

Nationalism: A Politico-Aesthetic Study of Finnegans Wake

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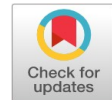
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Abstract: This research investigates nationalism, especially concerning the Irish identity. Writer has set nationalist ideals in the background of humor, historical references, and complex storytelling. The novel questions the fixed narratives that nationalism often imposes. The novel's narrative technique and stylistic innovation, mythic references, and looping timeline, invite readers into a world where identities constantly shift and blend. It examines the limitations of national identity and skepticism of the writer regarding national ideals. In light of politico-aesthetic discourse of thinkers like Jacques Rancière, Walter Benjamin, and Herbert Marcuse, this analysis reveals how the novel portrays nationalism as an endless cycle of pride and doubt. This dynamism shapes culture and opens up to reinterpretation and transformation.

Keywords: Nationalism, Shifting Identities, Joyce's Skepticism, Walter Benjamin, Jacques Ranciere, Herbert Marcuse.

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INTRODUCTION

James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is a complex piece of modern literature (Ajmal, M., Hussain, Z., & Bashir, R. (2024)). He used structurally and grammatically incorrect phrases and sentences in his work to represent the anarchy of traditional literary norms (Ajmal, M., Hussain, Z., & Bashir, R. (2024)). The novel seems to be an example of avant-garde experimentation and a well written and recorded commentary on Irish history, culture, and politics (Ajmal, M., Hussain, Z., & Bashir, R. (2024)). This study demonstrates Joyce's uses of distortion and fragmentation to convey the themes of cyclical nature of history and the fragmentation in the novel (Ajmal, M., Hussain, Z., & Bashir, R. (2024)). It is known for its unusual language, deep themes, and its view of history as a cycle (Gillespie, M. P. (Ed.). (2017)). This multi-layered novel explores the connections between art, politics, and national identity (Burns, C. L. (1998, April)). Joyce alternately loved and loathed his homeland, condemning it as an "ignorant and famine-stricken and treacherous country" (Burns, C. L. (1998, April)). For Joyce, the Irish are alternately too distant and too familiar, too morally rigid and too dissolute" (Burns, C. L. (1998, April)). Joyce has ambivalence towards Ireland (Nolan, E. 2002). Joyce's responses to Ireland, from affectionate tolerance to impassioned repudiation, are typically organized around the presumed certainty of his unsympathetic representation of Irish separatist nationalism (Nolan, E. 2002). The story reflects and complicates the political issues of its time, as it was written during a period of intense political unrest and strong nationalist feelings in Ireland and across Europe (Nolan, E. 2002).

James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* explores nationalism in a complex way that is not easy to interpret (Mays, M. 1998). The novel is grounded in the specific history, language, and culture of Ireland, and also reaches beyond any single national story, offering a global perspective (Pearson, N. C. 2001). Understanding Joyce's artistic choices helps reveal the tension between local traditions and universal ideas, with nationalism presented as something to be critically examined rather than a clear-cut concept (Menmuir, A. 2013).

Joyce's artistic style in *Finnegans Wake* connects closely to his political views (Sørensen, D. 1977). He challenges the rigid stories that nationalism often creates and questions what national identity really is by breaking

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apart language, history, and selfhood (Kim, K. S. 2006). However, Joyce's approach to nationalism is not wholly negative (Nolan, E. 2002). The novel presents a mix of national and antinational views, using themes of breakdown and renewal to reflect the changing political landscape (Mirze, Z. E. 2005).

This paper analyzes the artistic forms in the novel that critique both national and antinational feelings. It looks at how Joyce's unique style comments on nationalist ideas. How does his use of fragmented, multilingual prose show the tensions in nationalist projects? Which formal elements—its circular structure, mix of languages, or mythic themes—challenge or support nationalist ideals? Additionally, how does the novel move between pride in the nation and doubt, using artistic methods to highlight the contradictions in nationalist discourse?

Furthermore, this paper discusses how Joyce's views on nationalism contribute to the overall themes of the novel. It investigates how nationalism, both a political and cultural force, shapes the story. In what ways does Joyce's mixed feelings about Irish nationalism show his concerns about the limits of national identity today? How do the book's nationalist themes add to its critique of history, power, and language? And how do Joyce's artistic choices—his handling of time, depiction of historical figures, and cyclical approach to history—reflect his view of nationalism as part of a repeating human pattern?

