

“Make His Private Linen Public”: Rereading *Finnegans Wake* through Gossip and Echo*

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I. Introduction

Finnegans Wake, the last work by James Joyce, is infamous as an abstruse and esoteric text. Accordingly, it has been thought to be almost impossible to reduce the work in a couple of tidy paragraphs as a matter of a summary. If roughly epitomized, however, two threads of tales interweave the texture of *Finnegans Wake*. On the one level of the narrative, Tim Finnegan, a hod carrier, falls from the ladder (“His howd feeled heavy, his hoddit did shake. . . Dimb! He stottored from the latter. Damb! he was dud. Dumb!” [*FW* 6.8-10]), but he wakes up back to life in his funeral after having tasted whiskey (“will you whoop for my deading is a? Wake? Usqueadbaugham!” [*FW* 24.14]). On the other level, HCE(Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker), a contemporary reincarnation of Tim Finnegan, sneaks a look at two girls who pee in Phoenix Park, and this rumor drags HCE into a deep

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disgrace and guilt. Just like a Möbius strip, these two narratives revolve the text and crisscross each other at certain points. Otherwise, the whole text can be reduced to HCE's dream in which Finnegans's legend of revival and reincarnation is seamlessly intermingled along with other myths concerning the human history and its circulation ("commodius vicus of recirculation" [FW 3.2]).

Since *Finnegans Wake* frustrates readers extremely with its radical experimentation of more than 40 different languages, it is useful to approach the text through a close reading from a specific perspective, instead of totalizing the narrative as a whole. In this essay, I will closely read Chapter 8 of Book I with a special focus on the theme of "rumor" or "gossip," which, to some extent, penetrates Joyce's *oeuvre* as a crucial theme.¹⁾

The eighth episode of Book I of *Finnegans Wake* consists of a series of gossips between two washerwomen, who treat HCE and ALP (Anna Livia Plurabelle) "as a crow to pluck," as Miss Ivors from "The Dead" would say to Gabriel. These washerwomen gush out all the tidbits of rumors and gossips about the couple's secret sexual life. However, at a certain point, their story is expanded to embrace the whole history of Ireland and even the humankind. This chapter, in this way, reveals Joyce's theme of rewriting of history in its alternative version. This analysis hinges upon a reading of gossip as an alternative historiography. In case of Charles Stuart Parnell, gossip played a huge role in his downfall. I will read Parnell's tragedy as an allegory to reveal the power (not merely danger) of gossip in history. Gossips can be an alternative vehicle to shape and reshape history/historiography. In a word, this essay aims at rereading the washerwomen's gossips about HCE and ALP as an alternative historiography.

1) This essay uses rumor and gossip as interchangeable terms, but Coady distinguishes rumor from gossip: "This is one difference between rumor and another form of communication with which it is often confused, gossip. Gossip may well be first-hand. By contrast, no first-hand account of an event can be a rumor, though it may later become one" (87).

II. Parnell, Gossip, and History

Emmet Larkin, a scholar of Parnell and his relationship with Catholic Church in Ireland, calls him as "the great mythological figure in modern Irish history" with his tongue in his cheek. According to Larkin, Parnell is a fabulous figure in the Irish popular mind:

In the popular imagination he still remains Ireland's 'uncrowned King.' The myth holds that he brought his people to the edge of their earthly kingdom only to find that he was betrayed in the great moment of promise. It was 'the priests and the priests' pawns,' lamented James Joyce's Mr. Casey, who 'broke Parnell's heart and hounded him into his grave.' This myth found its roots in the political needs of Irish Nationalism and was cultivated and amplified by the artists of the Irish literary revival. (315)

Although his study is focused on demythifying Parnell and saving Irish Catholic Church from the opprobrium from the Irish populace concerning Parnell's downfall, nevertheless, Larkin's article provides us with a crucial moment of thinking how gossips are irretrievably interweaved in Irish politics and religion.

The story of how Captain O'Shea in his suit for a divorce named Parnell as a co-respondent, and how the verdict went against Mrs. O'Shea and Parnell, neither of whom entered a defense, is well known in Irish history (Larkin 316). Katherine Parnell, known before her second marriage as Katharine O'Shea, was an English woman of aristocratic background, whose decade-long secret adultery with Parnell led to a widely publicized divorce in 1890 and his political downfall. Katharine married Captain William O'Shea in 1867, a Catholic Nationalist MP for County Clare from whom she separated around 1875. Katharine first met Parnell in 1880 and began a relationship with him. Three of Katharine's children were fathered by Parnell. Captain O'Shea knew about the relationship. However, he kept publicly quiet for several years. Their relationship was a subject of gossip in London political circles from 1881 and later turned into a huge scandal, as Irish catholicism

stigmatized their relationship as an adultery.

