

## The Battle of the Little Bighorn in *Finnegans Wake*

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This article shows that underlying the Museyroom passage of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is an account of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Joyce's passage touches on what motivated the battle, its Irish participants, its commanders, Custer's disagreements with his Crow scouts, Sitting Bull's prediction of Custer's failure, Custer's (purely fanciful) joking reply to Sitting Bull's prediction, Custer's home near Bismarck, ND, and his signature song. Other passages scattered throughout *Finnegans Wake* treat of casualties, a straggler, Custer's trumpeter, Custer's from-the-grave denunciations of his subordinates, and the burial of the dead. The famous "Three quarks for Muster Mark!" passage describes the desolation of Last Stand Hill. And Joyce's famous final paragraph contains an account of the legend of the narrow escape of Custer's Crow scout Ashishishe, who, at the battle's close, hides in the carcass of a horse before making his escape downriver. A brief look at Joyce's choice of names closes out the article.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This article shows that James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* [22] gives an account of the Battle of the Little Bighorn and its aftermath. The famous "Three quarks for Muster Mark!" passage describes the desolation of Last Stand Hill. The book's ending describes the legend of the narrow escape of the Crow scout Ashishishe, who, at the battle's close, hides in the carcass of a horse, emerges before daylight, and enters the Little Bighorn River to float downstream. The Museyroom passage provides a detailed description of a photograph of Custer and seven of his men, all of whom are killed in the battle. This same passage also touches on the base motives behind the battle, its commanders, its Irish participants, Custer's disagreements with his Crow scouts, Sitting Bull's prediction of the battle's outcome, and Custer's (purely fanciful) joking reply to Sitting Bull's prediction. Moreover, as will be discussed in Sec. XII, references to Custer's home near Bismarck, ND and his signature song "The Girl I left behind Me" appear in the same sentence at (FW 9.32–9.33):

This is the bissmark of the marathon merry of the jinnies they left behind them.

Other passages describe the burial of the dead and Custer's from-the-grave expressions of disgust for his subordinates. A brief look at Joyce's choice of names closes out the article.

Note: The reader should be forewarned that no attempt will be made to duplicate standard reference works such as McHugh's *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* [28]. The reader is expected to know these annotations.

## II. IRISHMEN AT THE LITTLE BIGHORN

At first sight nothing could be more preposterous than to say that *Finnegans Wake* describes the Battle of the Little Bighorn. What does this battle have to do with the Irish? But, in fact, the Battle of the Little Bighorn was in some respects an Irish immigrant's battle, and the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry—nicknamed "The Garryowen" after the Irish tune—was in some ways an "Irish regiment" [27, p. 74]. This is certainly reflected in the casualty list. Among the fatalities we find these three alphabetically consecutive entries [41, pp. 55–56]:

- Pvt. Patrick *Kelly*, born in 1841 in County Mayo.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Michael *Kenny*, born in 1849 in Galway.
- Capt. Myles Walter *Keogh*, born in 1840 in County Carlow.

Moreover, we find the above last names "buried together" at (FW 193.24):

And Kelly, Kenny and Keogh are up up and in arms.

It is as if these names were cut and pasted by Joyce into *Finnegans Wake* from the Little Bighorn casualty list. Moreover, Keogh's grand-niece, Margaret, provides a link between the Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Easter Rising of 1916. She was killed while rescuing an Easter Rising Volunteer [41, p. 56].

## III. GEORGE ARMSTRONG CUSTER

Joyce's Museyroom passage (FW 8.9–10.23) begins by describing a man consistent with George Armstrong Custer (FW 8.17–8.21):

This is the big Sraughter Willingdone, grand and magentic in his goldtin spurs and his ironed dux and his quarterbrass woodyshoes and his magnate's gharters and his bangkok's best and goliar's goloshes and his pulluponeasyan wartrews.

Joyce's description employs the phrase "the big Sraughter Willingdone," which may be read as "the big slaughter *willingly done*." Joyce describes a man who is "magentic," whereas Custer had a florid (i.e., magenta) complexion [12, p. 118] and was nicknamed "Red Nose" by the Cheyenne [41, p. 30]. And our man wears "goldtin spurs," whereas Custer wore gold mounted spurs [18, p. 736]. Moreover, "goldtin" hints at Medal of Honor winner Theodore W. Goldin, who survived the Little Bighorn as part of Reno's detachment [41, pp. 43–44]. Our man wears "magnate's gharters" and his "bangkok's best," whereas Custer *might* have worn suspenders (a *cavalrymen's* garters) and wore a "broad-brimmed plantation straw hat" into a fight at The Battle of Aldie, Virginia in 1863 [30, p. 448]. As for "pulluponeasyan wartrews," these may refer to Custer's pull-up-on-pony-easy-an war trousers. And "ironed dux" reminds us that Custer was known as "Iron Butt" [12, p. 184]. Moreover, according to *Merriam-Webster*, Custer was (loosely speaking) a dux: that is, a military commander stationed in a (Roman) province [42].

#### IV. CUSTER’S FLAG

At (FW 8.11–8.12) we also read:

This is the flag of the Prooshious, the Cap and Soracer.

Of course, the cavalymen of the 7<sup>th</sup> wore blue uniforms [12, p. 2], which fits Prussian (“Prooshious”) blue. But did Custer’s regiment really fight under a flag featuring a cup and saucer? Below, in Fig. 1, is the arrangement of most of the stars on the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry’s guidon [26].

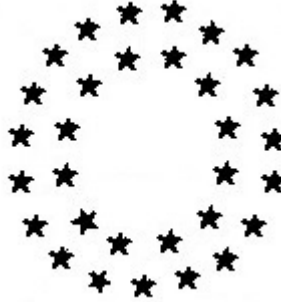


FIG. 1: Arrangement of the “cup and saucer” circles of stars on Custer’s Little Bighorn guidon. His actual guidon had four additional stars at the corners of the imaginary square the circles occupy.

Does not its inner and outer circles of stars resemble a cup and saucer *viewed from the top*?

#### V. CUSTER’S LIVING DETACHMENT

Even better evidence is provided by (FW 8.21–8.24), which describes eight of those killed in the battle:

This is the three lipoleum boyne grouching down in the living detch. This is an inimyskilling inglis, this is a scotcher grey, this is a davy, stooping.

What we see in the above passage *in plain sight* is a reference to “lipoleum boyne,” suggesting Napoleon Bonaparte on the one hand, and The Battle of the Boyne (1690) on the other. We also see words such as “inimyskilling,” “inglis,” and “scotcher grey,” which bear no obvious relation to the men who fought at the Little Bighorn, but do suggest the Protestant *Inniskilling* regiment and the Royal *Scots Greys*. But with Joyce one must not be too hasty in drawing conclusions. Joyce is tricky. Important meanings may lie buried and need to be dug out, and one narrative may overlay and obscure another.

In fact this passage unambiguously refers to George Armstrong Custer, who was killed while commanding the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry at the Battle of the Little Bighorn (1876), as well as seven others who were killed with him. We know this because the above passage describes a specific photograph, taken in 1875, the year before the battle. See Fig. 2. Even a quick glance at the photograph reveals two things: Of the two men standing at the photo’s center, one is *stooping* and the other, arms crossed and head turned away, appears *grouchy*. As the stooping man is leaning with his hand and elbow against the chair in front of him we may infer he is unsteady on his feet (perhaps from too much “stouping” — drinking from a stoup of wine). Be that as it may, the subjects of this photo are identified in *Custer’s Luck*, by Edgar Irving Stewart [37, p. 81]. From this source we can identify the “davy, stooping” as Capt. Myles Walter Keogh and the “grouching” man as Gen. George Armstrong Custer. Custer once said of Keogh, “I do think him rather absurd, but would rather have him stationed near us than many others.” Custer’s wife — on whose chair Keogh is steadying himself — described Keogh as a “drunken sot” [41, p. 56].

