

“nat language”: Joyce, Language, and Irish Nationalism*

Kiheon Nam

1

It has been a critical consensus among Joycean readers and critics that the language of *Finnegans Wake* is equivalent to the status and function of words in the dream. So it has been long regarded as “anti-language” (Wales 156)—“nat[not] language at any sinse of the word.” As many critics unravel the crux of the linguistic complexity of *Finnegans Wake*, a “massive superstructure of interwoven motifs” emerges (Hart 31). More recent studies reveal that *Finnegans Wake* is a historical document anchored in the process of Irish independence: for example, “*Finnegans Wake* is a Civil War text” (Pierce 246). As Joyce’s interest in Vico “lies in the creative potential inherent in this union of language, identity and social relationships”(Jaurrechette 73), it is difficult to discuss the language question without referring to its historical contexts. All these critical perspectives cannot

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exhaust, but rather proliferate, the meanings of *Finnegans Wake*. I will focus on the specific political debate revolving the Irish language question, since Joyce's radical experiment of language and communication in *Finnegans Wake* is relevant to the political discourse of establishing an Irish national identity.

Joyce began writing *Finnegans Wake* early in 1923, which marked the end of the Civil War, resulting in the Partition, and some extracts with his tentative title 'Work in Progress' were intermittently published until it appeared as the ultimate book in 1939. Therefore, the signatures of the Civil War are indelible in Joyce's last work. The Civil War, which followed the signing of the 1921 Treaty with Britain, caused the Sinn Féin party to split into Pro-Treaty and Anti-Treaty factions. If Joyce's writing coincides with the period of the formation of a new Irish state, *Finnegans Wake* cannot help but deal with the question of "constructing" an Irish national identity. It is almost an axiom that the identity of a nation depends largely on whether it has its "native language" or "mother tongue," even though sectarian difference also operates as a determining factor in Ireland. Trained in the camp of emergent nationalism at the turn of the century, many Irish writers actively participated in the revival movement for the Irish "native" language, that is, Gaelic. James Joyce was an outsider, keeping aloof from this perimeter of the movement, although he was not totally immune to it, and furthermore was resentful of the arbitrariness of the movement whose goal was to resuscitate the almost dead language. As an Irish writer and a colonized subject of the British Empire, however, Joyce must have inevitably been ridden by the controversial agenda of reviving the "native" language, and have found it difficult to keep totally aloof from the debate. In the post-colonial era, many newly independent nations made efforts to revive their own languages and at least to make them "official" languages. Ireland also officialized the Irish language with English with the advent of a new nation in 1921. Throughout his career as a writer, Joyce never forgot the significance of language in constructing a national or racial identity. Such a belief leads him to incessantly interrogate the efficacy of language as a communicative means within the national conflict of building a new free state. The validity of reviving the Irish

language, Gaelic, cannot be immune to Joyce's aggressive questioning of Irish identity. As Margot Norris points out, the "cosmic indeterminacies of identity take the form in *Finnegans Wake* of an insistent questioning of everything throughout the text" (1990, 162). So like the problem of a national identity, the language question resists getting at an easy and naïve conclusion. My point is that *Finnegans Wake* is a result of Joyce's "revolution of the word" against the colonizing and universalizing privilege of his "nat language," English.

2

In his 1907 Trieste lecture, "Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages," Joyce traces the origin of the Irish language to "the ancient language of the Phoenicians" (*CW* 156). Why does Joyce connect the origin of the Irish language with the Semite rather than the "mainland" Britain? This means that his remarks on the language question inevitably inscribe political debates on the reinstating of Gaelic as a "native" language. It is true that Joyce adopts the Viconian cycle of history as the framework for *Finnegans Wake*, but Joyce does not valorize the Viconian dichotomy of native vs. invader, although he employs it in the Wakean main figures, Shem/Shawn. Joyce complicates this dualistic pattern by reversing privilege or subverting hierarchy or obscuring both. It is a good example that "Joyce attributed his Phoenicianism to . . . the eighteenth-century antiquarian and philologist General Charles Vallancey, a British army engineer who was, paradoxically, one of the leading figures of the first Celtic Revival" (Cullingford 231). As David Pierce underlines, "Who now, Joyce seems to be saying, can tell the difference between Mutt and Jute, the indigenous Irish from the foreign invader?" (Pierce 250).

