

... AN BRIAHER ... VEXUM ... THE WORD... המילה

By Maria Faustina Tanner

To trace tabulation, we might begin at a beginning a provocative emplacement where;

בתחילה הייתה המילה, והמילה הייתה עם האלוהים, והמילה הייתה אלוהים.¹

BHI AN BRJATHER ANN AGUS BHI AN BRJATHAR FARÁ DIA AGUS B'É DIA AN BRJATHAR.²

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD.

AND GOD SAID, LET THERE BE LIGHT, AND THERE WAS LIGHT.

GENESIS 1

The Word as a beginning itself opens to understanding as paradox, as we read from a book without origin where writing itself is its advent...

As a corpus of texts the Torah, also referred to as the Old Testament, was composed sometime between the twelfth and the second century B.C. Many of its genealogies, stories and poems were passed down through the generations in the way of oral tradition. It's transmission over time could be said to have formulated in the way of a *history of ideas* in the 'interplay of representations that flow anonymously between men in the interstices of great discursive monuments.'⁴

With faith as the cornerstone to the inter-generational vitality of this Holy Book, its contents could be repeated, known and transformed. However in this trajectory the writings of the Torah also faced certain erasure as no complete texts survived from the time before the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the Jews in the Babylonian Exile of 587/6 B.C. by the Roman army led by Titus. In the wake its broken textual genealogies, the Old Testament is imbued and bound by internal configurations and secret contradictions that lead questions of translation toward an ever receding point of occultation.

The Torah was written in ancient Hebrew with brief intervals written in Aramaic. Biblical Hebrew belongs to a category of the world's oldest living languages. 'Hebrew is classified as a Semitic language (or Shemitic, from Shem, the son of Noah).'⁵ The Hebrew language is referred to as Leshon Hakodesh לשון הקודש, which translates as sacred language or the 'tongue of holiness'.⁶ Hebrew words appear as cuneiform symbols, letters that form pictures allowing the symbol to be applied in a variety of different ways. The pictographs produce not only literal meanings, but also implied and figurative meanings. Study of the implied and figurative meaning of Hebrew words goes beyond the scope of literal perceptions to reveal the 'hidden manna'⁷ in the Word of God, *Dvar Yhw*. The twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet are the root articulations of the live creative force of the word - המילה

In the silent birth of distant correspondences, the *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (*The Book of Invasions*), written by Irish Christian Monks in 11AD, stated that Gaelic was among the 72 original languages that arose during the biblical confusion of tongues and that 'ancient Gaelic was second only to Hebrew in its purity and sacredness'.⁸ Interestingly 18th century historians discerned a notable similarity between the Early Gaelic and Hebrew - Phoenician of the second century B.C. 'Roman dramatist, Titus Maccius Plautus 184 B.C. wrote a play titled *The Penulus* in which he placed the then current Phoenician into the speech of one of his characters, later 18th century linguists noticed the great similarity between that Phoenician and the Early Irish Language'.⁹

AS SHOWN BY THE TRANSLITERATION IN THE PENULUS OF TITUS PLAUTUS:

HEBREW-PHOENICIAN¹⁰

BYTH LYM MO THYM NOCIOTHII NEL ECH AN TI DAISC MACHON

Y S I DO IEBRJM THYFE LYTH CHY LYA CHON TEMLYPH ULA.

EARLY GAELIC

BETH LIOM' MO THIME NOCIAITHÉ, NIÉL ACH AN TI DAIRJE MAÉ COINNE

IS I DE LEABHRAM TAFACH LEITH, CHI LIS CON TEAMPLUIBH ULLA.¹¹

The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* it is neither probable history nor science, but rather a compendium of sub-literatures and almanacs by anonymous authors. The narrative prose and poems of the ancient book, inscribe Irish history with genetic dimension synchronous with that of the Old Testament. *Lebor Gabála Érenn* tells a story of the post - diluvian (after the flood) history of Ireland. It's writings follow mankind in his descent from Adam through the sons of Noah revealing - in this lineage the origin of the Goidelic peoples (the Gales). In an abbreviated pedigree it follows; Noah was Father to Japheth and Japheth was Father to Magog, and Magog, Father to Baath and Baath had a son by name Fénius Farsaid (also Phoeniusa; Phenius, Féinius, Farsa, Farsaidh, many variant spellings).¹² It is this named descendant of Noah that is said to be the forbearer of the Gales.

