

James Joyce's Urban EcoAnarchism

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Abstract

In this paper I contend James Joyce invests *Finnegans Wake's* river-woman Anna Livia Plurabelle with the agency to reconnect Dublin's inhabitants to the environs that resource their urban ecology. In early twentieth-century Dublin, Nature retained the fearsome power of Giambattista Vico's thunderclap. Regular typhoid outbreaks contributed to increased infant mortality rates in the inner city; and, as Anne Marie D'Arcy observes, the River Liffey delta could not absorb the raw sewerage discharged from the city's wealthy coastal townships, so this washed upriver, offering the ideal conditions for typhoid's parasitic bacterium to multiply. There is no place for the Romantic sublime in such a setting. Yet *Finnegans Wake* nurtures the hope that Dubliners might remediate their city's urban ecology. Anna Livia gifts the city three key means to this end: birth control to limit population growth, an uprising of the poor to redistribute wealth, and gout to curb greed and thus reduce natural resources consumption. While these steps might initiate the beginning of an egalitarian society in Dublin, they require the city's inhabitants to gain a heightened consciousness of their actions. With such a revolution, recalling Peter Kropotkin's ecoanarchism, played out on an intergenerational timescale, urban Dublin could regain equilibrium with the environs that sustain it, countering the global phenomenon of the 'Great Acceleration'. Reading the *Wake* as ecoanarchism is one approach to discover that, like his fictional alter-ego Stephen, Joyce seeks to change the urban ecology of Dublin by pricking the conscience of generations of readers who enjoy the privileges of education, and contemplation.

Keywords: *Finnegans Wake*, Vico, ecoanarchism, urban ecology, post-pastoral.

Resumen

Este trabajo argumenta que James Joyce otorga a Anna Livia Plurabelle, la "mujer del río" de *Finnegans Wake's* el poder para reconectar a los habitantes de Dublín con los alrededores que forman su ecología urbana. En el Dublín de principios del siglo veinte, la naturaleza retenía el poder aterrador del trueno de Giambattista Vico. Brotes frecuentes de fiebre tifoidea contribuían al aumento de la tasa de mortalidad infantil en el centro de la ciudad, y, como destaca Anne Marie D'Arcy, el delta del río Liffey no podía absorber las aguas residuales que venían de los ricos municipios costeros, así que ésta subía a contracorriente, creando las condiciones óptimas para el desarrollo de la bacteria que produce la fiebre tifoidea. No hay lugar para el concepto de lo "sublime" del Romanticismo en este escenario. Sin embargo, *Finnegans Wake* de Joyce alimenta la esperanza de que los dublineses quizá puedan remediar la ecología urbana de su ciudad. Anna Livia ofrece a la ciudad tres claves al respecto: métodos anticonceptivos para disminuir el crecimiento poblacional, el levantamiento de las clases pobres a fin de exigir la redistribución de la riqueza, y la gota para contener la codicia y de ese modo reducir el consumo de recursos naturales. Aunque estos pasos tal vez iniciarían el principio de un Dublín más justo y equitativo, requerirían que los habitantes de la ciudad fueran más conscientes de sus acciones. Con esta revolución, evocando el ecoanarchismo de Peter Kropotkin y aplicándolo a una escala de tiempo intergeneracional, el Dublín urbano podría recuperar el equilibrio con los alrededores que lo mantienen, contrarrestando el fenómeno global de la "Gran Aceleración". Leer *Finnegans Wake* desde el punto de vista del ecoanarquismo es una

forma de descubrir que, como su álgter ego Stephen, Joyce busca cambiar la ecología urbana de Dublín, apelando la conciencia de generaciones de lectores que disfrutaban los privilegios de la educación y de la contemplación.

Palabras clave: *Finnegans Wake*, Vico, ecoanarquismo, ecología urbana, post-pastoral.

This article focuses on the Anna Livia Plurabelle (ALP) chapter of *Finnegans Wake*, reading it as a post-pastoral text that seeks to alter the relationship of its largely urban, privileged readers to the rural environment(s) that sustain them. I begin by reviewing some recent ecocritical readings of Joyce's fiction. Hereafter, I describe Dublin's socio-environmental context in Joyce's lifetime, the pastoral pleasures of the wealthy, and the anti-pastoral reality of the poor. Next, I consider the influence of Italian Enlightenment philosopher Giambattista Vico's *New Science* on two central figures in the *Wake*: the married couple HCE (Here Comes Everybody) and ALP, who are human characters, and a mountain and river respectively. The river-woman ALP instils fear in urban Dublin when she visits her ills and gifts of hope upon the city; she might thereby reinitiate a veneration of her waters. This is one aspect of ALP's active role in revivifying her watershed. In the final section of this article I discuss how her distribution of ills to urban Dublin also seems intended to promote ecological justice by limiting resource consumption, reducing birth rates, and initiating insurrections amongst the poor. Her gifts defend her ecosystem's integrity, by encouraging the equal flourishing of human and non-human life, and thereby expanding the community of justice in urban Dublin (Schlosberg 143). Her gifts also foster the ecoanarchist ideal that insurrection might establish complete social equality, and human coexistence with the natural world. As contemporary readers, ALP's gifts might prick our consciences, as they address socio-environmental issues associated with the ongoing 'Great Acceleration' of human population, resource use, and environmental degradation.

James Joyce's modernist fiction is increasingly viewed as exploring the interdependence of the biophysical, social, economic and spiritual in urban Dublin and its environs. For instance, in the recently published *EcoJoyce: The Environmental Imagination of James Joyce*, Anne Fogarty observes how Joyce's "programmatic urbanism" underscores the "anti-pastoral aspects of 'dear dirty Dublin'" (xv). The term 'anti-pastoral', coined by Raymond Williams, describes literature that offers "a corrective" to the "deceptions" of the pastoral tradition (Gifford 22). For Terry Gifford, anti-pastoral texts depict "rural reality", and outline "pastoral responsibility" (22). While offering such a corrective, Joyce's fiction also utilises what Gifford calls a post-pastoral mode, undermining the human/nature divide, and illustrating the complexity of human-environment interrelations in urban Dublin (26). In *The Ecology of Finnegans Wake*, Alison Lacivita analyses these complex human-nature interrelations. Developing Finn Fordham's contention that the *Wake* is a story of rubbish generated on a planetary scale, she argues the *Wake* is an "exemplary text" of urban ecology, which belongs within the ecocritical canon (Fordham, *Lots of Fun* 20; Lacivita 1). While despair, alienation, and

stylistic experimentation are more familiar modernist themes than urban ecology, Lacivita draws on Scott J. Bryson's contention that ecological modernism deploys these familiar themes to explore "a fundamental uncertainty about the relationship between human and non-human nature" (Bryson 591, qtd. in Lacivita 6).

