CHAPTER 4

"Under the shadow of the Monument": On First Looking into Finnegans Wake

Peter D. McDonald

Paris,
1922–1939

Grahamstown,
1984 –
– for the two DAs

Every those personal place objects . . . where soevers.

Writing about *Finnegans Wake* has always been beyond me, though I have once written with it. The notoriously idiosyncratic project to which Joyce devoted himself during the tumultuous interwar years plays a central part in my book, *Artefacts of Writing* (2017), setting the terms, alongside Rabindranath Tagore's extraordinary oeuvre, for a way of thinking about languages, heritages, communities, and the state. "Though many reading experiences, rather than any fixed set of norms or methodological principles, let alone any general theory of criticism, have shaped and continue to shape my evolving engagement with literary writing," I wrote in the introduction, "repeated, often bewildering encounters over a number of years with James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) proved pivotal for this book."[1] The reason? In the process of remaking me as a reader, the *Wake* changed how I thought about the foundations of the sovereign, self-determining modern state – hence the title of the central chapter on Joyce, which comes from a throwaway remark he made about the United States in a letter to his son on 4 July 1935: "Independence, Dependence, Interdependence Day."[2] My changing and change-making experience of the *Wake* was only part of the story, however. No less influential were the circumstances in which I first encountered it. Though this became clearer to me only after I finished *Artefacts*, I should have known better. After all, as the *Wake* itself insists, there is no secure distinction between what is supposedly intrinsic to reading and what is extrinsic to it. Or to be more precise and to use one of its own guiding figures: while we can take a letter out of its envelope, we cannot read

it in a properly Wakean way if we ignore its mode of delivery and "the enveloping facts themselves circumstantiating it."[3]

I could say the intrinsic experience of reading *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) steered me to the *Wake*, but, once again, that is not the whole story because I did not stumble on Joyce's first foray into long-form fiction by chance or as an isolated artifact. I initially encountered *Portrait* on a "World Novel in English" course as a second-year undergraduate in 1984, where it appeared alongside Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), William Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932), Saul Bellow's *Herzog (*1964), Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964), J. M. Coetzee's *Dusklands* (1974), and V. S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* (1979). As I read them over the year, each of these books cast new light on the others, creating different patterns and connections like a shifting kaleidoscope. With *Portrait*, *Heart of Darkness* – or rather the *Heart of Darkness* debate Achebe provoked in the 1970s, and Naipaul complicated – had the most powerful refraction effect. At issue was not just the canonical status of Conrad's novella, or the conflict of interpretations, but questions about the ownership of the English language, its literary forms, and the heritages with which it was associated in the era of decolonization. On the one hand, there was Achebe, in his guise as a writer-critic, denouncing Conrad as a "bloody racist" in his now-classic essay, "An Image of Africa" (1977).[4] On the other, there was Naipaul, the creative practitioner, reworking Conrad's novella in *A Bend in the River* to tell his own African story. Reading outside the very masculinist list of prescribed books, I found Nadine Gordimer coincidently doing the same as Naipaul in *Burger's Daughter* (1979).

All this alerted me to *Portrait*'s own questions about language, ownership, and empire. "His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech," Joyce has the undergraduate Stephen think during his scholastic exchange about art and language with the English dean of studies: "I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language."[5] He and the dean have just been arguing about "tundish," which Stephen tries to claim as an Irish word for "funnel." Later, he realizes he is wrong, noting in his diary entry for 13 April: "I looked it up and find it English and good old blunt English too. Damn the dean of studies and his funnel! What did he come here for to teach us his own language or to learn it from us. Damn him one way or the other!"[6] Complicating this anti-colonial animus, Stephen's next entry records his apprehensions about an "old man" from the west of Ireland whom he represents as an atavistic adversary in his own inner drama, casting himself as the high poet-priest of modernity. A figure out of

a nativist Gaelic League imaginary (or Yeats's Celtic Twilight?), the cabin-dwelling old man nonetheless switches casually between English and Irish.

What struck me most about *Portrait*, particularly when compared with the other novels on my second-year course, is the way Stephen's evolving and always fraught relationship with English shapes the narrative itself, making the language question much more than a thematic concern. This shaping impetus runs from the first sentence and the oral story Stephen's father tells him as a small child ("Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow") to the last, which centers on the high-minded Hellenism of Stephen's final written diary entry ("April 27. Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead").[7] So, for the Joyce of *Portrait*, the English language in its various spoken idioms and written forms was more than a contestable colonial inheritance or an elective literary medium. It was a central subject and structuring device.