In *Custer’s Luck* we are informed that eight of the men in the photo were killed at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. We have just identified two. This source lists the remaining six, who are from left to right, Lt. James Calhoun, Boston Custer, Dr. Lord, Lt. W. W. Cooke, “Tom” Custer, and Lt. Algernon Smith. The easiest to identify are “the three lipoleum boyne grouching,” which is to say “the three boys crouching.” They are Boston Custer (crouching, fourth from the left), W. W. Cooke (crouching, wearing white, and sporting muttonchop whiskers, sixth from the



FIG. 2: Hunting and camping party of Custer and invited guests. Fort A. Lincoln on the Little Heart River, Dak. Terr., 1875. From left to right those in the photo are: **Lt. James Calhoun**, M. Swett, Capt. Stephen Baker, **Boston Custer**, Lt. W. S. Edgerly, Miss Watson, **Capt. Myles W. Keogh**, Mrs. James Calhoun, Mrs. George A. Custer, **General George A. Custer**, Dr. H. O. Paulding, Mrs. E. A. Smith, **Dr. G. E. Lord**, Capt. T. B. Weir, **Lt. W. W. Cooke**, Lt. R. E. Thompson, The Misses Wadsworth, **Capt. Thomas W. Custer**, **Lt. Algernon E. Smith**. In boldface are the names of the eight people who were killed at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. *Photo courtesy of National Archives. National Archives Identifier: 530885.* (Background information for this photo is also available from the William Henry Jackson papers; L. Tom Perry Special Collections; Photograph Archives; Brigham Young University; Provo, Utah [4]. Photographer: William Henry Jackson.)

right), and Thomas Custer (crouching, almost hidden, and second from the right). They are the three youngest of those killed: “the three lipoleum boyne grouching down in the living *detch*,” which is to say “the living *detachment*.”

The remaining three soldiers are less easily identified, as their nationalities are unknown to the author. Lt. Algernon Smith (lounging on the far right) is likely the “scotcher grey” as he commanded Company E which rode only gray horses [15, p. 163]. And Dr. G. E. Lord (standing to Custer’s left with his right arm extended) is likely the “inglis” given the doctor’s English last name. By a process of elimination this leaves “inimyskilling” as Lt. James Calhoun (lounging on the far left and wearing suspenders).

## VI. THE 7<sup>TH</sup> CAVALRY COMMANDERS

There follows at (FW 8.24–8.27):

This is the bog lipoleum mordering the lipoleum beg. A Gallawghurs argaumunt. This is the petty lipoleum boy that was nayther bag nor bug. Assaye, assaye! Touchole Fitz Tuomush. Dirty MacDyke. And Hairy O’Hurry.

In the above passage we see “Touchole Fitz Tuomush,” “Dirty MacDyke,” and “Hairy O’Hurry.” Custer’s famous “reddish gold curls” make him an obvious choice for “Hairy” [12, p. 113]. Custer’s second and third in command were Maj. Marcus Reno and Capt. Frederick Benteen, respectively. Benteen’s first name of Frederick suggests “Fritz,” and hence “Fitz,” whereas Reno’s first name of “Marcus” suggests “Mac.” That Marcus Reno later confessed to being a peeping tom lends further support to the idea of Reno as “Dirty MacDyke” [12, pp. 44–46]. But what could “Touchole Fitz *Tuomush*” refer to? Perhaps it refers to Benteen’s having *too much* ammunition while the others had too little? As the battle unfolded it was Benteen who had the greatest access to the pack train.

So we can now infer that “bog lipoleum mordering the lipoleum beg” is *big Napoleon Custer mordering little Napoleon Reno*, where “mordering” = M[arcus] + ordering. That Custer was tall is clear: five foot ten at age seventeen [38, p. 3]; and Reno was known to be short [41, p. 80]. This leaves “the petty lipoleum boy that was nayther bag nor bug,” who presumably is Benteen.

The phrase “Assaye, assaye!” suggests the Dakota Sioux words “aś’a” meaning “to shout at” and “aśa” meaning “to become reddish” [34, p. 49]. Note that “ś is an aspirated *s*, having the sound *sh*, as in *shine*” [34, p. 2].

This leads us to the phrase “Gallaghurs argaumunt.” Because the men of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry were attacking not merely Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, but also Gall, an obvious interpretation suggests itself. The morning of the battle Custer and his scouts met at an elevation known as the Crow’s Nest. A snappish Custer had an argument with his Crow scouts over whether the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry had been detected (he thought not) and the number of warriors they faced (he thought fewer). Charges of cowardice were bandied about. Above, the phrase “Gallaghurs argaumunt” appears to combine “Gall” + “augury” + “argument.” Expecting a small enough encampment Custer planned to divide his command and make a three-pronged attack, with the three wings commanded by Reno, Benteen, and himself [33, pp. 145–155]. When Benteen warned against dividing the regiment in the face of a potentially large encampment, Custer curtly replied, “You have your orders” [33, p. 153].

## VII. THE NATIVE AMERICAN ENCAMPMENT

It is possible to interpret most of Joyce’s remaining Museyroom text as relating to the fight at the Little Bighorn River. For example, at (FW 8.28–8.33) we find (italics added, with the author’s clarifications in brackets):

This is *Mont Tivel* [Montana Devil, which is to say the Dantesque fumeroles of Yellowstone], this is *Mont Tipsey* [Devil’s Monument or Teapot Dome], this is the *Grand Mons Injun* [Grand Teton Mountains]. This is the *crimealine of the alps* [line of crinoline-like tepees] *hooping* [whooping] to *sheltershock* [bunkerschlacht] the *three lipoleums* [Custer, Reno, and Benteen]. This is the *jinnies* [warriors] with their *legahorns* [Little and Big Horn Rivers] *feinting* [fainting] to read in their *handmade’s* [hajmde] book of *strategy* [strategy + strale] while making their war *undisides* [not this side] the *Willingdone* [Custer].

Above, “Mont” is an abbreviation for “Montana” (the state in which the battle took place), and “Mont” is “Mountain” in French. The word “bunkerschlacht” is German for “Bunker battle,” or a Battle of Bunker Hill. And “fainting” signifies the vision quest of Sitting Bull that incorporated an image of soldiers falling from the sky like grasshoppers. Sitting Bull either fell into a trance or literally fainted during his vision quest [12, p. 267]. And “handmade” in Dakota Sioux suggests “hajmde,” meaning “to fast and dream, to have intercourse with the spiritual world,” according to Stephen Return Riggs’ *A Dakota-English Dictionary* [34, p. 124]. And “strategy” combines the words “strategy” and “strale,” the Italian word for arrow. And “undisides” signifies that the battle began with the defeat of Reno, with Custer *on the opposite side* (not this side) of the river.

The reader interested in just why the Native American encampment was so large should consider that it was comprised of multiple tribes, including a large number of Teton Sioux and Cheyenne, and some Arapaho and Santee Sioux [33, pp. 317–320].

## VIII. THE UNITED STATES’ MOTIVES

At (FW 8.33–8.36) we find (italics added, with the author’s clarifications in brackets):

The *jinnies* [Sioux and Cheyenne warriors] is a *cooin her hand* [Bud *Counihan*] and the jinnies is a ravin *her hair* [Denis *Hehir*] and the *Willingdone* [Custer] *git the band up* [sounds officers’ call]. This is big *Willingdone* mormorial *tallowscoop* [telescope] *Wounderworker* [Wovoka] *obsides* [“observation” + “-cide”] on the flanks of the jinnies.

Firstly, note that cartoonist Bud *Counihan* introduced the comic strip character *The Little Napoleon* in the 1920s [39].

## REGINA v. HEHIR.

(Queen's Bench Division, 1895. [1895] 2 Ir. R. 709.)

Denis Hehir was indicted for the larceny of a £10 note, of the goods and chattels of one John Leech. It appears from the evidence that this £10 note was handed by Leech to Hehir, in part payment of a sum of £2. 8s. 9d. due by the former to the latter, and that, at the time when it was so handed, both Leech and Hehir believed it to be a £1 note. It further appears that, after the lapse of a substantial period of time, Hehir became aware that the note was one for £10, whereupon, in the words of the case, "he fraudulently and without color of right intended to convert the said note to his own use, and to permanently deprive the said John Leech thereof, and that to effectuate such intention the said prisoner shortly afterwards changed the said note and disposed of the proceeds thereof."

The case was left by the Lord Chief Baron to the jury (who found the prisoner guilty), in order to obtain an authoritative decision up-

FIG. 3: Above is the case against Denis Hehir, found guilty of larceny after he was accidentally overpaid, taken from *Cases On Criminal Law Selected from Decisions of English and American Courts*, 1908 [29, pp. 453–454]. Joyce's analogy with the Sioux being given the Black Hills *with their as-yet-undiscovered gold deposits* is a close one: The Sioux were also, in effect, "found guilty of overcompensation." Custer's discovery of gold in the Black Hills led initially to demands that the Sioux sell their land for less than it was worth. Ultimately, it led to attacks on those Sioux who most opposed selling. The attack that became the Battle of the Little Bighorn was one of these [15, pp. 31–37]. "Over the next hundred years, more gold would be extracted from a single mine in the Black Hills . . . than from any other mine in the continental United States" [33, p. 4].

