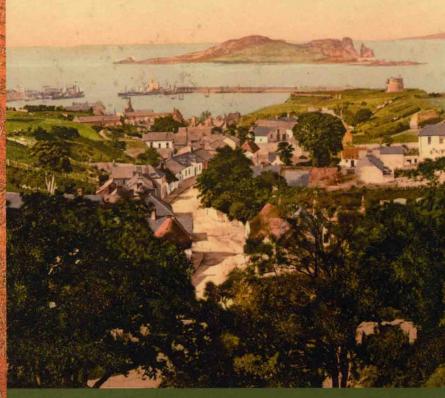
The Ecology of Finnegans Wake

Alison Lacivita



THE FLORIDA JAMES JOYCE SERIES

The Ecology of Finnegans Wake

Alison Lacivita

Foreword by Sebastian D. G. Knowles

University Press of Florida

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Foreword

Once in a blue moon a work comes across an editor's desk that promises to shape the work of a generation. Whoever first read On the Origin of Species in manuscript must have felt this way, seeing an entire horizon heave into view. Here comes ecocriticism-led by Alison Lacivita. Lacivita has created an exquisite chapel in her study of the Wake and the natural world; the intertwining vines of genetic study and ecocritical reading pleach together in an intricately braided text that is a veritable archipelago of new and hidden discoveries. It is as if James Frazer had actually done his homework: this is The Golden Bough for the ecocritical age, an inspirational and breathtakingly original reading that is everywhere supported by close critical engagement with the text. This book provides a necessary redress to the legions of critics who require Joyce to be an urban writer in Aesopian dualism against the Irish literary revival, a town mouse against the country mice of Yeats and Synge, out in their pampooties to murder him. Joyce may have played that distinction up in a particolored way ever since his departure from Dublin, but Alison Lacivita isn't fooled, and she returns James Joyce to the green world where he belongs, leading us to fresh woods and pastures new.

In undergraduate exams on *Ulysses*, I have been known to set two simple questions from the "Ithaca" catechism: "Did he fall?" and "Did it flow?" What follows constitutes the single best possible answer to both questions at once. Lacivita is concerned with nothing more nor less than our post-Edenic existence, and the way that we may make our return to Paradise. Did it flow? Yes, it certainly did: the watery sources of all Joyce's work are revealed in all contexts—genetic, cultural, political, physical, literary, geographical. From paleobotany to post-structuralism, from partridges to peat bogs, from polar bears to Poulaphouca, we are given an encyclope-

dic topology of the legible landscapes of the *Wake*, including a welcome disquisition on the influence of gaslight on paraheliotropic trees. Lacivita does more than shore up the presence of the River Liffey in the *Wake*; her reclamation of an entire subject from the silted waters of the *Wake* makes her at once charitable mason, landscape architect, and hydroengineer.

Genetic criticism and environmental scholarship can be neatly aligned in ways that make Finnegans Wake a perfect study for Lacivita's general argument. Over time and through space Finnegans Wake developed like nothing else in literature, allowing Lacivita to shuttle effortlessly between the growth of the text and the text's love of growing things. By the end of Lacivita's book, we come to realize that Finnegans Wake allows infinite space to explore the nutshell of the natural world. But that does not make Joyce's work unique; Finnegans Wake just makes the general ecocritical argument better than any text ever written. This is the unique quality of Lacivita's scholarship: she makes Finnegans Wake a representative work rather than a singularity, a great tree of life instead of a radioactive stone only to be approached in a hazmat suit with a Geiger counter. "Allalivial, allalluvial!" (FW 213.32). "Environs" (FW 3.03) has been hiding in plain sight. Lacivita is our Lucretius, and The Ecology of Finnegans Wake our De Rerum Natura: through her marvelous work, we are drawn closer to the stars.