By looking closely at nationalism in *Finnegans Wake*, this study aims to enhance our understanding of how Joyce's work serves as both a significant literary achievement and a thoughtful response to the political and cultural issues of his time. It emphasizes how Joyce navigates the connection between art and politics through the book's artistic forms and approach to nationalism, presenting a modern view that is both rooted in history and open to future possibilities.

Research Questions

- What aesthetic forms in *Finnegans Wake* have served as a critique of national and antinational sentiments?
- How has Joyce's treatment of nationalism contributed to the novel's politico-aesthetic discourse?

LITERATURE REVIEW

M Ajmal, Z Hussain, R Bashir renders James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* as an ambiguous, complex and multi-layered piece of work. Scholars M. P. Gillespie (2017) explores the novel's unusual language and cyclic narrative which according to him reflects cyclic nature of history. C. L. Burns (1998) has noted that Joyce's work is about the tumultuous times he lived in and national identity. E. Nolan (2002) is of the same notion. *Finnegans Wake* was written during a period of intense political unrest, around 1930s and 1940s, particularly in Ireland and across Europe, as nationalist movements were swelling and governments were reforming societies. M. Mays (1998) explore the complex interplay of nationalism within the novel. The novel's narrative, according to him, is both connected deeply to Irish history and culture and provides global interpretation as well. Nationalism is not a straightforward concept in *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce has questioned the meaning of nationalism, its flaws, and impact on identity as well as its potential limitations.

N. C. Pearson (2001) sees *Finnegans Wake* not merely a story of Irish history, language and culture but a global narrative as well. A. Menmuir (2013) suggest that Joyce's nationalist perspective is both local and universal and Joyce's artistic work helps in decoding his views. The novel doesn't only reflect the Irish political scene but also opens up a wider debate; what nationalism means in an increasingly interconnected world. D. Sørensen (1977) is of the view that Joyce's innovative artistic style is deeply rooted in his political views. K. S. Kim (2006) highlights that novel's fragmented language, mythical allusions, and cyclic structure disrupt traditional ideas about a single and unified national identity. The novel's shifting voices and scenes suggest that identity—both personal and national—is ever-changing. It defies the stability that nationalist ideals often seek.

Z. E. Mirze (2005) propose that the novel blends both national and anti-national views. Joyce's aesthetic use of fragmented language and narrative reflects the political fragmentation of the time, as nations and empires grappled with internal divisions and rising tensions. Joyce blends aesthetic innovation with political critique presenting nationalism not as a fixed ideal but as something more dynamic and multidimensional. The experimental language of the novel; the use of multilingual puns and portmanteau words, reflects the challenges and ambiguities opposing the straightforward definition of nationalism and identity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To explore the politico-aesthetic dimensions in *Finnegans Wake*, this study draws on the ideas of influential theorists Jacques Rancière, Walter Benjamin, and Herbert Marcuse, whose works highlight how art, politics, and identity intersect. Each of these thinkers offers a lens that can be used to view how Joyce's writing simultaneously reflects and critiques nationalist ideologies.

Jacques Rancière offers his ideas on aesthetics and politics, particularly his concept of the "distribution of the sensible." According to Rancière, "The distribution of the sensible establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts. This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution." Art can reconfigure the "sensible" order of society—the way we see, hear, and understand our world—by presenting new forms and ideas that disrupt conventional thinking. Rancière suggests that aesthetics is not just about art but is a framework that defines the sensory experience within a community. It influences what is seen, heard, and recognized as valid or legitimate. Joyce's fragmented language and surreal imagery in *Finnegans Wake* is an attempt to redefine what is considered "real" or "possible." This shift in perception disrupts the familiar narratives of nationalism, encouraging readers to rethink the construction of national identity.

Walter Benjamin's ideas on history and storytelling are pivotal for this discussion. Benjamin argued that history is not just a series of events but is shaped by who tells it and how it is told. In his words, [...] They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries[...]. The way history is told and who tells it affects how it is perceived and remembered. Benjamin argues that artists and writers through their writings and artworks re-examines the stories told. Through art, they resist dominant histories and create new ways of understanding the past and present. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce creates a cyclical, mythic structure where historical moments seem to repeat, emphasizing that history is subjective and open to reinterpretation. Benjamin's idea of the "aura" of art—the unique presence of artwork and its position in tradition—echoes with Joyce's use of myth and multilingualism. Joyce disrupts traditional narratives with the use of different languages and myths, creating a narrative that reflects his ambivalent views on Ireland's nationalist past and future.