Secondly, note that in the late 1800s a Denis *Hehir* received a £10 note as part of his wages, when a £1 note was intended. His employer soon recognized the error and demanded return of the original £10 note. Hehir explained that he no longer had it. He was then charged with larceny and found guilty. In Fig. 3 we see a snippet of a contemporaneous legal account of the case. Its caption relates the case of *Regina v. Hehir* to the demonization of the Sioux that followed discovery of gold on Sioux land. Importantly, legal commentary on the case from the above source also mentions a hypothetical "bank note indorsed by the Duke of Wellington. . ." In this way Joyce references both Napoleon *and* Wellington in the phrase "cooin her hand and the jinnies is a ravin her hair." This juxtaposition confirms that the Hehir reference is not spurious.

From James Donovan's *A Terrible Glory* we learn that Custer had his trumpeter sound officers' call as they approached the Little Big Horn with its large number of tepees [15, p. 208]:

Custer immediately had his trumpeter blow a soft officers' call, the first trumpet notes since they had left the Yellowstone three days earlier. . . Custer told the officers gathered about him that the scouts had discovered a large village about fifteen miles away on the lower reaches of the Little Bighorn. He had not personally seen the camp, he said, but Boyer and the Indian scouts had.

Custer's officers' call is his "gitting the band up." Custer *utterly failed* to see the enormous village even with field glasses (a "tallowscoop"), however he had seen dust from a pony herd [15, p. 207]. The word "mormorial" combines "memorial" with the legend of "Old Morm," a fisherman who caught a fish much larger than expected [21, p. 96] (author's clarification in brackets):

One day *he* [Old Morm] was sitting on a rock, fishing with one of the jawbones, when he hooked something extraordinarily heavy—whales were nothing to him. However, this resisted all his endeavours, and at length he was obliged to resort to other means to raise the monster. He caught a dove, and tying the line to its leg, he filled it with his spirit, and commanded it to fly upwards. It did so, and without the least difficulty New Zealand came to light!

Custer was about to "reel in" a far larger and angrier fish than *he* expected. In Joyce's passage "obsides" combines the abbreviation for "observation" ("obs") and the suffix "-cide" meaning "kill." Tragically, Reno's attack began with the killing of Gall's two wives and three children [15, p. 233], [33, p. 170]. The word "Wounderworker" perhaps relates to Wovoka, the peaceful Paiute prophet who forecast a resurgence of Native American culture [15, p. 385]. His advocacy of the Ghost Dance was a factor leading to the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890, which also involved the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and the loss of life of Native American women and children [15, pp. 385–393].

## IX. WARRIORS IN THIN RED LINES

At (FW 9.2–9.8) we find (*italics added*, with the author’s clarifications in brackets):

This is the *jinnies*’ [warriors] *hastings* [hasty] dispatch for to *irrigate* [irritate] the *Willingdone* [Custer]. Dispatch in thin red lines [of warriors] cross the *shortfront* [short front] of *me Belchum* [Reno]. *Yaw, yaw, yaw!* [Read, read, read!] Leaper Orthor. Fear siecken! Fieldgaze thy tiny frow. Hugacting. *Nap* [Flee]. That was the *tictacs* [tactics] of the *jinnies* [Sioux] for to fontannoy the *Willingdone* [Custer]. *Shee, shee, shee!* [She-Bear, She-Bear, She-Bear!] The *jinnies* is *jillous* [ravine] *agincourting* [surrounding and preparing to fire arrows at] all the lipoleums.

The dispatch to Custer begins with “Yaw, yaw, yaw!” The word “yawa” in Dakota Sioux means “to read” [34, p. 617]. A “Leaper Orthor” is a grasshopper (an *orthogonal*, or vertical, leaper). Just prior to the battle Sitting Bull had his vision of soldiers falling from the sky like “grasshoppers,” as mentioned earlier.

Now consider “Fear siecken!” If “Fear” is taken to mean “Vier” (“four” in German) and “siecken” is taken to mean “sieben” (“seven” in German), we have “Four seven!” The battle took place about a week before the nation’s centennial, which in European format is 4/7/1876. Another plausible interpretation is “Fear seven!” given that a “seven-person band” led by Black Bear was observed by Custer’s men just prior to the battle [33, pp. 145, 320]. Or, if you like, “Fear 7<sup>th</sup>!” or “Fear sicken!” or perhaps “Wir siegen!” meaning “We will win!” in German.

Some accounts say that Custer had a Native American wife named Me-o-tzi (or Mo-nah-se-tah). Joseph White Cow Bull, present at the battle, claimed that Me-o-tzi was in among the tepees that Custer attacked [12, pp. 417–418], [33, pp. 59, 403]. This suggests that “Fieldgaze thy tiny frow” may be interpreted as “Field glasses on thy tiny wife” (“frau” meaning “wife” in German).

Custer antagonist Ulysses S. Grant was born Hiram Ulysses Grant, so that “Hugacting” suggests “H. U. G. acting.” Custer earned Grant’s enmity by testifying before Congress about corruption in Grant’s War Department, even as planning of the campaign against the Sioux went forward [33, pp. 4–5]. And “napa” in Dakota Sioux means “to run away, flee,” which explains “Nap” [34, p. 330].

Shortly after sighting the “seven-person band” the scouts of 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry found an abandoned encampment. Inside a teepee decorated with charcoal drawings [33, p. 157] was the corpse of the recently deceased Sans Arc, Old She-Bear, which explains “Shee, shee, shee!” [12, pp. 274–275]. With regard to “jillous,” *Merriam-Webster* says that “gill” is a “steep-sided rocky valley” or a “1/4 imperial pint” [42]. Initially, about five hundred warriors charged through a valley and were repulsed. Reinforced, they swarmed around the tipping Reno’s valley position [33, pp. 179–180]. Of course, “agincourting” suggests the Battle of Agincourt and its bows and arrows.

At (FW 9.13) we hear Custer’s rejoinder to the dispatch:

Cherry jinnies. Figtreeyou!

which (more or less) means “Red warriors. Fig tree, you! You will be eaten by grasshoppers!”

But Joyce also appears to reference the story of St. Francis of Assisi and the grasshopper on the fig tree. As told by Abbé Léon Le Monnier in his *History of S. Francis of Assisi* [23, p. 438]:

Here is another story showing how the wild things grew tame in the society of the Saint. A grasshopper took up its abode on a fig-tree, near his cell, at the Portiuncula. It chirped as all grasshoppers do chirp. One day the Saint held out his hand to it and said, “Sister grasshopper, come to me.” It obeyed and jumped on to his hand. “Sing, sister grasshopper,” said Francis, “praise the Lord with thy jubilant cry.” It began and continued its jubilant cry till Francis told it was a good grasshopper, then it went back to its fig-tree. For a whole week the Saint, who had found out its hiding-place, visited it every day. He stroked it gently with his finger and said, “Sing,” and it sang. At last he said to his companions: “Let us send away our sister the grasshopper, it has rejoiced us long enough with its songs, we might end by becoming vain of it.” The grasshopper departed, “as a good obedient daughter,” and was not seen again.

## X. RENO FOREMOST

At (FW 9.15–9.20) we find (*italics added*, with the author’s clarifications in brackets):

This is *me Belchum* [Reno] in his twelvemile *cowchooks* [rubber boots], *weet, tweet* [a wee treat, or sip] and stampforth foremost, footing [to] the camp for the *jinnies* [Sioux and Cheyenne]. Drink a sip, drankasup, for *he’s as sooner* [he’d no sooner] buy a guinness than he’d *stale* [steal] store stout. [*The implication is that Reno preferred hard liquor to stout.*] This is Rooshious balls. This is a trinch. This is mistletropes. This is Canon Futter with the popynose. After his hundred days’ indulgence.