Out of her family connection to the Liberal Party, Katharine acted as liaison between Parnell and Gladstone during negotiations prior to the introduction of the First Irish Home Rule Bill in April 1886. Katharine's November divorce proceedings from Captain O'Shea, in which Parnell was named as a co-respondent, led to Parnell's being deserted by a majority of his own Irish Parliamentary Party and to his downfall as its leader in December 1890. Irish Catholics felt a profound sense of shock when Katharine broke her Catholic vows to her previous marriage by marrying Parnell on 25 June 1891. With Parnell's political life and his health essentially ruined, he died at the age of 45 less than four months after their marriage.

The fact that Joyce sympathized with Parnell as a true leader of Ireland's independence is well known. Parnell, as a matter of fact, pervades Joyce's *oeuvre*; in *Dubliners*, Mr. Hynes writes a poem for the so-called "uncrowned king"; in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Mr. Casey and Mr. Dedalus lament for Parnell's downfall at the Christmas table; in *Ulysses*, Bloom cherishes his memory of Parnell in which he picks up a hat for Parnell. Parnell also appears in *Finnegans Wake* because he may be an aspect of Shem's sense of betrayal, and becomes the source of Earwicker's stammer (Parnell himself had a speech impediment). In this way, Parnell himself pervades in Joyce's works and disseminates gossips throughout his text: "he is forever part of the pointless, unemplotted chatter of Joyce's universe" (Spoo 76).

While dealing with Parnell's case, Spoo brings gossips into the area of history: "Parnell has been translated to the realm of gossip. By the time of 'Eumaeus,' gossip has become an important mode for recording and disseminating history. This shift is consistent with the general movement in *Ulysses* toward styles and perspectives, since a gossip enjoys, within certain communal restraints, his or her private version of the truth" (77). As Spoo notes, gossips record and disseminate history in its alternative version.

In *Finnegans Wake*, HCE, who struggles through hardships because of rumors

and gossips, resembles Parnell's fate. When *Finnegans Wake* elaborates the theme of fall (including, but not limited to, Tim Finnegan's fall from the ladder and HCE's fall because of the rumor at Phoenix Park), it can be also read as an allegory of Parnell's downfall. However, as Spoo notes, gossip should not be interpreted merely as negative because it can dismantle the bulwark of official history. Gossips spread amorphously and disrupt the authority of official historiography, providing alternative or personalized versions of stories. It is in this sense that *Finnegans Wake* embodies the power of "gossipocracy" (*FW* 476.4): "The spreading of gossip takes entire generations; a fact that renders the indeterminacy of the *Wake*'s speaking voice (or voices), including the narrator's, far more enigmatic" (Lemos 354). Gossips, in short, reverberate the universe of *Finnegans Wake*.

III. Gossip as Alternative Historiography

According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, etymologically, gossip — Old English *godsibb*, from *god* (god) + *sib* (akin, related) — emerges from a sense of extended familiar ties, affinitive connections that exceed strict connective links of blood and family tree. The *OED* lists as the first definition of the word, "one who has contracted spiritual affinity with another by acting as a sponsor at a baptism" (Goss 166). This etymological definition of the word "gossip" is quite unexpected. In *The Fool of Quality*; or, *The History of Henry Earl of Moreland*, for example, the Irish novelist and playwright Henry Brooke wrote: "Walter Warmhouse, a substantial farmer in Essex, was advised, by serjeant Craw, that he had an unquestionable right to a certain tenement in the possession of Barnaby Boniface, his next neighbour and *gossip*, who flattened by the dint of good ale and good humour" (www.oed.com, emphasis added). In 1777, the word gossip was used to mean "a reliable confidant."

The word gossip was especially applied to a woman's female friends invited to be present at a birth. For example, the Church of England clergyman Thomas

Fuller wrote the following in *The History of the Worthies of England*, published in 1662: “It was fashionable for the Clergy (especially if Regulars, Monks, and Friars) to have their Surnames (for Syr-names they were not) or upper-names, because superadded to those given at the Font, from the places of their Nativity, and therefore they are as good evidence to prove where they were born as if we had the deposition of the Midwife, and all the *Gossips* present at their Mothers labours” (www.oed.com, emphasis added). Here, the word gossip means a close friend.