Herbert Marcuse's ideas on art and liberation provides a framework of Joyce's aesthetic choices. Marcuse believed that art has a transformative power that can transcend the limitations of established social norms, and paints a more freer, a more just picture of the world. In his words, "Art cannot change the world, but it can contribute to changing the consciousness and drives of the men and women who could change the world." He argues that art's role lies in its ability to break away from the prevailing reality and reveal new modes of thinking and feeling that challenge the status quo. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce rejects conventional narrative structures by adopting unconventional stylistic choices. This symbolizes a liberation from rigid ideas of identity and history. Through these experimental forms, Joyce envisions a world where identity, like language, is fluid and open to renewal. This concept opposes nationalism's rigid definitions of cultural and historical identity.

These theorists provide a framework for understanding how *Finnegans Wake* engages with nationalism through its aesthetics. Rancière's focus on the sensory re-ordering, Benjamin's focus on history and myth, and Marcuse's view on the transformative power of art suggest that Joyce's narrative is not rigid opinion of nationalism but as an active tool to reshape and redefine it. By examining *Finnegans Wake* through this politico-aesthetic lens, we can better understand how Joyce uses the novel to critique fixed ideas of identity and history while envisioning alternative ways of being that challenge nationalist ideologies and open up new possibilities for the future.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Section 1

Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* illustrates how literature can critique and complicate nationalist ideals through its innovative forms. The novel's fragmented, multilingual prose, cyclical structure, and mythical foundations engage with the complexities of nationalism, revealing its allure and limitations. Joyce balances national pride and

skepticism, exposing contradictions inherent in nationalist discourse.

A key feature of *Finnegans Wake* is its polyglot style, blending English with elements from Irish, French, German, and more. This reflects the hybrid nature of Irish identity shaped by native and colonial influences. For instance, the phrase “A barnacle goose has alipt a grassy rondel” (p. 14) evokes cultural layering and confusion. Terms like “grassy” connect to the Irish landscape, while “alipt” (suggesting both “leapt” and “alight”) symbolizes movement and transformation, indicating that identity is always in flux.

Joyce’s use of portmanteau words and puns further reflects the tensions within nationalism. The character “HCE” (short for “Here Comes Everybody”) represents a collective identity but shifts throughout the text, preventing any fixed interpretation. This fluidity demonstrates how nationalist ideals can be both unifying and exclusive, striving for common identity while often marginalizing those who do not conform. The phrase “Here Comes Everybody” and HCE’s changing name show that Joyce believes in a shared identity that cannot be pinned down. His reference to “Aire” (air, Ireland, Éire) mixes sounds and ideas, suggesting that identity is as flexible as language, challenging the idea of a fixed Irish identity. Joyce uses language to highlight this uncertainty, encouraging readers to see that national identity is naturally divided and always changing.

Joyce’s experimental use of language combines words from different languages, creating a colorful experience that resists a single linguistic or national identity. This mixed-style shows the blended nature of Irish identity and questions the idea of a “pure” national language. For example, Joyce writes: “Three quarks for Muster Mark! Sure he hasn’t got much of a bark / And sure any he has it’s all beside the mark.” (p. 383) These lines play with sounds and languages. “Quarks” comes from a German phrase, while “Muster Mark” echoes the title of Irish chieftainship. By mixing these language elements, Joyce blurs the lines between different languages and cultures, suggesting that national identity is just as varied and complex as language itself.

Another key element in *Finnegans Wake* is its circular structure, which reflects a mythic, non-linear view of history. The novel starts mid-sentence and appears to end with the beginning of that same sentence, suggesting a continuous cycle of renewal and decay. This circular form critiques nationalist history, which often claims to be a straight path toward progress or independence. Joyce’s view of history challenges this linear narrative, instead suggesting that history repeats itself in cycles rather than moving forward clearly. This idea appears in passages like “the rivering waters of, hitherandthithering waters of. Night!” (p. 216) where language and imagery flow in a circle, mirroring the cycles of rise and fall that define national histories. The “rivering waters” symbolize the ongoing flow of time and history. By mentioning the Irish river Liffey, both literally and symbolically, Joyce connects Ireland’s landscape to recurring history, one that cannot be limited by rigid nationalist ideals.