I find Bryson's view compelling, as the *Wake* represents Dublin's urban dwellers as part of a cyclical "creative-destructive process" that shapes the physical earth (Gifford 27). At the start of the twentieth century, Dublin, like nearly all cities, began to absorb and process increasing amounts of "water, energy and materials" from the natural environment and to discharge a growing amount of pollutants, garbage and solid waste as its urban population increased (McNeil 287). Accordingly, the land area sustaining an urban population like Dublin's, most probably "an order of magnitude greater than that contained within municipal boundaries", was put under increasing environmental stress (Rees 121). Responding to these factors, *Finnegans Wake* offers a "collideorscape", or collage of points of view, in its transhistorical narrative of Dublin and its 'environs' (FW 143.28).

Urban Dublin's Socio-geography

The socio-geography of early twentieth-century Dublin gave rise to two main visions, or scapes, of the natural world. Rich Dubliners lived in the city's suburban townships that were created by a "Protestant and Unionist Middle Class" (D'Arcy 254). Here, they maintained privileged links with a romanticised, pastoral Nature, enjoying the provision of piped water, lawned gardens, and picturesque views, such as the Wicklows: these hills were deemed romantic by Leitch Ritchie, in his *Ireland: Picturesque and Romantic* (1837). In contrast, Dublin's most underprivileged inhabitants were housed in the crowded, disease-ridden city centre (Ó Maitiú 15, qtd. in D'Arcy 265). This urban centre is built on the deltaic marshlands of the River Liffey, whose poor drainage compromised the health of its inhabitants. In 1911 one third of Dublin's families (21,000 of them) lived in central Dublin, in one-room tenements, and twice as many young children died here, compared to the suburbs (O'Brian 109). Clearly, Dublin's poorest inhabitants still experienced abysmal living conditions at the start of the twentieth century, even though suburban gentrification made Dublin, statistically, a healthier city than in prior decades, when the city had "the unenviable reputation of being the unhealthiest city in the United Kingdom" (O'Brian 105). In the inner city, measles, whooping cough and diarrhoea epidemics claimed the lives of Dublin's poorest young children; typhoid and tuberculosis routinely killed those over 25 years old (O'Brian 105). Urban poverty created this health epidemic: half of all typhoid fever deaths in the Leinster province (20,000 km²) arose in central Dublin (Creighton 299). Joyce had first-hand experience of this 'natural violence', from which city walls offered no protection. As D'Arcy notes, Joyce lost his sister Mabel to typhoid in 1911, after his family moved from the city's privileged township of Rathgar to the inner city; prior to this, in 1902, his brother Georgie died, probably of peritonitis following typhoid fever (278-280; S. Joyce 133). Thus Joyce became part of an urban ecology, where humans

were potential vectors of typhoid's parasitic bacterium due to their exposure to effluents, large amounts of which discharged into the Liffey's mouth from ash-pits and water closets in the Rathmines and Pembroke townships. This raw sewage washed up the river, back into the city centre, on the tide (Redmond, qtd. in D'Arcy 257).

These two polarised visions of Dublin, the one pastoral and the other post-pastoral, did not preclude upward mobility in urban Dublin. An Irish Catholic middle class was politically ascendant in the City Hall (D'Arcy 262). Consequently, while Protestant Unionists still lived in the affluent coastal suburbs, Dublin's middle classes increasingly aspired to their elite lifestyle (D'Arcy 265). For instance, as D'Arcy observes, Joyce's Ulysses, Leopold Bloom, dreams of an ideal home supplied by the new municipal Vartry water scheme, featuring a bathroom with shower; an upstairs water closet; a water-sprayed rockery, and a lawn sprinkler (*U*, 666-667, qtd. in D'Arcy 269-270). Bloom may subconsciously aspire to bathe in an Edenic spring, but he overlooks the link between increased piped water consumption and the saturation of the subsoil surrounding the Liffey delta due to seeping "raw sewerage and stagnant water from numerous wells abandoned with the event of Vetry water" (D'Arcy 275). In the first decades of the twentieth century, this shift in urban ecology, which was directly linked to the recent provision of piped water to Dublin and its wealthy townships, engendered a sharp increase in typhoid deaths in central Dublin, even amongst the middle classes (276).

In *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (1916) Joyce's fictional persona, Stephen Dedalus, voices the "despair" felt by those inhabiting Dublin's rank inner-city environment (*P* 254). When this young man removes a louse crawling on his neck, he is distressingly "illclad, illfed, louseeaten" (254). From this abject standpoint, Stephen seeks to prick the conscience of Dublin's privileged inhabitants, living in the wealthy, suburban, independent townships, within, as D'Arcy notes, households paying substantially lower rates than those in central Dublin (D'Arcy 265). Stephen regards these people as rich "patricians of Ireland housed in calm" (*P* 258). His use of the Roman epithet "patrician", here meaning aristocratic, and his allusion to these people's thoughts of "land agents"—stereotyped as managers of English Absentee landlords' agricultural holdings—gesture towards British colonialists' continued profit from Ireland's human and natural resources in the early twentieth century (258-259). Given that Joyce's later Wakean persona, Shem the Penman, is expected to "develop hereditary pulmonary T.B.", and like Stephen needs to be "properly deloused" to have a hope of escaping his plebeian origins, and the risk of typhus, it seems highly plausible that this text, too, is crafted to prick the social and environmental conscience of a privileged, urban elite in the aftermath of the First World War and the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922 (*FW* 172.13; 175.03). This pricking of conscience involves the interrogation of the excessive consumption of material resources, which might be viewed as an attempt to regain those prelapsarian pleasures associated with the pastoral. By exposing the city's dirt to those who geographically partitioned themselves from it, in a text that draws on both anti-pastoral and post-pastoral modes, Joyce may have intended to bring the 'environmental

footprint' of Dublin into focus for privileged members of urban society, who by aspiring to a pastoral ideal draw most heavily on the earth's natural resources.

