

FINNEGANS WAKE: THE AGENCY OF THE LETTER IN THE CONSCIOUS

Volume I

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Cornell University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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May 2008

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Cornell University 2008

When the most conspicuous and best-recognized architectonic gestures of the text of *Finnegans Wake* are taken with the history of its composition, they strongly indicate a structural and semantic convergence on the action of a central chapter. The climax of the *Wake* becomes the writing of what is genetically and narratively its first and most crucial parody of the thunder so prominent in the thought of Giambattista Vico, where the thunder functions as the origin of human history and language in the voice and name of God the Father. Joyce reconstructs this thunder not as voice but as writing, and as the Name not of the Father but of a Mother revealed as an archetype of the alphabetical letter. *Per* the pun, the thunder-scheme is thus assimilated to the *Wake*'s well-known trope of writing *per se*, the letter written by Anna Livia Plurabelle; but Joyce himself casts the switch from Father to Mother in a deliberately psychoanalytic light.

After a discussion of the question of centrality in a critical approach, my introduction reviews the ways Joyce's previous fictions anticipate various elements present in the *Wake*'s own center before moving on to a close but provisional reading of that center. Chapter I reviews the notion of centrality in extant studies of the *Wake*, with particular attention to Clive Hart's useful meditation on the dialogues. Chapter II notes that a system analogous to Hart's governs the disposition of the thunders, and explores their provenance in Vico. III explores Joyce's resolve, apparent from the first, to center his last work on the question of the Name, and traces the consequences through the thunder-scheme and other sustained motifs.

IV describes the provisional convergence of these motifs in the *Wake*'s chapter

II.3, which stages the murder of the Father and the destruction of his Name, before moving on to the genetic and textual evidence for Joyce's incorporation of the Freudian primal scene into that tableau and its narrative anticipations. V begins the examination of the oedipal themes proleptic in the earlier fictions, including their imbrication with questions of economic and imperial power. VI brings this proleptic movement to a head while examining the powerful change in subject and language-use effected by its apotheosis in *Portrait*. VII returns to a closer examination of the Wake's central gesture in II.2, and notes the way in which that gesture synthesizes the structural and semantic elements of the text as a whole.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jonathan Pickett attended Reed College, the University of Oregon and Oregon State University before receiving his Bachelor of Arts in English from Oregon State University and moving onto graduate work at Cornell. Other than teaching and a brief stint in radio his chief work has been with groups dedicated to changes in environmental policy. His sporadic forays into professional music have convinced him that he is an amateur.

For my Father

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I'd like to thank all of the members of my committee for their patience and encouragement. Jonathan Culler has been quick, perceptive and sympathetic. To Daniel Schwarz I owe the insight that texts themselves are eager to tell us how to read them. Molly Hite's ideas on the esthetics of space and time have implicitly informed my methodology more than she may recognize.

Over the years I've also been sustained by a crew of interested and interesting interlocutors. Mario Hernandez heard these ideas in germ; his enthusiasm meant a great deal. John Frankel of the Cornell University Library consistently recommended himself at once by virtue of his wide erudition and his convenient station on the third floor. Laura Linke of the Cornell University Library consistently recommended herself at once by virtue of her confident navigation of archival materials and her whimsy. Some day David Weiss will be inadequately thanked for his legion kindnesses by the fuller development of his true and useful insight that in *Finnegans Wake* Joyce has rebuilt the Temple.

Teaching has been for me often as instant in its edifications as in its gratifications. I've been blessed with many exceptional students but would particularly like to thank the dark twins: Lennox Debra and Diana Carsons.

My friend Glenn Altschuler of the American Studies department deserves more thanks than I can give him here.

I'd also like to thank Amy for her love, and Ariel for listening to me in the car.

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INTRODUCTION

I

The Mountain

This study purports that extant critical surveys have already begun to sketch the outlines of a map which, held the right way and read in the light of a careful reassessment of *Finnegans Wake*, brings us to a sort of peak in Darien.

Joyce himself has carefully plotted the path up this mountain, and the view from its summit decisively reorients the terrain not just of the text in which it appears but of all of Joyce's work. The climactic moment is an apotheosis of the very first aesthetic ambition of the artist as a young man of which we have record. This ambition, though the key to unrivalled semantic power, is so radical and comprehensive that its consummation is wisely postponed until the evening of Joyce's life.

But this and many another wild yet justified surmise are best deferred until our climb is over. For the climb even to begin we must be brought to the mountain and recognize it, and there we encounter our first difficulty. Though in some ways it looms in almost too plain a sight – indeed a certain paradoxically obfuscating superabundance of evidence makes it resemble, with sometimes evocative precision, a purloined letter – our mountain is surrounded and perhaps compounded by reflection to such a degree that to date it has been but half-apprehended, dismissed as a mirage or ignored entirely.

Persistence in the face of this discouraging critical history might well begin with the authorial remarks which famously identify both the text and its most familiar principal with, as it happens, a mountain. It's not just that HCE himself is from the first conceived as "a primordial giant, a mountain, a god."¹ More to the point the very structure of *Finnegans Wake* is conceived – also from the first – in the same metaphor. According to Bishop, "[t]he comparison was to become a well-worked favorite, varying in form with the state of the work" [*Joyce's Book of the Dark* 20].² In Joyce's own words, *Finnegans Wake* in its relatively inchoate genesis was

like a mountain that I tunnel into from every direction, but I don't know what I will find' [Ellmann 543].

As the work develops, clearer structural differentiation emerges; but the conceit persists.

I am boring through a mountain from two sides. The question is, how to meet in the middle [Givens, cited *SMFW* 67].³

This latter remark is perhaps the earliest suggestion that *Finnegans Wake* has such

¹ p. 545 Ellmann, Richard. *James Joyce*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982. Henceforth cited as "Ellmann."

² p.20 Bishop, John. *Joyce's Book of the Dark*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986. Henceforth cited as "Bishop."

³ pp. 67 Hart, Clive. *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake*. USA: Northwestern University Press, 1962, henceforth cited as "*SMFW*."

a thing as a "middle." The identification of this middle – and the elucidation of its structural and semantic import – will be our chief aim. But the formulation also points up, however implicitly, one of the difficulties and duplicities which will complicate our search.

As the metaphor suggests, what central zone the Wake affords will be to a great degree a zone of depths. The author will mine a rich vein from the middle of his mountain; indeed we might even say he returns to bury there a certain treasure smelted from its ore. Like the deepest point in a mine or cavern, the site of this buried treasure will prove obscure, profound and eminently chthonic.

But the middle of a mountain, more obviously and intuitively, is also where – precisely above the depths of its most inaccessible center – it rises to a peak. In searching for our treasure, thus, we'll find that in characteristically Joycean *coincidentia oppositorum* the zenith of a summit and the nadir of a central depth have been made to coincide.