In the above text “me Belchum” is Reno, who followed Custer’s orders to lead the advance [33, p. 154]. He behaved memorably by tipping frequently from a flask of whiskey before and during the ensuing battle. Donovan’s *A Terrible Glory* devotes a two-and-half-page footnote in small print to Reno and his flask [15, pp. 460–462]. The word “cow-chooks” suggests “caoutchouc,” meaning rubber, or rubber *boots* [42]. The phrase “Rooshious balls” likely refers to “Rushing Bulls.” Custer’s interpreter Fred Gerard was nicknamed “Fast Bull,” and “Bull” was part of the name of several of Custer’s scouts, including Bob Tailed Bull, who was killed in the battle [33, pp. 158, 198]. See Sec. XIX for why “a ttrinch” likely refers to Custer, *a cut-throat finch*. The word “mistlethropes” likely refers to “mistle thrush,” a bird whose gray-brown back matches the gray horses of Company E, led by Lt. Algernon Smith [43, p. 94], [15, p. 163]. And “Canon Futter with the popynose” clearly references the “drunken sot,” Myles Keough, who at the age of twenty left Ireland to become cannon fodder in the army of Pope Pius IX [33, p. 128].

## XI. CUSTER’S ATTACK

At (FW 9.24–9.26) we find (italics added):

This is *camelry*, this is *floodens*, this is the *solphereens in action*, this is their *mobbily*, this is *panickburns*.  
Almeidagad! *Arthiz* too loose!

where “Arthiz” likely derives from Custer’s nickname of “Autie” [15, p. 39]. These lines refer to Custer’s cavalry (“camelry”) flooding (“floodens”) toward the Little Bighorn from the north, causing mob-like (“mobbily”) panic (“panickburns”) in among the tepees, prompting action from Crazy Horse, Gall, and other leaders, sovereigns in action (“solphereens in action”).

In addition to these battle references, the above text has connections to *Hamlet*. Consider the use of “camel” in this quote from *Hamlet* 3.2.404–407 [36] (italics added):

Polonius. My Lord, the Queen would speak with you, and presently.  
Hamlet. Do you see yonder cloud that’s almost in shape of a *camel*?

Moreover, in *Hamlet* 1.5.66–80 poison “floods into” a “sovereign’s” ears; and in *Hamlet* 2.2.527–529 there is a “moblèd” queen. Furthermore, in *Hamlet* 1.5.81–87 the ghost of King Hamlet is in a “panic” about “burning” in purgatory.

Here is how the above scene continues at *Hamlet* 3.2.408–415 (underlining added):

Polonius. By th’ mass, and ’tis like a camel indeed.  
Hamlet. Methinks it is like a weasel.  
Polonius. It is backed like a weasel.  
Hamlet. Or like a whale.  
Polonius. Very like a whale.  
Hamlet. Then will I come to my mother by and by. <sup>⌈</sup>*Aside.*<sup>⌋</sup> They fool me to the top of my bent. — I will come by and by.

Notice the word “bent”: As we shall see, Capt. Benteen made his way slowly to the battle, as if to say, “I will come by and by.”

Lastly, concerning Custer’s attack, at (FW 9.27–9.30), we find (italics added, with the author’s clarifications in brackets):

*Goat* [Custer] strip Finnlambs! This is *jinnies* [Crow scouts] rinning away to their *ousterlists* [outer limits] dowan a bunkersheels. With a nip nippy nip and a trip trippy trip so airy. For their heart’s right there.

At West Point, Custer was the class “Goat,” meaning he graduated last in his class [35, p. 41]. As the battle unfolded the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry’s Crow scouts did a “bunkersheels” back toward Bismarck, ND [33, pp. 207–208, 253]. The word “*bunkersheels*” also suggests “hiding places.” Keep in mind that the Crow scouts, after having helped Custer find the encampment, were dismissed by him; they were never expected to fight [12, p. 314], [15, p. 231]. The phrase “For their heart’s right there” derives from the WWI song “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary.” The song was first popular among the (presumably homesick) Connaught Rangers, a mainly Irish regiment in the British Army. It begins, “Up to mighty London came / An Irish lad one day” [11, p. 1083]. The analogy between the Crow scouts in the U. S. Army, and the Irish in the British Army, is an obvious one.

## XII. THE WIDOWS OF BISMARCK, ND

At (FW 9.32–9.33) we find (italics added, with the author’s clarifications in brackets):

This is the *bissmark* [Bismarck] of the *marathon merry* [marathon journey] of the *jinnies* [Custer’s Crow scouts] *they* [the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry] left behind them [when Custer began his attack].

The phrase “the jinnies they left behind them” suggests the song “The Girl I Left Behind Me.” According to Howard Wight Marshall in *Play Me Something Quick and Devilish* [27, p. 74]:

“The Girl I left behind Me” became a military march in the 1800s and popularized as a US Army theme song after George Armstrong Custer adopted it as his Union army regimental anthem during the Civil War. Then, a few years later, “The Girl I left behind Me,” along with “Garryowen,” became associated with Custer’s Seventh Cavalry and his defeat at the Battle of Little Bighorn in Montana.

Moreover, the story that “The Girl I Left Behind Me” was played by Custer’s regimental band as his soldier’s bade a tearful farewell to their sweethearts at Fort Abraham near *Bismarck*, ND, goes back to Mrs. Custer herself [13, p. 263]:

...when our band struck up “The Girl I Left Behind Me,” the most despairing hour seemed to have come. All the sad-faced wives of the officers who had forced themselves to their doors to try and wave a courageous farewell, and smile bravely to keep the ones they loved from knowing the anguish of their breaking hearts, gave up the struggle at the sound of the music. The first notes made them disappear to fight out alone their trouble, and seek to place their hands in that of their Heavenly Father, who, at such supreme hours, was their never-failing solace.

Although Custer and his wife lived near Bismarck, ND (at Fort Abraham Lincoln) and “The Girl I Left Behind Me” was Custer’s signature song, the narrative suggests that the “jinnies” are not wives at all. Instead, they are the Crow scouts who were on the side of Custer but did not participate in the battle. They were *left behind*. Imagine their ponies merrily making a marathon journey away from the battle in order to carry word of the disaster to the steamboat *The Far West* at the confluence of the Bighorn and Little Bighorn Rivers. From there, word would be carried to Bismarck, ND, where the widows of the soldiers lived. The first scout to reach the army brass on *The Far West* was Curley on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, 1876. The battle began on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Using sign language he tried his best to communicate the magnitude of the disaster [15, pp. 312–313].

## XIII. THE DEAD

At (FW 79.16–79.17) we find (italics added):

... to carry, as earwigs do their dead, their soil to the earthball where *indeeth* we shall calm *decline*, our legacy unknown.

which appears to refer to Little Bighorn survivor and Medal of Honor winner Frederick Deetline, whose last name appears in two pieces. Some of the bodies at the Little Bighorn were left in pieces [41, p. 33]. There is only one occurrence of the string of letters “deet” in *Finnegans Wake*.

## XIV. A STRAGGLER

At (FW 81.14–81.15) we find (italics added):

... in the saddle of the *Brennan’s* (now Malpasplace?) pass, versts and versts from true civilisation ...

which appears to refer to Pvt. John Brennan of Company C from County Waterford, Ireland. Brennan survived the Little Bighorn by straggling (“horse gave out”). Frequently in prison, he was eventually dishonorably discharged [41, p. 20].

## XV. THE DISFIGURED AND DISMEMBERED

At (FW 169.11–169.20) we find (italics added, with the author’s clarifications in brackets):

Shem’s bodily getup, it seems, included an *adze* [tomahawk] of a skull, an eight of a larkseye, the whoel of a nose, one numb arm up a sleeve, *fortytwo hairs off his uncrown* [scalping], eighteen to his mock lip, a trio of barbels from his megageg chin (sowman’s son), the wrong shoulder higher than the right, all ears, an artificial tongue with a natural curl, *not a foot to stand on* [unjustified motives], *a handful of thumbs* [all thumbs], *a blind stomach* [blind ambition], *a deaf heart* [deaf to compassion], *a loose liver* [drunken], two fifths of two buttocks, one gleetsteen avoirdupoier for him, a manroot of all evil, a salmonkelt’s thinskin, eelsblood in his cold toes, a bladder tristended. . .

## XVI. CUSTER’S GHOST ON BENTEN

At (FW 173.26–174.4) we find (italics added, with the author’s clarifications in brackets):

. . . three jeers (pah!) for his rotten little ghost of a Peppybeg, Mr Himmyshimmy, a blighty, a reeky, a lighty, a scrapy, a babbly, a ninny, dirty seventh among thieves and *always* [all ways] bottom sawyer, till nowan knowed how *howmely* [“how me?” + “-ly” = homily] howme could be, giving unsolicited testimony on behalf of the absent, as glib as eaveswater to those present (who meanwhile, with increasing lack of interest in his semantics, allowed various subconscious smickers to drivel slowly across their fichers), unconsciously explaining, for inkstands, with a meticulousity bordering on the insane, the various meanings of all the different foreign parts of speech he misused and cuttlefishing every lie unshrinkable about all the other people in the story, leaving out, of course, foreconsciously, the simple worf and plague and poison they had cornered him about until there was not a snoozer among them but was utterly undeceived in the *heel of the reel* [end of the dance or movie] by the recital of the rigmarole.