Vico's Influence on the Eco-narratives of Anna Livia Plurabelle (ALP) and Here Comes Everybody (HCE)

Environmental conscience is a veiled, yet constant political concern in the *Wake*. Vico's definition of urban space and civilisation's progress in *The New Science* is particularly relevant to the *Wake's* urban environmental conscience. Attention has only recently been focussed on Vico's influence on the *Wake's* environmental imagination, yet Lai neatly pinpoints how the *Wake* "declares its debt to Vico from the opening word 'riverrun'" (98). The course of the River Liffey brings us back "by a commodius vicus of recirculation", to another reading of Dublin's environmental history (*FW* 3.02). Vico's *The New Science*, read schematically, describes civilisation's progression through three stages: the first two, the age of gods and the age of heroes, are associated with poetic imagination; the third stage, the age of men, is associated with the faculty of reflection (Costelloe 2015, online). These three stages are followed by a period of recurrence, or *ricorso*. James Atherton, following Samuel Beckett, identifies the four books of the *Wake* as imitating this programmatic account of history; each book represents a different age, though as Fordham notes "there are cycles within cycles" in the *Wake's* books (Atherton 46; Beckett 7-8; Fordham, *Lots of Fun* 7, 18). Robert Pogue Harrison similarly finds that characteristics of all three stages co-existing within a given historical period for Vico (*Juvenescence* 56-58, quoted in Falconer). Contemporary research continues to examine the *Wake* in relation to Vico's notion of historiography, from the angle of Irish History, and with Lacivita's *The Ecology of Finnegans Wake* from the perspective of environmental history (Fordham 2007a 18; Lacivita 79-80; 102-103). For instance, Lacivita observes how, in 1929, additions Joyce made to the sketch "Haveth Childers Everywhere" (another name for the patriarch HCE) demonstrate "the move away from the countryside and from agriculture and into cities" (96). She notes that this trajectory parallels Vico's stages of human history.

The river Liffey, whose cyclical flow recalls Vico's cyclical history, is one of the two central topographical and ecological figures in the *Wake*; the other is the mountain, HCE. This patriarch, HCE (Here Comes Everybody), is mountain to his wife ALP's river, and father to the abject Joycean persona, Shem the Penman. According to Eugene Jolas, Joyce claimed that while "time and the river and the mountain are the real heroes" of his last fiction, stories about these natural features are dramatised using novelistic elements: the interactions between "men and women", and events of "birth, childhood, night, sleep, marriage, prayer, death" (Jolas 11-12). HCE's progressive alienation from the land, and his pollution of the river Liffey shapes his narrative. For instance, the *Wake* describes HCE's plough time as a "prefall paradise peace" (*FW* 30.15). This evocation of an agrarian paradise derives from Vico's description of a Saturnine "golden age", the first age of the world when "the years were counted in grain harvests" (4, "The Idea of the Work"; 172, bk. 2). Vico associates successful harvests of golden corn with a healthy

civis, or 'urban space': "the plough rests its handle against the alter... to give us to understand that ploughed lands were the first alters of the gentiles" (9, "The Idea of the Work"). These ploughed lands, therefore, are sacred. For Vico, the first cities, also known as alters, were all founded on cultivated fields, or *luci*, "burnt lands within the enclosure of the woods", irrigated by "perennial springs" (9-10, "The Idea of the Work"). As Lacivita notes, it is the plough rather than city or town walls that initially demarcates urban space in Vico's cosmology (175). Distorting the normal usage of the word *urbs*, he contends that urban spaces were first demarcated by the plough's wooden moldboard, implements "first called *urbs*" (174, bk. 2). In fact, 'city walls' is the common definition of *urbs* in Latin, according to Charlton Lewis and Charles Short¹. In the Viconian scheme, respect for the harvest's temporality, and "prizing and cherishing" the natural environs that resource a city, particularly its springs, are vital to the health of the urban environment and its citizens (170-171, bk. 2).

HCE's initial, nurturing relationship to the arable lands surrounding Dublin is alluded to when he is described as an agrarian "husbandman handling his hoe" (*FW* 5.09). HCE meets William the Fourth, England's "Sailor King", in a similar guise (1830-1837; *FW* 31.11; McHugh 31-32). He encounters the King whilst carrying an earwig trap, and the keys to a Dublin turnpike road. The trap and keys imply HCE works two jobs at this stage in the *Wake's* narrative: he patrols gardens located south of Dublin, in an affluent costal area on Sunday afternoons, collecting trapped earwigs that damage young seedlings; and he oversees a turnpike road, where tolls are collected for the crown purse. In his first, agrarian role, HCE fights a pest on 'his' native land; in his second, civic role, paid by the government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, he forfeits his nurturing relationship with the land, and becomes its aggressor. That HCE is dressed in British military garb, which protects him from the wet Irish climate: "plus fours, puttees, and bulldog boots" further dramatises his physical remove from the soil, and his assimilation by a foreign, colonial power (*FW* 30.24). Additionally, the image of these boots caked in red earth, evoking blood, "ruddled cinnibar with flagrant marl", implies his physical violence towards the land, if not those inhabiting it. Hereafter, he becomes a Dublin statesman, a "maximostbridgesmaker" focused on social and civil engineering (*FW* 126.10; 34.18-20). With this shift, Dublin's environs no longer provide a habitat where earwigs, men, and plants co-exist. Instead they become material resources, subject to taxation and revenue: consequently, Dublin's environs are discussed in the language of utility. Harrison associates this rational language with Vico's age of men (*Forests* 122-123). Duty of care, which is exemplified by familial bonds, and the notions of respect, vigilance and economy that govern households, are debased in this new, utilitarian relationship with the land (*Forests* 143).