The novel’s opening and closing lines loop back to each other, emphasizing a circular view of history. The first lines say: “riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs;” The final line states: “A way a lone a last a loved a long the.” This line reflects how history in *Finnegans Wake* is an endless cycle of rebirth and renewal, not simply a linear story. Joyce’s circular structure critiques nationalism’s straightforward narratives, suggesting that history—and therefore national identity—moves in cycles of rise, fall, and renewal, continually reshaping itself.

This circular view also highlights the mixed feelings inherent in nationalism. Nations often start with ideas of freedom and unity but can end up in patterns of exclusion, conflict, or division. By presenting *Finnegans Wake* as a never-ending cycle, Joyce critiques the belief in straightforward national progress, implying that history is filled with recurring tensions and unresolved contradictions. The novel does not completely reject nationalism but sees it as part of a complicated historical process that never fully achieves the unity it promises.

Joyce’s perspective on history as a cycle, rather than a straight line, critiques nationalist stories that often present themselves as progressing toward a final goal. This passage reflects a sense of endless return: “The abnihilisation of the etym by the grisning of the grosning of the grinder of the grunder through the flandr in the flay.” (p. 353)

The language in this text is cyclical and repetitive, with overlapping sounds and words. Terms like “abnihilisation,” which suggests annihilation, and “grisning,” meaning a grinding sound, create an image of historical cycles wearing down identities. This may imply that nationalist projects can lose their meaning over time. Such a cyclical structure challenges the idea that nationalism leads to progress.

Joyce uses myth and archetype in *Finnegans Wake* to explore nationalism. The novel includes many references to Irish mythology, biblical stories, and classical myths. These myths blend, making it impossible to isolate any single one. By drawing on both Irish and global stories, Joyce places Irish identity in a larger human context,

avoiding a purely nationalist perspective. For instance, the character of Finnegan represents both an Irish hero and a universal figure of the "fallen man," who rises and falls continuously, embodying both hope and failure. The following quote highlights this cycle of death and rebirth: "Hohohoho, Mister Finn, you're going to be Mister Finnagain!" (p. 4) This line reflects a resurrection myth (Finnegan rises after his fall) and suggests that identity is an ongoing process. The term "Finnagain" implies the constant cycle of falling and rising, connecting the Irish hero Finn to a universal symbol of human resilience. By reimagining Ireland's mythic heroes within a broader human story, Joyce critiques the use of myth as a nationalist tool. This layering of myth challenges the nationalist focus on a single, unifying origin story. Joyce proposes that both national and personal identity come from many, often conflicting, stories. He often uses mythological figures, both Irish and universal, to create a national identity that feels broad. The character of Finnegan, who experiences both fall and rise, serves as a recurring symbol: "What clashes here of wills gen wonts, oystrygods gaggin fishygods! Brékkek Kékkek Kékkek Kékkek!" (p. 4) In this passage, Joyce uses sounds ("Brékkek Kékkek") to mix Greek and Irish myths, intertwining references to Irish rivers and gods with foreign figures. The text reflects a world of opposing forces where national and anti-national feelings clash continuously. The repeated mythological references emphasize how identity is fluid, with national identity linked to universal symbols.

Another example is Joyce's portrayal of Anna Livia Plurabelle, a river goddess representing the River Liffey and symbolizing Ireland itself: "My leaves have drifted from me. All. But one clings still." (p. 196) Anna Livia, as the River Liffey, represents Ireland's constantly changing identity, similar to the flowing river. Her "leaves" may symbolize parts of Irish identity that are in transition—always changing while keeping a core that remains. This aligns with Joyce's view of Ireland as both grounded in tradition and open to change.

In this passage, Joyce uses the story of Tristan and Isolde, which has Celtic roots but also appeals to a wider audience, to combine myth with cultural mixing. This mix of cultures allows him to challenge the idea that Irish identity must be culturally "pure." He writes: "Thine was the anger of the antitwin on tother's bier; there the thrice-waved laves of Errynne wrestle with the twice-papped Paps of Anu." (p. 55)

In this case, "Errynne" stands for Ireland, and the "Paps of Anu" are two hills associated with the goddess Anu. This connection reinforces that Ireland is linked with other European traditions. By mixing Irish mythology with broader Western myths, Joyce argues that Ireland's national identity is naturally diverse, which goes against the idea of cultural purity.