In the same lecture, Joyce continues to differentiate the Irish language from English, by tracing back to its origins and mentions the Gaelic League's policy:

Now the Gaelic League has revived its use. Every Irish newspaper, with the exception of the Unionist organs, has at least one special headline printed in Irish. The correspondence of the principal cities is written in Irish, the Irish language is taught in most of the primary and secondary schools, and, in the universities, it has been set on a level with the other modern languages. In Dublin, the names of the streets are printed in both languages. The League organizes concerts, debates, and socials at which the speaker of *beurla* (that is, English) feels like a fish out of water, confused in the midst of a crowd that chatters in a harsh and guttural tongue. In the streets, you often see groups of young people pass by speaking Irish, perhaps a little more emphatically than is necessary. The members of the League write to each other in Irish, and often the poor postman, unable to read the address, must turn to his superior to untie the knot. (*CW* 155-56).

In 1892, Douglas Hyde's famous lecture, "On the Necessity for De-Anglicizing the Irish People," put the cultural nationalist movement into high gear, even though his idea was rather Anglo-Irish. Willard Potts emphasizes on sectarian struggle by differentiating between the Protestant side and Catholic side in the literary Revival (27). So the League's political stance is entangled with this cultural nationalism. "The League's objective was specifically to revive the use of the Irish language, and introduce it into the educational curriculum at all levels" (Forster 448). By enumerating some examples of the failed communication among the Irish people, Joyce undermines the validity of reinstating the old defunct language. An awareness of the difference between English and Irish is persisted through the Irish literary tradition. Gaelic, "a harsh and guttural tongue," necessitates Seamus Heaney's invocation for the "guttural muse" a ppropriate for Irish literature, since English is not sufficient to express the tonality of Irish spirituality. This difference is inevitably attributed to the British colonization of Ireland. So the language question was at once sufficient and necessary for constructing a cultural and political Irishness. In *A Portrait*, Stephen Dedalus feels such words as "home, ale" sound strange on the lips of the dean. This unfamiliarity comes from Joyce's subaltern experience of English as taught through the colonizing education and culture of

Britain. Whether a person can speak in Irish or not was a crucial litmus paper for identifying a nationalist. This kind of fervor produced an idealization of the lifestyle of the west and its nostalgic rural values.

Even in his earlier stage, Joyce was keenly aware of the political dimension of language. In 'The Dead,' Miss Ivors, a fervent nationalist, attacks Gabriel Conroy for his ignorance of his "native" language, Irish, and teases him by using some Gaelic phrases unfamiliar to him.

—And why do you go to France and Belgium, said Miss Ivors, instead of visiting our own land?

—Well, said Gabriel, it's partly to keep in touch with the languages and partly for a change.

—And haven't you your own language to keep in touch with, Irish? Asked Miss Ivors.

—Well, said Gabriel, if it comes to that, you know, Irish is not my language.

(*D* 172)

Gabriel Conroy, one of Joyce's alter egos, denies Gaelic as "[his] language," since he is reluctant to be involved in the populist movement of Gaelic revival. Gabriel's primary purpose of traveling to Europe is "to keep in touch with the languages." Miss Ivors, an enthusiastic supporter of the Gaelic league, taunts Gabriel for being a West Briton, a pejorative term for a person in the service of the Dublin Castle and Corporation, the imperial implements. This conflict between two figures exemplifies the language question of reviving Gaelic. Miss Ivors's urge to travel to the western part of Ireland symptomatically articulates the romantic idealization of the Irish peasant led by literary revivalists and cultural nationalists. The ability of using Gaelic functions as a hallmark of being Irish, even though sectarian distinction is important as well in the Irish context.

In "A Mother," Mrs. Kierney takes advantage of her daughter's "Irish" name, Kathleen, and, in addition, promotes her image as an ardent nationalist by giving her Irish lessons at home: "People said that she was very clever at music and a very nice

girl and, moreover, that she was a believer in the language movement" (D 125).

The Irish class was held every Wednesday night in a back room on the second floor of a house in O'Connell St. The class consisted of six young men and three young women. The teacher was a young man in spectacles with a very sick-looking face and a very crooked mouth. He spoke in a highpitched voice and with a cutting Northern accent. He never lost an opportunity of sneering at seoninism and at those who would not learn their native tongue. He said that Beurla was the language of commerce and Irish the speech of the soul . . . (SH 57-58)

Beurla is English, "the language of commerce," but it does not represent the tonality and resonance of the Irish: "Beurla missed the ground old voice" (*FW* 132.27). Patrick Pearse, Joyce's once Irish teacher as well as one of the revolutionary leaders in 1916 Easter Rising, was a proponent of the expansion of Irish native language, Gaelic. In "The Coming Revolution," Pearse insists that "bloodshed is a cleansing and a sanctifying thing, and the nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood" (*Field Day Anthology* II: 558). No doubt Joyce would have abhorred Pearse's concept of "manhood," similar to the rejuvenating ideology of imperialism.