Fénius Farsaid was a leader of his people and is recalled as one of the 72 Chieftains present during the building of Nimrods tower of Babel in southern Mesopotamia, occurring sometime around 4000 BCE. Fenius had a son Niul fifth in descent from Japhet. Niul married Scota, daughter of Queen Nefertiti and Pharaoh Cincris of Egypt and they produced a son from that marriage by the name of Goidel Mac Ethéoir (Goidel Glas). Legend holds that Goidel Glas under the tutelage of his grandfather Fenius Farsaid crafted the Goidelic (Gaelic) language from the original 72 languages that arose during the biblical confusion of tongues in Babel.¹³

AND THE LORD SAID, BEHOLD THEY ARE ONE PEOPLE, AND THEY ALL HAVE THE SAME LANGUAGE, AND THIS IS WHAT THEY BEGAN TO DO AND NOW NOTHING, WHICH THEY PROPOSE TO DO, WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM. 'COME LET US GO DOWN AND THERE CONFUSE THEIR LANGUAGE, THAT THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER'S SPEECH, SO THE LORD SCATTERED THEM ABROAD FROM THERE OVER THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH; AND THEY STOPPED BUILDING THE CITY.

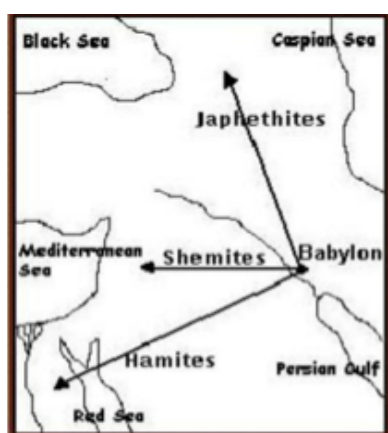
GENESIS 11:6-8

Lebor Gabála Érenn also tells of how the Goidelic people aided Moses and the Israelites in their flight from Egypt and that they too also left Egypt at the same time as the Israelites in the Exodus of 1446 BC.¹⁴

I WILL BRING YOU UP OUT OF THE AFFLICTION OF EGYPT TO THE LAND OF THE CANAANITE AND THE HITTITE AND THE AMORITE AND THE PERIZZITE AND THE HIVITE AND THE JEBUSITE, TO A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY.

EXODUS 3:17

Moses in gratitude was said to have offered the Goidelic people a place in the Promised Land should they choose to accompany the Hebrews. However the Goidel's declined Moses offer and settled in Scythia (Central Eurasia in classical antiquity). After a period of time spent in Scythia, the Goidels left and spent 440 years wandering the earth, undergoing a series of trials and tribulations akin to those of the Israelites, who spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness.¹⁵



NOW THESE ARE THE RECORDS OF THE GENERATIONS OF SHEM, HAM AND JAPHETH, THE SONS OF NOAH, AND SONS WERE BORN TO THEM AFTER THE FLOOD.

GENESIS 10:1

Eventually the Goidelic peoples journeyed to the Iberian region of Spain and settled there, the Iberian descendants of the Goidelic nomads became known as the Milesians (the Irish of today). The claim that the Irish Gaels came from the Iberian region of Galicia in Spain is in part inferred from the similarity of the names *Iberia* and *Hibernia* and the names *Galicia* and *Gael*.¹⁷

The Milesians are said to have come to Ireland in an invasion led by King Milesius, who overcame the predecessors of Ireland the Tuatha De Danaan and their goddess Ériu. The Milesians were magnanimous in victory and named the island Erin, the dative form of the Goddess name, in her honour. Milesians are also said to have arranged a settlement with the defeated Tuatha, the Milesians taking the upper half of Ireland and the Tuatha De Dananna taking the half below the ground.¹⁶

