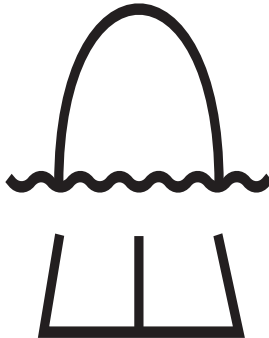


A WORD
in YOUR EAR

How & Why to Read
James Joyce's
Finnegans Wake

Eric Rosenbloom





A Word in Your Ear

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ARCHDRUID BERKELEY & ST. PATRICK—
pages 611–612

Context. This passage is another part of the last chapter of the book. It describes the contest of wisdom between Patrick and king Leary's Druid (*i.e.*, chief poet), from which Patrick won the right to preach throughout the kingdom (*see* History, *above*). George Berkeley (1685–1752) thought that our belief in natural order comes from the order of our perceiving mind and therefore of the similar mind that created and is in nature. He went on to assert that nothing exists except as perceived in the mind of God, that our perception of reality is in fact a sharing in the thoughts of God, an appropriate explanation in the world of a dream.* Berkeley's problem with the extramental world plays by pun into the excremental theme of *Finnegans Wake*.† He appears here as the ultimate philoso-

*Zeno of Elea may also play a part in the passage. Famous for his paradoxes, he elaborated the one-many opposition in the dogma of Parmenides, "The Ent is, the non-Ent is not" (as the 11th edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica* has it, and which the archdruid ("numpa one puraduxed seer") in this passage refers to as the "wisdom of Entis-Onton" [Latin being–Greek beings]): What is (Greek *on*) is, what is not is not. The first, the one, is the object of thought, indivisible, continuous, and perfect, whereas the second, the many, is the mutable object of sensation, everything commonly called reality, and does not exist—it is but a reflection of the one as perceived through the senses. Thus the archdruid claims to see the true reality inside what he sees, the light that is not reflected.

†Another pun-pair is word/turd. The transaccidentating artist-

pher of Ireland. His argument is presented in Pidgin English to suggest an oriental quality in Berkeley's thought as well as the effort to make him understood. Berkeley uses Chinese, Greek, and Latin words, and Patrick uses Latin, German, and Japanese (from the land of the rising sun). There are plays with the L-R interchange common in Irish as well as Oriental languages, and with the P-Q sound split between Brittonic and Gaelic: For example, Berkeley is Belkelly (among other efforts) and Patrick is Patholic. On the preceding page, we hear that Leary has bet half his crown on each contestant. This is a very rich and difficult passage, which we will touch only some of, I hope without making too much mess.‡

Pattern. Leary is \sqcap , Berkeley \sqsubset , Patrick \wedge . Because Leary has let Patrick challenge him, Berkeley seethes against both, which colors his argument. Patrick shows his identification with \sqcap , and Berkeley becomes \swarrow .

alchemist transforms shit into gold, expelled reality to outward symbols of inner life, or, akin to the agriculturalist, manure into food. The challenge of reading is not to see through the veil of printed words to something hidden but to transubstantiate them as symbols back to originating thought.

‡I am grateful to correspondent Andrew Blom for elucidating Joyce's explorations of philosophy and aesthetics for me and for long and productive debate.

Bowdler's Version.

Tunc. Bymeby, ... Balkelly, archdruid of islish chinchinjoss ... finish he show along the his mister guest Patholic ..., scilicet, all too many much illusiones through photoprismic velamina of hueful panepiphanal spectacurum of Lord Joss, the of which zoantholitic furniture, from mineral through vegetal to animal, not appear to fallen man ... but one photoreflexion of the several iridals gradationes of solar light, that one which that part of it ... had shown itself ... unable to absorbere, whereas for numpa one puraduxed seer in seventh degree of wisdom of Entis-Onton he savvy inside true inwardness of reality, the Ding hvad in idself id est, all objects ... showed themselves in trues coloribus resplendent with sextuple gloria of light actually retained Rumnant Patholic ... no catch all that preachybook, utpiam, ... Bilkilly-Belkelly say patfella, ... with other words verbigratiagradung from murmurulentous till stridulocelerious ... while his comprehendurient, with diminishing claractinism, augumentationed himself in caloripeia to vision so throughsighty, ... High Thats Hight Uberking Leary his fiery grassbelonghead all show colour of sorrelwood herbgreen, again, ... of his essix-coloured holmgrewnworsteds costume his fellow saffron pettikilt look same hue of boiled spinasses, other thing, ... his golden twobreasttorc look

justsamelike curlicabbis, moreafter, ... verdant readyrainroof belongahim Exuber High Ober King Leary very dead, what he wish to say, spit of ... plenty laurel leaves, after that bulopent eyes of Most Highest Ardreetsar King same thing like thyme choppy upon parsley, alongsidethat, ... enamel Indian gem in maledictive fingerfondler of High High Siresultan Emperor all same like one fellow olive lentil, onthelongsidethat, ... violaceous warwon contusiones of facebuts of Highup Big Cockywocky Sublissimime Autocrat, for that with pure hueglut intensely saturated one, tinged uniformly, allaroundside upinandout-down, very like you seecut chowchow of plenty-much sennacassia. Hump cumps Ebblybally! Sukkot?