Ironically, the original meanings of the word gossip are related to someone “familiar” and “reliable.” However, the word gossip is currently used in the following definition: “Gossip is informal conversation, often about other people’s private affairs.” *Oxford English Dictionary* defines gossip as “trifling or groundless rumour” or “unrestrained talk or writing, esp. about persons or social incidents.” Seemingly, there exists a huge gap between the original meaning of the word gossip and its contemporary use. However, if we take into account the fact that we share informal conversations about others’ private affairs only with reliable friends, these two seemingly contrasting meanings can be reconciled.

Philosophers such as Martin Heidegger look down on gossip as “idle talk”:

The groundlessness of idle talk is no obstacle to its becoming public, instead it encourages this. Idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one’s own . . . Idle talk is something which anyone can take up; it not only releases one from the task of genuinely understanding, but develops an undifferentiated kind of intelligibility, for which nothing is closed off any longer. (qtd. in Spacks 23)

Although he warns the danger of gossip in terms of its groundlessness, Heidegger, in fact, reinforces the productive potential of gossip, which is crucial to our discussion. The groundlessness of gossip, ironically, encourages itself to be public.

This ‘groundlessness’ of gossip highlights the mystical nature of this amorphous discourse for Salman Rushdie, another postcolonial writer who resembles Joyce in many ways. In his novel *Shame*, Rushdie juxtaposes pieces of town gossip to create

the mystical setting of his novel; many different accounts admittedly have contributed to the sketches of his peculiar characters and their actions. His narrator develops large portions of plot in passages introduced by shaky statements like "Tongues began to wag" (Rushdie, *Shame* 45): "Gossip is like water. It probes surfaces for their weak places until it finds the breakthrough point; so it was only a matter of time before the good people of Q hit upon the most shameful and scandalous explanation of all" (46). Although the narrator expresses an intention to "get back onto solid ground" (47), the tone of the text that follows remains unchanged in its gossipy nature.

In this sense, Rukmini Bhaya Nair, in analyzing Rushdie's novels, mentions: "Subversion/sub-versions of the grand narratives of history and religion might be effectively achieved through gossip, since the *raison d' etre* of this mode of discourse is the creation of doubt about established versions of facts" (995). According to Nair, gossip displays some of the following features:

First, it consists of a characteristically fragmented telling, not of the whole story but of the story where it most reveals human frailty. Second, it is recounted from the point-of-view of the spectator, who must remain essentially uninvolved in the main action, yet constantly makes moral judgments. Third, the spectator who indulges in gossip is typically taken to be a woman, or woman-like, betraying a taste for trivia. . . . Sixth, since gossip functions as exposé, the codes of verbal propriety kept in conventional histories may be broken with impunity in gossip. Blasphemies, obscenities and scatological details are thus legitimised in the discourse of gossip. . . . Ninth, and finally, gossip is primarily a spoken genre, capacious and elastic, capable of incorporating a *Kathasarit-sagar*, a thousand and one ephemeral anecdotes. (995)

As mentioned above as the sixth trait of gossip, "the codes of verbal propriety kept in conventional histories may be broken with impunity in gossip," and "blasphemies, obscenities and scatological details" are allowed in the discourse of gossip. And in *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie offers a metaphor for the

discursiveness as well as the lasciviousness of gossip in his description of “Durga the washerwoman”:

She was as full of gossip and tittle-tattle as she was of milk. . . everyday a dozen new stories gushed from her lips. She was a monster who forgot each day the moment ended. . . Her name, even before I met her, had the smell of new things; she represented novelty, beginning, the advent of new stories, events complexities. (*Midnight's Children* 445)

Here, Rushdie’s washerwoman reminds us of Joyce’s washerwomen who gush out gossips about HCE and ALP, and “realities of human pettiness” (Spacks 25). Rushdie must have been influenced by Joyce in regarding the washerwoman as a symbol of gossip and new stories.