With my curiosity piqued, I ferreted out Joyce's other books in the university library. For some reason, *Finnegans Wake* came to hand first. The library had the 1946 Faber and Faber hardback, a reprint of the first edition which includes a list of "Corrections of Misprints" at the end. Opening it for the first time on that day in 1984 was for me about as far from Keats's experience of first looking into George Chapman's seventeenth-century translation of Homer as it is possible to get. A "new planet" the *Wake* may have been, but I did not feel like an awestruck "watcher of the skies," even less like "stout Cortez," and not just because Keats mixed up his Spanish conquistadors. To me, planet *Wake* seemed utterly airless, alien, and bewildering. I barely got past the first page. True, I could "read" the Latinate script and the printed characters. I could even recognize many familiar-looking English words, despite all the verbal shenanigans (Sir Tristram's "penisolate war" stood out). I also got the idea that someone (Finnegan?) had had a fall a bit like Humpty Dumpty ("the pftjschute of Finnegan, erse solid man, that the humptyhillhead of humself"[8]). But for the rest, I was at sea without a compass.

All I had were questions. Why was Joyce messing with the basic rules of English punctuation? No apostrophe in the title, no capital for "riverrun," and then this one-hundred-letter parenthetical monster: "(bababadalgharaghtakamminarronnkonnbronntonnerronntuonnthunntrovarrhounawnskawntoohoohoordenenthurnuk!)." The paragraphing was somewhat reassuring, but, if Joyce was mainly a novelist, why was there no dialogue? I knew from *Portrait* that he did not like quotation marks, but, if this was a novel, as the slabs of prose seemed to suggest, then who was the narrator and where did one

character begin and another end? Asking for a plot was obviously asking for trouble. In the face of all this, the errata at the end of the library edition seemed like an exercise in absurdist pedantry. Was any sane reader really going to care that "Quáouauh!" on page 4 should read "Quaouauh!" or that "Mac Dyke" on page 8 should be printed "MacDyke?"[9] After half an hour, I returned the book to the shelf and went back to the rambling essay I was writing about E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. Yet, for all my befuddlement (or because of it?), I was hooked, and so I found myself returning to the *Wake* again and again in the years ahead, lured by the most basic question: why did Joyce, a writer I admired even more after reading *Ulysses* (1922), spend the last seventeen years of his writing life on such a seemingly deranged and deranging project?

The first glimmerings of an answer came about a year later when I returned to the library and to that opaque first page, now armed with William York Tindall's *A Reader's Guide to Finnegans Wake* (1969), which opens with these faintly encouraging words: "*Finnegans Wake* is about anybody, anywhere, anytime."[10] From Tindall I learned that the *Wake*'s second paragraph details some of the many invasions and migrations that had shaped, and were still shaping, the history of Ireland ("the scraggy isthmus of Europe Minor"): from the ancient Celts, some of whom immigrated from Brittany, to the modern Irish, many of whom emigrated to the United States – hence the play on "North Armorica" and "doubling," which is also a city on the Oconee River in Georgia, US.[11] Underpinning all this, Tindall intimated, was something like a Joyceanic philosophy of history. These specifically Irish migrations reflected the workings of two very different but always crosscutting world-historical forces – Tindall called them "principles" – each of which is potentially creative and destructive: a free-flowing, circulatory "feminine" force, associated chiefly with the River Liffey ("riverrun") and Anna Livia Plurabelle (ALP); and a master-building, rising-and-falling (tumescent-detumescent?) "masculine" one, linked most immediately to Dublin's Howth Castle and Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker (HCE).[12] When Tindall then connected this philosophy to Joyce's word play, a switch flipped. I was particularly taken by his comments on "penisolate," which he describes as a "radiant word" because it "carries Wellington's Peninsular War, the Wellington Monument, the lonely penis, and the lonely pen" – the Anglo-Irish Duke of Wellington (1769–1852) is one of HCE's many masculinist avatars.[13] Moreover, Tindall added, all the crazy punning and mixing of languages itself bore witness to humanity's never-ending, often violent interactions: for example, "'Passencore,' not yet in French, vies with German 'wielderfight' (wiederfechten) – literally 'fight

again.'"[14] With Tindall's help, I realized that the Joyce of the *Wake*, who was evidently more of the ALP than the HCE persuasion, is emphatically not the Stephen of *Portrait*. Far from fretting "in the shadow" of the dean's English, Joyce used his last literary wager to ramp up the linguistic experimentalism of *Ulysses*, wresting the language from its erstwhile colonial owners and re-foreignizing it for his own idiosyncratic (and to me still largely mysterious) purposes.