In other words the structural center of *Finnegans Wake* proves basically twofold, made of the propinquity and sometimes superposition of heights and depths. In one sense the summit is the vantage from which, in a steep and vertiginous juxtaposition, the abyss reveals itself. "It is like looking down from the cliffs of Moher into the depths," says the dean of studies, speaking to the young artist on the "aesthetic question," and then continues: "Many go down into the depths and never come up."⁴ No one before Joyce (and I would argue no strictly *literary* author since; those who follow Joyce most closely here have been the theorists) has sunk to these depths, and the idiom is variously apposite. *Finnegans Wake* chronicles the evolution of the

⁴ p. 204, Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Penguin USA, 1993, 2003. Henceforth cited as "*Portrait*" or "*P.*"

aesthetic beyond the beautiful, beyond at last even the sublime and into some sublimer synthesis of the sublime and the ridiculous, the sublimated and the abject, sublimation and the inchoate and chaotic sprawl of the most primordial and polymorphous perversions. The synthesis of height and depth becomes the synthesis of surface with substrate and finally of sign with substance in the central *matter* of the text, in which the material contingency of the sign becomes the semantic substance it bodies forth. As Beckett observed, *Finnegans Wake* "is not about something; it is that something itself."⁵ It's just that we haven't yet recognized how deliberately, how definitively, and above all how literally this is true.

The recognition of depth here requires in part precisely depth-perception. As in the optometric case, this depends on the simultaneous apprehension of two related zones, which in the ensuing pages I occasionally call the Wake's "center" and "epicenter." As the metaphor implies, the "epicenter" is where the shock of some great event is felt first – critically, at any rate. Subsequent investigation, however, indicates that the cause and origin of the disturbance lies some distance beneath – though not at all independent of – that surface.

Virtually the only critic, however, to take at all seriously the notion of a Wakean center of any sort, let alone a complicated one, remains Clive Hart, in his *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake*. Hart's work is immensely valuable. It is without question the chief point of departure for my own; but I have come to the view that what Hart has discerned as a textual center might be better described – and to a large degree in Hart's own terms – as an epicenter. An analysis of Hart's problematic

⁵ p. 14, Beckett, Samuel. "Dante ... Bruno. Vico ... Joyce," *Our Exagmination Round His Factification For Incamination Of Work In Progress*, Samuel Beckett et al, New York: New Directions, 1939. Henceforth cited as "*Symposium*."

evidence will be the subject of my first chapter. Insofar as it is eminently *apropos* to this introduction we might however briefly advert here to the text Hart finds crucial.

Though Hart (whose study concerns itself with mountains not at all) does not remark the fact, the chapter he forwards as central – II.3, or the third chapter of the Wake's second Book – announces with its first lines that this chapter is itself at least somewhere in the vicinity of the summit we seek. With the Wake's famous protagonist, we find ourselves at

the height of his life from a bride's eye stamppunct ... when a man that means a mountain ... wades a lymph that plays ... [309.03].

The evocation of a commanding, synoptic vista suggests however that this mountain's "peak" is also a "peek." In fact we here have "perhelps the prop of a prompt" [309.08] or cue that allows us to see something about the structure of the text as a whole; the view "begs the glory of a wake while the scheme is like your rumba" [309.07]. This rumba, with its 3/4 signature, has long been recognized [e.g. *Annotations* 309]⁶ as a gesture toward the three-against-four scheme, partly borrowed from the cyclical historical ages of Vico, which informs the Wake's structure variously, including in the disposition of its materials into three long Books followed by a shorter fourth. From this roughly central point we thus survey the entire

⁶ p. 309, McHugh, Roland, *Annotations to Finnegans Wake*, 3rd Edition. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2006. The pagination of *Annotations* corresponds to the Wake's; hence unless context demands clarification it will generally be cited simply as "*Annotations*."

structural situation of the text precisely as though from a "height" or bird's-eye standpoint. But already we note – and with "the prop of a prompt" from the Wake's characteristic "superfetation" of meaning – a certain duplicity.

On the one hand, a bird's-eye standpoint is necessarily a height. But on the other, this height is not simply a coign of vantage but itself the object of a gaze: the bride's. One and the same phrase suggests a curiously doubled, if not doubly doubled, point of view. The very point from which the commanding vista is to be enjoyed is itself viewed from some point below which relativistically grants the first its status as "height." The owner of this "bride's eye" is familiar to even the most casual reader of the Wake; she is none other than the bride herself, HCE's consort Anna Livia Plurabelle or ALP, generously signaled throughout the text by her acrostics. We detect these acrostics here when we read that "a man that means a mountain ... wades **a** lymph that **p**lays." As her husband is the mountain, ALP is famously the Liffey. And "Lymph," as McHugh's *Annotations* [309] reminds us, derives from the Latin *lympa*, "clear water."

We might say thus that the river flows on the plain beneath the mountain, and looks up to it, even as the mountain, gazing into the water's depths, sees itself reflected. But of course the indeterminacy of the subject-object relations here interweaves identities more closely still. The deft portmanteau's assimilation of the bird's-eye standpoint with the "bride's eye" suggests not merely reflection but amalgamation. If the bride's eye *is* the bird's eye then the bride, too, gazes from the heights, and perhaps into the depths of a certain deferred and delayed self-recognition.

Wherever analysis of this abyssal situation comes to rest, the effect is worth remarking as an anticipation of our eventual discoveries. It's also an effect also noted in his way by Bishop, who finds it characteristic.

Showing HCE everywhere "anastomosingly assimilated" with his "streamline secret," these dyads [HCE and ALP] appear not only acrostically, but descriptively, turning "the solid man" -- "our mounding's mass" -- into a "melting mountain in a wooing wave" (132.7-8) or, since he lies moored to the earth like Gulliver in Lilliput, into "a Mons held by tent pegs and his pal whatholoosed on the run" (113.19-20 [L. mons, "mountain"]), the scene of the Wake itself extending "from Fonte-in-Monte to Tidingtown" (202.9 [note the "fountain" inside the "mountain," and the "tide" on which the "town" is based]). Ultimately, these dyadic configurations show that the real hero of *Finnegans Wake*, "The Bearded Mountain" figured in the relief map, never exists independently of his "streamline secret" and consort ... [Bishop 367].

In short, the conflation of identity we detect at the mountain's "height" is the same that Bishop has detected variously throughout the text.

It's worth citing Bishop's convenient garner of instances for their suggestion that the conflation of HCE's identity with ALP's is perhaps a matter of some import. And when we consider this in conjunction with the idea that in some way the identity of the Wake's principal is a mountain, an extremely obvious pun emerges. So far as I can determine criticism has made virtually nothing of this pun, perhaps because Joyce's own remarks, critical tradition itself and a sociological state of affairs only lately on the wane all predispose us to receive a *man* that means a mountain as the Wakean order of the day. But as Lacan might tell it, the joke is one door down. The kind of mountain most likely to come to mind for any European is of course an Alp. It's not the name of the father that means mountain, but the name of the mother.