One interesting aspect of Joyce's view on nationalism is how he shows both pride in Irish culture and skepticism of nationalist ideas. *Finnegans Wake* is deeply tied to the Irish language, landscape, and myths, yet it does not simply celebrate these aspects. For example, the character Shem is both an outsider and an essential part of Irish identity. Through Shem, Joyce explores the complex feelings of belonging and separation that many people in the diaspora experience. Shem, as a writer, constantly rewrites history in a fragmented way, showing Joyce's mixed feelings about national stories. He recognizes the appeal of national identity but resists being limited by it, suggesting that belonging can be inclusive and changeable. "This is the opendoored jail of his moods, adolffoled... swoolth of his dreamium." (p. 184) Shem describes his emotions as an "opendoored jail," showing the limits he feels as both part of and separate from Irish identity. The word "adolffoled" (which hints at both Adolf and folded) may refer to the pressure to follow a dominant ideology. Shem's disjointed language highlights the struggle between personal expression and group identity, emphasizing Joyce's view that true national identity should be open and evolving, rather than a prison of strict beliefs.

Joyce's mixed feelings about nationalism—both pride and skepticism—are clear in his portrayal of Shem and Shaun, who represent different views on identity and creative freedom. Shem, as the artist and outsider, uses language to challenge and reshape identity, while Shaun embodies a more traditional, nationalistic perspective: "Shem is as short for Sham and is pronounced according." (p. 169) Shem's name, a play on "sham," suggests that identity can be artificial or deceptive. He challenges the idea of a fixed or authentic identity. His use of language and art goes against national standards, reflecting Joyce's skepticism of nationalism. In contrast, Shaun, often shown as Shem's more conventional brother, supports societal norms, revealing the conflict between personal identity and collective ideals in nationalist discussions.

Joyce highlights a tension in Irish history with the phrase, "Ireland sober is Ireland stiff" (p. 555). This simple statement suggests that when Ireland's identity is limited by strict nationalist views, it becomes lifeless. Joyce argues that identity loses its vibrancy when trapped in narrow beliefs. By promoting a more flexible view of identity,

Joyce critiques nationalism while celebrating the rich and varied nature of Irish culture.

Another character, Anna Livia Plurabelle, represents the River Liffey, symbolizing Ireland itself. Her speech combines many languages and voices, showcasing the beauty and diversity of Ireland. It also emphasizes that a “pure” Irish identity is impossible. She says, “Of course, if we fall we will, that is, no, we won’t, not ever” (p. 215). Her words capture the conflicting aspects of Irish nationalism, showing both strength and vulnerability, unity and division. The phrase “if we fall. . . we won’t, not ever” highlights the complex feelings of national pride and fragility, revealing how Irish identity is layered and contradictory. Anna Livia’s mix of Irish and foreign sounds supports Joyce’s critique of nationalism as both inclusive and exclusive.

Joyce’s language in *Finnegans Wake* describes a world without borders, where Irish identity is both local and global, challenging the idea of a separate culture: “Yawn’s oscar-segments all over the book of Doublends Jined” (p. 20). “Doublends Jined” blends “Dublin” and “Double Ends Joined,” showing how local and universal ideas connect. This playful use of language reflects Joyce’s view that Dublin (and Ireland) is unique yet part of the larger world. National identity becomes an intertwined concept rather than something singular, challenging attempts to see it as purely separate.

Joyce often questions the traditional nationalist hero by portraying such figures as flawed. HCE, a key character in *Finnegans Wake*, represents both Everyman and an antihero, challenging the glorification of national figures. He states, “I arise now and go about my father’s business. . . And it’s old Dublin doom here for you!” (p. 34). By having HCE “arise” like a biblical figure while confronting “Dublin doom,” Joyce challenges heroic stories. “Father’s business” suggests a noble lineage or purpose, while “Dublin doom” points to an inevitable fate in Ireland. This line shows Joyce’s mixed feelings about nationalism: he acknowledges the call of cultural duty while also questioning the burden of tradition and myth.