Gayatri Spivak’s essay “Echo” provides us with a crucial moment in which gossip can be rethought as a discursive alternative to a dominant voice. While Narcissus symbolizes western epistemology based upon knowledge about self, Echo symbolizes the subaltern existing on the margin of western-centered epistemology. Interestingly enough, however, Spivak rereads Echo as subversive reverberations to disrupt Narcissus’ self-centered speech. If we apply this perspective to *Finnegans Wake*, we can conclude that Joyce does not repeat or imitate the colonizer’s language English passively. Instead, Joyce upends the platform of epistemology and philosophy upon which the colonizer’s language exists, and reverberates a resistant echo to suggest an alternative history.²⁾

In her essay “Echo,” Spivak grapples with the intellectual’s ethical responsibility toward the subaltern. It is five years after her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” was published. In “Echo,” Spivak radically reinterprets the myth of Narcissus and Echo in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* from an epistemological perspective. According to Spivak, psychoanalysts and critics focus on Narcissus’ narcissism and marginalize Echo. This means that the subaltern cannot but be

2) This part of Spivak’s reinterpretation of Echo is based on Kyoungsook Kim’s “‘Hush! Caution! Echoland!’: Rereading Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* as a Postcolonial Echo.”

regarded as the other, and all the efforts to represent the other inevitably are doomed to fail. In this circumstance, Spivak concludes that the subaltern cannot speak. However, the intellectual's failure should not be seen as the subaltern's failure. Instead, it is at this point of the intellectual's failure that the subaltern's articulation begins. While "Can the Subaltern Speak?" deals with the issue of the intellectual's failure to speak for the subaltern, "Echo" opens up the possibilities of the subaltern's resistance which begins at this very point of the intellectual's failure.

Echo crushes on Narcissus at the first glance and haunts around him. However, Echo is destined to repeat the last few words of someone's speech, not able to start sentences on her own because of a punishment from Hera. Therefore, she cannot confess her love to Narcissus. Narcissus asks Echo, "Why do you fly from me?" and Echo cannot but repeat the ending, "Fly from me. Fly from me. Fly from me." What is interesting here is that Echo turns Narcissus' interrogative sentence into an imperative one, with hegemony passed over to Echo. Narcissus, who only loves himself, is not ready to accept Echo's confession at any rate. Ironically, it is Echo's confession that baffles Narcissus' self-centered arrogance. Here, what we should remember is the fact that Echo's echoes are not mere repetitions; they alter and delay the meaning and intention of Narcissus' speech much like Derrida's *différance*.

Spivak's reinterpretation of Echo provides a possibility in which punishment can be interpreted as a compensation to empower the subaltern although it is not done intentionally. Echo's distorted and fragmented echoes originally result from Hera's punishment. However, this punishment changes into a sort of compensation and exercises deconstructive and subversive power. This kind of reinterpretation opens up a new dimension to read the ethical status of the subaltern from a wholly different perspective.

In his earlier works, Joyce expresses his anxiety over English, the colonizer's language, as the tool of his art, because the English language Joyce uses as the colonized cannot but be an imperfect imitation of the English the British use. However, in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce does not represent any colonial or

post-colonial self-consciousness about English. What Joyce does in *Finnegans Wake* is not imitation but echo. Echo does not seek for perfection because it is amputation and fragmentation in itself. The language of *Finnegans Wake* is not English *per se* but the echo of English, which is amputated, fragmented, and hybridized. It does not permit any space for cultural hegemony or power of the British Empire. It does not allow any space for cultural purity, either.

Gossip is also like echo. This reading of gossip and echo not as punishment but as compensation can help us to offer positive interpretations of postcolonial theories. While Narcissus represents the problematics of the self-centered western philosophy, echo or gossip symbolizes subversive reverberations from the margin to upend the center. Much like Echo, washerwomen in *Finnegans Wake* gush out gossips about HCE and ALP and about Ireland.

IV. Washerwomen as Subaltern Historiographers

Dear Miss Weaver: I have finished the Anna Livia piece. Here it is. After it I have hardly energy enough to hold the pen and as a result of work, worry, bad light, general circumstances and the rest. A few words to explain. It is a chattering dialogue across the river by two washerwomen who as night falls become a tree and a stone. The river is named Anna Liffey. Some of the words at the beginning are hybrid Danish-English. Dublin is a city founded by Vikings. The Irish name is Ballyclee = Town of Ford of Hurdle. Her Pandora's box contains the ill's flesh is heir to. The splitting up towards the end (seven dams) is the city abuilding.