Translated Excerpt from Lebor Gabála Érenn: The Book of Invasions The Milesians 65:95

Noble son of Ugoine,
How attains one to full knowledge of Ireland?
He arose from Scythia,
Did Fénius Farsaid himself;
Nél reached Egypt,
Remained awhile faithfully
With Pharaoh in journeys.
A betrothal of Nél, of Scota,
The conception of our father Gáedil,
The surname of "Scot" spread abroad
Did the fair daughter of Pharaoh.
The people of the Good God arrived together
With smiting of a great host.
Cincris was extinguished,
Drowned in the Red Sea.
They voyaged the sea-surface
Arrived at Scythia,
Which Eber Scot harried;
(...)

They sailed over Caspian
Entered on Lúis, Made for Toirrián,
Followed on past Africa,
Arrived at Spain,
Where were conceived Érimon,
And Eber to Míle,
Soon Bregó, Bile,
For avenging of Íth,
Grouped in their barks, Sixty their number.
The men as they returned
Divided Ireland
Among twice six chieftains.
Let the truth of the history suffice!¹⁸

After their parting of ways these descendants of time, the Hebrews and Gales would not meet again in written history for thousands of years. Then once again in 1079AD, the ancient Annals of Inishfallen wrote how; "Five Jews came from over sea with gifts to Tairdelbach King of Munster, and were sent back over the sea again".¹⁹

A number of historians held to the idea that the Early Christian redaction of Celtic Antiquity sought the purposeful re-alignment of Ireland's pagan history with that of a more fundamental monotheistic worldview. Judeo-Christianity could inscribe a totalising account of creation that was closer to a perceivable origin, more firmly linked to its ultimate horizon (and consequently more in control of its determination). With religious erudition advancing the reaches of a Judeo-Christian narrative leading to its general acceptance in Ireland circa 431AD, paganism lapsed ever increasingly into a rift in language and its memory...

From infinite parallaxes whose delicate strands of credence and passage converged, in the mid-nineteenth century a *history of ideas*²⁰ would crystalize anew in the work of a spiritual and ideological re-construction of the Irish nation. The movement known as Young Ireland arose as anti-colonial cultural nationalism, it was made up of insurrectionist poet fighters who recognized the subversive potential of reigniting the fire of belief in the illustrious heritage of Ireland. Claiming distinct heritage and nationality that ran deeper in time than the rupture of linguistic bifurcation and the visceral fear of spiritual and ethnic miscegenation's, the mystical cords of biblical syncretism were made to resound in the soul story of the land once again.

Beginning in 1845 a member of Young Ireland writing under the pseudonym "Speranza", Lady Wilde, (mother of Oscar Wilde) contributed both prose and verse for the Irish Nationalist Journal until it was suppressed for sedition in 1848.²¹

DEDICATION

To Ireland

My Country wounded to the heart,
Could I but flash along thy soul
Electric power to rive apart
Thy life from out Deaths icy drift,
Till the full splendors of our age
Shone round thee for thy heritage -
As Miriam's,²² by the Red Sea strand
Clashing proud cymbals, so my hand
Would strike thy harp,
Loved Ireland!

•••

She flung her triumphs to the stars
In glorious chants for freedom won,
While over Pharaoh's gilded cars
The fierce, death-bearing waves rolled on:
I can but look in God's great face,
And pray him for our fated race,
To come in Sinai thunders down,
And, with His mystic radiance, crown
Some Prophet-Leader, with command
To break the strength of Egypt's band
And set thee free,
Loved Ireland!²³

Speranza

Weaving words with the intangible threads of sacred heritage, the literature and poetry of the Young Ireland movement was deeply embedded in notions of a hypostatized union of land, language, and religion – a calling forth of the memory of a pre-lapsarian Eden, the birth right of the Gaelic People.