Joyce’s writing uses opposites, paradoxes, and contradictions, reflecting the divided identity of Ireland and the complexities of nationalism. For example, in the line, “And they leap so looply, looply, as they link to light” (p. 34), Joyce uses repetition to create a sense of circular movement, which mirrors the repetitive nature of identity and history. The phrase “link to light” suggests hope and unity, while “looply” indicates an endless and fragmented process. This line highlights the difficulty of unifying something as complex as national identity, which is always changing and never complete.

Joyce frequently mixes and changes his language, making any fixed idea of national identity hard to grasp. This fluidity shows his view of Irish identity as complicated and always in motion. For instance, in the line, “Apud the noontide of the rushlit air, like cursing ambassadors from Lagamarsh and flooded with the panthapon of his pseudojaccence...at the mere mention of worts and cells in morimortals” (p. 104), the “cursing ambassadors” seem to represent different aspects of Irish (or national) identity. “Lagamarsh” might refer to a mixed or swampy area. The word “pseudojaccence,” which combines “pseudo” and “adjacent,” suggests something false or indirect. This fragment shows Joyce’s doubt about fixed identities and nationalism’s focus on one-sided stories.

In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce uses broken, multi-language sentences, a circular structure, and mythic elements to critique nationalism. Instead of completely rejecting nationalism, Joyce reveals its complexities, showing how it can bring people together while also leaving others out. Through his unique style, Joyce encourages readers to consider a more flexible and inclusive view of identity that accepts contradictions, similar to the unpredictable story of *Finnegans Wake* itself. By questioning fixed narratives about nationalism, Joyce’s novel offers a vision of identity that is rich, complex, and dynamic, just like the text itself.

SECTION 2

Joyce addresses nationalism in *Finnegans Wake* in a complex way. It is an important part of the novel’s discussion about politics and art. He shows Irish nationalism through broken language, repetitive history, and reinterpreted myths. Instead of simply supporting or opposing nationalism, Joyce honors and questions it, highlighting its beauty, dangers, appeal, and potential for violence. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce uses fragmented language to reflect the divided nature of Irish national identity. The novel is known for its difficult language, including puns in different languages, changing characters, and a confusing story structure. This complexity mirrors the divisions within Irish culture and history. For example: “The fall (bababadalgharaghtakamminarronnkonnbronnntonnerronnntuonnthunntrovarrhounawnskawntooh ooohordenenthurnuk!) of a once wallstrait oldparr is retaled early in bed and later on life down through all christian minstrelsy.” (p. 3) This phrase represents a major fall, similar to the Biblical fall from