The phrase “dirty seventh” suggests that we are again dealing with Custer’s 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. The curious word “bordering” seems to echo “mordering,” which appears in the passage analyzed in Sec. VI. Actually, Marcus Reno’s “morders”

“morders” = M[arcus] + orders

were arguably a form of murder (his small force was ordered to attack a huge Native American encampment). And Frederick Benteen’s “borders”

“borders” = B[enteen] + orders

initially took him to the borders of the action (which was arguably an insane thing for Custer to have ordered, as Benteen arrived late to the battle). From these we can see that Joyce’s use of “mordering” and “bordering” may be more than a coincidence. Significantly, “mordering” and “bordering” are the only two occurrences of the string of letters “ordering” in *Finnegans Wake*. In this way the word “ordering” connects two passages that are far apart.

But who is the “ghost of a Peppybeg, Mr Himmyshimmy”? We see from Benteen’s testimony at the Reno Court of Inquiry (convened on January 13, 1879 in Chicago’s Palmer House) that Benteen employed what might be called a “Himmyshimmy,” a sinuous movement firstly away from, and then back to, the main trail [3]:

Q. When your column separated from that of General Custer, describe the direction or angle of separation to the route you had been going?

A. It was about an angle of 45 degrees, which is a left oblique.

According to *Merriam-Webster*, to “shimmy” is to “oscillate abnormally,” which is a good characterization of Benteen’s time-consuming detour around the main line of march [42]. Benteen testified that he meandered through defiles, around high bluffs, “valley hunting ad infinitum,” before he executed a “right oblique” to strike the trail that he had left hours before. In *Merriam-Webster’s* definition, the “shimmy-shake” is described as a dance popular after WWI, which Joyce renders as the “Himmyshimmy” or “he, me, shimmy.”

So, Benteen is the “ghost of a Peppybeg, Mr Himmyshimmy.” Now we can see that “pah!” is a pun on the word “pa,” meaning Benteen’s father, who never forgave his son for being a traitor to Virginia: The son fought for the Union during the Civil War, whereas the father fought for the Confederacy [41, p. 17].

One cannot help but notice that “rotten little ghost” suggests this famous phrase from that famous ghost story *Hamlet* 1.4.100 [36]:

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

And, in fact, in the passage quoted earlier a ghostly Custer hurls seven insults at Benteen that are a takeoff on the insults Hamlet hurls at his uncle King Claudius. Here are the insults at (FW 173.27–173.29):

... Mr Himmyshimmy, a blighty, a reeky, a lighty, a scrapy, a babbly, a ninny, dirty seventh among thieves and always bottom sawyer...

And here is how the insults map over to *Hamlet*, all but one occurring in quick succession in *Hamlet* 3.4.73–117 [36]:

- “Mr Himmyshimmy” = “like a mildewed ear” (in German “shimmel” means “mold”).
- a “blighty” = “that from a shelf the precious diadem stole” (Custer’s and Hamlet’s hopes “blighted”).
- a “reeky” = “in the rank sweat of an enseamed bed”.
- a “lighty” = Claudius shrieks, “Give me some light. Away!” (*Hamlet* 3.2.295)
- a “scrapy” = “a king of shreds and patches”.
- a “dirty seventh among *thieves*” = “a cutpurse of the empire”.
- a “bottom sawyer” = “stewed in corruption, honeying and making love over the nasty sty!”

And here are the two insults that fail to map over to *Hamlet*, but which fit Benteen as an individual:

- A “nanny” suggests a “nine-y,” or a baseball player (member of the Benteen Baseball Club, discussed below).
- A “babbly” derives from Benteen’s letter critical of Custer (also discussed below).

But who—or what—is a “Peppybeg?” We know that a “Pepper’s Ghost” is a stage illusion that involves the superimposition of two images, one seen *through* a pane of glass, and one seen *reflected off* the glass, as seen in Fig. 4.

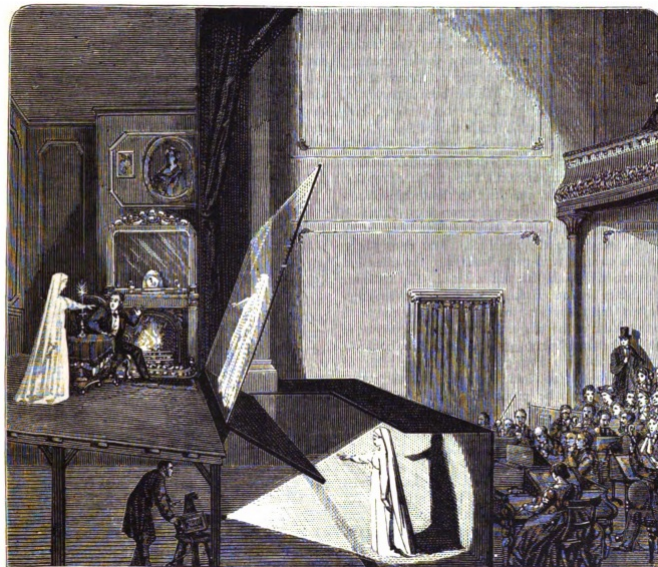


FIG. 4: Pepper’s Ghost was a popular stage illusion in the late 1800s. A figure below the stage was seen as a ghostly figure onstage. The illustration is from *World of Wonders: A Record of Things Wonderful in Nature, Science, and Art*, 1868 [1, pp. 201–202].

As it turns out, Reno admitted that he peered through the window of the home of his commanding officer one night. He thereby frightened the Colonel’s twenty-year-old daughter, who, turning to the window and seeing Major Reno’s peering face superimposed on the internal reflection of their parlor, exclaimed, “It is Major Reno!” So we can infer that, whereas Frederick Benteen is the “ghost of a Peppybeg,” Marcus Reno (the “Dirty MacDyke” mentioned

earlier) *is* the “Peppybeg” [12, pp. 44–46], [32, pp. 299–301]. We can also again take “beg” to mean “small,” given that Reno was short [41, p. 80]. And we can likewise take “Peppybeg” to mean “little pep” or “low-energy,” given that Reno preferred to hunker down on “Reno Hill” at the Little Bighorn.

So when did Benteen, “Mr Himmyshimmy,” give “unsolicited testimony on behalf of the absent”? The answer is, years earlier, in connection with the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry’s early morning attack on a Cheyenne village of about fifty tepees near the Washita River. The surprised and sleeping Cheyenne barely managed to put up a fight, but Custer still had one reason to be worried: Almost two dozen soldiers, including a Maj. Elliott, were “absent,” having pursued warriors downstream without returning. Custer returned without first determining their fate, and they were found dead only two weeks later [33, pp. 132–138]. In a letter to a friend a “babbly” Benteen used fractured “semantics” to described how Elliott and his men were killed [author’s clarifications in brackets] [44, p. 12]:

They [Maj. Elliott’s party] lay scarcely two miles from the scene of the [Washita] fight, and all we know of the manner they were killed we have learned from Indian sources. It seems that Major Elliott’s party were pursuing a wellmounted party of Cheyennes in the direction of the Grand Village, where nearly all the tribes were encamped, and were surrounded by the reinforcements coming to the rescue of the pursued, before the Major was aware of their position.

Benteen’s “meticulous” letter eventually found its way to “newsstands” and “inkwells” (“inkstands” in the quoted passage) where readers with an “increasing lack of interest in his semantics” came to blame Custer for the deaths of the “absent” [15, p. 67].