Vico's contention that politically corrupt civilizations may fall to an even more degraded condition because of their growing enslavement to their passion for luxury is a thought that seems to have influenced Joyce's parody of Vico. Joyce identifies this passion for material goods as a significant threat to the urban ecology of early twentieth-

¹ The Perseus Project records 22,058 instances of this usage (perseus.tufts.edu)

century Dublin.² It is a psychological trait like greed, not physical uncleanliness, which Vico finds characteristically “abject” (Vico 381).³ He writes:

If the peoples are rotting in this last civil illness... providence decrees that, through obstinate factions and desperate civil wars, they shall turn their cities into forests and the forests into dens and lairs of men. In this way, through long centuries of barbarism, rust will consume the misbegotten subtleties of malicious wits, that have turned them into beasts made more inhuman by the barbarism of reflection than the first men had been made by the barbarism of sense. (381)

Vico's rationale for this return to a barbaric state of “Nature” is that the first men, characterised by an embodied “barbarism of sense... displayed a generous savagery, against which one could defend oneself or take flight or be on one's guard”, whereas men of reason hide “a base savagery, under soft words and embraces, plots against the life and fortune of friends and intimates” (381). It is necessary, for Vico, to return to a sensual emersion in the physical world: from this perspective we might revise our place within the urban ecology. From such an embodied perspective a new polis could be constituted that would nurture and cherish the physical world that sustains and defines the city. Such a return involves shifting our attention from the complex, abstract language Vico associates with the stage of men, to the poetic imagination he associates with the ‘barbaric’ stage of gods, and the stage of heroes, respectively. The *Wake* often plunges into Vico's poetic imagination. As Michael Begnal writes, “in its initial difficulty *Wake* language reflects” the shifts in language described by Vico (2000, 639). This comment recalls Beckett's earlier description of *Wake* language as the “reduction of various expressive media to their primitive economic directness”; he contends this language is “pure Vico” (16).

Water, the ‘element’ of Anna Livia Plurabelle, is vital to urban ecology; yet water does not speak, it babbles. If civilizations begin with water for Vico, Joyce implies they also founder once they have become estranged from the poetry of water's babble: once the language of the polis becomes disembodied, and abstract, then urban water is gradually dirtied. Accordingly, and as Lacivita also notes, the physical environs of Dublin are foregrounded in the *Wake's* opening clauses through the description of the Liffey “riverrun” that connects the “environs” of Dublin to its morphing urban centre (85). This lyrical description continues a sentence begun on the *Wake's* last page, where the dying allegorical river-woman, Anna-Livia, flows out of the city to join the ocean (*FW* 628.15-16). As numerous critics observe, by allowing this sentence to flow from the end to the beginning of his book, Joyce's structural mimesis evokes the water cycle's closed circle. This natural cycle transcends the rise and fall of civilizations. In the *Wake* (as in *1001 Nights*, often cited in the *Wake*), Joyce adopts this notion of endless cycling as a device to string stories together and recycle them. A recurring theme in these stories is HCE's fall, which occurs in Dublin's Phoenix Park: Phoenix is, tellingly, a corruption of the Irish

² See the ecoanarchism section below.

³ In the section that concludes *The New Science* Vico contends that civilizations that give in to their “unrestrained passions” were “falling back into all the vices characteristic of the most abject slaves” and will eventually “become subject to [i.e., colonized by] better nations” (380-81).

fionnuisce, or 'clear water' (Slepon⁴). A whispering campaign claiming HCE exposed himself in the park to two women as they urinated, increasingly gains credence in the public sphere. These rumours, which Vico might term base savagery, precipitate HCE's fall as a Dublin statesman (*FW* 126.10; 34.18-20). In Vico's scheme, water, used in the age of gods and heroes for ritual or sacred ablutions, later became associated with the cleanness of civil government. Writes Vico: "from *politeia*, which in Greek means 'civil government', was derived the Latin *politus*, 'clean' or 'neat'" (102). Joyce adopts this theme, suggesting that when government is unjust, for instance if its mismanagement of water resources leads to effluent-contaminated water killing the poorest members of society, then statesmen will be deemed (metaphorically) unclean in their private lives. Given the metaphorical and literal import of water in *Finnegans Wake*, it is striking that Joyce's fictional personae, Stephen and Shem, dislike this 'element'. In *Ulysses*, Stephen is described as a "hydrophobe", who distrusts "aquacities of thought and language" (*U* 626). Thus he anticipates Shem's intense dislike of water's baptismal connotations: a downpour that soaks Shem is treated as "parsonal violence" (*FW* 174.24-25). What is repugnant to Shem is the association of water's regenerative cyclical flow with the cleanliness of civic government (*politea*), which in colonial Ireland, as now, is justified through the connection of church and state—both asserted to be of divine origin. It appears to have been repugnant to Joyce as well: D'Arcy reads Joyce's fiction as suggesting he considered the Dublin Corporation's engineering of a clean water supply for the city's 'patricians' forced the poorest inhabitants to imbibe the dirt of the wealthiest (170).

HCE's fall in Phoenix Park offers a veiled allusion to water's veneration in the 'mythic imagination' of Celtic Ireland. The women urinating in the park recall how Anna Livia does "her pee" on a Wicklow hillside (*FW* 204.11-12). Anna's "pee" develops the mythic dimension of her narrative: micturation is an act of creation for Irish pagans, urine being associated with "rain, rivers, and amniotic fluid" (Gibson, 2006, 53). The salacious rumours about HCE exposing himself to the life-giving flow of women urinating, indicate the rational understanding of water-as-resource is shadowed by a mythical imagining of water as a sacred, generative feminine body that can be abused.

ALP, Vico, and Post-Pastoral

In the Anna Livia chapter, two gossiping washerwomen dramatise how Dublin's rich patricians dirty the waters of Dublin's poor. The washerwomen's chatter as they wash laundry in the River Liffey at Chapelizod constitutes an eco-narrative, offering a poetic, spiritual understanding of the Liffey catchment that counters the prevailing view of the river as a material resource. Joyce makes ecological symbols of the washerwomen; their intimate local knowledge, and place-oriented storytelling recalls those 'indigenous' peoples who regard themselves as an integral part of their ecosystem (Nettleton *et al.* 461). Indeed, the women's metamorphosis into a stone and tree, respectively, at the

⁴ fweet.org

close of the chapter embeds them within the syncretic spiritual cosmology their narrative evokes; for instance, the stone recalls the Greek *omphalos* marking the world's centre. On another level, stone and tree can be read as androgynous entities (Glasheen 288; Fordham, "The Writing"). Plausibly, this androgyny results from the washerwomen's 'existence' within the *Wake's* written, masculine discourse, which communicates on behalf of a feminized natural world. However, the masculinist view of a silent, passive, feminised nature is resisted by the washerwomen's banter, and Anna Livia's own song, discussed later in this section of my article (FW 201.5-20). Indeed, the ALP chapter, and the *Wake* more generally, upholds the ecofeminist insight that exploitation of the earth is unjustifiable; the earth should not be deemed willingly submissive to powerful masculine rule: post-pastoral texts characteristically take this stance (Gifford 27).