grace and the political decline of the Irish hero Charles Stewart Parnell. This single word captures the collapse of history, culture, and identity, suggesting that the nationalist effort can crumble under its myths. Parnell's downfall reflects the ongoing failures of Irish hopes for unity. Joyce uses strong, impactful language to stress the importance of this fall and its effect on national awareness. Joyce shows mixed feelings about nationalism, especially in how he portrays Parnell. His grief over Parnell's decline symbolizes a personal loss and a loss for Ireland, highlighting the limitations of Irish nationalism in a world shaped by outside powers and conservative values. In the lines, "not yet, though venissoon after, had a kidscad buttended a bland old Isaac..." (p. 3), Joyce both mourns and ridicules Parnell's fall, mixing nostalgia with humor. His play on Parnell's childhood nickname "Butthead" and the Biblical story of Isaac connects personal history with national myths, showing that even heroes face cycles of betrayal and loss. This complexity reveals that while Joyce respects Parnell's goals, he doubts the hero-worship that nationalism encourages, suggesting that nationalism must continually face its beliefs and failures. Joyce's use of cycles in history in *Finnegans Wake* is another way he critiques nationalism. The novel's structure isn't linear; events and characters repeat and change, suggesting a cyclical view of history. This approach challenges the nationalist idea of a single, clear historical story. For Joyce, history is not a simple journey toward a glorious national future, but a loop that endlessly retells the same stories of rise, fall, and renewal. This cyclical structure relates to Walter Benjamin's idea that history is broken and not continuous. By showing Parnell's fall as part of a larger myth, Joyce suggests that the national pride in a consistent and unbroken past is actually a myth. In phrases like, "A scarlet pimparnell now mules the mound where anciently first murders were wanted to take root" (p. 564), he connects Parnell's disgrace with the fading hopes of the Irish people, indicating that the pattern of striving for success only to face ruin is part of human experience. Joyce places Irish nationalism within a sad cycle of hope followed by failure. By tying Parnell's downfall to old acts of violence and moral judgment, he criticizes the idea of the nationalist hero, showing it as part of an ongoing cycle of struggle, fall, and rebirth. Joyce argues that nationalism is not just a historical force but a recurring theme in civilization—reflecting human hopes and failures. Joyce uses historical figures like Parnell to explain the complicated nature of Irish nationalism and to critique broader identity politics. Parnell appears as a tragic character, disgraced yet still a symbol of Ireland's potential. By depicting Parnell's downfall as a near-ritual event, Joyce captures the feelings of betrayal and martyrdom surrounding him while questioning the reliability of heroes and their stories. "Bygmester Finnegan, of the Stuttering Hand, freemen's mau rer, lived in the broadest way immarginable in his rushlit toofar back for messuages before joshuan judges had given us numbers..." (p. 4). This line highlights the burden of Parnell's trial, connecting his disgrace to ancient tales of judgment and sacrifice. Joyce presents Parnell's life as more than just political; it captures the emotional and spiritual struggles of a nation wrestling with its own identity. "A pause. Their orison arises misquwhite as Osman glory, ebbing wasteward, leaves to the soul of light its fading silence (allah- lah lahlah lah!), a turquewashed sky" (p. 235). In this passage, Joyce combines Ottoman and Christian imagery to critique strict nationalist narratives, instead showing a mix of cultures that challenges the idea of a singular national identity. This "wasting" of Parnell, represented by the "wasteward" ebb, reflects the disillusionment after his fall and the diminishing idealism within the nationalist movement. Joyce turns the form of the novel into a political statement through his artistic choices. The fragmented language and changing identities make it hard for readers to find a single meaning. It mirrors the instability of nationalism. Joyce's unique use of language and references questions the possibility of a unified, "authentic" national identity. This connects with Jacques Rancière's idea that art challenges how we see, speak, and feel in society. *Finnegans Wake* accomplishes this by turning language into a tool for play, resistance, and chaos. In his view of history, Joyce suggests that nationalism is not an end goal but part of an ongoing struggle within society, where the promise of unity coexists with division. This perspective aligns with Herbert Marcuse's ideas of artistic negation and freedom. Joyce disrupts the nationalist idea of a complete or singular Irish identity by creating a novel that does not conclude clearly. Instead, he invites readers to view nationalism as both a goal and a limitation. It is something that brings people together but also divides and oppresses. Joyce often mocks the political language of nationalism, as in, "Circumspection, Our Allies the Hills, Are. Parnellites Just towards Henry Tudor?" (p. 307). Here, he mixes Irish nationalist feelings with references to English history, highlighting the complexity of Irish-British relations. By connecting the Parnellites with British historical figures, Joyce reveals contradictions within nationalism and the irony of seeking Irish independence using British legal and cultural systems. In another passage, he writes, "In yonder valley, too, stays mountain sprite. Any pretty dears are to be caught inside but it is a bad pities of the plain" (p. 564). This description of Ireland's idealized landscape and its "mountain sprite" captures

the romantic nationalism that often praises the rural Irish scenery. Yet the “bad pities of the plain” challenges this ideal, reminding readers of the difficulties the Irish people face. And also suggests skepticism toward the idealized rural nationalism often celebrated by Irish revivalists. Joyce critiques nationalism by frequently referencing battles and ancient Irish myths. For example, he writes, “The coffin, a triumph of confectionery, well worth a hundred pounds a cubic foot” (p. 201). This line contrasts the grandeur of nationalism with its futility. This dark humor challenges the devotion given to national heroes and their sacrifices, suggesting these acts may only serve the nationalist narrative. In another instance, Joyce says, “And the king said to him... ‘Remember! Remember! A never forget. You know who you remember.’” (p. 65). Here, he mocks the status of memory and legacy in nationalist stories. By using the king’s command to “remember,” he shows how oppressive historical remembrance can be in nationalist thought. This connects to Ireland’s frequent calls to remember colonial oppression, a topic Joyce addresses with both respect and irony. The line “A charmer under The New Bloomfield’s law. [He] tried to give it [the nation] a new name. . . but the laws against the memory of it held him back” (p. 47) references key figures like Parnell, who aimed to redefine Irish identity. Joyce questions the limits imposed by historical memory and national law, suggesting that a nation tightly bound to its past may struggle to innovate or progress. This reflects his cyclical view of history, where new heroes arise but remain constrained by earlier legacies. Furthermore, “His howd felt heavy, his howd felt big, at the change of the key that was sent him” (p. 281) points to the burdens individuals face due to religious and national expectations. The “key” symbolizes new responsibilities that can be hard to manage, similar to the weight of Irish Catholic identity. Joyce blends personal and community struggles, showing his mixed feelings about religion’s role in Irish identity within nationalism. In “This is the house that Jack built. This is the man that broke the bank. This is the country that was splintered. This is the lass that made it whole again” (p. 157), Joyce combines sexual and political imagery, connecting national struggles to personal conflicts. He links gender, authority, and nationhood in cycles that suggest both renewal and decay, highlighting that national conflicts impact everyday lives.