## XVII. CUSTER’S GHOST ON RENO

The previous passage continues at (FW 174.5–174.21), where we find (*italics added*, with the author’s clarifications in brackets):

*He* [Capt. Benteen] went without saying that the *cull* [Gall] disliked anything anyway approaching a plain straightforward standup or knockdown row and, as often as *he* [Capt. Benteen] was called in to umpire any *octagonal* [eight-way] argument among *slangwhangers* [Benteen’s baseball team], *the accomplished washout* [Major Reno] always used to rub shoulders with the last speaker and *clasp shakers* [Freemasons] (the *handtouch which is speech without words* [Masonic handshake]) and agree to every word [of me, Gen. Custer] as soon as [I] half uttered [them], [Major Reno:] *command me!, your servant, good, I revere you, how, my seer? be drinking that! quite truth, gratias, I’m yoush, see wha’m hearing?, also goods, please it, me sure?, be filling this!, quiso, you said it, apasafello, muchas grassyass, is there firing-on-me?, is their girlic-on-you?, to your good self, your sulphur,* and then at once focuss *his* [Major Reno’s] whole unbalanced attention upon *the next octagonist* [the Colonel] who managed to catch a *listener’s eye* [Reno’s peeping eye], [with Reno] asking and imploring *him* [the Colonel] out of *his piteous onewinker* [Reno’s piteous letter, written to the Colonel after getting just one wink’s worth of sleep], . . . whether there was anything in the world *he* [Reno] could do to please *him* [the Colonel] and to overflow *his* [the Colonel’s] tumbletantaliser for *him* [the Colonel] yet once more.

The word “cull” suggests the warrior “Gall.” And “umpire any octagonal argument” suggests Benteen, manager of The Benteen Baseball Club, the “slangwhangers” in the text. When Benteen managed *and* played (as he sometimes did: “each captain, of course, being captain, and playing as one of the nine of his troop”) he oversaw *eight*, rather than the usual nine, baseball players [9, p. 5]. He therefore “umpired” their “octagonal” (eight-way) disputes [8, p. 21]. Since Custer carried a Remington sporting rifle with an octagonal barrel it follows that “an octagonal argument” might also be an argument *about* Custer, in which context “slangwhangers” suggests “slanderers” [41, p. 31]. That Reno was a member of the Masons (the “clasp shakers”) is confirmed by a letter written by Reno dated August 17, 1867 [5]. Reno’s “piteous onewinker” was a pleading explanatory letter to the Colonel the morning after Reno played peeping tom. His drunkenness (“be drinking that!” . . . “be filling this!”) and his strange behavior (in another incident he *clasped the hands* of an absent officer’s wife) led to his dishonorable discharge [12, pp. 42–46].

## XVIII. LAST STAND HILL

At (FW 259.7–259.10) we find these lines, which sum up the battle in a nutshell (*italics added*, with the author’s clarifications in brackets):

*Loud* [Lord], heap miseries upon us yet entwine our *arts* [hearts] with laughters low!  
 Ha he hi ho hu.  
 Mummum.

Translated from Dakota Sioux, the middle line gives:

Bury, high hill, edge of an ax, hair stand on end, bones,

where I have employed these definitions [34, pp. 145, 156, 160, 163, 166]:

ha, *v.* to bury, as a dead person  
 he, *n.* a high hill or ridge of hills  
 hi, *n.* the bit or edge of an ax  
 ho, *v.* to stand up on end, as hair; ho, *intj.* of surprise  
 hu, *n.* a bone, bones

Above, “h represents a strong surd guttural resembling the Arabic *kha*” [34, p. 1].

At (FW 383.1–383.14) we find:

— *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.*  
*But O, Wreneagle Almighty, wouldn't un be a sky of a lark*  
*To see that old buzzard whooping about for uns shirt in the dark*  
*And he hunting round for uns speckled trousers around by Palmerstown Park?*  
*Hohohoho, moultly Mark!*  
*You're the rummest old rooster ever flopped out of a Noah's ark*  
*And you think you're cock of the wark.*  
*Fowls, up! Tristy's the spry young spark*  
*That'll tread her and wed her and bed her and red her*  
*Without ever winking the tail of a feather*  
*And that's how that chap's going to make his money and mark!*

Overhoved, shrillgleescreaming.

This famous passage (from which physicist Murray Gell-Mann chose the word “quark” for the fractionally-charged particles in protons and neutrons) appears to describe the scalping of Custer (“moultly Mark”) and his men. To “moult” is to shed hair. We read of surprised men with their hair standing on end (two of the meanings of “ho” in Dakota Sioux), “whooping” (war whoops), “hunting round” (a play on “happy hunting ground”), “speckled trousers” (blood-speckled trousers), “overhoved” (over-hoofed or trampled), and “shrillgleescreaming” (“shrill” + “eagle” + “screaming”), which collectively describe the scene at Last Stand Hill. The string of letters “illgleescreaming” specifically suggests the eagle-bone whistles blown at battle’s end [12, p. 13]. The seemingly out-of-place “Palmerstown Park” appears to refer to the Reno Court of Inquiry held at the *Palmer House* in Chicago [3]. Lastly, “Three quarks for Muster Mark!” may refer to “quirts,” which are whips used by warriors to inflict a token blow, a coup, that is a unit of victory over a (sometime dead) enemy. A “coup” involves “striking or touching an enemy in warfare” [42].

In the Feb. 1872 *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* we find the following nursery rhyme, which involves “quark!” repeated three times in succession, twice [2, p. 480] (italics added):

A carrion crow sat on an oak  
 Watching a *tailor* cut out his coat;  
 He cut and he snipped with clever art,  
 While the old carrion crow said, “Quark! quark! quark!”  
 “Oh, bring me my arrow and my bow,  
 That I may shoot that carrion crow!”  
 The tailor fired and missed his mark,  
 And the old carrion crow said, “Quark! quark! quark!”

It is easy to see that the carrion crow on the one hand, and the tailor who missed his mark on the other, link the above passage to death, defeat, and the man who missed his mark at the Little Bighorn: George Armstrong Custer.

Towards the end of the Museyroom passage’s “summary of events,” way back at (FW 10.3–10.4), we find (italics added):

Lipoleums is nice hung *bushellors*.

A “bushellor” is a suit repairer, essentially, a tailor. See *Merriam-Webster's* definition of “bushel” [42].

## XIX. CUSTER'S MOTIVES

At (FW 480.20–480.23) we find (*italics and underlining added, with the author's clarifications in brackets*):

- Hunkalus Childared Easterheld. It's his lost chance, Emania Ware him well.
- Hey! Did you dream you were *ating* [hating] your own *tripe* [tribe], *acushla* [little Custer], that you tied yourself up that *wrynecky* ["oxbowed" Greasy Grass] fix?

h u ŋ - k a ' - d o - w a ŋ - p i , n . a r i t e  
or ceremony of the Dakotas. *T.*,  
h u ŋ k a l o w a ŋ p i When a person,  
because he thinks highly of them,  
or for other good reason, intends  
in a measure to adopt the children  
of another, or to become "ate" to  
them, or be regarded by them as  
a relative in Dakota fashion, he  
makes the "h u ŋ k a l o w a ŋ p i" for  
and in honor of the children. The  
children thus become "h u ŋ k a," and  
are always after known as such by  
a red stripe across the side of fore-  
head and cheek, which they are  
permitted to wear as a badge.  
The number of these stripes shows  
how many times the wearer has  
been made "h u ŋ k a."—w. j. c.

FIG. 5: Entry from Stephen Return Riggs' *A Dakota-English Dictionary* [34, pp. 157–158], a resource that may have been used by Joyce. (In Riggs' book the above definition is spread across two pages.)

In Fig. 5 we see a definition that explains the meaning of *Huŋka* in Dakota Sioux; Joyce may have exploited this very entry in writing the above text [34, pp. 157–158]. Above, "ating your own tripe" may be taken as "ating your own stripe" and "hating your own tribe." These twin interpretations make sense when we consider that, "according to Cheyenne oral tradition, Custer's relationship with the Cheyenne captive Monahsetah in 1868–69 produced a son named Yellow Hair" [33, pp. 59, 138–139, 403]. Was Custer "ating his own stripe" and "hating his own tribe" when he brought about his own defeat?

According to *Merriam-Webster* the word "wry" means "twisted" or "bent" [42]. This is a fair description of the Little Bighorn's oxbows. Moreover, the word "wrynecky" may refer to Custer's trademark "cherry necktie," the color of rye being not far off from the color cherry [12, p. 113]. And, finally, I promised in Sec. X to explain why the word "ttrinch" likely refers to Custer. Here is that explanation: According to *Merriam-Webster* the cut-throat finch is distinguished by "a deep crimson band about the throat" [42]. This matches Custer's cheery necktie.

## XX. BURIALS

As the battle unfolded Custer relied on his chief trumpeter Henry *Voss* to relay commands [15, p. 254]. According to Two Moon, Voss did this continuously from Last Stand Hill: "At last about a hundred men and five horsemen stood on the hill all bunched together. All along the bugler kept blowing his commands. He was very brave too" [19, p. 448]. Joyce pays tribute to trumpeter Voss at (FW 570.2–570.4) (*italics and underlining added*):

*Bravossimost!* [Bravissimo!] The *royal nusick* [Royal Nonesuch] their show shall shut with song slide to nature's solemn silence. Deep Dalchi Dolando! Might gentle harp addurge!