> Sebastian D. G. Knowles Editor, Florida James Joyce Series

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I would like to express my gratitude to Dale and Janet Shearer, who kindly helped support this project. I would like to thank the *Joyce Studies Annual* for permission to reprint excerpts from my article "Polar Exploration in *Finnegans Wake*," from *Joyce Studies Annual* (2013). I would also like to thank David Hayman for allowing me to draw on his work, *The First-Draft Version of Finnegans Wake*, extensively, and Catherine de Courcy, for allowing me to publish information from our e-mail correspondence.

I dedicate this book to my parents, Mark and Audrey Lacivita, who supported me for the seven years I was away from the United States and were always only a phone call away.

Abbreviations

1. Editions of Joyce's Works

- BL Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*. Drafts, corrected typescript, and proofs, 1923–1939. British Library, London, Archives and Manuscripts Division.
- CW Joyce, James. Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing. Ed. Kevin Barry. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- D Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. Ed. Robert Scholes and A. Walton Litz. New York: Viking Press, 1969. Print.
- FDV Hayman, David, ed. A First-Draft Version of Finnegans Wake. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963. Print.
- FW (plus page and line number) Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*. New York: Penguin, 1999. Print.
- JJA (plus volume and page number) The James Joyce Archives. Ed. Michael Groden et al. 63 vols. New York: Garland Publishing, 1978–1979. Print.
- LI Joyce, James. Letters of James Joyce: Volume 1. Ed. Stuart Gilbert. New York: Viking Press, 1957; reissued with corrections, 1966. Print.
- LII Joyce, James. Letters of James Joyce: Volume 2. Ed. Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking Press, 1966. Print.
- LIII Joyce, James. Letters of James Joyce: Volume 3. Ed. Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking Press, 1966. Print.
- P Joyce, James. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Ed. Chester G. Anderson. New York: Viking Press, 1968. Print.
- PSW Joyce, James. *Poems and Shorter Writings*. Ed. Richard Ellmann, A. Walton Litz, and John Whittier-Ferguson. London: Faber and Faber, 1991. Print.

- SH Joyce, James. *Stephen Hero*. Ed. Theodore Spencer, John J. Slocum, and Herbert Cahoon. New York: New Directions, 1963. Print.
- U (plus episode and line number) Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Ed. Hans Walter Gabler et al. New York: Garland Publishing, 1984, 1986. Print.

2. Frequently Cited Works of Joyce Criticism

- Buffalo VI.B. (plus notebook number and page) *The* Finnegans Wake *Notebooks at Buffalo*. Ed. Vincent Deane, Daniel Ferrer, and Geert Lernout. Turnhout: Brepols, 2001–. Print.
- EFW Epstein, Edmund. A Guide through Finnegans Wake. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009. Print.
- Geni Slote, Sam, and Wim Van Mierlo, eds. *Genitricksling Joyce*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999. Print.
- HJW Crispi, Luca, and Sam Slote, eds. How Joyce Wrote Finnegans Wake: A Chapter-by-Chapter Genetic Guide. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007. Print.
- JJ Ellmann, Richard. James Joyce. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1982. Print.
- McHugh, Roland. *Annotations to* Finnegans Wake. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991. Print.
- Probes Hayman, David, and Sam Slote, eds. *Probes: Genetic Studies in Joyce*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995. Print.
- TDJJ Rose, Danis. *The Textual Diaries of James Joyce*. Dublin: Lilliput, 1995. Print.
- UFW O'Hanlon, John, and Danis Rose. *Understanding* Finnegans Wake. New York: Garland, 1982. Print.
- WiT Hayman, David. *The* Wake *in Transit*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990. Print.

3. Joyce Journals, Print and Online

| AFWC | A Finnegans Wake Circular |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| AWN | A Wake Newslitter |
| GJS | Genetic Joyce Studies |
| HJS | Hypermedia Joyce Studies |
| JJQ | James Joyce Quarterly |
| JSA | Joyce Studies Annual |

Textual Note

References in the text and notes to Joyce's manuscript material as "simplified" mean that I have not included all changes made to a passage, only those that are substantial or relevant to the discussion at hand. Carets (^) in transcriptions of manuscript material indicate Joyce's additions to the manuscript.

