

**“Their natural selections”:
Anthropogenesis and the Curious Lifeworld
of *Finnegans Wake***

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Abstract

*This essay deals with the influence of nineteenth century scientific naturalism on the compositional process of James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*. I identify previously unknown source-texts of Darwin and Carl Linnaeus, and subsequently demonstrate how their understanding of evolutionary theory and zoological taxonomy is critiqued by Joyce. I also outline the extent of Joyce’s concern with practices of knowledge-curation and exhibition. Through a close reading of Joyce’s documented fascination with the issue of human origins, or anthropogenesis, I propose a reading of the *Wake* as a form of counter-hegemonic natural history, in which standard models of human growth and organic development give way to the “deep time” of non-human and minoritarian forms-of-life.*

Keywords: Joyce; biopolitics; Darwinism; vitalism; *Finnegans Wake*.