In 1924, Joyce wrote a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, his patron. According to this letter, Chapter 8 of Book I consists of washerwomen's gossip about HCE and ALP's gossips. In this chapter, two washerwomen washing clothes on opposite banks of River Liffey chatter about the lives of HCE and ALP: "Every garment reminds them of a story, which they recount with pity, tenderness, and ironic

brutality. The principal tale is of ALP at her children's ball, where she diverts attention from the scandal of the father by distributing to each a token of his own destiny" (Campbell 18).

Seemingly, these trivial gossips remain as HCE and ALP's private stories. However, they crisscross and reveal Irish history in their deep levels. In the very beginning of the chapter, one washerwoman begs the other to tell stories about HCE and ALP:

O
 tell me all about
 Anna Livia! I want to hear all
 about Anna Livia. Well, you know Anna Livia? Yes, of course,
 we all know Anna Livia. Tell me all. Tell me now. (*FW* 196.1-5)

Here, "O" signifies a circle and a woman. The first few lines represent the shape of a triangle and a delta at the mouth of the river. This shape of a triangle visualizes the running river in perspective and the pyramid as the remains from archaic human civilization. Both the circle and pyramid symbolize the origin of civilization and existence. Thus the running river signifies a journey to a primordial state in time and space: "The journey back to the womb is not only spatial and geometrical, however, but, also temporal, a return to the delta in which earth and water first united to form the primal mud, the origin of life, 'your muddy old triangonal delta' [*FW* 297.23]" (Norris 210). As Norris suggests, HCE and ALP's story can be expanded to the origin of history.

Here, what laundry symbolizes is quite revealing. Considering the fact that the word 'text' comes from 'texture,' we can connect clothes with narrative. All the dirt in the clothes become subject matters of narratives. While the clothes signify official historiography, the dirt on them mean alternative, subaltern, historiography as experienced and embodied by individuals. Much like Shem who writes with his own excrement like ink, the washerwomen in Chapter 8 write HCE and ALP's stories and Irish history using the dirty water from their laundry. Their uncouth

gossips provide alternative, unofficial history. In this way, the eighth chapter of *Finnegans Wake* is both ALP's story and Ireland's history retold obliquely.

Washerwomen's chattering about ALP's former lovers, HCE, and their children intermingle with the sound of the running river, which, at the same time, is an embodiment of ALP herself. The filthy water resulting from the dirty clothes becomes ink with which the washerwomen write a personalized version of Irish history. Every piece of clothes reminds them of each particular story. They talk about HCE's sin at Phoenix Park:

You'll die when you hear. Well, you know, when the old cheb went futt and did what you know. Yes, I know, go on. Wash quit and don't be dabbling. Tuck up your sleeves and loosen your talk-tapes. And don't butt me – hike! – when you bend. Or what-ever it was they threed to make out he thried to two in the Fiendish park. (*FW* 8.5-11)

The sentence “Or whatever it was they threed to make out he thried to two in the Fiendish park” insinuates a surreptitious meaning. Its surface meaning is “Or whatever it was they tried to make out he tried to do in the Phoenix Park.” However, by using “three” instead of “tried,” Joyce implicates the fact that there were three soldiers who witnessed HCE's sin. The word “two” instead of “do” hints that there were two girls who peed at the park. Lastly, by changing “Phoenix Park” into “Fiendish park,” HCE's mischief is expanded to a catastrophe in Irish history in which many tragic events happened at the very park.³⁾

The two women keep gushing out gossips about HCE while washing his shirt, which triggers their backbiting:

3) For example, “The Phoenix Park Murders” were the fatal stabbings of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Thomas Henry Burke in Phoenix Park in Dublin on 6 May 1882. Cavendish was the newly appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, and Burke was the Permanent Undersecretary, the most senior Irish civil servant. The assassination was carried out by members of the rebel group Irish National Invincibles, a more radical breakaway from the Irish Republican Brotherhood (www.wikipedia.com).

