, Yeats includes a fascinating footnote which reveals that Blake is far more pivotal to his esoteric system than he lets on in the quote above:

See Blake’s *Mental Traveller*. Neither Ellis nor I, nor any commentator has explained the poem, though one or another has explained certain passages. The student of *A Vision* will understand it at once. Did Blake and my instructors draw upon some unknown historical source, some explanation perhaps of the lunar circuit? (Yeats *A Vision* 189)

Some *ur-text* like *Finnegans Wake*, in other words? Kidding aside, “The Mental Traveller” is truly an enigmatic poem and is also, as Hart explains, a key source text for *Finnegans Wake* (Hart 49). Too simply put, it tells the strange tale of a baby boy who is nailed to a rock by an old woman. As the baby grows up to be a man, the old woman becomes younger, couples with the man, and eventually becomes a baby herself while he attains old age. The odd cycle then repeats: age and youth, female and male in perpetual opposition. The following stanza seems to be the “crossover” point:

Till he becomes a bleeding Youth,
And she becomes a Virgin bright;
Then he rends up his manacles,
And binds her down for his delight. (Blake 425)

Yet this is not the only Blakean opposition or “contrary” to appear in *A Vision* and *Finnegans Wake*. Yeats writes,

I had never read Hegel, but my mind had been full of Blake from boyhood up and I saw the world as a conflict—Spectre and Emanation—and could distinguish between a contrary and a negation. “Contraries are positive”, wrote Blake, “a negation is not a contrary.” (Yeats *A Vision*, 72)

This passage is echoed (and/or mocked) in “The Triangle” section of *Finnegans Wake*, occurring just after Kev realizes that he has unwittingly drawn his mother’s genitals: “Mother of us all! O, dear me, look at that now! I don’t know is it your spictre or my omination but I’m glad you dimationed it!” (*FW* 299.3–6).

According to Anita Gandolfo, “biographical and textual study proves almost beyond a doubt that Joyce’s knowledge of Blake was filtered through William Butler Yeats” (Gandolfo 215). This, in turn, would likely explain why certain structural aspects of the three writer’s “systems” are so similar. The interaction of contraries has been discussed at length, but there are other clear parallels. The Twenty-seven Churches or moods that history cycles through in Blake’s Prophetic Books, are made to correspond to the 28 Phases of the moon by Yeats. And these are then playfully transformed into the 28 circling Rainbow Girls of *Finnegans Wake*, with Issy as number twenty-nine to represent the leap-year. A closer numerical connection, however, is with the sets of quaternities present in the Prophetic Books, *A Vision* and

Finnegans Wake. Kathleen Raine maps out the linkages for the first two of the three texts:

By this change of emphasis Blake's Zoas become not so much universes as polarized fields of mutual attraction and repulsion, anticipating Yeats's own quaternity, in *A Vision*, of paired opposites: *Will* (Blake's Luvah) and *Mask* (Blake's Tharmas)—feeling and its object—*Creative Mind* (Urizen) and *Body of Fate* (Los)—thought and its object. (Raine 120)

In *Finnegans Wake* a correspondence is also being directly made between Blake's Zoas and the Four Old Men, represented in this case by their respective Irish provinces:

They answer from their Zoans; Hear the four of them! Hark torroar of them! I, says Armagh, and a'm proud o'it. I, says Clonakilty, God help us! I, says Deansgrange, and say nothing. I, says Barna, and whatabout it? Hee haw! (*FW* 57.7)

Yeats's four faculties are found as well, in corrupted form, within the central section of Chapter 2.2 alongside references to Plato's *Timaeus* (*FW* 300.20–24), another text which Joyce apparently filters through *A Vision* (Hart 129). Yeats writes,

The first gyres clearly described by philosophy are those described in the *Timaeus* which are made by the circuits of "the Other" (creators of all particular things), of the planets [five planets visible to the eye, and the sun and moon] as they ascend or descend above or below the equator. They are opposite in nature to that circle of the fixed stars which constitutes "the Same" and confers upon it the knowledge of Universals. (Yeats *A Vision* 68)

Hart, also noting Joyce's use of the *Timaeus* in 2.2, quotes from Plato describing these circles of the Same and the Other:

And he [the Demiurge] gave supremacy to the motion of the same and uniform, for he left that single and undivided; but the inner circle he cleft into seven unequal circles. (quoted in Hart 133)