In retrospect this is so obvious that it should have conditioned our reception of the text all along; but in any case when it *is* recognized, the narrative and structural implications of Joyce's identification of text and protagonist with a mountain are expanded and inverted.

Some of this re-cognition, as we've indicated, will involve a certain reframing of Hart's arguments. Hart (though once again his journey proceeds without taking our familiar landmark as a point of reference) has detected II.3 as central, and has further noted that there indeed something of narrative centrality happens to HCE: he's killed. More even than this, a full analysis of the chapter would have to deal with its depiction of that other central event in the life of its protagonist, namely marriage. Even in this expanded reception, however, II.3 remains chiefly concerned with the Wake's male protagonist.

But a careful analysis of "the real hero of *Finnegans Wake*, 'The Bearded Mountain'" has begun to suggest that at the very least some comparable center should reveal the central mountain as ALP herself. This proves to be the case. The chapter of this supplemental center is found but one door down, as the theme of juxtaposition would suggest. It is the chapter immediately prior to II.3, II.2.

As it happens II.2 and II.3 are already the chapters most frequently entertained, when the question arises at all, as candidates for a structural center of *Finnegans Wake*. Of the two only II.3 has benefited from any substantial structural or semantic analysis to defend its claims. II.2, however, has at least this going for it: it is among the very first things to leap out at the reader of *Finnegans Wake*, because it is so strikingly *visual*.

Even at a first glance – which sometimes proves, as we will see, the last glance it gets – the chapter seems to emerge from the murk of surrounding opacity, almost teasing us with the promise that at last we will actually *see* what's going on. A fuller

analysis of II.2's typographical and pictorial quirks ensues in the first chapter of the present work. For now suffice it to say that by far the most conspicuous of II.2's visual gestures is its large central diagram -- an illustration of Euclid's first proof -- reproduced on the following page.

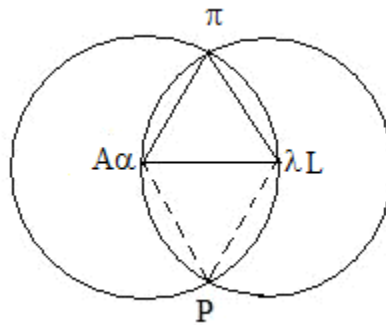


Figure I.1: The diagram of *Finnegans Wake*.

And there, caught in the same reflective duplicity which characterized its textual presentation at the beginning of II.3, we find the mountain revealed again, though this time, if anything, more clearly. It almost literally stands out as a sort of extra-literary event, something at the margin of literature and perhaps outside the margin altogether. The mountain appears this time not as a word but as a picture; more precisely, a picture of the bride. For when the veil of the obscuring text parts to reveal this mountain drawn as though with the schematic simplicity of a child (suitably for this chapter, sometimes called “The Children’s Hour” and supplemented on its last page by two pictures in a childish hand), the mountain proves to mean a woman after all. If we’re still in doubt, the letter rushes back in at the last minute with its own truth: inscribed within the picture itself is the name of the mountain and the name of the mother: ALP.

As we'll see in more detail, II.2 does indeed indicate – as do certain other zones of the text – that this geometric figure *is* a mountain, and not just any kind of mountain but, of course, one of the Alps; according to the chapter itself, “the Madderhorn” [274.04]. But at this point the question might well recur: Why a mountain at all? The metaphor is apt to a general structural and compositional situation, as we've seen and as the author himself suggests: but a careful reading of the *Wake* as a whole and II.2 in particular suggests there's more at stake. Giambattista Vico's *New Science* has long been recognized as a source of one of the *Wake*'s most determining tropes: the thunder, inaugural of history and language and construed by primitive man as the self-naming Law of a paternal God. Various aspects of this “primal scene” are well-known, but one aspect at least has received shorter critical shrift than it might. The physical location of the primordial reception, its place in space, is *on the top of a mountain*. This is necessarily the case, explains Vico, for at the time the first thunder – discharged from clouds formed from the still evaporating waters of the Flood – sounds, only the unsubmerged tops of mountains are available for habitation.

We'll treat more of this and related topics in the second chapter of the present work. For the moment suffice it to say that whatever the genesis of Joyce's notion that his work was in some way essentially mountainous (a condition which also informs the text's frequent allusions to itself as a pile of rubbish, heap of dung, etc.), the metaphor of the mountain is usefully tangent to one of the *Wake*'s most sustained structural and thematic conceits: its well-known thunderwords, variously parodic of Vico's. The geographical site of the *ur*-utterance mountain is the spatial correlate of the thunder's inaugural place in time. If the *Wake* is as self-referential as is often claimed, it makes sense that a mountain – a structural metaphor in any case, as Joyce himself indicates – would announce itself as a crucial physical location within the geometry or geography as it were of the text itself considered as physical artifact.

Whatever the importance of these considerations, however (and the importance will prove considerable), the discussion of spatial structure cannot help but remind us that the visual representation of the mountain in II.2 has been highly stylized and abstracted. In the event it's less a childish scrawl than a sort of rigid Platonic ideal of a mountain rendered as a precise equilateral triangle. There are several reasons for this, but one of them is obvious enough to any serious student of the Wake. In his compositional notes – and occasionally in the text-proper – Joyce represented his characters through tidy abstract geometric formalisms which Roland McHugh, their chief explicator, has dubbed "sigla." An upright equilateral triangle – precisely limned in the diagram's upper half – is the "siglum" through which her creator represented the Wake's *magna mater*: ALP. Once again, the obvious pun: yes, the upper triangle of the diagram is a schematic of a mountain: it's just that the mountain, once again, is really an ALP.

Neat, but the situation begs a second question: why make the woman a triangle at all? Again, there are many reasons, and many of them have been noted. The triangle is an ancient image of the female sex, a sort of assimilation of the pubic delta and the womb. A delta, of course, is also where a river ends up, where it gives itself into the sea as ALP does on the Wake's last page. (Though in passing we might observe that this conventional interpretation finds itself intriguingly supplemented by yet another of the text's gestures towards circularity when we discover that as a mountain the equilateral triangle also represents the river's origin, as the Wake variously notes in the Wicklow Mountains.) But whatever hay the text makes of the situation, the intriguing fact remains that ALP is by no means Joyce's first reduction of Woman to this kind of geometrical abstraction. Though the trope has not received sufficient attention, in fact there's a veritable Joycean tradition of the feminine triangle.

To this tradition we will shortly turn. But first, to summarize some of the

suggestions which emerge so far. It begins to seem plausible at least that the text of *Finnegans Wake* forwards as some crucial site of origins some textual event associated with origin in the most comprehensive sense: that is to say, an origin both of history and of persons. It's not simply that we encounter a stylized version of the site of Vico's original scene, generative of history and language. We also find a stylized abstraction, in part almost a Platonic version, of the *mother* of the book, and specifically – if the critical tradition (unequivocally justified by the text, as we'll see) of the diagram as a version of the womb is taken into account – in her capacity as generatrix.