The washerwomen's chatter brings the dirt and stains of Dublin's bourgeoisie inhabitants out into the open. For instance, one of them is "lathering hail" (FW 200.34-35), or lathering the hell, out of Dublin poet Denis Florence MacCarthy's underwear to wash it clean. This is an act of retribution: MacCarthy's underwear acts as a metaphor for human sully of the physical environment, where the elevated consumption rates of society's elite, including MacCarthy's family—his father was a wealthy catholic merchant—increase the city's environmental footprint (Stewart⁵). The aggressive washing of MacCarthy's underwear also constitutes a rejection of a Romantic sublime. Bloom, the water lover and pastoralist who aspires to an elite lifestyle, has a copy of MacCarthy's *Poetical Works* on his bookshelves, with a stylish bookmark left at page five, suggesting the volume was acquired by him as 'cultural capital', but not seriously read (U 661). Bloom embodies the privileged reader who basks "in the panorama of all flores of speech" after their "dayety in the sooty, having plenxy of time off on his gouty hands" (FW 143.3-5). Despite owning MacCarthy's full *Poetical Works*, Bloom would not know MacCarthy's collection *Underglimpses* contains a Wordsworthian poem, "The Bath of Streams", which chapter 1.8 parodies, if he never read past page five in MacCarthy's *Poetical Works* (McHugh 200). In "The Bath of Streams" pure streams, anthropomorphised as "girls/ In their loosen'd curls", form a river flowing oceanward; this aqueous path, associated with life's hopeful course, terminates in heavenly union with eternal soul (9-10). This description parodies the Romantic sublime's assertion of natural infinitude, which Thomas Weiskel interprets as "an attempt to revise the meaning of transcendence precisely when the traditional apparatus of sublimation—spiritual, ontological, and (one gathers) psychological, and even perceptual—was failing to be exercised or understood" (Weiskel 4). Rejecting the Romantic sublime, the *Wake* anticipates Thomas Weiskel's astute observation that "we have lost the obsession, so fundamental to the Romantic sublime, with natural infinitude" as we live "once again in a finite material world whose limits are beginning to press against us" (*ibid.*). If, as Simpson argues, the Romantic sublime may be negatively associated with the infinite "expansion" of empire, then this concept would troublingly conceal an untenable

⁵ rcorso.net

ecological model for the urban space of Imperial cities on (human) intergenerational timescales (Simpson 246). Processes of deforestation, mining and resource extraction, originally associated with colonial expansion, and more recently with the support of increasingly urban post-colonial populations, are unsustainable on intergenerational timescales, and detrimental to the health of both rural and urban populations (Stephens 2012, online).

The washerwomen's dialogue in the *Wake* rejects the sublime, unsullied trajectory described in "The Bath of Streams". Instead, their chatter provides insight into the harsh living conditions of Dublin's poor, and their stressed urban ecology. To evince how these conditions arose, one washerwoman transports her interlocutor on a millennial scale environmental history of the Liffey catchment as she narrates Anna Livia Plurabelle's life. The extent to which the Liffey catchment's ecology has been damaged by colonisation is conveyed in the washerwoman's veiled account of the cultures supported by this river basin: the Celts (pre 427 A.D.⁶), early Christian settlers (427-795 A.D.), the Norse (795-1022 A.D.), and finally the English (post 1022 A.D.). An analeptic narrative maps this history onto the river Liffey's course in answer to the question, who was the first that sexually despoiled Anna Livia: "who was the first that ever burst?" (*JJA* 43, vol. 48; draft 1.8§1.*2, 47474-110). Ultimately this question leads to the river Liffey's source, located in the Wicklow Hills. These hills are located above the "Garden of Wicklow", a name that recalls the Garden of Eden (*JJA* 7, vol. 48, draft 1.8§1A.*0, MS 47471b-76). Here, a "whole drove of maiden hawthorns" witness Anna wriggling in rain pools, after she has released her generative stream of urine (*FW* 204.20). The hawthorn tree introduces a further mythic, Celtic association: in Ireland it is considered "a faerie tree", sacred because "the hawthorn guards wells and springs" (Gifford J. 58). Additionally, it is linked to "lovmaking, conception and birth" (*ibid.*). Joyce may be drawing on all these connections to suggest the River Liffey be venerated as a life source again. A letter he wrote to Harriet Shaw Weaver on January 27th, 1925, demonstrates he knew "the Irish alphabet (aim beith, coll, dair etc) is all made up of the names of trees" (Joyce, *Letters* I, 225). The hawthorn tree, *Huath*, H in the Ogham alphabet, is associated with the period of May 13th to June 9th in the Celtic Tree Calendar (Gifford J. 56). The washerwoman's tracing of the River Liffey's history and physical course back to its life-giving mountain springs therefore provides an example of Vico's theory that the health of the *civis* depends on nurturing the "perennial springs" that support it (*NS* 16-17, pt. 1).

Joyce associates Celtic imagery with the Liffey's source; additionally, Anna Livia's song, composed before Joyce began to draft chapter 1.8 in February 1924, expresses the river-woman's desire for renewed intercourse with Celtic culture when her colonialist husband, HCE, does not adequately nurture her. Seeking to revivify her riparian environment, ALP's song evinces her agency: unsatisfied in her co-habitation with her "old Dane" of a husband, ALP wishes for an uprising that will improve her environment, and offer environmental justice: With her pantry "out of ... milk" - which may signal

⁶ These dates derive from William Collier's *History of Ireland*, which Joyce possessed in his Trieste library.

anthropogenic environmental stress, ALP can't wait for her "old Dane" to waken (*FW* 201.16; *FW* 201.08). Singing "its up and off with me", she plans to rise up and head to Clontarf (*JJA*, 48, 4, draft 1.8§1A.*0, MS 47471b-74v; *FW* 201.18-19). Here, at the tidal mouth of the Liffey, Boru's Celtic army defeated a Norse-Irish alliance on Good Friday in 1014 (Collier 46-47). Significantly for Joyce, this battle of 'indigenous' succession was imitated in the 1916 Easter Rising of the Irish against the colonial English in Dublin. However, intriguingly given this context, the closing words of Anna Livia's song subverts the colonial metaphor of *entrada* or penetration into 'virgin country': ALP desires the sexual adventure that brings fresh languages (saywint) into her impoverished milieu; she wants to feel "the race of the saywint ([seawind/saying wind] up me ambushure"; she welcomes the mixing of languages in her watershed (*FW* 201.19-20).