Punc. Bigseer, refracts the petty padre, ... tripeness to call thing and to call if say is good while, ... celestial from principalest of Iro's Iris-mans ruinboon pot before, ... as My tappropinquish to Me wipenmeselpsgnosegates a handcaughtscheaf of synthetic shammyrag to him hers, seemingsuch four three two agreement cause heart to be might, saving to Balenoarch (he kneeleths), to Great Balenoarch (he kneeleths down) to Greatest Great Balenoarch (he kneel-eths down quitesomely), the sound sense sympol in a weedwayedwold of the firethere the sun in his halo cast. Onmen.

That was thing, bygotter, the thing, bogcotton, the very thing, begad! Even to Bilkilly-Belkelly-Balkally. Who was for shouting down the shatton on the lamp of Jeeshees. Sweating on to stonker and throw his seven. As he shuck his thumping fore features apt the hoyhop of His Ards.

Thud.

Summary. Then ["Tunc," a time word] arch-druid Berkeley finished his exposition to Patrick, namely, perception through the veil of colors of the visible world—animal, vegetal, and mineral—is to fallen man but the reflection of one of several grades of light, the one not absorbed. The enlightened seer knows the inner truth of reality, as objects show to him the six-fold light they retain. Patrick didn't catch all that, so Berkeley repeated with other words increasingly strident [auditory through time], while Patrick enlarged himself in heated color to clearer vision [ocular in space], Overking Leary's fiery hair shows the color of sorrel green, his saffron kilt looks the hue of boiled spinach, his golden torc [neck ornament] looks just like cabbage, the green cloak on High King Leary is dead, I mean the spit of laurel leaves, the blue eyes of the High King like thyme and parsley, the indigo gem on the finger of the Emperor like olive or lentil, the violet bruises on the face of the Autocrat tinged all over like the humps and clumps

of senna you see cut—so it is for everybody! [“Ebblybally” = everybody + Eblana (Dublin) town (Irish *baile*).] Sukkot?*

Punk [point: stop, as well as a space word], reflects (and refracts) Patrick, it’s worthless to call an epiphany (“thing” [as the archdruid called it, following Kant, “the Ding hvad in idself id est”]) what you see as good: By this backwards logic, celestial light comes from your pallid Irish rainbow. As I see [sight-sense] the clumps of shamrock we wipe ourselves with,† so the rainbow [Italian *arcobaleno*; “Balenoarch” means lightning-lord/whale-god] (he kneels, low and lower) is the sound-sense symbol of the eternal fire the sun in his halo cast on men.‡

*Hebrew *sukkotb* (SKVTh) are tabernacles of the covenant (which was a rainbow, the road between earth and heaven) as well as the harvest booths commemorating it and the new year. Sucat was Patrick’s original name. Scut and scat are here, too: The former is a woman’s backside, the latter is excrement as well as the singing in jazz of nonsense syllables akin to vamping on the piano (Berkeley is “vampsybobsy” to Patrick’s monotonic hum). A booth for defecating is a commode, mentioned in the first sentence of the book; it is perhaps where Finnegan sits enthroned like Osiris in his coffin preparing to be reborn, “idylly turmbing over the loose looves leaflefts jaggled casualty on the lamatory” (p. 357).

†Patrick mentions “four three two agreement,” a progress from the many to the one (Zeno’s *on*). It also alludes to the year, A.D. 432, Patrick came to Ireland and the year, 432 B.C., Athens adopted the Babylonian 19-year cycle—the catholic Golden Number—of synchronizing lunar and solar calendars, of time marked by reflected light and by original light.

‡“The father the son and the holy ghost amen” is one of the phrases punned upon throughout the book.

The storyteller wraps up with a couple “begorra”s and a “bedad,” restating Patrick’s consubstantial trinity of begetter, begotten, and “the very thing” (the holy ghost). Even Berkeley (now with 3 names added in succession), still straining, knew he was bested, as he shook his thumb and four fingers [“thumping forefeatures”—see the picture on p. 308] at Patrick’s (or the king’s) high [Irish *ard*] arse (or arts). Thud—the 3-fold turd (itself, as issued from the son (Λ) who is also the father (Π)) returns to the earth, ending a cycle and providing (by providence, per Vico via Plato) the material for a new one.

Comments. Patrick succeeds in his invasion by appropriating what he finds in Ireland. Berkeley sees the inward color of things, but envy’s green in his reactive assertion of Irishness betrays the limits of his vision. Patrick sees the outward colors of things and shows them to be symbols of the source of all light and heat.

Together, saint and sage created Ireland’s golden age, but its passing betrays the limits of Patrick’s timeless formulation. Yet a new day rises as before.