The circle of the Other is split into seven lesser circles which conform to the orbital spheres of the planets, as Yeats explains above, but Hart point outs that they also correspond

in *Finnegans Wake* to the seven colours of the spectrum, thus explaining the abundant rainbow imagery throughout the book (Hart 133). Shaun the Same, embodying the primary tincture, shines with the undivided white light, while his brother Shem the Other (like Berkeley in Book 4), is *antithetical* and rainbow-hued. And in this regard, it is important to stress that what Plato describes in the *Timaeus* is not only the macrocosmic World Soul, but also the microcosmic soul of every human individual, the latter reflecting the former (Cairns & Hamilton 1173). In this manner, the seven circles of the Other are not only planetary and spectral, but also energy centres within the body, identical to what in Indian thought are termed *chakras* (for wider discussion of these parallels see McEvelley “Plato and Kundalini” 208–24). These seven centres are listed in a left marginal note in 2.2 of *Finnegans Wake* under the heading “*Force Centres of the Fire Serpentine*” (FW 303.L1–7), and are matched in the central column with a list of seven Irish writers (FW 303.5–8). If corresponded as listed, “Doubhlinnbayyates” (W.B. Yeats) would be coupled with the “inter-temporal eye,” presumably the Ājñā or third-eye chakra, appropriate for the visionary author. Again, Joyce is mocking and being serious simultaneously. This conception of the World Soul, taken from the *Timaeus* and theosophical sources, is identified by Yeats and Joyce with what they both call “the great memory” (Yeats *Mythologies* 345). In a 1902 essay on poet James Clarence Mangan, Joyce writes:

In those vast courses which enfold us and in that great memory which is greater and more generous than our memory, no life, no moment of exaltation is ever lost. (Joyce *Critical Writings* 83).

It is very likely that Joyce derives this idea from Yeats’s 1901 essay “Magic,” which explains how this great memory “can be evoked by symbols” (quoted in Carver 207). In his compelling essay, “James Joyce and the Theory of Magic,” however, Craig Carver quotes Frank Budgen who specifies that these notions cherished by the younger Joyce continued to be of crucial importance to him while writing *Finnegans Wake*:

Yeats held that the borders of our minds are always shifting and form part of the universal memory. The universal mind and memory could be evoked by symbols. When telling me this Joyce added that in his own work [*Finnegans Wake*] he never used the recognized symbols, preferring instead to use trivial and quadrivial words and local geographical allusions. The intention of magical evocation, however, remained the same. (quoted in Carver 207)

Surely, therefore, this is the greatest inter-linkage of *A Vision* with *Finnegans Wake*. The former focuses more on the universal and archetypal, while the latter captures the flow of the particular and the all-too-human. *A Vision* is systematic and sequential to a degree, while *Finnegans Wake* animates an interconnected tangle of everything-at-once. Both try to evoke or present the World Soul through symbols, both sacred and profane, both traditional and arbitrary, and in this way they perform magic. Indeed the two books and their authors are instances of the primary and antithetical tinctures in interpenetrating play. And Joyce is surely conscious of this, as Yeats appears in *Finnegans Wake* as a meticulous Shaun-type in contrast to his own irreverent Shem persona (*FW* 345.13).

And nowhere is this point clearer than in “The Triangle” section of chapter 2.2. While Hart explains that the whole of *Finnegans Wake*, in its twice intersecting grand circles of Shaun and Shem (once in the middle at chapter 2.3 and once at the beginning/end of the book), mirrors the movement of the World Soul in the *Timaeus* (Hart 10), it is on page 293 where this is depicted geometrically (Hart 131–2). Chapter 2.2, and within it “The Triangle” or “The Muddest Thick,” is a fractal encapsulation epitomizing the whole book.

If the 28 phases of *A Vision*, mapping out the contrary waxing and waning courses of the primary and antithetical tinctures and gyres, were directly overlaid onto *Finnegans Wake*, then this section in 2.2 would definitely indicate a crossover point. This crossover is reflected in the diagram, in the exchange of marginal commentary, in the delivery of blows and in other textual evidence. There are two of these crossover points in Yeats’s system: Phase 8, which marks the crossing of the primary half of the cycle into the antithetical; and phase 22, at which point the cycle shifts from the antithetical back to the primary (Yeats *A Vision* 78–9). These phases, to use solar terminology, function as “equinoxes,” just as Phases 1 and 15 are “solstices.”

Sheldon Brivic rightly states, therefore, that “the crossing of Dolph and Kev corresponds to Phase 22 of Yeats’s *A Vision*, which begins at the ascendancy of the objective or primary tincture, ‘that primary tincture’ (*FW* 286.4–5)” (Brivic 21). Like the fractal organization of *Finnegans Wake*, in Yeats’s system “each phase is in itself a wheel” (Yeats *A Vision* 89). All levels of being are reflected within it: personal, historical, cosmological. On the personal level, the Will of Phase 22 is at “balance between ambition and contemplation” (Yeats *A Vision* 157), while historically “our own civilization is now almost midway in the movement of the Will from Phase 15 to Phase 1” (Yeats *A Vision* 204), i.e. Phase 22. And, sure enough, in a

later chapter Yeats explains that Phase 22 runs from 1875 to 1927 (Yeats *A Vision* 299), a span including the majority of Yeats's and Joyce's lifetimes, as well as the completion of the first drafts of *A Vision* and *Finnegans Wake*.