ALP's song recalls the Viconian model, where urban civilisation breaks down when the city does not nurture the environs that support it. What is radical in Joyce's interpretation of Vico is that Anna Livia, as river environment, becomes an active agent, uprising against those who do not nurture her. As an ecological body that exhibits what Jane Bennett, with a nod to Bergson, calls "Vital materialism", ALP blurs the boundary between life and inanimate matter, the human and the divine (63). She challenges human mastery, reacting as if human ill treatment threatened her own survival. From an ecological perspective, Joyce was a pioneer in dramatising the natural environment as having agency in the early 1920's. His sense of ALP as a dynamic life force may derive from Henri Bergson's *élan vital*, a concept he introduced in *Creative Evolution*. The term describes "the tremendous internal push of life", the "initial impulsion which thrusts it into the world" (104; 284). Joyce had a copy of the 1914 edition Bergson's original, *L'Evolution Créatrice* in his Trieste Library (Ellmann 101). In contrast with Joyce's portrayal of a dynamic river-woman, who can rise up against those who colonise her, the American terrestrial ecologist Frederic Clements, writing in 1916, evokes a passive physical environment, "occupied" or "invaded" by host organisms (142).

ALP rises, and her agency is felt anew, when she is misused in the early twentieth century; her riparian ecology becomes stressed due to urbanisation. As she travels from the Wicklow Hills towards Dublin, she gradually loses her natural colour, and begins to stink. Upon this journey, Anna also travels from the Viconian stage of Gods to that of Men. In the Wicklows, she retains her babbling, 'primitive' nature: indeed, she is ironically described as a "bushman woman" and an "igloo dweller", recalling Vico's age of Gods (*FW* 207.32-33). On the plains, she enters Vico's saturnine golden age, shod in "a ploughboy's nailstudded clogs, a pair of ploughed fields in themselves" (*FW* 208.06). Her hat is adorned with a golden "band of gorse", the tree associated with Lugh, Celtic god of light (Gifford 37). Without sunlight and water there can be no harvesting of "the barleyfields and pennylotts" that Anna Livia courses through on her way to Dublin (*FW* 203.06). The shades and textures of ALP's bright underwear indicate her riparian ecology is still characterised by a species rich biodiversity in the rural counties of Wicklow and Kildare; her stockings have "salmospotspeckle[s]", her "bockknickers" are "bloodorange", and her teddy is decorated with "swansruff" (*FW* 208.12-19). However, the weighty garb of civilisation mutes this vibrant rural ecology, as Anna flows into

Vico's rational age of Men, characterised by the language of utility (Harrison 122-123). ALP's heavy corduroy coat, a "civvy codroy coat with alpheubett buttons", is closed with that characteristic marker of civilisation, writing. It is also "boundaried round" by a "two-bar tunnel belt", an allusion to the freight line that crosses the Liffey at Chapelizod and runs under Phoenix Park (FW 208.18-20). The Irish rail network was justified, in part, because it could transport the country's valuable exports towards its docks far quicker than the old canal network. In the 19th century, the River Liffey supplied fresh water to the "seepy and sewery" Grand and Royal canals that conveyed export goods from five Irish counties through the Liffey delta, and overseas (FW 207.13; Harness, "Map of Ireland", reprinted by the National Library of Ireland; McHugh, *Sigla* 37). In 1837, exports valued at 2.6 million pounds left Ireland via this route (Harness, "Map of Ireland", reprinted by the National Library of Ireland). Intensified industrialisation at the beginning of the twentieth century, and Dublin's growing urban population, justified the building of a rail network, but this 'progress' also led Anna Livia to wear a "clothes-peg tight astride on her ... nose" so she did not smell the polluted "rreke" (reek) of her stagnant waters (FW 208.22-24). Clearly, by dramatising the environmental history of the River Liffey in this manner, Joyce rejects the Romantic sublime, finding it tarnished by association with infinite colonial expansion.

Anna Livia's EcoAnarchism

With her waters becoming increasingly polluted in the twentieth century, Anna Livia actively defends her life-giving potential with a plague that promotes the ecoanarchist aims Peter Kropotkin sets out in his writings. Ecoanarchism is a perspective strongly influenced by the scientific research and political ideals of Elisé Réclus, and Peter Kropotkin, anarchists, and environmental scientists writing at the end of the nineteenth century (Purchase 21; Macauley 298). It adopts anarchist political theory, which John P. Clark identifies as having four ideological features, among them viewing the ideal society as "noncoercive and nonauthoritarian" and proposing strategies to immediately institute this ideal society (Clark JP. online). Ecoanarchism, like ecofeminism, associates the domination of one group of humans by another with humans exerting control over the natural world (Macauley 299). The alternative, ecoanarchist ideal is a radical ecological one, which envisages coexistence with the natural world, as using "appropriate or libratory technology, decentralization, and organic ways of living and thinking" (*ibid.*).

Joyce had four of Kropotkin's publications in his Trieste library: *The Commune of Paris*, *La Conquista del Pane* (The Conquest of Bread), *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, and *La Granda Rivoluzione* (*The Great French Revolution*; Ellmann 116). Kropotkin views the earth as a self-regulating system, and contends that community interactions shape the physical environment; therefore he argues consumption should be needs based to prevent material resources from becoming overly limited (Purchase, 2003, 20; 22). In *The Great French Revolution*, Kropotkin writes how commerce "accumulates incredible riches in the hands of those who monopolise the lands, the mines, the ways of

communication, and the riches of Nature" (1909, online). He also calls for people to "rise against the monopolisers of the soil", and evokes a "law of mutual aid" (*ibid.*). These assertions echo the socialist values of the Fenian proclamation of 1867, which argues that: "The soil of Ireland, at present in possession of an oligarchy, belongs to us, the Irish people and to us it must be restored... our war is against the aristocratic locusts, whether English or Irish, who have eaten the verdure of our fields" (Lee 56).