On Friday nights when there was a public meeting of the League he [Mr. Hughes] often spoke but as he did not know enough Irish he always excused himself at the beginning of his speech for having to speak to the audience in the language of the "Spiritual Saxon." . . . He scoffed very much at Trinity College and at the Irish Parliamentary Party. . . . On inquiry, Stephen found that Hughes, who was the son of a Nationalist solicitor in Armagh, was a law student at the King's Inns. (SH 58)

Joyce's abomination of violence, which substantiates in the figure of Leopold Bloom, led him to denounce Pearse's glorification of bloodshed by undermining his counterpart, Mr. Hughes. Joyce must have, however, been aware of the validity of "the language of commerce," because he sensed the significance of commodity

culture and colonial economy.

In “Wandering Rocks,” John Fanning talks about the city council's discussion of the official language problem: “Are the conscript fathers pursuing their peaceful deliberation?” and “Hell open to Christians they were having [...] about their damned Irish language” (*U* 10.1004, 1006-07). Joyce was in the middle of this debate, while he was still in Dublin. The language question, along with the land question, was a hot issue, since it was pivotal in identifying which aspects of Ireland must be constituted into a free state when its time is ripe. Joyce's paradoxical attitude toward English can be encapsulated into the following:

Finnegans Wake is Joyce's tower of Babel. It is also the ultimate outlet for his frustration with the barriers that one language can provide, especially if it is felt to be 'alien.' (Wales 136)

In the next stage, I will discuss Joyce's thematic strategies in overcoming these frustrations which result from the fact that an Irish writer must express what he feels and thinks not in his own “native” tongue.

3

James Joyce's interest in language continued, at this time more fervently, in *Finnegans Wake*, a work of Babelian languages. Joyce's lifelong interest in language is shown in his matriculation essay, “The Study of Language,” in which he emphasizes on the etymology of words. At this point, it must be pointed out that Vico's *New Science* was one of the most important references in discussing Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. Influenced by Vico's etymological principle, Joyce, born into a nation that had been subjected to a series of colonial and imperialistic invasion, delves into the working mechanism of the etymology of a language, since the etymological study reveals not only the internal social formation of a people, but

also the international forces that transformed that people through trade, war, migration, and colonization. This interest is sustained later in Joyce's mind as shown in a Wakean phrase: "The abnihilisation of etym" (*FW* 353.22), which is "the sabotage of the letter enacted in *Finnegans Wake*" (Spurr 251). According to Vico's cyclical patterns of history, language is a production of primitive man imitating the voice of God heard in the noise of thunder, only to stutter. So stuttering is a result of the primal scene/original sin of language acquisition. Stephen Heath connects the Fall (the primary subject of *Finnegans Wake*) with the relation of language and negation by inciting Hegel's reference to Adam as a name-giver (Heath 51). Sin is related to Sinn in German, which means meaning.

in the Nichtian glossery which purveys aprioric roots for aposteriorious tongues
this is nat language at any sinse of the world (*FW* 83.10-12)

The Wakean language is "nat[not] language at any sinse of the word," since it destroys and subverts linguistic rules and practices. Its semantic challenge ironically gives us a better understanding of the mechanism of language, in which human subjectivity is constructed. The Wakean language is the "night" language, since the Danish word "nat" pronounced as 'not' means night. So it is the language of dream process. According to McHugh, Jespersen argues in *An International Language* (by quoting Dr. Sweet) that "the ideal way of constructing an a posteriori language would be to make the root words monosyllable . . . & to make the grammar a priori in spirit" (McHugh 83). In addition, "Nichtian" means both Nietzschean and invalid or empty in German. Katie Wales argues that the language of *Finnegans Wake* is based on the principles of negation and limitation.