The line “That dream he was part in!” (p. 92) expresses disillusionment with the ideal of an independent and united Ireland. This line hints at the limitations of national goals, which can seem appealing but are often hard to achieve. Joyce’s ironic tone critiques the idealism in nationalism, reminding readers of its fragile and fleeting nature.

Overall, Joyce reflects on nationalism as a complex idea. He explores Irish history and figures like Parnell. He criticizes nationalism’s limitations while recognizing its emotional and cultural importance. In *Finnegans Wake*, nationalism mirrors history: it is cyclical, broken, and always changing. The novel critiques nationalist ideas. It reveals its conflicts and contradictions while expressing the human desire for connection and identity.

In this way, *Finnegans Wake* does not completely dismiss nationalism; rather, it questions its beliefs and shows it as an inspiring force that can also lead to conflict and disappointment. This complexity encourages readers to rethink nationalism’s role in the bigger struggles of history, power, and identity. It reflects Joyce’s belief in art as a way to explore and redefine political and cultural boundaries.

CONCLUSION

Finnegans Wake is James Joyce’s deep exploration of how national identity, history, and personal memory connect and change. Joyce uses complex language and rich symbolism to challenge readers to rethink the fixed stories that nationalism often tells. His focus is on Irish nationalism.

The novel includes many prideful references to Irish history, language, and culture. However, Joyce also points out the ironies and limitations of creating a single national identity. He shows that while Ireland’s nationalist history can bring pride, it can also be restrictive. Holding too tightly to nationalist ideals may overgeneralize or erase the diversity of individual and collective identities.

Joyce’s portrayal of historical figures, like the ill-fated Charles Stewart Parnell, shows his understanding of the tragic patterns in nationalism. These figures symbolize the complex struggles and heartaches of the Irish nationalist cause. Their stories reflect how the past influences the present while leaving unresolved tensions. Joyce reminds us that the glory of nationalist ideals often comes with sacrifice and disappointment. Joyce presents history as a cycle rather than a straight line through the stories these figures and events. He suggests that the impact of past on identity is both inevitable and open to new interpretations.

Joyce’s language also critiques nationalism. His fragmented, multilingual writing reflects a world where

identities and histories blend rather than stand alone. This style resists the idea of a “pure” or “authentic” identity that nationalism often seeks. Instead, Joyce shows identity as a mix of influences, languages, and histories that do not fit traditional classifications. Thus, his work offers a modern take on nationalism, questioning rigid boundaries while embracing cultural exchange. By referencing thinkers like Rancière, Benjamin, and Marcuse, we see how Joyce’s unique form—its broken grammar, circular storytelling, and mix of myth and reality—questions traditional nationalism, suggesting that cultural identity can never be precisely defined but is always changing.

In the end, *Finnegans Wake* critiques nationalist ideas that try to impose a single story on history and identity. Joyce’s reluctance to approve a fixed idea of Irishness highlights his belief in the richness of a culture that can hold contradictions and embrace change. He neither romanticizes nationalism nor completely condemns it. Instead, he places it in a broader cycle of human experience, where history and identity are always shifting. His work suggests that the future of national identity relies on openness to hybrid identities and the ability to let go of rigid images of the past.

Through *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce encourages readers to view both personal and national identities as stories that are never truly finished and always open to new interpretations. The novel offers a modern perspective that embraces complexity and uncertainty as vital aspects of art, politics, and human experience. By questioning the foundations of nationalism, Joyce gives us a powerful reminder that the identities we create are strong because they are flexible, evolving, and capable of crossing the limits of history and politics.

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