Though Tindall opened my eyes to the *Wake*'s densely textured Irishness, I continued to feel the lure of his "anybody, anywhere, anytime" claim, which he supports with this edited quotation: "Every those personal place objects . . . where soevers."[15] For the most part, this only compounded my puzzlement, though, as an undergraduate studying English and philosophy in the mid-1980s in what was then called Grahamstown, South Africa, at what is still called Rhodes University, Tindall's promissory first sentence did get me thinking. There were, after all, some points of intersection between my immediate circumstances and the world of the *Wake*: the long shadow of the British empire being the most obvious. Grahamstown was founded in 1812 as a military outpost on the eastern frontier of the British Cape Colony, which was itself established to secure the sea route to the east during the "penisolate" Napoleonic Wars. A product of the same history, albeit in a later phase, the university, which dates from 1904, took its name from its first benefactor, the mining tycoon, arch-imperialist, and former premier of the Cape, Cecil John Rhodes (1853–1902): for CJR read HCE. Though the "enveloping facts" of this long history were everywhere to be seen in the 1980s, they were overshadowed by the more urgently "circumstantiating" present, which saw apartheid enter its darkest final years.

Yet there was one point at which the colonial past and the late-colonial present converged: a vast local icon called the 1820 Settlers National Monument, an odd amalgam of the Wellington Monument, Howth Castle, and the "Willingdone Museyroom" where the *Wake* begins.[16] A short walk from the university library, the monument occupies a commanding position on a hill overlooking the city; in this it is unlike Howth Castle, which is less imposingly situated. The monument is, in fact, adjacent to a stone fort and battery which had been located on the same spot for military purposes in the 1830s, and, during the militarized crackdowns the apartheid government imposed in the mid-1980s, the monument itself was used to house a searchlight trained on the city's black neighborhoods. All enough to make any soul do more than fret. In my case, the building's looming extrinsic presence had another, no less inward effect

as well. Memories of the shadow it cast over my first efforts to look into, or simply at, the *Wake* fueled my compulsion to return to Joyce's eccentric last work time and again in the years ahead.

Memorializing the arrival of four thousand British colonists at the Cape in 1820 was nothing new. Since the half-century in 1870, each milestone had been lavishly marked by a series of commemorative events. Then, in the centenary year, the first major physical memorial was erected in the city's high street – replaced by a granite trilithon (another HCE emblem) in the 1950s – and a specially dedicated museum, focusing on the military history, followed in 1965. The 1820 Settlers National Monument was of a different order, however, not just because it was grander but because it was intended to be a living memorial. Modeled on the monolithic modernist design the American architect Louis Kahn developed in the 1950s, the vast seven-level 20,000m^2 building, which was opened with great ceremony in 1974, includes a thousand-seat theater and a two-hundred-seat cinema as well as art galleries and conference facilities. Since its inception, it has also been the venue for an annual festival of the arts. As its first publicity officer, Thelma Neville, explained in an article about the opening, the ship-like concrete, brick, and glass structure – "proudly dominating the landscape" – was intended to embody the iconic function:

> As the use of the building had to be related to the contributions made by the British pioneers, the main functions are designed to concentrate on perpetuating the heritage bequeathed by the 1820 Settlers – the English language and the democratic traditions they brought with them – by means of an auditorium to be used mainly for English-language festivals and a conference centre that points to the democratic practice of debate and discussion.[17]

A plaque in the entrance, which pointedly speaks for the settler lineage in the possessive first-person plural, still makes the same point: the "facilities are open to all, to enjoy and enlarge our heritage of language and culture and to perpetuate our traditions of tolerance and freedom of speech." As the publicity officer added, in another telling formulation, "it is perpetuating more than a language. It is an ethos; a characteristic spirit; a heritage; an endowment."[18]

Three conspicuously displayed (and less noticeably modified) quotations in the cavernous main foyer, one etched in stone around a central fountain, the other two rendered in large, brushed-steel letters on the concrete walls at the entrance, reiterate the message in more poetic terms. "That all might have life and have it more abundantly," the fountain inscription reads, adapting Jesus's parable of the good shepherd from the King James version of John 10:10.

"We must take root and grow or die where we stand," the writing on the first wall at the entrance declares, turning a past-tense observation made by the English missionary Henry Dugmore (1810–96) in *The Reminiscences of an Albany Settler* into a present-tense injunction: Dugmore's recollections of his arrival as a nine-year-old member of an original settler group began as a lecture on the occasion of the half-century celebrations in 1870. Finally, a side wall at the entrance carries four lines from the end of "The Emigrant's Cabin," a 305-line "conversation poem" by the Scottish writer, free-speech campaigner, and abolitionist, Thomas Pringle (1789–1834), who was a leading figure in the settler community during his brief six-year residence in the Cape:

> Nor wild Romance nor Pride allured me here:
> Duty and Destiny with equal voice
> Constrained my steps: I had no other choice . . .
> Something for Africa to do or say.