Young Ireland and its predecessors, The Gaelic Revival understood the critical and emancipatory value of the historical imagination, of the implications of making and re-making history rather than accepting it as force imposed from the outside. The Irish cultural rebellion circa 1848, drew on emblematic power of biblical narrative found in early Christian writings. Its literatures engaged an experimental transposition that explored a linking up with a mystical Judeo-Christian (elsewhere, within here), Foucault elaborates this notion referring to it as 'the thought from the outside'²⁴ 'that only in its dispersion shines forth, (...) the experience of it involves going outside oneself, ultimately in order to find oneself.'²⁵ In the context of the Young Irelands poetic prayer, this going outside of the self – the besieged and beleaguered Island of Ireland, represented the gathering of the Irish nation within 'the dazzling interiority of thought'²⁶, a spacious and unfolding interiority of biblical genealogical exegesis, ultimately in the search of itself.

Time sets us now at a very different and distant shore to that of our nameless forefathers. In a contemporary globalized world the delicate lines of deep history are all but rinsed from a secularized process of present remembering. To disturb ancient writings and awaken them to present memory, 'reciting the marks still legible on their surface, to rediscover the flash of their birth',²⁷ we partake in a search for a form of truth that proceeded us in words without end... In the perils of that search, from the ancient past, we can still hear the ambiguous echoes of the prophetic voice and how it has reached and bent into myriad configurations of identity and power of today. The continuous and rhizomatic nature of the Biblical history is revealed in the Jewish National Anthem written 1880's by Naftali Herz Imber, titled HaTikvah (The Hope). The song was first adopted in 1897 by the First Zionist Congress and was used unofficially until 1948 subsequently it was made the official anthem in 2004.²⁸ Bound in its aspiration to prophecy of the Torah, it is sung with the words:

כל עוד בלבב פנימה
נפש יהודי הומייה
ולפאתי מזרח קדימה
עין לציון צופיה

As long as in the Jewish Heart,
The spirit is still yearning
With eyes turned toward the East,
Toward Zion,

עוד לא אבדה תקוותינו
התקווה בת שנות אלפיים
להיות עם חופשי בארצנו
ארץ ציון וירושלים

Our hope is not lost,
Our hope of two thousand years,
To be a free people in our land
Land of Zion and Jerusalem.²⁹

The Irish National Anthem written in 1907 by Peadar Kearney titled Amhrán na bhFiann (The Soldier's Song). It was first published in the newspaper, Irish Freedom in 1912, but was not widely known until it was sung at the GPO during the Easter Rising of 1916. The chorus was formally adopted as the Irish National Anthem in 1926.³⁰ The anthem sings salute to those nomadic tribes who first settled ancient Ireland and whose descendants fought in the republican rebellion in the name of Irish national freedom against British hegemony:

SINNE FIANNA FÁIL,
ΑΤΑ ΦΑΟΙ ΓΗΕΑΛΛ ΑΓ ΕΙΡΙΝΝ,
BUÍON DÁR SLUA
THAR TOINN DO RÁINIG CHUGHAINN,
ΦΑΟΙ ΜΗΟΙΔ ΒΗΕΙΤΗ ΣΑΟΡ
ΣΕΑΝΤΙΡ ΔΡ ΣΙΝΣΕΑΡ ΦΕΑΣΤΑ,
ΝÍ FHÁΓΦΑΡ ΦΑΟΙΝ ΤÍΟΡΔΑΝ ΝΑ ΦΑΟΙΝ ΤΡÁΙΛΛ.

Soldiers are we,
Whose lives are pledged to Ireland,
Some have come
From a land beyond the wave,
Sworn to be free,
No more our ancient sire – land,
Shall shelter the despot or the slave.³¹

Amid vast and hybrid assemblages of knowledge, chronologies, genealogies and mythologies, to the reflexive hermeneutics of historicity, one thing is clear; time is apparently linear and irreversible in its march. And as the past continues to foreshadow the future, the question from its advent remains essentially the same. What words, what seeds of meaning will continue to root and complexify and what will be seeded no more in the anxious and fertile soil of an unborn future?