* * *

Notions of Centrality

Already, though, certain readers might feel inclined to raise objections. Surely, nothing at once so simple-minded and so grandiose, so pat and at last perhaps so vulgar as a "punchline" should be the object of "great" literature, either in its production or its reception. Even if the "punchline" manages to acquire some of the dignity proper to an epiphany, if this mountain of text really has laboured to bring forth so negligible a mouse perhaps *Finnegans Wake* is no more than the sterile white-elephant so many of its fiercest critics have claimed it to be. Either that, or a reading that discerns such an event in a text so famous for proliferation, profusion and undecidability has by definition discerned only the reflection of the reader's monomania.

These are sensible objections, particularly insofar as they issue from a certain commendable sensibility. But while giving them the weight they are so evidently due,

we might briefly consider some of the questions that weigh on the other end of the scale.

The first, of course, would be the question whether *Finnegans Wake* is in fact "great" literature, or, indeed, whether it is literature at all. Clearly, its style has reserved for it some sort of special place, one that seems to oscillate between exclusion and centrality. Terry Eagleton has observed more or less that the litmus test of any literary theory is whether it applies to *Finnegans Wake*. Whether or not this formula is fair or useful, it depends on a not-implausible and perhaps generally implicit reception of the Wake as an artifact which by its occupation of the margins finds itself precisely definitive of – and thus central to – a field of operations in the way that limit-cases often are. This peculiar condition of included exclusion is anticipated nearly from the beginning, by the author at least, who implied the temporal resolution of the spatial paradox. Told by Mary Colum that his latest work was "outside literature," Joyce replied that "it may be outside literature now, but its future is inside literature." In a certain sense, Joyce's prediction has obviously been vindicated. Eagleton's adduction of the Wake as a test-case depends in part on the influence of theory which, particularly in its deconstructive and psychoanalytic veins, is often vaguely allied – whether by its principal architects, their *manques* or their opponents – with the Wakean text.

Of course one of the criticisms leveled at theory is that its baroque apparatus is able to invest even vulgar objects with the appearance of interest. Whether or not this is a reasonable objection does not fall within our immediate purview to decide. We already know, however, that one of theory's most fetishized texts is perhaps the most famous instance of a writing famous for concentration on the punctiform epiphany, the moment of "aha." Plausibly, the vulgar machinations of the detective story might warrant its exclusion from serious discussion; but such has not proved the case.

Instead the very prototype of the genre – Poe's *The Purloined Letter* – has proved a prototype of theory, unexpectedly worming its way from the periphery into the heart of academic affairs.

It will already have occurred to readers of the *Wake* that despite the evident difficulties of its style one of the things that the text has made plain over the years is that the provenance and content of some *letter* are in question; indeed, we might say that this is one of the things Joyce's critically marginal text has in common with Poe's. Joyce's *coup* is that despite the artful and semantically crucial maintenance of an all-but-indefinite suspense, he finally constrains the legion suggestions of the text to the letter's single place; at least to the degree Poe does, and perhaps even more surely. Of course once the location of this letter has been defined speculation may descend, precisely as in the better-known instance, as to whether and to what degree this letter has arrived at its destination or even left its source. But just as the elaboration of the question in Poe is assisted by the recognition that in some provisionally acceptable sense the text implies that the letter was left on the *escritoire*, so the identification of an analogous place in *Finnegans Wake* will, so far from curtailing discussion, afford it focus.

Of course even those who grant that Poe's letter enjoys an at least notional location must concede that its content remains provocatively mysterious. It is precisely this absence of content which has fitted it so well for the machinations of theory, for which it thus serves as an index of the "pure" if perpetually violable signifier. The case will prove to be somewhat the same in the *Wake*; but we will be well advised to keep Beckett's injunction in mind once more. To a great degree, certainly, the letter will prove to be less about something than "that something itself." But the purity of signifiers is difficult of preservation, a fact Joyce, at least, was prepared to acknowledge even in his most purely formal exercises. In consequence it is even more

the case with Joyce than it is with Poe that the letter *is* about something after all; indeed, it is the chief virtue of Joyce's technique that the letter is allowed to be about a very great deal, becoming a signal instance indeed of language saturated with meaning to the utmost possible degree.

Even in its denotational capacity, however, the letter is once again more than anything else about *itself*. Indeed, to the degree that theory is cited in defense of the increasingly bland imagination of an indefinite hegemony of the indeterminate (a critical univocity into which Derrida, the power of whose writing depends as often on the assertion of unsuspected identities as it does on their dissection, seldom falls), there will be a certain poetry in the condition that in being so about itself the letter recognizably becomes an instance of the object perhaps most critically fetishized. But this is to come.

In any case: whether we like them or not, literary artifacts of the type that *do* evince crucial and relatively punctiform revelations have insinuated themselves into critical discussion. It's not just that there *are* in fact books of this kind; common academic practice has already made way for them. The question isn't whether or not the writing or reading of texts that evince this kind of focus is legitimate; rather, it's whether or not *Finnegans Wake* is in fact this kind of text. I will suggest that a preponderance of the evidence implies that it is. But before moving on entirely from this introductory discussion of the question it might be as well to note another kind of text – perhaps the most canonical variety of all – that often seems to be organized around the achievement of some central goal, discovery or revelation. This is the epic.

The epic, indeed, may be the most determinate and most central margin literature has. Rooted in the voice, not the letter, it stands in part on that account at the entrance to literacy as in some ways (and in some ways *soi disant*) the first and founding work of cultural imaginations. It's not just that the first text in an introduction to English

literature is often enough *Beowulf*, or even that Homer is inaugural for the "literature" of the West. The very first literary tale to which humanity at large is heir – that is, anything resembling a story in a traditional sense that has been *written down* – is the Epic of Gilgamesh. As those who have read it can aver, this prototype of a prototype is geared overwhelmingly toward a single climax: the hero's brief grasp of the object that confers immortality.

To be sure, not all epics are organized by this device, nor even organized toward any goal quite so ineluctably as is Gilgamesh (though one might note – Joyce certainly did – that even in Homer the unveiling of Odysseus in Ithaca evinces something of the crescendo). But a particular kind of epic certainly *is* organized this way; the medieval Romance, with the epic quest of its protagonist for the paragon, often enough the Holy Grail. The finest expression of this particular epic form stands out from its peers to the degree that the name of its author has itself become, with Homer and Shakespeare, the name of the canonical *per se*. Indeed T.S. Eliot finds that by comparison even Homer is excluded from a company so rarified: "Shakespeare and Dante share the world between them. There is no third."