Joyce's notion of "nat language" challenges some presumptions about language. First of all, Joyce takes charge at the Gaelic League, whose purpose is to resuscitate the almost dead language, Gaelic, since only a few people in the western coast of Ireland were able to use Gaelic in everyday life. This movement is not just a cultural one, but also a political one, based on the belief that a nation's soul can

be expressed by her language. Eoin MacNeill, who co-founded the Gaelic League with Douglas Hyde, was one of the major proponents for reestablishing "the ideal configuration of tribal and patriarchal values" by reviving the Gaelic language. For this "heroic specter attained a resplendent incarnation in the Irish nationalist movement and the Celtic Revival, attaining its apotheosis in blood spilled for the sake of an oppressive new Irish state (Hofheinz 118). Joyce's disdain for revivalists can be illustrated by Molly's invective against them: a "lot of sparrowfarts skitting around talking about politics" (*U* 18.879-80).

As English is Joyce's "secondmouth language" (*FW* 37.13), a colonial writer like him inevitably regards utterance or writing as a political act. As John Bishop argues, "the language of the book [*Finnegans Wake*], like the language of dreams and like language autonomically disrupted by the stutter, will operate in a manner unpredictably different from that in which rational language operates" (Bishop 307). Joyce's ambivalent attitude toward invasion and colonization is problematic, especially in terms of the language question, since the Gaelic League easily applied a binary opposition to the use of "native" language. By dismantling the binarism of "native" language, Joyce seems to admit that his "acquired" language is unavoidable. Although his English is "secondmouth language," it is also "nat language," a language acquired in the historical moments where he is fatalistically positioned. As James Fairhall argues, "[t]his night or dream language, which is 'nat [not] language' in the usual phallogocentric mode, is fatal to the linguistic absolutes and opposites which dominate public discourse in time of war" (234). But Joyce must have had in mind the "root language" (*FW* 424.15) etymology, in that "nat" is not simply "not," but also the root of such words as nature, native and nation. But whether Free Stater or Republican—"freestouters and publiccranks" (*FW* 329.31), Joyce does not taunt them for their political ideologies, but rather he is "showing impatience with the narrowing of the political options available for his country" (Pierce 249). Likewise, Joyce interrogates the rigidity of the Gaelic League's policy, which reinforces and perpetuates the imperialistic distinction between native and invader in the Irish minds along with self-degradation.

Colin MacCabe argues that *Finnegans Wake* is “anathema to those nationalists who wished to promote doctrines of Celtic purity” (4). Joyce’s phrase, “miscegenations on miscegenations” (*FW* 18.20) attests to his blame of those who insist on “Irish Ireland” for denying many Irish heroes their Irishness. Emer Nolan supports for Joyce’s all-inclusiveness by saying that “the various stages of opposition to invasion or colonization blend together, both in the text and in commentary upon it” (146-47). Imperial power relies on the enforcement of distinctions, in particular, binary. So does writing itself, since signification is possible only if differentiation is available.

Secondly, Joyce questions if a universal language is attainable. Admitting that Joyce told Harriet Shaw Weaver to write a book that should be a kind of “universal history” in ‘Work in Progress,’ it would be too hasty to conclude that Joyce endorses the “universal language.” By pointing to Ogden’s concept of “Basic English,” Susan Shaw Sailer argues that “Joyce shared Ogden’s belief that a new language might be necessary for the creation of a consciousness proper to the twentieth-century”(858). The language of *Finnegans Wake* is “a sort of universal language” (Sailer 860), but here it needs a cautious step to insist upon Joyce’s privileging of universality. In an unpublished thesis, Laurent Milesi emphasizes on Joyce’s proclivity toward universality:

The only language which would be above all languages and beyond the reach of tradition must subsume all linguistic and historic nationalisms, must be a recreation of the whole universe for the artist to resist any national enclosure; such a universal language, devoid of history except personal history, is the dream which Joyce aimed at in the night of the *Wake*, which is also the night common to all mankind (qtd in Sailer 861).

Despite Joyce’s emphasis on the universality of language, we need to be careful in coming to a conclusion, since he eulogizes and at the same time denounces any fixation of meaning. Furthermore, “such a universal language, devoid of history except personal history” is unimaginable to Joyce, who “did not want to create a

new literary Esperanto"(Sailer 862). I would rather agree with Robert McAlmon, who argues that "[Joyce] wishes to originate a flexible language that might be an Esperanto of the subconscious and he wishes to believe that anybody reading his work gets a sensation of understanding, which is the understanding which music is allowed without too much explanation"(110-11). But I would add to say that Joyce tries to recognize the universal aspects of language, but not to create a universal language that can be understood by everybody without any difficulty.