This comprises lines 137–39 of the poem, plus line 230, all spoken in the Pringle voice. "Thomas Pringle" lives on as the name of one of the building's primary venues as well. The cinema and main theater are also named: the former after the writer, feminist, and anti-war campaigner Olive Schreiner (1855–1920); the latter after the poet, academic, and leading proponent of the monument, Guy Butler (1918–2001). There is some acknowledgment of local Xhosa heritage too, but only via a single figure who also exemplifies the success of missionary evangelism. The art gallery is named after Ntsikana (1780–1821), the first Xhosa prophet to propagate Christian beliefs.

For the monument's founders, the talismanic settler names and quotations did more than express what they considered the "characteristic spirit" of the British legacy. Like the plaque declaring the facilities "open to all," they elevated their project above the brutally repressive realities of apartheid. "Inscribed in the flagstones of the floor of the impressive memorial foyer, around a perpetually bubbling fountain, are the words from St John's gospel" testifying to the monument's "openness and hospitality," the chair of the 1820 Foundation (then Jan Breitenbach) explained in 1991.[19] He was echoing his predecessors who had from the start insisted "this is no sectional or bombastic memorial."[20] The "enveloping facts themselves circumstantiating" the construction of the building suggested otherwise. Two will suffice. First, a coincidence: the monumental tribute to "our traditions of freedom of speech" opened the year the white-only, Westminster-style parliament, another settler inheritance, passed the Publications Act 1974, inaugurating a new, more repressive phase in the history of apartheid censorship. Second, an enabling condition: far from disdaining, or simply ignoring, the latest drive

to commemorate the 1820 settlers, the state actively supported it from the start, in the end covering 80 percent of the final construction cost (3.2 million of the 4 million rand total, around 200 million rand in today's values).[21] Indeed, for the state, the monument was something of a propaganda coup: the publicity officer's promotional piece about the opening was, accordingly, given a six-page, illustrated spread in *SA Panorama* (1956–93), a state-run periodical designed to boost South Africa's image at home and abroad. Evidently, any threat the founders' claims about openness, tolerance, and free expression posed was outweighed by the endorsement their project gave to the state's own racialized ethnolinguistic vision of South Africa as an essentially Anglo-Afrikaner polity, comprising an association of divinely ordained, separate *volke*, each with its own language and ethnic heritage. "No group had made a bigger contribution to the character of South Africa today," *Panorama* reported the state president (then J. J. Fouché) saying at the opening in 1974, before adding, again in his words, that the vast new building was not only a monument "of which English-speaking South Africans could be proud but a symbol of pride and hope for all South Africa."[22]

Finnegans Wake challenges this kind of thinking at every level and takes issue with the monument's founding assumptions at every turn. Working out exactly how and why was a tortuous process, but the following passage pointed the way – it is, in fact, the first of the *Wake*'s many explicit reading lessons:

> (Stoop) if you are abcedminded, to this claybook, what curios of signs (please stoop), in this allaphbed! Can you rede (since We and Thou had it out already) its world? It is the same told of all. Many. Miscegenations on miscegenations.[23]

I found the last sentence, which had a special resonance in the South Africa of the 1980s, particularly illuminating because it offers a rationale for Joyce's practice of creative re-foreignization, which the passage also illustrates. By adding words like "rede" (German for "speech") and "abeceda" (Czech or Slovak, also possibly Anglo-Saxon "abecede," for "alphabet") to the already interlingual English ("please" from French, "signs" from Latin/French, "world" from Old Frisian/Anglo-Saxon), Joyce layered his own inventive "miscegenations" (itself a Latinate coinage) on the many "miscegenations" of ordinary English, simultaneously claiming the language for himself and disabling any ideas of linguistic purity or ethnic ownership. As Seamus Heaney intimated, this spoke to many writers living with the colonial legacy of British-English in the mid-1980s. "The English language belongs to us," declares the defiantly angular Joyce of the *Wake* who appears like *Hamlet*'s