"Nothing would be worth plowing through like this," observed Pound of the Wake, "except the Divine Vision – and I gather its not that sort of thing" [Ellmann 585]. And yet it turns out that to a surprising degree that's precisely the sort of thing the Wake is. In fact Dante serves as a useful entry to one of the Wake's most central and puzzling chapters in a curiously compound way. Indeed, the Wake seems to stage – not at its notoriously non-terminal "end" but instead, and appropriately for its sort of epic "cycle," at some central hub or axis – a vision. Like Dante's, this vision moves at last toward a consideration of the miracle of the Incarnation. It also, however, translates the well-known geometric figure which closes the Comedy into a meditation primarily on a *triangle*; though even this triangle, it develops, is associated in Joyce's thought to

a great extent with Dante.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* – the acme of the medieval Romance and perhaps of the epic form as a whole – made a great impact on the Moderns, and on none more than Joyce. A raft of criticism has already documented the influence – often enough structural – of all of Dante, including the *Comedy*, on all of Joyce's writing, including the *Wake*. The most comprehensive study is Mary Reynold's *Joyce and Dante: The Shaping Imagination*.⁷ And in her examination of the *Wake* Reynolds comes to an interesting conclusion: II.2 – the very chapter which, in part on account of its geometrical diagram, currently engages our attention – becomes, through a series of allusions to the *Paradiso*, the *Wake*'s structurally central expression of some ultimate vision.

Reynolds was not the first to suspect something of the sort in this textual vicinity. She herself cites Atherton, whose *Books at the Wake* noted that "The recognizable quotations from Dante ... nearly all come in the 'Night Lessons' Chapter (260-308) and references to ... the *Divine Comedy* are fairly evenly spaced around this chapter" [Atherton 79].⁸ Reynolds also notes that scholars like Phillips, Senn, Hart, DiBernardi, Sidnell and Philippe Sollers have all in various ways suggested that "Dante allusions in the geometry lesson point to circular patterns that connect Dante's *Paradiso* with the tenth chapter specifically, and also with the book's larger design" [Reynolds 208 and *n.*].

⁷ Reynold, Mary. *Joyce and Dante: The Shaping Imagination*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1981. Henceforth cited as "Reynolds."

⁸ p. 79, Atherton, James S. *The Books at the Wake: A Study of Literary Allusions in James Joyce's Finnegans Wake*. Viking, New York, 1960. Henceforth cited as "Atherton."

The Shaping Imagination has justly earned a place of pre-eminence in Joycean scholarship. Hearing of Reynold's recent death, Robert Spoo, the editor of the *James Joyce Quarterly*, observed that the book was "definitive in Joyce studies." As Morris Beja put it, "the importance of Dante was exceptionally profound" in Joyce's work and Reynolds "was able to show just how pervasive it was."⁹ Yet despite her study's manifest importance, Reynolds remains (with, unfortunately, the scholars she cites) somewhat vague on the subject of *what* precisely the Wake's "larger design" might be, at least insofar as it relates specifically to "the tenth chapter" (II.2), and on the subject of how precisely the content of the Wakean "vision" detailed there amplifies our understanding of the work as a whole. The present study will take up these questions in the ensuing pages.

It's certainly not, however, that Reynolds says nothing whatsoever on these subjects, and what she says merits our attention. Reynolds' chief insight consists of the recognition that II.2's diagram is itself likely a Joycean parody of the punctiform epiphany toward which the *telos* of the entire Comedy tends: precisely the Divine Vision to which Pound ironically alludes.

As is (or used to be) well-known, Dante finds in his epic's final lines that even the exalted novelties of his new poetic power necessarily fall silent before the ineffable, and that

As the geometer intently seeks
To square the circle, but he cannot reach,
Through thought on thought, the principle he needs

⁹ New York Times, August 29, 2000

so are his own "wings ... far too weak" to communicate what he has seen concerning the ultimate mystery of the trinity and the incarnation.

But then my mind was struck by light that flashed

And, with this light, received what it had asked.

Here force failed my high fantasy; but my

Desire and will were moved already -- like

A wheel revolving uniformly -- by

The Love that moves the sun and the other stars.

[*Paradiso* XXXIII]¹⁰

At the summit of Dante's vision speech gives way to immediate intuition. As is so often the case, this intuition is represented as a light. This representation, like the geometrical figure which introduces it, will help us to recognize a similar effect in the Wake, when – and precisely when, as II.2 will put it "flash becomes word and silents selflound" [267.16] – the perpetual opacity of the text gives way to the promised clarity of a picture.

But as the formula adduced here suggests, this incarnation isn't simply the moment when word becomes flesh; in crucial addition, the "flash" becomes precisely "word." Vision doesn't simply transcend language, it becomes it.

Where Dante fails, in other words, Joyce presses on, into and beyond the zone where Eliot, in his own iteration of the Vision of the Rose, found that

¹⁰ Alighieri, Dante, *Paradiso*. Translated by Allen Mandelbaum.

Random House, New York, 1984. Henceforth cited as "*Paradiso*."

Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still.

Of course Joyce's Word won't stay still either; it's just that in learning where the dance is (at the still center of his own turning word, of course) Joyce is able to keep up with it.

None of the foregoing is of particular concern to Reynolds, but we do note that her meditations centripetally tend, though more obliquely, toward the figure that has begun to command our own gaze. As Shem's exegesis of the triangle (effected for the benefit of his brother Shaun, the two comprising, as Reynolds notes "a daintical [Dantesque] pair of accomplasses" [295.27]) moves to its conclusion, Reynolds draws attention to the suggestive promise of its "vision:"

"Now ... I'll make you to see figuratleavely the whome of your eternal geomater." ... Adaline Glasheen's *Third Census* picks up the etymology of "geomater" to remark on the suggestion of Earth-Mother; the word is also an equivalent of Dante's "geometra."

Qual e 'l geometra che tutto s'affige
Per misurar lo cerchio ...
.
As the geometer who sets himself

To measure the circle ...

(Par. 33:133-134) [Reynolds 211]

And this is what brings us to the Joycean tradition of associating the principal geometric figure discerned here with: 1) a somewhat and sometimes explicitly Dantean figure of the desired woman and 2) a vision.

Reynolds herself reminds us of the first half of this tradition, which we find concerns once more not just vision but revelation.

Joyce's geometry problem becomes grotesque when Kev and Dolph, the twins of the Night Lessons chapter, seek the mystery of creation by lifting the skirt of Anna Livia to see her "muddy old triagonal delta," the "first of all usquilateral threeingles." There is an echo here also of Stephen's rambling remarks in *Eumaeus*: Dante and the isosceles triangle, Miss Portinari, he fell in love with ..." (U 637:25-6).

[Reynolds 212]

Indeed there is. When we consult Gifford's indispensable *Ulysses Annotated* for some clue as to what might inspire the peculiar metaphor of *Eumaeus*, we find a plausible enough explanation:

Beatrice was married to Simone de Bardi, hence the "triangle," presumably "isosceles" because Dante's idealization of Beatrice's image put him so far from the real marriage relationship at the triangle's

base.¹¹

No doubt. But Joyce's own remarks, received both directly and indirectly, also incline us to receive the figure as the assimilation of a desired feminine ideal with aspects of *textual structure* itself. As Reynolds herself notes,

Joyce told Adolph Hoffmeister, "Number is an enigma that God deciphers."