While Joyce likely knew Kropotkin's views on the social aspect of ecoanarchism from the above-mentioned texts, he seems to have encountered his systems-based geographic thinking second-hand, through the writings of environmental geographers Elisée Reclus and Léon Metchnikoff. Reclus, a close friend of Kropotkin's, wrote the preface to Metchnikoff's *La Civilisation et les Grandes Fleuves Historique*, and was one of the first thinkers to adopt "a global ecological view of the Earth" (Grinevald 36-7, qtd. in Purchase). In the month that Joyce first began to detail Anna Livia's bag of ills, Joyce also made notes on Metchnikoff's *La Civilisation et Les Grands Fleuves Historique*. His note "green Nile/ in fermen/tation" appears to gloss Metchnikoff's contention that the green Nile, in its first flood phase, is poisonous because it carries fermented, organic debris (Deane *et al.* 64 - VI.B.1.034/a; Metchnikoff 213). This note introduces the possibility that poisonous waters might initiate political ferment. If ruling elites typically establish a dominant onto-cosmology that explicates the "secret workings of natures", as Metchnikoff contends, then the Liffey's unexpected pestilence could undermine political authority, inciting uprisings (194-5). This admittedly speculative chain of events nonetheless resonates with Joyce's notes from Metchnikoff; his personal experience of losing a sister to typhoid; and his claim that the *Wake* is about "an uprising of the little people" (*FW*, 615.14; D'Arcy, 2013, 278; Joyce, qtd. in Fordham, *Lots of Fun* 36).

Anna Livia gifts a "pison plague" (*sic*) to overcrowded, early twentieth-century Dublin (*FW* 212.24). This is retaliation, yet Anna Livia's plague harms the city's poorest inhabitants the most. Joyce, in developing this section of the washerwoman's narrative, employs a listing technique. In the published version of the *Wake* this list extends over four pages. Since a 'gift' is offered to each of ALP's 1001 children in turn within this section, this rhythmic passage attests to the 'plurability' of Anna Livia, her flowing life force is capable of sustaining, or condemning, a dearth of individuals. The majority of the early entries that Joyce makes to this list introduce maladies as gifts; and on March 7th 1924, in a letter to his patron Harriet Shaw Weaver, he explicitly describes Anna Livia's sack of presents as a Pandora's Box containing "the ills that flesh is heir to" (*Letters I*, 213). By this date, Joyce appears to have dramatised Anna Livia as bringing few illnesses and ills to Dublin's richer residents. One example I find in the earliest draft of this passage is the gift of a "puffpuff" to Pudge Craig (*JJA* vol, 46, 33; draft 1.8§1A.*1/1B.*1; MS 47471b-88). This could plausibly be interpreted as giving fat Craig a railway line, linking Dublin's wealthy coastal townships to its city centre (D'Arcy 265). In a later draft, Joyce adds another character associated with affluence: "gouty Gough" receives "spas and speranza", enjoyment (*spass*, in German) and hope (*speranza*, in Italian). In contrast with this paucity of offerings for Dublin's privileged inhabitants, Dublin's poor are showered with 'gifts', including tuberculosis symptoms, a drinker's nose and an alcohol

related skin disease, nerve palsy, and a harelip⁷. Marriages of strife may also be preferentially gifted to this social group (FW 201.11-12). Anna Livia gives a whole stream of women monthly periods, and because birth control was not widely practiced by Dublin's poor, largely Catholic families, the responsibility of caring for large families created significant tensions in these homes (FW 212.06-15). In 1921, Dublin obstetrician Gibbon Fitzgibbon evokes this strife in a letter to the *British Medical Journal*. He writes that in Dublin, while middle class parents practiced some form of birth control, the working classes did not, giving rise to their "constant deprivation" (qtd. in Preston 191).

The above examples demonstrate that the ills 'gifted' by ALP are cast disproportionately on the poorest members of society. However, in another letter to Weaver, written three weeks later, Joyce reminds her that Pandora does not only bring "malaise" (Joyce, *Letters* I, 222). From the perspective of urban ecology, potentially the most hopeful gift Anna Livia brings to Dublin is one of the last she distributes; this is introduced within the first draft of this passage, suggesting it was part of Joyce's original plan for this section of chapter 1.8. The moon-woman, "Selina", of the healthy oyster river "Susquehanna" receives a condom, a "pig's bladder balloon" (FW 212.05-6). Contraception gives Selina the means to prevent her sexual desires leading to unplanned children. Other figures receiving presents from Anna Livia clearly exhibit sexual desire, for instance the masturbating Elisie Oram; the Joycean persona who receives a libertine's pile, possibly a beam or erection; and the lust-filled Magdalena (FW 211.05-12). Hope stems from the ability to curb population growth by dissociating sexual desires and intercourse from pregnancy and childbirth, thereby reducing environmental stress, financial deprivation, familial strife, and human mortality. Joyce glosses some of these associations in a succinct amendment to a 1927 draft of chapter 1.8, written one year after contraception became illegal in the Irish Free State: "out of the paunschaup on to the pyre" (FW 209.31). In other words, once you've pawned all your belongings, for instance to fund family expenses, you're bound to die soon. In 1928, Joyce again amends this passage, adding: "And they all about her, juvenile leads and ingenuinas, from the slime of their slums and artesaned wellings" (young boys and girls crowd Anna Livia, coming from the slime of their slums and artisanal dwellings; *JJA* vol. 48, 357; draft 1.8§1.17; MS 47475-86; FW 209.31-33). With this addition, Joyce further emphasises the extreme poverty of children in Dublin's poorest areas, before introducing the list of Anna Livia's gifts. The acknowledgement of peoples' 'primitive' libidinal desires, accompanied by the active use of contraception, could reduce birth rates. This, Joyce seems to suggest, might be the key change Dublin's inner city slum dwellers could make in their lives to improve their environment.