ghost to the self-doubting Heaney-figure in section XII of *Station Island* (1984). "Keep at a tangent," he then says, and "fill the element / with signatures on your own frequency."[24] As if in concert, Salman Rushdie took similar instruction from the *Wake* with world-shattering consequences in *The Satanic Verses* (1988).[25] At around the same time – in 1984 and 1986, respectively – two leading contemporary writers in South Africa, Es'kia Mphahlele and Njabulo Ndebele, addressed the national English Academy, a white-led organization with close ties to the monument. Their subject? The future of English as a decolonized, black lingua franca in South Africa, beyond what Ndebele called the academy's "prescriptive open-mindedness."[26] The phrase applies equally to the idea of linguistic guardianship for which the monument stood. At that point, Mphahlele, who returned to South Africa in 1977 from two decades in exile, was the most eminent black educationalist in the country: he founded the African literature department at the University of Witwatersrand in 1983. Ndebele, then teaching English at the National University of Lesotho, would go on to succeed him as head of the Witwatersrand department in 1991.

Yet, as I slowly came to realize, Joyce was doing more than targeting colonialist delusions about the English language. He was raising equally testing questions about his own primary medium: the Latinate English writing system. Though this critical feature of his project was staring at me from every page – for one thing, I had simply to read, "if you are abcedminded" literally – it took some time for me to see it, or, rather, to unlearn how I had been taught *not* to see it in the process of learning to read. By a curious trick of the literate brain, becoming "abcedminded," as Joyce's word play implies, makes us absent-minded about the medium of alphabetical writing as such. From its unpunctuated title to its non-final word ("the"), the *Wake* is a counter-lesson in basic literacy designed not only to interfere with, and compound, the vagaries of the sound-based though notoriously non-transparent English writing system, but to foreground the promise and perils of writing as an endlessly proliferating, infinitely malleable, and always corruptible artifact of human devising. "Countlessness of livestories have netherfallen by this plage," Mutt tells Jute in their non-dialogue on a dump just before the "stoop" passage, "flick as flowflakes, litters from aloft, like a waast wizzard all of whirlworlds."[27] He is contemplating the long, palimpsestic history of human interaction caught in the decomposing "humus" runes of "ourth," but could be referring to the litter-like frailty of the many "claybooks" that come under Joyce's compendiously eclectic scrutiny: from the contested textual history of the Irish *Book of Kells* (900 CE) to fakeries like the Scottish poet James Macpherson's

Poems of Ossian (1760), and from the constitution of the Irish Free State to the Bible and the Quran. Like ALP's unreadably but emblematically defaced and recirculating letter, all form part of the moldering "museo-mound" which is, at once, the *Wake* itself and the ultimate site of humanity's worldly, earth-written heritage: etymologically, "mound" evokes the Latin "mundus," the French "monde," and the Germanic "midden," all of which connect to the Germanic "world" we are invited to "rede."[28]

Reread in Joyce's desacralizing, forensically humanistic terms, the monument's talismanic quotations begin to look rather different. "We must take root and grow or die where we stood," as Dugmore originally had it in his 1870 memoir-lecture, recalling the moment he and his settler group found themselves alone in the "wilderness" of the Cape frontier. "But we were standing on our own ground," he then added, "and it was the first time many could say so."[29] This excised sentence, which follows directly from the present-tense injunction quoted on the monument's entrance wall, raises the question of land ownership, the most contested and as yet unresolved legacy of the settler era. It also casts a shadow over the words from John 10:10 around the fountain, which raise other, no less troubling questions when seen in their original context or envelope. While the inscription implicitly figures the settlers and their descendants as the good shepherds of Jesus's parable and so as Jesus himself, the original verse has Jesus contrasting himself to the "thieves and robbers" (the false messiahs) who came before him: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."[30] A further (repressed?) parallel with the Dutch, later Afrikaner, colonists as the "thieves and robbers" now begins to look plausible – or is the implied distinction between the settlers and the terroristic military forces who preceded them? As the *Wake* cryptically has it, the "polyhedron of scripture" is indeed a "proteiform graph."[31] The lines from Pringle's "The Emigrant's Cabin" create other complications, in part because the Pringle voice does not just say "Duty and Destiny" vaguely instructed him to do or say "something for Africa." On the one hand, they compelled him to do "something for the sad Natives of the soil, / by stern oppression doomed to scorn and toil," even if "but one mite of Europe's debt to pay."[32] This is the Pringle who would also write "Makanna's Gathering," which begins: "Wake! Amakósa, wake! / And arm yourselves for war."[33] The poem is a tribute to the Xhosa philosopher-warrior-prophet and Robben Island prisoner Makhanda (*c.* 1780–1820), a more challenging figure than Ntsikana, who was

defeated by the British at the battle of Grahamstown in 1819. On the other hand, the same "Duty and Destiny" directed Pringle to devise various "schemes for civilizing savage men."[34] This Pringle would also conclude his *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa* (1835) with the words, "Let us enter upon a new and nobler career of conquest. Let us subdue savage Africa by JUSTICE, by KINDNESS, by the talisman of CHRISTIAN TRUTH."[35]