The British Library (BL) in London is a major repository of Joycean materials, including annotated drafts, typescripts, and proofs of *Finnegans Wake*. All of the BL citations I present in this study come from the 63-volume James Joyce Archive (JJA). In short citations, such as (BL 47482b-62v), manuscript number (47482b) and page or folio number (62v), sometimes indicating recto (r) or verso (v), follow BL. In long citations, such as (BL 47480-267, JJA 55: 446a, FDV 203.29, FW 380.34), the BL locator is succeeded in turn by (1) location in the James Joyce Archive (vol. and page number), (2) location in the *First-Draft Version of* Finnegans Wake (FDV), and (3) location in *Finnegans Wake* (page and line number). Thus, commas in long citations separate the elements of one citation; semicolons separate discrete citations.

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Introduction

An Ecocritical Joyce?

"Time and the river and the mountain are the real heroes of my book." Joyce made this assertion to Eugene Jolas while explaining one version of the structure of *Finnegans Wake*; he continued: "Yet the elements are exactly what any novelist might use: man and woman, birth, childhood, night, sleep, marriage, prayer, death" (qtd. in Jolas, "My Friend" 11–12). This study follows Joyce's direction, presenting the argument, through a genetic examination of environmental themes in the text, that "the river and the mountain" are really the heroes of *Finnegans Wake*. I define "environmental themes" broadly, as themes relating to the natural world or the human relationship to the natural world. Such themes are wide-ranging and include topics such as the city, wetlands, geography, imperialism, animals, agriculture, technology, transportation, engineering, religious tradition, mapping, and the sciences, among others. However, to limit the material, this study focuses only on instances where these themes are clearly grounded in the physical environment.

Through the dual lenses of ecocriticism and genetic criticism, *Finnegans Wake* is situated here in a tradition of modernist inquiries into the relationship between culture and nature. If we broadly define literary modernism as a response to modernity, *Finnegans Wake*'s articulation of an urban ecology, of a self-conscious aesthetic appropriation of nature, and use of experimental form to represent nature make it an exemplary text. During the first years of its composition, *Finnegans Wake* was on its way to becoming the first major text of modernist literature to express profound engagement with the environment. Joyce did not necessarily commence the writing of the *Wake* with this idea in mind. However, from an examination of the earliest sketches and notebooks for the *Wake*, it appears that

Joyce was interested enough in the environment, in a capacity seemingly not yet clear even to him, to record dozens of notes from a wide variety of sources and in very different contexts and to incorporate environmental themes into all of the early sketches.

In this introduction, I provide a brief overview of ecocriticism and its relationship to modernist studies, Irish studies, and Joyce studies. Then I discuss my genetic methodology and provide a genetic approach to three sources in one of the *Finnegans Wake* notebooks as an example of its applications in such a study. Finally, I provide a chapter-by-chapter outline of the book.

An Introduction to Ecocriticism

In the introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Harold Fromm and Cheryll Glotfelty provide the most frequently cited definition of ecocriticism: "Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii). Since the formative essays of the ecocritical canon were published in the 1970s and 1980s, ecocriticism has steadily expanded in scope, and the traditional approach of examining the role of nature in a particular literary text now encompasses an everbroadening definition of both "literature" and "physical environment." "Physical environment" has come to mean everything from the deepest woods to the busiest urban areas, and "literature" has become almost any type of text.

As ecocriticism becomes more of an accepted theoretical approach in literary study, the subject matter of which ecocriticism is allowed to speak steadily continues to expand. Along with class, race, and gender, place can now be seen as a determining factor in the understanding of literatures and their production. By "place," I (reductively) mean the specificities of the environment (both built and natural), and their exchange with the culture specific to that particular geographical area. This new focus on place has helped result in the merging of ecocriticism with Marxist criticism (ecomarxism), gender studies, queer theory, feminist criticism (ecofeminism), ethnic studies, and postcolonial criticism.