Reduced consumption of natural resources, or further civil unrest, are other possibilities of 'hope' afforded by Anna Livia's gifts. Dublin's wealthier inhabitants appear characterised by "Blind and gouty Gough", who Roland McHugh suggests might be the Irish General Gough, a man who led army campaigns in South Africa and India,

⁷ Tuberculosis symptoms, "a cough and a rattle and wildrose cheeks"; a drinker's nose and an alcohol related skin disease, "a brazen nose and pigiron mittens"; nerve palsy, "deltoid drops"; and a harelip, "a hairclip" (FW 210.08-22; McHugh 210).

and so fostered the British vision of infinite colonial expansion (FW 211.25; McHugh 211). One hope may be that Dublin's largely protestant elite might associate their excessive enjoyment of natural resources with the bodily swellings, burning pains, and stiffness of gout. Consequently, their happiness and hopes might be interrogated, and their consumption patterns changed. Finally, early in the passage introducing ALP's sack of gifts, Joyce links "rickets and riots" (FW 209.33). This intimation of insurrection propounded by ill health and poverty, which is reinforced by several other allusions to previous Irish insurrections in the passage under discussion, could be interpreted as a call for Finnegans to wake up, and change the political status quo⁸. Indeed, as Peter Maguire observes, the word 'Finnegans' recalls the Fenian uprising and their demand for Home Rule in the wake of the Irish famine (319-320). However, unlike these fights for social justice, Joyce's text construes insurrection more broadly in terms of ecological justice.

In Vico's scheme, extensive civil unrest can result in a *ricorso*, a regression into the forest, into poetic imagination, and into barbarism. In the *Wake*, *ricorso* might be understood as a form of environmental justice that would ameliorate the Liffey environment by developing the poetic imagination of Dublin's inhabitants, so Nature becomes animate for them, and therefore worth protecting. A *ricorso* might also lead them to acknowledge their irrational, libidinal and material desires, and their often-negative effect on Dublin's urban ecology. As such, Joyce's "rickets and riots" might also be intended to evoke the writings of ecoanarchist Kropotkin, for whom "revolution is a concrete event where participants achieve heightened consciousness of their own actions", as they move towards the goal of complete equality (Macaulay 320). Where Joyce is most innovative in his vision of ALP's ecoanarchism, which initiates the *ricorso*, is that he frames it as an intergenerational phenomenon. As such *Finnegans Wake* anticipates Augustin Berque's concept of *Médiance*, which posits that humans exist always already in relation to nature; we are responsible for our descendants and for willing them (in the legal sense) the conditions for a decent humane life (Berque, quoted in Hess, 333-335). Certainly, in his association of urban ecology, rates of consumption, and population control, Joyce had some insight into the factors influencing what is now termed the 'Great Acceleration'. The increase of human populations, urban populations, water use, and primary energy use that began in the 1750s, has increased, often exponentially, since the 1950s. These changes now have far-reaching consequences for urban and rural ecosystems, as they have affected the functioning of the 'Earth System' (Steffen *et al.* 81). In Chapter 1.8 of the *Wake* Joyce suggests that the deceleration of

⁸ The list, in chronological order, includes defeat of the Norse-Irish by Brian Boru's Celtic Army, "A praises be and a spare me days for Brian the Bravo" (FW 211.06-07); the big drum used to commemorate the 1690 Battle of the Boyne, "A big drum for Billy Dunboyne" (211.33-4; 1B 75; Glasheen 3rd Census, 80); Oliver Bond's sentencing to be hanged for his role as secretary to the United Irishmen in 1798, "For Oliver Bound a way in his frey" (211.03-4); the tearful sadness of Sarah Philpott, whose fiancé Robert Emmet was executed after the Irish Rebellion of 1803, "For Sarah Philpot a jordan vale tearorne" (210.30-1), and the 1916 Easter Rising, that recalls Boru's rising of 1014: "A niester egg with a twicedated shell and a dynamight right for Pavl the Curate" (210.36).

many of these phenomena would remediate Dublin's urban ecology, for the good of this city's future inhabitants, and the surrounding environment.

In this essay, I've argued the *Wake* might prick the conscience of generations of readers through the narrative of ALP. This follows the River Liffey's course from the Wicklow Mountains to Dublin Bay, using this as a chronotope that "deranges" temporal scale, and dramatises the long-term socio-ecological consequences of urban expansion in Dublin (Clark 148-150). Writing in 1924, when the Irish Free State was newly independent, Joyce evokes the Celts' veneration of a sacred natural world, for instance by describing a hawthorn grove situated at the Liffey's source; this tree traditionally safeguards springs in Celtic myth. In contrast he associates the Liffey's polluted river waters in urban Dublin with the rational thought of Vico's age of Men. According to Vico, this age no longer interprets the world using poetic imagination; consequently, the ploughed fields sustaining a city like Dublin, and the waters irrigating them, are no longer considered sacred (9-10, "The Idea of the Work). The ills ALP brings to Dublin seem designed to create fear in this urban society, recalling how Jove's thunderclap "humanely engenders fear" of the divinity in Vico's cosmology ("The idea of the work", 13; Book II, 233). By inducing fear, ALP's visit to Dublin might foster renewed veneration of the Liffey. Significantly, Joyce disassociates this veneration of the land from the Romantic sublime's embrace of natural infinitude; and he satirizes his own masculine fictionalisation of feminine 'nature', showing ALP to be neither a passive, nor a silent figure of infinitude. The two washerwomen who gossip about ALP are acutely aware of the limitations of the physical world: their hands are blue cold; their backs ache ("my hands are blawcauld" FW 213.04; "my back, my back", FW 213.17). Consequently, they describe a river-woman who is equally conscious of physical limits, and who seeks to remediate the Liffey's stressed ecology by curbing population growth, reducing consumption rates, and creating a more equal society through uprisings that might redistribute wealth: we might look to similar solutions for current socio-ecological predicaments. Significantly, rather than a top-down "biopolitic" that imposes behavioural changes within a population through "regulatory technology", the river-woman ALP initiates ecoanarchism from the bottom up (Foucault 249). As a river-woman, who connects the geosphere, biosphere, and atmosphere, she influences individuals, one by one, using fear and hope to initiate behavioural changes that will promote the flourishing of Dublin's urban ecology.

Submission received 17 February 2016 Revised version accepted 22 September 2016

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