I have discovered the importance of numbers in life and history. Dante was obsessed by the number three. He divided his poem into three parts, each with thirty-three cantos, written in terza rima. And why always the arrangement of four – four legs of a table, four legs of a horse, four seasons of the year, four provinces of Ireland. ... The significance of the same number varies, depending on where it occurs and what it refers to. [Reynolds 208].

The juxtaposition of numbers here is not, perhaps, entirely accidental. As we've noted above, the *Wake* plays three off against four relentlessly, generally by contradistinguishing one element from three related ones.

This sort of numerology – somewhat, perhaps, like the text which tends toward a

¹¹ p. 546, Gifford, Don and Seidman, Robert J. *Ulysses Annotated*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. Henceforth cited as "UA" followed by page number(s).

"special" moment – is not to everyone's taste; but it was, evidently to the taste of Joyce, whose work, in any case, has from its inception demonstrated a resolute indifference, bordering on contempt, for conventional taste, whether popular, clerical or academic. Some find this discerning of numerical pattern in contingency morbid or medieval. Joyce would agree. Asked whether his methods weren't, at bottom, trivial, Joyce famously replied that some were trivial and some were quadrivial [Ellmann 546], thereby at once implying the scope of a university education (if a medieval one) and, once more, the hobby horse of the three-four pattern cited, as we've seen, in II.3's opening assertion that "the scheme is like your rumba round me garden" [309.07].

Most apposite to our present case however is Joyce's accurate appraisal of the same sort of monomania (or triviamania) evinced by Dante in the structural ordering of his own text. For as Joyce recognized, Dante's obsession with threes went beyond the Comedy to constrain various of his other works, most notably *La Vita Nuova* and its treatment of Beatrice. This structural factor is at least as important as the romantic one in Stephen's curious characterization of Beatrice as constituting in *herself* (and not alone, *pace* Gifford, in her relations) a "triangle." And as much seems to be suggested by the article nominally by Samuel Beckett which opens the authorially guided *Symposium or Our Exagmination Round His Factification For Incamination Of Work In Progress*.

Of the contributors to the *Symposium* Joyce famously admitted that he had stood behind "those twelve Marshals more or less directing them what lines of research to follow" [quoted in Ellmann, 612]. The book opens with Beckett's piece, which in its title economically announces the three most important influences on the Wake as a whole. Beckett's "Dante ... Bruno. Vico ... Joyce" constitutes perhaps the earliest, most determining hint as to the structure and content of the Wake available to scholarship.

Scholarship has, however, more or less reversed the priorities suggested by the title. In general exegesis Bruno has run second to Vico, and Dante – despite the doughty work of Reynolds *et al.* – has tended to run a distant third. The present study, for better or worse, will likewise tend for the most part to take the name of Vico as the most important first word in Wakean criticism. But for the moment we will mitigate the injustice by returning, with Beckett and his *maitre*, to the question of Dante. *Symposium's* opening article makes various observations of merit on this score, but the only one that will detain us here concerns the mathematics discussed above. Comparing Dante and Joyce, Beckett – though apparently in his capacity as amanuensis – writes:

Another point of comparison is the preoccupation with the significance of numbers. The death of Beatrice inspired nothing less than a highly complicated poem dealing with the importance of the number 3 in her life. Dante never ceased to be obsessed by this number. Thus the Poem is divided into three Cantiche, each composed of 33 Canti, and written in terza rima. Why, Mr. Joyce seems to say, should there be four legs to a table, and four to a horse, and four seasons and four Gospels and four Provinces in Ireland? [*Symposium* 21]

The text at this point is in fact but a lightly amended *redivivus* of Joyce's letter on the same topic cited by Reynolds above. The difference is that in this iteration the linking of Beatrice at once with trinity and the *Divine Comedy* is much more firmly established. Indeed, as Stephen remarks, the author of the Comedy seems to have fallen in love with precisely a triangle.

Ulysses' identification of the muse Beatrice with a triangle, however, scarcely

exhausts the Joycean dilation on the theme, even within *Ulysses* itself. In fact any student of Joyce who exercises memory in this regard is likely to recall that the instance cited by Reynolds is by far the least developed example of its type. There are at least two important and sustained elaborations of the metaphor prior to the *Wake*. Indeed when the *Wake*'s instance is taken into account with its anticipations in *Portrait* and *Ulysses* we see that a sort of triangular *leitmotif* links Joyce's three published novels.

* * *

The Triangle

As readers of *Portrait* may recall, the equation of the desired woman with the triangle obviously impressed itself on Joyce's imagination early. In distinguishing the static impulse from the kinetic (to the advantage of the former) in his discussion with Lynch, Stephen, searching for the appropriate aesthetic object, curiously transubstantiates the classical archetype of the desired woman into the sublime stasis of a geometrical abstraction.

It's Stephen's other number, Lynch, the devil's advocate of the piece appropriately answering Stephen's ethereal formulations in his own "deep bass voice" [*Portrait* 227], who actually introduces us to the muse. The terms of Lynch's own desire could not be less Platonic; indeed they descend (though with the help of Stephen's anamnestic midwifery) to a parodic hyperbole of the grossly material.

- You say that art must not excite desire, said Lynch. I told you than one day I wrote my name in pencil on the backside of the Venus of

Praxiteles in the Museum. Was that not desire?

- I speak of normal natures, said Stephen. You also told me that when you were a boy in that charming carmelite school you ate pieces of dried cowdung.

Lynch broke again into a whinny of laughter and again rubbed both his hands over his groins but without taking them from his pockets.

- O I did! I did! he cried. [*Portrait 222*]

One does not require, perhaps, an intimate acquaintance with the vagaries of Joyce's correspondence to detect the almost vehement insinuation of a certain scatophilia here. In this case of course it's safely shunted off on to another; but when we come at last to a closer examination of the Wake's diagram – and particularly to a fascinating climax (the term will gradually reveal its inevitable overdetermination) in which brother and other conspire and at last confound – it will behoove us to recall the terms in which the "wrong kind of art" becomes such a crucial question of taste here.

For the moment, though, Stephen's further rejoinder - even its medieval caste - is more to our purposes. Taking the goddess as an obvious enough example, Lynch seems to have uncovered the root desire that esthetic sublimation merely masks. But Stephen, unperturbed, tenders in response an object so abstract that it would seem proof against Lynchian subversion. Inspired by Aquinas (and anticipating his own meditations on Lessing's aesthetic categories in *Proteus*) Stephen seeks refuge in the stasis of the visual register; and as though to make assurance doubly sure, his esthetic object becomes pure geometry, safely abstracted from the sinuous and dynamic lines of the flesh.

- Aquinas, said Stephen ... uses the word *visa* ... to cover esthetic

apprehensions of all kinds, whether through sight ... or through any other avenue of apprehension. This word, though it is vague, is clear enough to keep away good and evil which excite desire and loathing. It means certainly a stasis and not a kinesis. How about the true? It produces also a stasis of the mind. You would not write your name in pencil across the hypotenuse of a rightangled triangle. [*Portrait 225*]

This, it would seem, is an impregnable argument. But when Stephen receives his own message in reverse form from the other, it's another argument that's clinched (or Lynched).