RUINS

Shall we thread the dust of ages
Musing, dreamlike, on the past,
Seeking on the broad earths pages
For the shadow Time hath cast;
Waking up some ancient story,
From each prostrate shrine or hall.
Old traditions of a glory
Earth shall never more recall?

(...)

Ah! The world has sadder ruins
Than these wrecks of things sublime;
For the touch of mans misdoings
Leaves more blighted tracks than time
Ancient lore gives no examples
Of ruins here we find –
Prostrate souls for fallen temples,
Mighty ruins of the mind.³²

Speranza

¹New American Standard Bible, The Open Bible edition, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1978) John1: 1 Hebrew text

²Ibid

³Ibid

⁴Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith, (Routledge Classics London & New York, 2010) p.153

⁵http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/11_language.html

⁶http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leshon_Hakodesh

⁷*Deuteronomy 8:3* 'And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of Yahweh.'

⁸Maria Tymoczka, *The Irish Ulysses*, Chapter 2 - *The Irish Architectonics of Ulysses: Symbolic Structures from The Book of Invasions*, (University of California Press, E-books collection, 1982-2004)

⁹Thomas Moore, *The History of Ireland*, (vol.3) (1840)

¹⁰The Phoenician alphabet, called by convention the Proto-Canaanite alphabet for inscriptions older than around 1200 BC, is the oldest verified consonantal alphabet. It was used for the writing of Phoenician, a Northern Semitic language, used by the civilization of Phoenicia.

¹¹Thomas Moore, *The History of Ireland*, (vol.3)(1840). Leading 18th and 19th century scholars, such as Gen. Charles Vallancey, Lord Rosse and Sir William Betham, also wrote on this subject. Vallancey, spoke of, 'The great affinity found in many words, nay whole lines and sentences of this speech, between the Punic [Phoenician] and the Irish.' <http://www.ensignmessage.com/archives/hebrew.html>

¹²John Carey, *The Ancestry of Fénias Farsaid*, (Harvard University study, published in *Celtica* 21, 1990) p.104-112. http://www.ucc.ie/acad/smg/CDI/PDFs_articles/Carey_AncestryofFeni usFarsaid.pdf

¹³Geoffrey Keating, *Foras Feasa ar Eireann le Seathrun Ceitinne*, translated by E. Comyn & P.S. Dinneen, Ex-Classics Project p.91-100

¹⁴Hughe David, *The British Chronicles*, (vol.1) (Heritage Books Inc, 2007) p.35

¹⁵http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebor_Gabála_Éirenn

¹⁶Patricia Monaghan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore* (Infobase Publishing, 2004) p.332

¹⁷Maria Tymoczka, *The Irish Ulysses* (University of California Press, 1997) Literary Criticism p.26

¹⁸<http://www.maryjones.us/ctexts/lebor5.html>

¹⁹<http://jewishmuseum.ie/jews-in-ireland/>

²⁰Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge Classics London and New York, 2010) p.153 'The history of ideas, is the discipline of beginning and ends, the description of obscure continuities and returns, the reconstitution of developments in the linear form of history. It becomes therefore a discipline of interference.'

²¹T.E. O'Sullivan, extract from *The Young Irelanders* (The Kerryman Ltd., 1944)

²²Miriam was Moses' sister, and her only prophecy was a song of praise for Moses after he parted the Red Sea. Later, God punished her for complaining that Moses had too much power.

²³Francesca Wilde, *Poems by Speranza*, 1st Edition (Oxford University) p.7

²⁴Michel Foucault and Maurice Blanchot, *Foucault Blanchot*, translated by Jeffrey Mehlman and Brian Massumi (Zone Books, NewYork, 1990) p.16

²⁵Ibid p.16

²⁶Ibid p.16

²⁷Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge Classics London and New York, 2010) p.68

²⁸<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatikvah>

²⁹Ibid

³⁰http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/Historical_Information/The_National_Anthem/

³¹Ibid

³²Francesca Wilde, *Poems by Speranza*, 1st Edition (Oxford University) p.36