He's an awful old reppe. Look at the shirt of him! Look at the dirt of it! He has all my water black on me. And it steeping and stuping since this time last wik. How many goes is it I wonder I washed it! I know by heart the places he likes to saale, duddurty devil! Scorching my hand and starving my fa-mine to make his private linen public. Wallop it well with your battle and clean it. My wrists are wrusty rubbing the mouldaw stains. And the dneepers of wet and the gangres of sin in it! What was it he did a tail at all on Animal Sendai! And how long was he under loch and neagh! It was put in the newses what he did, nicies and priers, the King fierceas Humphrey, with illysus dis-tilling, exploits and all. But toms will till. I know he well. Temp untamed will hist for no man. As you spring so shall you neap. O, the roughy old rappe! Minxing marrage and making loof. (*FW* 196.11-24)

The sentence "He's an awful old reppe" contains the river Reppe; the word "reppe" also means "to touch" along with "scoundrel." The "water black" meaning "dirty water" also reminds us of the original meaning of the word Dublin as "black pool." In this way, the dirty water coming from HCE's shirt merges Dublin and Ireland. The words in the next line contain river names such as Steeping, Upa, and Stupia (MacHugh 196). When the washerwomen grab and wash HCE's underwear, they badmouth HCE and "make his private linen public." Here, the women's manifesto of "making one's private linen public" penetrates to the pith of gossip. The sentence "Toms will till" means "Time will tell"; "Temp untamed will hist for no man" can be read as "Time and tide wait for no man," hinting that HCE's rumors have no choice but to spread out to every nook of Ireland before long. Here, "Tom" can be read as everybody who spreads gossips about the rumor; it can be also read as "time." In this way, words in *Finnegans Wake* cannot be fixed into only one meaning. Embracing multiple meanings, these words can enrich the texture of *Finnegans Wake*.

The washerwomen keep making fun of HCE's strutting and stuttering. However, in describing his attitude, they incorporate four place names of Ireland – Derry, Cork, Dublin, and Galway: "And his derry's own drawl and his corksown blather and his doubling stutter and his gullaway swank" (*FW* 197.4-6). HCE's rape

of ALP (when he raped her home [*FW* 197.21]) overlaps with the viking's conquest of Ireland in early history: "In a gabbard he harqued it, the boat of life, from the harbourless Ivernikan Okean, till he spied the loom of his landfall and he loosed two croakers from under his tilt, the gran Phenician rover" (*FW* 197.28-31).⁴

However, whatever one washerwoman tells the other does not guarantee any sort of authority or authenticity. Her stories are put into ceaseless doubts and questions: "Who sold[told] you that jackalantern's tale?" (*FW* 197.26-7). Here, "Jack-o-lantern" means something misleading or elusive. At some other point, one woman confronts the other: "You're wrong there, corribly wrong! Tisn't only tonight you're anacheronistic!" (*FW* 202.34-5). Here, "corribly" means 'horribly' and the river Acheron and "anachronistic" are incorporated in the word "anacheronistic." The correct sense of time, which is regarded essential in official historiography, is out of question in terms of gossips.

Much like rumors which are not based on definite sources, the washerwomen's tellings of HCE are never reliable. It is in their gossips that HCE turns into many different roles in Irish history such as a sailor, "gran Phenician rover" (*FW* 197.31), "marchantman" (*FW* 197.33), and even a whale who took away the holy grail from Ireland ("And the whale's away with the grayling" [*FW* 197.36]). In this way, HCE cannot be fixed onto a single identity; he gets expanded into various roles in Irish colonial history.

However, ALP is not an innocent victim in the washerwomen's gossips. The washerwomen also continue their gossips about ALP as a lecherous woman, who had relationships with many men before marriage:

Linking one and knocking the next, tap ting a flank and tipping a jutty and palling in and pietaring out and clyding by on her eastway. Waiwhou was the first thur- ever burst. Someone he was, whuebra they were, in a tactic attack or in single combat. Tinker, tilar, souldrer, salor. Pieman Peace or Polistaman. That's the thing Pm elwys on edge to esk. Push up and push vardar and come

4) In this sense, the critic Christy L. Burns mentions: "This national history echoes the personal history of HCE" (Burns 239).

to uphill headquarters! (*FW* 202.10-16)

The washerwomen blame ALP as a lascivious woman who has promiscuous relationships with many men and later calls in prostitutes in order to sexually stimulate HCE. The sentence above "Push up and push vardar and come to uphill headquarters!" means a journey toward the origin in time as well as toward the upper part of the river in space. While the original source of Liffey (or ALP), Wicklow, is a small lake, the washerwomen move toward the lower part of the river where the banks are widely apart. At the beginning of this chapter, two women's heads are close enough to bump into each other: "And don't you butt me — hike! — when you bend" (*FW* 196.9). At the end of this chapter, however, the river gets wider and wider that they cannot even hear each other's voice: "Can't hear with the waters of" (*FW* 215.31).