Yet the *Wake* is more than a commentary on the perils of conjuring a legacy from edited and selected writings. By undoing the English writing system from within in the way it does, it subverts the monument's *raison d'être* as a living memorial dedicated to "perpetuating" the "characteristic spirit" of the English language. To think of English as the expression of an unchanging "ethos" or as the bearer of an inherently democratic ethnic "heritage" – to use the publicity officer's formulations – is, for Joyce, to subscribe to a linguistic version of Christian "infusionism," the doctrine of the soul as "a divine emanation, infused into the body at conception or birth,"[36] which amounts, in Joyce's book, to little more than "kapnimancy," a play on "capnomancy" or "divination by smoke."[37] This kind of thinking takes political, or politico-theological, forms too, as Joyce recognized – the preamble to the Irish Constitution being one conspicuous example with which the Wake engages.[38] By toying with the polyphonic and polysemic potential of the grapheme at every opportunity, each of the *Wake*'s 628 pages represents an obsessively orchestrated affront to infusionism in all its permutations and iterations. Take just one example, the word "rede" in the "stoop" passage. To Anglograph eyes it might look like a misspelling of "read" (itself Germanic in origin), modeled, say, on a verb like "cede," an oddity that would not arise if the passage is heard rather than seen: to standardized British-English ears, "rede" would simply be a homophone of "read" (/riːd/ in IPA). For a reader with knowledge of German, however, it would look like the word for "speech" (also "talk" or "conversation"), which transcribes as /ˈreːdə/ in IPA. Unlike "penisolate," Tindall's "radiant word," which works more like a conventional if densely packed English portmanteau, "rede" as an interlingual Latinate grapheme refuses to incarnate any one language, meaning, or sound, opening itself up to many readers and phonetic renderings while at the same time revealing the hazy, shape-shifting mirage that hovers between writing and speech. Hence the ditty Joyce composed as a sales pitch for his London publishers: "Buy a book in brown paper / From Faber and Faber / To see Annie Liffey trip, tumble and caper. / Sevensinns in her singthings, / Plurabelle on her prose, / Seashell ebb music wayriver she flows."[39]

The unwrapped 1946 Faber edition is still on the shelves of the university library, but "the enveloping facts themselves circumstantiating it" have changed decisively since 1984. A decade later, South Africa became a unitary, secular state and a constitutional democracy with eleven official languages, Afrikaans, English, and isiXhosa among them, and a statutory commitment to promoting fourteen others, including Arabic, German, Hindi, and Nama. More locally, following a protracted, twenty-year debate, Grahamstown formally became Makhanda (Pringle's "Makanna") in 2018. In an official statement about the name change, Nathi Mthethwa, the South African Minister of Arts and Culture, explained:

> It is the Truth & Reconciliation Commission [1996–2003] that recommended that the renaming of geographic features be a form of "symbolic reparation" to address an unjust past. These reparations include changing the names of geographical places. Surely, we cannot prove ourselves committed (as government) to fully achieve these reparations if we retain names such as "Grahamstown" – named after Colonel John Graham [1778–1821] – whose name is captured in history as being the most brutal and most vicious of the British commanders on that frontier, whose campaigns were executed with – in his own words – "A proper degree of terror"? At the time, British authorities praised Graham for "breaking the back of the natives". The battles he waged were not only against soldiers, everyone – including women, children and the elderly would not be spared. Even post-battle, he and his soldiers would employ the "scorched earth policy" against those he had already brought violence and misery against, by burning their fields and killing their cattle; starving them into submission, before killing them. This is the man that "Grahamstown" has been named after.[40]

Three years earlier, Rhodes University also began reconsidering the HCE figure after which it was named in response not to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission but to the Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) campaign which led to the removal of Cecil John Rhodes's statue from the University of Cape Town in April 2015. After a two-year process, it was, however, decided to retain the name, largely on financial and pragmatic grounds. "It cannot be disputed," the university council nonetheless acknowledged, "that Cecil John Rhodes was an arch-imperialist and white supremacist who treated people of this region as sub-human."[41]

At the time of writing (2023), the vast building on the hill overlooking today's Makhanda is still called the 1820 Settlers National Monument but, starting in October 2015, its governing council too initiated a public

consultation about its name and future. Though the RMF campaign was very much in the air, the council took its cue from the preamble to the 1996 Constitution:

> We, the people of South Africa,
> Recognise the injustices of our past;
> Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;
> Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and
> Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.[42]

As the briefing document for the consultation noted, "the ethos and operations of the Monument should be based on this broader statement of commitment, rather than solely the values and ideals of the British Settlers who arrived in this area in the 1820s."[43] Since the process, which was due to end in October 2019, is still ongoing, there is scope for an unlikely thought experiment: imagining a post-monument future consistent not only with the constitution – the preamble as well as the language provisions – but with *Finnegans Wake*. Whatever else this de-monumentalizing initiative might involve, two guiding commitments would be clear. First, rejecting the infusionist assumptions on which the monument was founded – all the talk of "perpetuating" a "characteristic spirit" – it would acknowledge that, when it comes to the future of any heritage, there can be no otherworldly guarantees. This is not just because infusionism is capnomancy but because, as Joyce's philosophy of history has it, all the unjust heritages or "Museyrooms" master-building HCE-figures construct must eventually fall. Second, replacing the symbol of the "perpetually bubbling," single-source fountain with an ALP-inspired river of many origins and none, this initiative would call for the building to be rededicated, perhaps naming it simply iZiko laseMakhanda lezobuGcisa (the Makhanda Centre for the Arts). Its purpose? To serve the Eastern Cape's many languages and heritages, to redress the injustices of the past, and to uphold the promise of linguistic and cultural survival through intercultural engagement and creative exchange or, in Joyce's coinage, "MUTUOMORPHOMUTATION."[44]

To signal this new start, the quotations from Pringle and Dugmore would have to be moved from the main entrance to a more modest location elsewhere in the building, where they could be remounted with an explanatory plaque giving the details of their original provenance or envelopes. What to put in their place? For the side wall where the Pringle quotation was originally situated, imagine an easily changeable

display – words painted by local graffiti artists, perhaps, or inscribed by light as if written on water – with two initial quotations:

> What kind of makeshift shelter is this?[45]

This comes from the opening of Zoë Wicomb's *Still Life* (2020), an inventively fictive, ingeniously multi-voiced reassessment of Pringle and his legacy. Alongside it on the same wall:

> More and more he is convinced that English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa.[46]

This is one of the rare moments in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) when the central protagonist, David Lurie, glimpses a world beyond his own prescribed, often prescriptive, linguistic, literary, and philosophical horizons.

Finally, on the forward-facing entrance wall where the Dugmore quotation once stood, picture the following two quotations in brushed steel and, ideally, in the original isiXhosa with translations captioned alongside:

> you entered with bible in hand,
> "Receive the great book
> and spurn your lore and customs."
> minister turned into soldier,
> he raised his rifle and blasted his cannon,
> Rharhabe's mountain roared,
> dust arose and the land was aflame.[47]

This is a transcribed and translated extract from an oral performance David Yali-Manisi (1926–99), the leading isiXhosa *imbongi* (ceremonial oral poet) of his generation, gave at the monument in July 1977. As the mode of address indicates, Manisi was knowingly confronting the upholders of the settler tradition, the descendants of the historical "you" to whom he directed his words. Rharhabe (*c.* 1722–87) was a key figure in the Xhosa royal lineage and founder of a prominent sub-clan who took his name.

> It comes from the sea; it is a tribe that looks as though it regularly attacks other tribes. Their language is so complicated, no one understands it. As for fighting, they are powerful people who fight using the heavens; the heavens thunder once, smoke and fire explode, and then something falls in the distance.[48]

This is from S. E. K. Mqhayi's isiXhosa classic, *Ityala Lamawele* (The Lawsuit of the Twins, 1914). Mqhayi (1875–1945), a prominent writer, journalist, and language activist, was also Manisi's most eminent predecessor in the *imbongi*

tradition. Looking back more than a century, he describes the arrival of the British, their strange language, and mysteriously lethal weaponry through the eyes of early nineteenth-century Xhosa royal messengers. If his subject recalls the ancient Irish *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (The Book of Invasions), one of Joyce's many sources for the *Wake*, his inventively estranging language prefigures the opening of *Portrait*, where the young Stephen, who does not yet have the concept or word "spectacles." sees his father "through a glass."[49] In its various iterations, *Ityala* is many things: a compilation of isiXhosa poetry and customary law, a biography of major historical figures, including Makhanda and Ntsikana, a reflection on the "pandemonium of nations and tribes," the advent of the British wrought, and a creatively intercultural engagement with the King James Bible and the Latinate writing system.[50] It is also a fictive parable about the traditions of democratic deliberation among the amaXhosa in the precolonial era, written, as Mqhayi put it in his 1914 preface, to encourage "young Xhosa males and females to look carefully at precisely what will disappear when these wise and distinguished expressions and customs of their origin vanish completely."[51]