Custer's body was found slumped against that of Voss [20, p. 66]. There is only one occurrence of the string of letters "voss" in *Finnegans Wake*, and it occurs above in "Bravossimost," which derives from "bravissimo," meaning "very good" in Italian.

Similarly, there is only one occurrence of the string of letters "dolan" in *Finnegans Wake*, and it occurs in the phrase "Deep Dalchi Dolando," which is an instance of the "Dear Dirty Dublin" motif. Not surprisingly, one of the

“gravediggers” at Last Stand Hill was a John *Dolan*, born in Dublin [10, p. 74]. Dolan was a soldier with Custer’s Company M. He missed an appointment with death by being left at Yellowstone Depot, and went on to write a detailed account of the burial of the more than 200 dead [15, pp. 311, 457]. His replacement, Myles O’Hara, was one of the first killed [7, p. 180].

The word “nusick” obviously suggests “music.” Voss was, after all, a trumpeter. But, more importantly, “nusick” decomposes into “n. u.” + “sick,” where “n. u.” is a standard abbreviation for “Name Unknown” [24, p. 810]. Because of their number, facial mutilation, and lack of identifying clothes, burying the dead in named graves generally proved impossible. Moreover, the number unburied dead horses helped make the burial detail a sickening assignment [15, pp. 310–311] See Fig. 6.

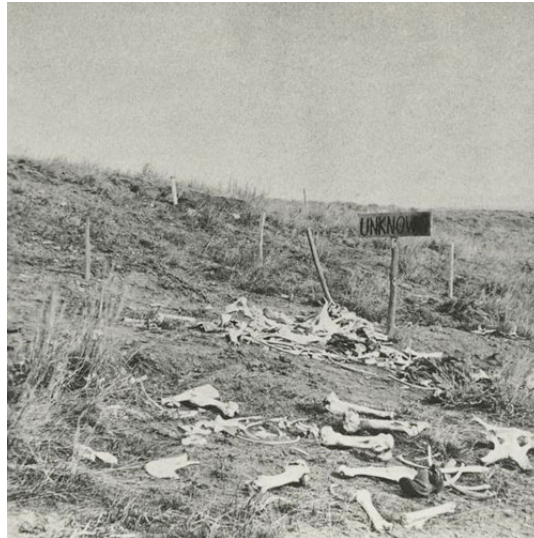


FIG. 6: Last Stand Hill, 1879. Name Unknown. *Photo courtesy Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.* (Photographer: Stanley J. Morrow.)

The phrase “The royal nusick” suggests the show “The Royal Nonesuch” in Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*. Two of Huck’s “royal” companions con a town with a play of that name [40, chs. XXII–XXIII]. In a similar way Custer mythology soon swept the country.

In Irish “dall” means “blind person,” and “chi” means “will see,” where:

“Dalchi” = “dall” + “chi”

In Latin “delendo” means “obliterating,” where:

“Dolando” = “Dolan” + “delendo”

As an officer, Col. Myles Keough got a burial better than most. See Fig. 7.

## XXI. A DIRGE

The word “addurge” suggests the playing of a “dirge,” and the phrase “Might gentle harp” suggests Thomas Moore’s “My Gentle Harp” [31]. Below are its first two stanzas:

*My Gentle Harp* by Thomas Moore (1779–1852)

My gentle Harp, once more I waken  
 The sweetness of thy slumb’ring strain;  
 In tears our last farewell was taken.  
 And now in tears we meet again.  
 No light of joy hath o’er thee broken,  
 But, like those Harps whose heav’nly skill  
 Of slavery, dark as thine, hath spoken,





FIG. 7: The grave in 1879 of Col. Myles Keogh, “the davy stooping” in the photo of the eight men killed; see Fig. 2. *Photo courtesy Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.* (Photographer: Stanley J. Morrow.)

Thou hang’st upon the willows still.

And yet, since last thy chord resounded,  
 An hour of peace and triumph came,  
 And many an ardent bosom bounded  
 With hopes — that now are turn’d to shame.  
 Yet even then, while Peace was singing  
 Her halcyon song o’er land and sea,  
 Though joy and hope to others bringing,  
 She only brought new tears to thee.

## XXII. ASH REBORN

Perhaps the earliest “sole survivor” (or “Phoenix rising from the ashes”) story of the battle concerns Custer’s scout Curley. This is the same marathoner whose pony ride first brought news of the defeat to the confluence of the Little and Bighorn Rivers, where the *Far West* was anchored and the army brass awaited news of Custer’s success [12, pp. 314–316]. In Fig. 8 we even see Curley described as the “only survivor.” Note that in the upcoming passage Joyce uses Curley’s Crow name, Ashishishe, whose first letters are *Ash*. Moreover, at (FW 59.18) we even find the word “Ashreborn.” Henceforth, Curley will be referred to as Ashishishe, which in Crow simply means “The Crow” [14, p. 66].

In one lone survivor story Ashishishe escapes by donning a red Sioux blanket and so passes through the surrounding Sioux unmolested [12, p. 314], [15, pp. 312, 469]. Another story, going back to 1923, is that a John Stout scouted for Custer and survived the debacle by hiding in the carcass of a dead buffalo [37, p. 491]. It is possible that over time these two escape stories conflated and made their way into legend. So, in *Son of the Morning Star*, Evan S. Connell mentions the tale of Ashishishe making a “miraculous” escape after “eviscerating a dead horse and concealing himself within the cavity” [12, p. 314]. It is from this legend on the margins of history, rather than the more plausible story that Ashishishe merely viewed the battle from a distance, that Joyce draws his inspiration.

In the last few pages of *Finnegans Wake* we find Ashishishe biding his time inside a “bay” horse as “daylight” nears (FW 626.34–626.35). Taking advantage of this “baylight” he peers from his “great blue bedroom” (FW 627.9) and reflects on what has happened. Then, wearing a blanket, Ashishishe emerges into the outside air. He makes his way quietly to the Little Bighorn River and floats like a long tadpole (“taddy”) downstream. With a “whish” he exits the water at the neck of an oxbow. In the distance he spies a grieving Gall and Gall’s remaining family. Ashishishe decides to head back to the U. S. Cavalry. (“Us” in the narrative.) Having crossed the neck of the oxbow he reenters the river and floats downriver like Huck Finn on a raft. Ashishishe vows to remember the Battle of the Little Bighorn

and the Black Hills, *given* to the Sioux by the Treaty of 1868 [33, p. 54]. And to remember the city of Keystone, in the Black Hills. And he vows to retell the story until thousands see.

Before we begin we need to know a little bit about sacred Crow ceremonies. In the 1800s a Crow seeking a vision might hang from a rope attached to his pierced breast or shoulder, or use this same rope to pull buffalo skulls until the connection broke. While trying to break free the participant was anointed with white clay and endured extreme hardships [25, pp. 29, 44–45]. Eventually a vision materialized and served as a guide. Sitting Bull's prophetic vision of soldier's falling like grasshoppers was such a guide.

Another thing to know is that Capt. Myles Moylan survived the battle and was prominent enough to be asked to testify at the Reno Court of Inquiry [15, pp. 60–61, 369–370]. He and Myles Keough appear in the text as "moyles and moyles." Spotted Eagle, a Sans Arc leader, was also present at the battle [15, p. 188]. He appears as "whitespread wings like he'd come from Arkangels." In French *l'aval* refers to "water downstream." According to *Merriam-Webster* the word "tid" refers to "a girl or young woman" [42]. She is seen by Ashishishe in among the tepees as he's carried by the "tide," the second meaning suggested by "tid." And to Native Americans the battle was fought, not at the Little Bighorn River, but in the land of the Greasy Grass [15, p. 185].

This brings us to five complex sentences having multiple layers of interpretation, found at (FW 627.28–627.31):

How she was handsome, the wild Amazia, when she would seize to my other breast! And what is she weird, haughty Niluna, that she will snatch from my ownest hair! For 'tis they are the stormies. Ho hang! Hang ho!