Regardless of the direction of their journey in time and space, the text of Chapter 8 is strewn with all kinds of rumors, which make us rethink HCE and ALP. Ana Rodríguez Navas, in this sense, celebrates gossip as a process of rewriting: "I take gossip to be fundamentally a process of narrative revision, with the act of revelation also standing as an act of rewriting, erasing, or challenging past narratives" (58). Gossips the washerwomen disseminate throughout the chapter rewrite HCE and ALP's story and Ireland's history.

V. Conclusion

Can't hear with the waters of. The chittering waters of. Flittering bats, fieldmice bawk. talk. Ho! Are you not gone a home. What Thom Malone Cant's hear with bawk of bats, all thim liffeying waters of. Ho, talk save us! My foos won't moos. I feel as old as yonger elm. A Tale told of Shaun or Shem? All Livia's daughter-songs. Dark hawks hear us. Night! Night! My ho head halls. I feel as heavy as yonder stone. Tell me of John or Shaun? Who were Shem and Shaun the living sons or daughters of? Night now! Tell me,

tell me, tell me, elm! Night night! Telmetale of stem or stone. Beside the rivering waters of, the hitherandthithering waters of. Night! (*FW* 215.31-216.5)

At the end of Chapter 8, the washerwomen turn into a tree and a stone respectively. It is quite ironic that the washerwomen, symbolizing amorphous spoken gossips, make up concrete, solid material of the world. Spoken gossips and unreliable rumors construct the very basic structure of reality. Burns' comment of how Joyce rewrites Irish history in *Finnegans Wake* is quite revealing here: “. . . portion of *Finnegans Wake* . . . suggests a reading of Joyce's configuration of Irish history and Ireland as the babbling of various communities of speakers who dwell both within the consciousness of one figure while also spreading into the surrounding social landscape” (Burns 249). Through gossips, history gets fragmented and disseminated in variegated versions.

This essay has looked into Chapter 8 of the washerwomen, who literally wash HCE's and ALP's linen in public, and discussed how gossips turn official historiography into alternative versions. However, Chapter 8 is not the only one. Throughout *Finnegans Wake*, the alleged crimes committed by HCE in Phoenix Park are endlessly told and retold in time and space by different voices. Each time the story is told, something is changed, added or subtracted, but “the uncertainty concerning the narrated (un)facts remains entirely the same” (Lemos 353-54). This very ‘uncertainty’ of gossip blasts authority and authenticity of official historiography which forces one to believe that there exists only one correct version of history.

To conclude, gossips exercise a centrifugal force to spread out alternative, heterogeneous, versions of official historiography, which wields a centripetal force to assimilate various voices into a homogeneous version.

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Abstract

"Make His Private Linen Public":
Rereading *Finnegans Wake* through Gossip and Echo

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The eighth episode of Book I of *Finnegans Wake* consists of a series of gossips between two washerwomen, who gush out all the rumors about HCE(Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker) and ALP(Anna Livia Plurabelle). Here, HCE's fall caused by gossips resembles Parnell's downfall; HCE and ALP's marriage allegorizes early colonial history of Ireland. Much like Shem who writes with his own excrement like ink, these washerwomen rewrite HCE and ALP's stories and Irish history using the dirty water from their laundry. Their uncouth gossips provide alternative, unofficial history retold obliquely. In his earlier works, Joyce expresses his anxiety over English, the colonizer's language, as the tool of his art. What Joyce does in *Finnegans Wake* is not imitation but echo. Echo does not seek for perfection. The language of *Finnegans Wake* is not English but the echo of English, which is amputated, fragmented, and hybridized. It does not permit any space for cultural hegemony or power of the British Empire. Much like echo, gossips also disrupt the authority and authenticity of official historiography. In case of Parnell, gossip played a huge role in his downfall. Gossips can be an alternative vehicle to shape and reshape history/historiography. In a word, this essay aims at rereading the washerwomen's gossips about HCE and ALP as an alternative historiography. To conclude, gossips exercise a centrifugal force to spread out alternative, heterogeneous, versions of official historiography, which wields a centripetal force to assimilate various voices into a homogeneous version.

■ **Key words** : Gossip, alternative historiography, echo, *Finnegans Wake*, James Joyce, Parnell

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