Almost every critic has a consensus about the multiplicity of the Wakean world. As Emer Nolan argues, "Joyce's apparent assault on the narcissism of community, however, has more often assimilated to a facile universalism" (140). It is rather true that "[t]here were so many different levels of national experience to comprehend: and yet there was available to Joyce no overarching central image, no single explanatory category, no internal source of authority" (Kiberd 328).

Joyce's assault on the phallogentricity of language is telling. Nothing in *Finnegans Wake* has a single meaning; nothing can be tied back to a single source of meaning. . . . Phallogentric discourse is marked by the display and exercise of power: it assumes that the human subject controls, precedes, or exists outside language, that the position of the subject in language is unproblematic, and that its task as discourse is mastery over the world through science, rationality, and logic (Pierce 252).

Joyce's concern with (mis)communication reveals itself in the exchange between Mutt and Jute in the early episode of *Finnegans Wake*. These two figures are one of the ever-changing avatars of Shem and Shaun respectively, and they also stand as the first native and invader figures in the series that culminates in the dialogue between Muta and Juva in the final chapter (Nolan 150). Interestingly, Mutt is regarded as the native here, while Jute, reminiscent of a native people constituting Anglo-Saxon England, is a Shaun-figure, oriented towards the spatial and visual. Mutt is a polyglot, offers to converse with Jute in any of several suitably hybrid languages he names: "scowegian . . . anglease . . . phonio saxo?" (*FW* 16.6,7). But

Mutt's "stuttering" or stammering is a "hauhauhauhaudibble thing" (*FW* 16.18), a sign of original sin. Here Joyce seems to endorse the affluence of native language.

Joyce's third concern with language is whether an artificial language is valid in terms of communication. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce mentions some artificial languages: "vollapluck" [Volapük] (*FW* 34.32), "bassvoco" [Ido artificial language] (*FW* 32.24), "neutral idiom" [Idiom Neutral] (*FW* 117.14). The idea of creating an artificial language may receive Joyce's invectives, because the forceful implementing of a language into a society or culture is beyond Joyce's imaginable reality. In addition, some hybrid languages are also mentioned: "Munda" [an English Indian language] (*FW* 172. 31), "Mordvealive" [Mordvina Finno-Ugric language] (*FW* 162.18), and "Etruscan" [language never deciphered] (*FW* 120.23). The hybridity of some languages, however, indicates that no language is purely "original." Genealogies of language rebut ideas of the origins of language, since tracing back to an origin results in a surprising encounter with multiple "origins," thus undermining the notion of "origin." In this sense, every genealogical search for the universal language inevitable leads to a failure.

The dream language of Joyce's dark book is not simply obscure, nor manifest: "His dream monologue was over, of cause, but his drama parapolylogic had yet to be, affact" (*FW* 474.4-5). This shift from dream to drama coincides with that of monologue to parapolylogic. In this sense, *Finnegans Wake* is not simply a record of the dream language, but rather possibly a paralogism because it is based on "polylogic." So "no single interpretation, by itself, can do justice to any historical document" (McGee 273). Therefore, no attempt to pin down the meaning of *Finnegans Wake* inevitably confronts a failure. Joyce warns the reader of such a mistake:

Yet to concentrate solely on the literal sense or even the psychological content of any document to the sore neglect of the enveloping facts themselves circumstantiating it is just as hurtful to sound sense . . . (*FW* 109.12-15)

If the “enveloping facts” or historical circumstances are neglected, the reader may hurt the “sound sense” of any document. In a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce himself said: “One great part of every human existence is passed in a state which cannot be rendered sensible by the use of wide awake language, cutanddry grammar and goahead plot” (*Letters* III, 364). *Finnegans Wake* is a self-reflexive text, commenting on its own difficulties by engaging the reader into the “writerly” process of reading:

You is feeling like you was lost in the bush, boy? You says: It is a puling sample jungle of woods. You most shouts out: bethicket me for a stump of a beech if I have the poultriest notions what the fareset he all means. (*FW* 112.3-6).

What the “ideal reader suffering from an ideal insomnia” (*FW* 120.13-14) of *Finnegans Wake* needs is

patience; and remember, patience is the great thing, and above all things else we must avoid anything like being or becoming out of patience. (*FW* 108.8-10)

In his famous analysis, Jacques Derrida connects phallogocentrism with discourses of war. Derrida combines “war” (English) with “wahr” (German) in order to suggest that the phallus is the dominant signifier to operate in the war of truth.