Furthermore, Yeats writes that the movement of the four Principles from death to new birth (counter to that of the four Faculties from birth to death) also begins at Phase 22 (Yeats *A Vision* 223). Yet Joyce seems aware of all of this, incorporating and overlaying all of these levels and cycles into a single point. His phrase "between shift and shift" (*FW* 293.3), certainly refers to the Yeatsian *Shiftings*, *Dreaming Back*, etc. of the soul travelling between lives. However, it surely also refers to the passage through dreams at night—the dead being "the Dramatis Personae of our dreams," as Swedenborg wrote (Yeats *A Vision* 227), to the passage of events through history, and to the passage of our world through the cosmic cycles. And on page 287 where the marginal notes disappear and the six-page crossover begins, opening with the Yeatsian "for—husk, hiss, a spirit spires —" (*FW* 287.18), there runs a nine-line aside in Latin which neatly sums up the various processes at work. McHugh translates it as:

Let us... turn over in our minds that most ancient wisdom of both the priests Giordano and Giambattista: the fact that the whole of the river flows safely, with a clear stream, & that those things which were to have been on the bank would later be in the bed; finally that everything recognises itself through something opposite & that the stream is embraced by rival banks. (McHugh 287)

The flow of the Mother river, of the World Soul herself, hailed by the reprobate priests Bruno and Vico, cycles on, generating and embracing all contraries. Then ten pages later, this process is revealed as interlocking double gyres or cones: "Ocone! Ocone!) the maidsapron of our ALP" (*FW* 297.11). Which subsequently takes us forward through "the/riverrun" (*FW* 628.16,3.1) and back to the "second" paragraph of the book where we read that "the stream Oconee exaggerated themselfe to Laurens County's gorgios while they went doublin their mumper all the time" (*FW* 3.7–9). The standard interpretation of this phrase, of course, is that it refers to Dublin, Georgia on the Oconee river, and this is surely correct. Yet all meaning is multiple in *Finnegans Wake*. So also within these lines is the flow of the river, and the double cones or whirlpools (*gorgo* is the Italian for whirlpool) turning throughout time. However, it would make sense that references to *A Vision* would be placed, alongside allusions to several other vital texts, at this crossover counterpoint. Perhaps they were placed

in remembrance of the fact that the opening passage was the very next section that Joyce completed (although in very stripped-down form) after he wrote the first draft of “The Triangle” (Crispi and Slote 485). In any case, the two crossover points still resonate; all passing through these junctures; shifting, turning, gyring between the shifts.

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ABSTRACT

The first part of this pair of essays on *A Vision* by W.B. Yeats and *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce (Mortson) examined the personal and literary relationship and history of the two Irish writers, culminating in the publication of their respective last major works of prose. That essay focused on the continued interest, at once ironic and sincere, in the Western esoteric tradition and the occult shared by both writers. It attempted to show how this mutual interest was reflected in these authors' earlier prose and poetic writings. Additionally it tried to trace how certain themes, symbols and even characters within these works, revealing this esoteric influence, were creatively employed by both Yeats and Joyce in an ongoing exchange throughout their particularly long and productive literary encounter. The essay further argued that evidence for this encounter is very clearly shown in Chapter 10 (Book 2, Part 2) of *Finnegans Wake*.

The present paper, being the second part of the pair, will concentrate more intently on Book 2, Part 2 (or 2.2) in special consideration of the structural and thematic impact of *A Vision* on the chapter, and by extension on the whole of *Finnegans Wake*. However, in an even narrower focus, specific attention will be given to the central and earliest written section within this chapter which has been called "The Triangle" in respect to the circular and triangular geometric figure that appears at its heart (*FW* 293). The extensive placement of references to Yeats and *A Vision* in this section is not disputed by critics, but a common conclusion is that Joyce's use of these references is superficial in substance and parodic in intent, no deeper motivation being evident. Notable exceptions to this view are *Finnegans Wake* critics Clive Hart and, more recently, Alistair Cormack. It will be argued presently, however, that the thematic and structural influence of *A Vision* on this pivotal section of *Finnegans Wake* is even more profound than has been indicated by Hart and Cormack.

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