Notes

1. Peter D. McDonald, *Artefacts of Writing: Ideas of the State and Communities of Letters from Matthew Arnold to Xu Bing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 23.
2. James Joyce, *Letters of James Joyce, vol.* III, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber, 1966), 369–70.
3. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 127.
4. Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa," *Massachusetts Review* 18, no. 4 (1977): 788.
5. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 159.
6. Ibid., 212.
7. Ibid., 5, 213.
8. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber, 1946), 3.
9. Ibid., 629.
10. William York Tindall, *A Reader's Guide to Finnegans Wake* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), 3.
11. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 3.
12. Tindall, *A Reader's Guide,* 30.
13. Ibid., 31.
14. Ibid.
15. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 598.
16. Ibid., 8.

17. Thelma Neville, "Settlers Commemoration," *South African Panorama* 19, no. 10 (October 1974): 12.
18. Ibid., 13.
19. Thelma Neville, *More Lasting than Bronze: A Story of the 1820 Settlers National Monument* (Pietermaritzburg: Natal Witness Printing and Publishing, 1991), 105.
20. Ibid., 103.
21. Ibid., 64, 93.
22. Neville, "Settlers Commemoration," 11.
23. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 18.
24. Seamus Heaney, *Opened Ground: Poems, 1966–1996* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 268.
25. For Rushdie's indebtedness to the *Wake*, see McDonald, *Artefacts of Writing*, 243–60.
26. Njabulo S. Ndebele, *Rediscovery of the Ordinary* (Johannesburg: COSAW, 1991), 103. His address was entitled, "The English Language and Social Change in South Africa" (1986). For Es'kia Mphahlele's earlier address, see "Prometheus in Chains: The Fate of English in South Africa" (1984), in Mphahlele, *Es'kia* (Cape Town: Kwela, 2002), 344–60.
27. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 17.
28. Ibid., 8.
29. Henry Dugmore, *The Reminiscences of an Albany Settler* (Graham's Town: Richards, Glanville and Co., 1871), 9.
30. Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, eds., *The Bible: Authorized King James Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130.
31. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 107.
32. Michael Chapman and Ernest Pereira, eds., *African Poems of Thomas Pringle* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1989), 29–31.
33. Ibid., 35.
34. Ibid., 29.
35. Thomas Pringle, *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa* (London: Edward Moxon, 1835), 341.
36. Definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary, www.oed.com.
37. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 108.
38. For a discussion of the Irish Constitution, see McDonald, *Artefacts of Writing*, 17–19, 144.
39. Joyce composed this for *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, a part-issue of the evolving *Wake*, which Faber published in 1930. See www.tseliot.com/editorials/finnegans-wake.
40. "Minister of Arts and Culture Nathi Mthethwa Gazettes the Renaming of Grahamstown to Makhanda," 2 July 2018, www.gov.za/speeches. For more on this history, see Ben Maclennan, *A Proper Degree of Terror: John Graham and the Cape's Eastern Frontier* (Johannesburg: Rahan, 1986); Julia C. Wells, *The Return of Makhanda: Exploring the Legend* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2021).

41. *Council Decides about the Future of the Name of Rhodes University*, 6 December 2017, www.ru.ac.za/latestnews/archives.
42. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996, www.gov.za/documents.
43. Grahamstown Foundation, "Change of Name 1820 Settlers Monument Invitation for Public Participation," www.uploads.strikinglycdn.com.
44. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 281.
45. Zoë Wicomb, *Still Life* (New York: New Press, 2020), 7. For a scholarly reassessment of Pringle, see Matthew Shum, *Improvisations of Empire: Thomas Pringle in Scotland, the Cape of Colony and London, 1789–1834* (London: Anthem, 2020).
46. J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1999), 117.
47. Jeff Opland, "The Image of the Book in Xhosa Oral Poetry," in *Print, Text and Book Cultures in South Africa*, ed. Andrew van der Vlies (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), 300. Manisi collaborated with Opland on the translations before he died.
48. S. E. K. Mqhayi, *The Lawsuit of the Twins*, trans. Thokozile Mabeqa (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2018), 72–73.
49. Joyce, *Portrait*, 5.
50. Mqhayi, *Lawsuit*, 70.
51. Ibid., 70.