Go to, let us extol Azrael with our harks, by our brews, on our jambeses, in his gaits. . . . And let Nek Nekulon extol Mak Makal and let him say unto him: Immi amni Semmi. And shall not Babel be with Lebab? And he war. And he shall open his mouth and answer: I hear, O Ismael, how they laud is only as my loud is one. (*FW* 258.2-13)

As Margot Norris notes, Derrida's reading of this passage privileges Joyce's “Babelian deconstructions” of language over the historical reality of children in fear and suffering (Norris 1992, 211-12). In other words, children praise the angel of death as the dream of liberation from physical suffering. They cannot expect an

actual liberation, but only its dream, whose dismal efficacy is to make them forget or disregard their physical reality. So the ignorance of physical suffering is preconditioned before the grand discourse of liberation is implemented. Nick's awareness of himself as the same ("semmi") with the Other, inscribes the ambivalence of language (Babel) that expresses the truth of human hearts (Hebrew "lebhah").

Joyce does not discard binary oppositions themselves, but rather puts them in the motion of eternal struggle with each other or breaks them by inserting a third term, thus promulgating multiplicity and never fixing any meaning. The result of this kind of narrative strategy is *Finnegans Wake*, a sort of New Arabian Nights. In this sense, Joyce reverses and revolts the linguistic hierarchy innately systemized in the process of colonization, in which Beurla displaced Irish. Ihab Hassan induces a prophecy: " 'Traduced into jinglish janglage' (*FW* 275.n6), *Finnegans Wake* . . . stands as a monstrous prophecy of our postmodernity" (108).

Joyce's solution to the problematics of violence in writing is "both pacifist and anarchist," since Joyce's distinctive signature is recognizable and *Finnegans Wake* is "a pastiche, a pell-mell assemblage of fragments forged and plagiarized from the cultural memory of Western Europe and beyond" (Spurr 251, 259). More importantly, the reader of *Finnegans Wake* must be reminded of Nolan's warning: "Too many readers have merely taken the text at its word, enthusiastically embracing its vision of a cyclical human history in which all conflict is ultimately subsumed and cancelled in a cosmic vision of eternal recurrence" (Nolan 141). In conclusion, Joyce's idea of "nat language" makes the reader busy participating in the process of interpreting the text by denying the final vocabulary or meaning. Nevertheless, we still have a problem—it is difficult to answer the following questions: "Are we speachin d'anglas landadge or are you sprakin sea Djoytsch?" (*FW* 485.12-13). It is almost impossible to identify whether the voice of *Finnegans Wake* is Joyce's own or someone else's. Joyce speaks in "nat language" in any sense of the word.

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Abstract

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Kiheon Nam

Joyce's concept of “nat language” as not language has been understood as his way of interrogating language *per se*. But nothing can be politically neutral, considering the fact that *Finnegans Wake* was written during the Irish Civil War and then the implementation of a free state. Furthermore, Joyce's last work is permeated by so many Irish historical events that we cannot discuss it without referring to them. One of the important historical events is the Gaelic League, an organization that led the bandwagon of Irish cultural nationalism.

As an Irish writer and a colonized subject of the British Empire, however, Joyce must have inevitably been ridden by the controversial agenda of reviving the “native” language, and have found it difficult to keep totally aloof from the debate. In the post-colonial era, many newly independent nations made efforts to revive their own languages and at least to make them “official” languages. Ireland also officialized the Irish language with English with the advent of a new nation in 1921. Throughout his career as a writer, Joyce never forgot the significance of language in constructing a national or racial identity. Such a belief leads him to incessantly interrogate the efficacy of language as a communicative means within the national conflict of building a new free state. By dismantling the binarism of “native” language, Joyce seems to admit that his “acquired” language is unavoidable. Although his English is “secondmouth language,” it is also “nat language,” a language acquired in the historical moments where he is fatalistically positioned.

Finnegans Wake is a result of Joyce's guerilla war against both his “native” language and “nat language” by multiplying or confusing the “origins.” It could be

an answer to those writers whose colonial experience always pits them against their obligation for using their “native tongues,” not colonizer’s language.

■ **Key words :** James Joyce, Irish Nationalism, Language, the Gaelic League,
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