Though there are presently many different ecocriticisms, two roughly unifying goals behind them all are (1) the exposure of the ways in which the language we use to describe and discuss nature affects our perception of that nature, and (2) the acknowledgment of human inseparability

from the nonhuman world. Though early ecocriticism often embraced and perpetuated the timeless "nature vs. culture" binary, such a division is usually now seen as an artificial construct (though oddly not with regard to modernist literature). As Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace argue in Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism (2001), the focus of earlier ecocritics on personal narratives of the American wilderness is guilty of "seriously misrepresenting the significance of multiple natural and built environments to writers with other ethnic, national or racial affiliations" (7). The culture/nature binary is implicated in the endurance of other damaging discursive binaries as well (white/black, man/woman, colonizer/colonized, urban/rural, human/nonhuman, etc.). As Steven Rosendale argues in The Greening of Literary Scholarship, an important idea to keep in mind as an ecocritic is the "human component of the human-nature relationship" (xvii). In the twenty-first century, there is no part of the nonhuman environment that is not affected by human life or vice versa. In short, this dynamic means that the culture/nature and urban/rural divide becomes less and less clear and that the ecocritic must examine all types of environments.

Recent years have brought the constructive interaction between ecocriticism and post-structuralism/postmodernism, though the attempt to bridge the gap between these two approaches has frequently been met with harsh criticism. Early ecocriticism (and much ecocriticism still) sets itself as against theory and in favor of a return to the "real" (once primarily through recourse to nonfiction texts and "nature writing"). Critics of the integration of post-structuralism and ecocriticism often represent poststructuralism as a malicious force that treats nature as solely a linguistic construct. Such critics tend to focus on only the most nihilistic interpretations of post-structuralism and postmodernism, overlooking the ability of these approaches to, for example, decenter the human subject and to query systems of thought and uses of language that reinforce narratives harmful to the environment. While such ecocritics' fear is understandable (radical interpretations of Jacques Derrida or Jean Baudrillard certainly can imply that nature exists only linguistically or culturally and that therefore we do not need to worry about our effect upon it), it is also limiting to the development of ecocriticism's theoretical stance and its larger implications.

Laurence Coupe, in The Green Studies Reader, argues that "green studies does not challenge the notion that human beings make sense of the world through language, but rather the self-serving inference that nature is nothing more than a linguistic construct" (3). Coupe accepts the role of language in understanding and formulating the world, but profitably separates this from the destructive belief that the world is only a linguistic construct. Allowing post-structuralism to enter the ecocritical debate on the linguistic level allows for an exploration into the root of our current environmental crisis.

A reassertion of nature's materiality may seem contrary to much philosophy associated with Joyce and with Finnegans Wake, but several philosophers associated with post-structuralism and postmodernism do in fact "use" nature to support arguments concerning the decentering of the human, of language, and of the metanarrative. In addition to Martin Heidegger's concept of "dwelling" and Derrida's discussions of the "ani/mal" (in The Animal That Therefore I Am), Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work has been the most readily adopted by critics working in diverse areas of ecocriticism. 1 The passages in Merleau-Ponty to which ecocriticism gravitates largely concern language, and David Abram goes so far as to conclude an essay on the phenomenologist by asserting that he stands for an "Eco-Logos," and that "[h]is work suggests a rigorous way to approach and to speak of ecological systems without positing our immediate selves outside of those systems" (97). Such a concept is what defines ecocriticism as a critical approach as opposed to simply a discussion of nature in literature; ecocriticism seeks to uncover assumptions, often buried in language, about the construction of "nature" as a category, and to explore the formal innovations for representing this construction.