On the lowest level "Niluna" suggests the "Nile" (and "Nile Grass"), and thereby the "Greasy Grass." And "Ho Hang! Hang ho!" suggests the flooding and receding Yellow River in China, and thereby the Yellowstone River. And "Amazia" suggests the "Amazon," or the Bighorn River, which joins the Yellowstone to the Little Bighorn River. So "the wild Amazia, when she would seize to my other breast!" fits the confluence of the Bighorn and Greasy Grass Rivers (which is where Ashishishe must go to tell his story to the brass). The Greasy Grass feeds into the Bighorn, which feeds into the Yellowstone; this river, in turn, has its origins in Yellowstone Lake in Wyoming, which shares geothermic pools and sulfurous cauldrons with adjacent Yellowstone Park and Old Faithful geyser. For Joyce the steam vents of Yellowstone generally are the abode of the "Devil" or, in German, "Teufel," which appears as "toy fair" in the text. Ellmann's *James Joyce* makes this point about the origin of "toy fair" [16, p. 712]:

The phrase, 'Carry me along, taddy, like you done through the toy fair,' was inspired by a memory of carrying his son George through a toy fair in Trieste to make up for not giving him a rocking horse.

Of course, Ashishishe also lacks a horse (a real living one), and so must be carried to freedom by the Greasy Grass.

So far so good, but on a deeper level the "handsome, . . . wild Amazia" is Custer, the unruly prankster who at West Point received demerits for throwing snowballs in 1861, and yet just two years later was promoted to brigadier general [12, pp. 108, 112]. And, the "weird, haughty Niluna" is arrogant Custer, snapping at his Crow scouts in the Crow's Nest. So, "snatch from my *ownest hair*" suggests Custer "snapping from my *Crow's Nest lair*." And "Ho Hang! Hang ho!" is the Custer of the Yellow River in China: a cruel, yellow-haired, remorseless, amoral flood of destruction. Furthermore, "auravoles" combines "aura" (vision) + "voles (rodents)" + "go the vole," which according to *Merriam-Webster* means "to risk all for great gains" [42]. We are now ready to follow the thoughts of Ashishishe inside the horse. But note that the semantically important word "riverrun," appended to the following passage, is actually the first word of *Finnegan's Wake*. This reflects the circular character of Joyce's text.

At (FW 627.9–628.16) we find (*italics and underlining added, with the author's clarifications in brackets*):

[*Ashishishe in the bay horse, near dawn, upstream of the Native American tepees.*]

My great blue bedroom, the air so quiet, scarce a cloud. In peace and silence. I could have stayed up there for always only. It's something fails us. First we feel. Then we fall. And let her rain now if she likes. Gently or strongly as she likes. Anyway let her rain for my time is come. I done me best when I was let. Thinking always if I go all goes. A hundred cares, a tithe of troubles and is there one who understands me? One in a thousand of years of the nights? All me life I have been lived among *them* [the whites] but now they are becoming *lothed* [loathsome] to me. And I am lothing their little warm tricks. And lothing their mean cosy turns. And all the greedy gushes out through their small souls. And all the lazy leaks down over their *brash* [brass] bodies. How small it's all! And me letting on to meself always. And liling on all the time. I thought *you* [the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry] were all glittering with the noblest of carriage. You're only a *bumpkin* [a carriage turned into a pumpkin]. I thought *you* [Custer] the great in all things, in *guilt* [gilt] and in glory. You're but a *puny* [pony]. Home! My people were not their sort out beyond there so far as I can [see]. For all the *bold* [Custer] and *bad* [Benteen] and *bleary* [Reno] *they* [the Crow scouts] are blamed, [by] the *seahags* [plains' newspaperman]. No! Nor for all our wild dances in all their wild din. I can seen meself among them, *allaniuvia pulchrabelled* [wearing white clay]. How she was handsome, the



FIG. 8: Ashishishe. Photo courtesy Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.

wild Amazia, when she would seize to my other breast! And what is she weird, haughty Niluna, that she will snatch from my ownest hair! For 'tis they are the stormies. *Ho hang! Hang ho!* [hanging from a rope] And the clash of our cries till we spring to be free [of buffalo skulls]. Auravoles, they says, never *heed of your name!* [heed you, or know you!] But I'm *loothing* [losing] them that's here and all I *lothe* [loathe + love]. Loonely in me loneness. For all their faults. I am passing out. Obitter ending! I'll slip away before *they're up* [the tribes awaken]. They'll never see. Nor know. Nor miss me. And it's old and old it's sad and old it's sad and weary I go back to you, my cold father, my cold mad father, my cold mad feary [great white] father, till the near sight of the mere size of him, the *moyles and moyles* [Myles Moylans and Myles Keoughs] of *it* [the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry], moananoaning, makes me seasilt saltsick and I rush, my only, into your arms. I see them rising! Save me from those *therrble prongs!* [three horse's ribs!] Two more [to squeeze by]. Onetwo moremens more. So. *Avelaval* [avenue + downstream]. My *leaves* [blankets] have drifted from me. All. But one clings still. I'll *bear* [wear] it on me. To remind me of.

[*Ashishishe, wearing a blanket, exits the horse.*]

*Lff!* [Leave!] So soft this morning, ours.

[*Ashishishe enters the Greasy Grass River, upstream of the tepees.*]

Yes. Carry me along, *taddy* [a long tadpole], like *you* [Greasy Grass] done through the *toy fair!* [Yellowstone!] If I seen *him* [Spotted Eagle] bearing down on me now under *whitespread wings* [white headdress] like he'd come from *Arkangels* [Sans Arc angels], I sink I'd die down over his feet, humbly dumbly [in the Greasy Grass], only *to washup* [Ashishishe washup]. Yes, *tid* [girl, tide]. There's where [to come ashore]. First. We pass through grass behush the bush to.

[*When an oxbow threatens to carry Ashishishe too near the tepees he exits the river at the oxbow's neck.*]

Whish! A *gull* [grieving Gall]. *Gulls* [Gall's grieving family]. *Far calls* [fading sounds]. Coming, far! End here. *Us* [U. S. Cavalry] then.

[*Having crossed the oxbow's neck Ashishishe reenters the Greasy Grass.*]

[Huck] Finn, again! Take. Bussoftlhee, *mememormee!* ["Old Morm" of a memory!] *till thousandsthee* [till thousands see]. *Lps* [lips, speak of lipoleums]. *The keys to* [the city of Keystone too]. Given! [to the Sioux!] A way a lone a last a loved a long the *riverrun* [Greasy Grass]

### XXIII. TILL THOU SENDS THEE

The phrase “till thousandsthee,” which closes out *Finnegans Wake*, suggests the phrase “till thou sends thee,” which, in turn, suggests this stanza from “A Paraphrase of the CIV Psalme,” by David Murray (1615) [17, p. 434] (italics added):

*A Paraphrase of the CIV Psalme* by David Murray (1567–1629)

But if Thy face Thou do withdraw in wrath,  
Thy creatures all then languish, grieve, and mourn;  
Of if Thou angry take away their breath,  
They perish straight, and unto dust return:  
But when *Thy Sprite Thou sends* them to renew,  
All fresh doth flourish, Earth regains her hue.

### XXIV. PROPER NAMES

Joyce uses “Anna” and “Earwicker” as character names. Interestingly, the word “ANNA” looks like two tepees separated by two sinuous rivers And earwigs have pincers, where Custer’s trebly-pronged pincer movement can be seen as either E or  $\sqcup$ . A few other points: Custer’s wife was nicknamed “Libbie,” which suggests the River Liffey in Dublin [15, p. 45], and “wakaŋ” in Dakota Sioux means “a spirit, something sacred,” suggesting *Finnegans Wakaj* [34, p. 508]. And, finally, the thunder-word at (FW 3.15) begins “bababadalgharagh. . .” It combines “baba” suggesting “baa baa” — as in the bleating of *Bighorn* sheep — and “bad,” meaning “mineral spring” in German. The Yellowstone area near where the battle was fought is synonymous with geysers. And the string of letters “algharagh” may be a corruption of the first name of Algernon Smith (who appears at the far right in Fig. 2). His body was found riddled with arrows near that of Custer [20, p. 66].

### XXV. CONCLUSION

This article shows that *Finnegans Wake*, generally, and Joyce’s Museyroom passage, specifically, tell the story of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. This is far from obvious. Overlaying the account of Custer’s fight is a more accessible account of the Battle of Waterloo. This is no doubt Joyce’s intention: The obvious Waterloo narrative acts as a smokescreen concealing the underlying Custer narrative. One must first understand the more obvious surface narrative before identifying and understanding the underlying narrative. It remains to be seen just how much of the fabric *Finnegans Wake* is woven around Sitting Bull’s memorable victory.

### XXVI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SOURCES

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