- No, said Lynch, give me the hypotenuse of the Venus of Praxiteles.
[*Portrait 225*]

Incorrigible.

He who would investigate the depths of the aesthetic question, it seems, must perforce descend. Just as in the Wake's diagram, there are already *two* triangles, an upper and a lower; and despite *Portrait's* efforts to distinguish them, a slightly sinister playfulness insists their complicity. We note, however, certain striking elements in the desire that eventually, and despite all Stephen's good intentions, has its way here. The first is that though it's self-evidently a carnal desire, and the triumph and expression of that desire is at least at first Lynch's conscious aim, the nominally reproductive urge becomes as well the desire of and for a body in quite a different sense. It becomes an oral desire; and if it's in any way infantile, it seems grossly wrong-headed, aiming at the ingestion of rather the wrong sort of matter. This evidence of a certain perversion, however, is not, despite its lurid character, at all the most peculiar aspect of desire

here. More striking is that the all-too-kinetic desire which topples the triangle from its abstract safety into the lap of Venus herself becomes *writing*; in this case, specifically the *writing of a name*.

Read closely, thus, Stephen's nominally rarified disquisition finds itself constantly interrupted by antic elements that would seem more at home in *Nighttown*. When we turn to *Ulysses* and its most sustained development of the triangle trope, the Rabelaisian tone is not quite so pronounced. We do find, however, that once again a sublime esthetic comes to grief at the hands of a smirking and robustly incarnate antagonist. More strikingly: we again discern the identity of Woman with a triangle that becomes, however strangely, the object of oral desire while simultaneously and more strangely still becoming the *site of writing*.

Once again, the register is the visual. This time, though, and more in the Dantean line, the visual is precisely a vision, suffered this time by Stephen's *other other*, Bloom, in *Oxen of the Sun*.

And the ... portent grows again, magnified in the deserted heavens, nay to heaven's own magnitude, till it looms, vast, over the house of Virgo. And lo, wonder of metempsychosis, it is she, the everlasting bride, harbinger of the daystar, the bride, ever virgin. It is she, Martha, thou lost one, Millicent, the young, the dear, the radiant. How serene does she now arise, a queen among the Pleiades, in the penultimate antelucan hour, shod in sandals of bright gold, coifed with a veil of what do you call it gossamer. It floats, if flows about her starborn flesh and loose it streams, emerald, sapphire, mauve and heliotrope, sustained on currents of the cold interstellar wind, winding, coiling, simply swirling, writhing in the skies a mysterious writing till, after a

myriad metamorphoses of symbol, it blazes, Alpha, a ruby and
triangled sign upon the forehead of Taurus.¹²

As will eventually become clear, a very great deal of the Wake's ultimate vision - indeed, a great deal of our thesis - is anticipated in Bloom's vision here. But in order to take entire account of the resonance of this scene with *Portrait's* we must allow it to play out to its own punchline. Once more this is delivered by some base, visceral opposite number - Mulligan, *Ulysses'* worldly medical man. This time it's Buck who sings the bathetic bass.

And though for a different reason than in *Portrait*, that term is once more apt. While certifying for us that it is indeed a vision that Bloom is undergoing, Mulligan also points out what the visionary is really seeing. That is, he points ...

... to the stranger and the scarlet label. Warily, Malachi whispered,
preserve a druid silence. His soul is far away. It is as painful perhaps
to be awakened from a vision as to be born. Any object, intensely
regarded, may be a gate of access to the incorruptible eon of the gods.
[U 340].

What, precisely, has Bloom been staring at? What *is* the scarlet label?

¹² p. 338, Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. New York: Random House
(Modern Library) 1961 Rpt. as *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*, ed. Hans
Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior. New York:
Random House, 1986.

During the past four minutes or thereabouts he had been staring hard at a certain amount of number one Bass ... which was certainly calculated to attract anyone's remark on account of its scarlet appearance. [U 340]

Hence the "ruby and triangled sign" of Bloom's astrological vision; for the Bass trademark, *soi disant* "The Oldest Trademark in the World," is of course a red equilateral triangle.

We find thus that once more there are two triangles where we would expect to find one. Just as Stephen's sublime abstraction revealed itself as the pubic delta of Lynch's baser muse, so Bloom's heavenly sign is Mulligan's bottle of beer. This time, though, the transition from the feminized esthetic ideal to its baser counterpart is so discordant that we would expect the concatenation with *Portrait's* scene to be broken. But it isn't. Though this time projected desire is caught in a subtler play of self and other, it noticeably persists. So the desired woman is now a bottle of Bass Number One ale? What of it! Appetite will be served, as surely as it was in *Portrait's* scene, and in much the same terms.

Just at the moment when Mulligan, Bloom and the reader all recognize the vision in its humbler guise, Bloom yields utterly. Curiously, though, he's driven to kinesis in part by some "other" with whose will his own becomes confounded.

... [B]oth their eyes met and as soon as it began to dawn on him that the other was endeavouring to help himself to the thing he involuntarily took hold of the neck of the mediumsized glass recipient which contained the fluid sought after and made a capacious hole in it by pouring a lot of it out [U 340]

In this instance the scatological element is absent. But in other respects the broad outlines are retained, and the equation rattles surely on to its conclusion. A sublime vision of Woman finds itself also associated with the *act of writing* and is revealed in its baser material correlate as the object of oral desire. And once again, the entire operation turns – from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the heavens to the earth – on the duplicity of a triangle.

By this point it's becoming clear that the author's decision to include a doubled triangle in the text of *Finnegans Wake* – and to include it, as will become clear, in a structurally crucial zone – derives in part from a consciousness of his previous fictions. Vico's mountain, it's true, looms large; but it's deliberate schematization as a triangle begins to look like part of a necessary strategy to give ALP her inevitable turn as the Joycean triangle of writing's doubled muse.

To a degree, a consideration of the diagram itself is sufficient for us to recognize many of the elements from *Portrait* and *Ulysses*. There, after all, is plainly enough a triangle, doubled into upper and lower, elevated and abased versions. The triangle proves to be the site of a *writing*; in fact, as in *Portrait's* case the writing of a name. In this case the writing itself forwards the duplicity and the distinction of the triangle's complementary registers, for the writing itself is of two registers. The demotic Roman letters that label the vertices of the lower triangle gives way to the sublimity of the Greek alphabet in the upper. And though the triangle is in some ways even more emphatically a creature of space and sight than is Stephen's triangle in *Portrait* – not even *Portrait*, after all, interrupts the conventional flow of its text in order to draw us some outlandish picture – the writing that takes place within it leaves no doubt that our vision is of Woman. It is in fact the name of the woman – really, no less than the Name of the Mother – that is written within the triangle itself, where once Lynch would have indited his *own* name.