Merleau-Ponty, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, provides support for the type of work ecocriticism is now doing when he writes that the goal now for philosophy consists "in restoring a power to signify, a birth of meaning, or a wild meaning, an expression of experience by experience, which in particular clarifies the special domain of language. And in a sense, as Valéry said, language is everything, since it is the voice of no one, since it is the very voice of the things, the waves, and the forests" (155). Continuing, Merleau-Ponty argues that "language is born of our carnal participation in a world that already speaks to us at the most immediate level of sensory experience," and thus, "language does not belong to humankind but to the sensible world of which we are but a part" (274). This detachment of language from the human is crucial when considering, for example, the relationship between language and the current environmental crisis; in a Lacanian sense, the system of language is something into which we have

been born, and it exists beyond the control of the individual utterer and utterance.

Merleau-Ponty's attitudes are consistent with the way Joyce portrays language in Finnegans Wake; the mixing of languages, both synchronically and diachronically, the malleability of words in different contexts, the difficulties in communication, and the misunderstandings suggest that individuals are not in control of their language or its usage. This lack of control is demonstrated through Joyce's decentering of the human subject, so that several times throughout the Wake, language's anthropocentrism is queried, and the text explores the possibilities of other forms of communication, be it through the legibility of the physical landscape or the "speech" of the river and the sea.

Louise Westling, author of The Green Breast of the New World: Landscape, Gender, and American Fiction (1998), argues elsewhere that a poststructuralist approach to literary texts can be quite useful to ecocritics, as "it helps to define the human place within the ecosystem by interrogating or erasing the boundary that has been assumed to set our species apart from the rest of the living community" ("Literature" 30). Writing of this boundary, environmental historian Donald Worster argues in The Wealth of Nature that "it is a completely arbitrary act to put culture and nature into separate categories, requiring rigidly separate methods of analysis. The polar bear has claws and a fur coat to cope with its environment; we humans use our cultures to do the same" (37). In Worster's view, culture is something directly born out of and dependent on nature, and this idea is integral to the exploration of the ecology of Finnegans Wake.

Ecocriticism and Modernist Studies

Though the situation is changing every day (as attested to by the publication of studies such as Bonnie Kime Scott's In the Hollow of the Wave: Virginia Woolf and Modernist Uses of Nature [June 2012], or the emphasis on nature in modernism at the 2011 Modernist Studies Association conference, etc.), very few ecocritics address modernist writers, and very few modernist critics address the natural environment. It is only slightly reductive to suggest that prior ecocritical focus on the romantics and nature writing, combined with modernist studies' emphasis on the urban, metropolitan aspects of modernism, has led to a significant gap on both sides. Fairly expansive bodies of ecocritical work already exist on the literature of the early modern period, the romantic period, and the years from World War II to the present, but the period from 1900 until 1950 remains largely unexplored ecocritically. Several studies examine the role of science (largely, physics) in works of modernist art and literature, but few focus on other sciences such as ecology, botany, entomology, zoology, or ethology, or on "nature" as a larger category. J. Scott Bryson, in one of the only attempts to bridge this critical gap, an essay titled "Modernism and Ecological Criticism," also notes this dearth and questions why this is:

An ecocritical methodology has much to offer as an approach to modern literature, not only because modern artists displayed a significant interest in natural elements in their work [. . .] but also because a central question for artists and intellectuals in the early part of the twentieth century became how humans could somehow render their experiences with a more-than-human world. (591)

This negotiation of the human and the nonhuman or "more-than-human" world can be found, to some extent, in all the central works of modernist literature, but more often than not, these negotiations are overlooked for more predictable modernist themes of despair, alienation, or stylistic experimentation. Such themes can be examined from the perspective of the environment as well, and any ecocritical approach to these tropes of modernist studies would produce propitious new readings. Themes of despair and alienation could be viewed as stemming from "a fundamental uncertainty about the relationship between human and non-human nature" (Bryson, "Modernism" 591), and stylistic experimentations could be understood as attempts to adequately represent a natural world that was receding farther and farther from human life, comprehension, and imagination every day.

To introduce my approach to the definition of an ecological modernism, I turn to Lawrence Buell. In his defining work of ecocriticism, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau*, *Nature Writing*, *and the Formation of American Culture*, he articulates four criteria for determining the "environmental" quality of a text:

1. The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history.