It will turn out, however, that something of a Lynchian writing persists. Though the Name of the Mother is aptly blazoned on her “siglum” proper, the upper triangle itself, we’re not quite sure how to read that name when its reflected in the lower; that suggestively shaped inversion or subversion of the mother which forms the figure where Lynch would put his pencil. Lynch would find it eminently legible, and we, too, will learn to read it soon enough. But for the moment that puzzle may be put aside in favor of a more general consideration of the theme of writing.

For this, obviously, is one of the chief things with which Joyce’s triangles consistently involve themselves. When we turn, thus, to the Wake’s own exploitation of the motif, we should not be surprised that this is staged in a chapter which announces itself to be precisely concerned with the genesis of writing itself.

* * *

Writing on the Triangle

As has long been recognized II.2 is the “Nightlessons” chapter, in which the children do their homework. This breaks down into two fields: mathematics and literature. The twins concern themselves with mathematics, their investigations culminating with a demonstration of Euclid’s First Proof, represented by the diagram. This, consisting as it does of the familiar doubled triangles, will despite its mathematical character prove of course to take writing as its theme, and to an even greater degree than triangles past. Through various curious distortions Joyce turns mathematics itself into the very genesis of language. As we will see, the Name at last indited on the Wake’s triangle will be the “*Nom de Nombres!*” [285.L3]: at once the Name of Names and the Name of Numbers.

But it's the occupations of the twins' sister, Isabel or Issy, to which the chapter's early development of the homework theme is given over. Issy is given charge of literature outright, but her education takes a very particular turn, revolving entirely around the composition of a letter.

In order to compose her letter, she must necessarily learn the rudiments of writing itself. On the one hand she learns these from a handbook bequeathed by an older female, alternately her mother and her grandmother. On the other, her knowledge seems to be already intrinsic.

But all is her inbourne. Intend. From gramma's grammar she has it that if there is a third person, mascarine, phelinine or nuder, being spoken abad it moods prosodes from a person speaking to her second which the direct object ... [268.17]

This parodic course in grammar persists off and on for the next several pages, though that "all is her inbourne" would seem to render Issy's rehearsals redundant. Of course "all" may include much more than syntax; everything in the book, with the qualified exception of the pictures, necessarily proceeds from – or is reducible to – writing, and as we'll learn this wider sense may be the more apt construction here.

In any case Issy's "lessons," if that's what they are, come to a head some twelve pages later with her composition. This is modeled on the copy-book letters of the early 20th century, in which young ladies were provided epistolary templates for various social situations.

Dear (name of desired subject, A.N.), well, and I go on to. Shlicksher.

I and we (tender condolences for happy funeral, one if) so sorry to

(mention person suppressed for the moment, F.M.) Well (enquires after allhealths) how are you (question maggy). [280.09]

And so on in this vein.

To some degree Joyce's writing has *always* been about writing, and we shouldn't be greatly surprised to see that the theme persists in his last work. The Wake's best-known motif in this regard is of course its famous Letter. But the Letter acquires special interest for us when we realize that that its prototype is in fact being written (and rewritten) here, in this chapter which has drawn so much of our attention.

Once attention is directed to Issy's fledgling efforts in II.2, a student of the Wake cannot help but recognize it as a younger version of ALP's Letter, finally unearthed a few pages before the "end" of the Wake in the brief Book IV.

Dear. And we go on to Dirdump. Reverend. May we add majesty?
Well, we have frankly enjoyed more than anything these secret workings of natures (thanks ever for it, we humbly pray) and, well, was really so denighted of this lights time. [615.12]

ALP's letter goes on for rather longer than her daughter's, but the stylistic correspondences are clear: the conventional opening salutation, the iteration of the phrase "go on to," and especially the constant repetition of "well" in both efforts. (This last is particularly marked in ALP's case; exactly half of her paragraphs begin thus.)

Critics have often complained of the lack of content in ALP's letter. One of the great puzzles and disappointments of the Wake is that the eventual revelation of this long-discussed document is so bare of information. Nor does the style ascend to any

particularly febrile heights; if anything, its comparatively subdued.

But as the present work will contend, neither the contents nor the style of ALP's Letter in IV are the point. The chief point is its *placement* in a general structural situation that points not to the Letter itself but to a retrospectively obvious pun detonated, as it happens, in II.2. The detection of this pun requires the detection less of the final product – ALP's mature correspondence – than as it were of the Letter-in-germ, or, more precisely, the Letter at its zone of origins.

Issy's prototype in II.2 is one of the hints that it is in this chapter that we must seek the Letter's origin. Other than in I.5, the "Letter" chapter itself (more concerned with a puzzled academic inquiry) this is the only sustained development of the Letter's prototype in the Wake. II.2, however, is far more insistent about the theme than even I.5, a fact which the conventional designation of the latter as the "Letter chapter" is in danger of overlooking.

In fact II.2 is the site of not one but at least *four* versions of the Letter, all composed by the children. Issy's template effort, whose beginning we've seen, is supplemented by another letter in her hand which appears in the chapter's longest (nearly a page in length) footnote on page 279, and the twins take their turn on page 301. The point is driven home with particular force however at chapter's close. The last text-proper in II.2 is the brief and sinister "Nightletter," composed jointly by all the children. Intriguingly, the geneticist Danis Rose notes that originally Joyce intended this letter "to appear on a page of its own after the 'night studies' and thereby at the dead centre of the book" [Rose 120] (a fact around which Roland McHugh at first hoped to develop a structural theory before being understandably baffled, apparently, by what he called the "exquisite concinnity" of II.2 which, he purported, might "seal its mystery for all time" [SFW 61]).

No other chapter in the Wake – not even IV, the site of the Letter itself – contains

so many iterations of the theme. (Though Hart, who takes the Letter as one of the Wake's two chief motifs, does not discuss II.2 in this regard, a brief glance at his own catalogue of "Major Statements of the Letter" in the index to *Structure and Motif* immediately reveals II.2's pre-eminence in this regard.) This cluster of epistolary instances is in large part simply an indication that the chapter contains what is clearly, outside ALP's effort in IV, the Letter's quintessential instance, as we will see. And the location is obviously apt; for II.2 is demonstrably the chapter where writing itself is *learned*.

But among the many things that remain to be determined is the relationship of this seminal, germinal writing to the *diagram*. Already we have some inkling of the way in which a foundational writing will be proper to that double-vision of ALP. Our investigations of Joyce's earliest triangle have revealed it as the site of the name, and so, II.2 clearly posits, will be the triangles of the diagram. It's not just that as in Lynch's triangle a name is obviously enough written (perhaps twice) therein; the text that introduces the diagram proper – appearing on the very top of the diagram page – reveals that the name is the *purpose* of the entire construction. "You, you make what name?" one twin asks another as the diagram is revealed [293.01]. And here is where our mountain and our triangle reveal the *raison d'être* of their assimilation. *Both* are the site of the Name. From Joyce's earliest published novel the triangle is destined to bear that inscription (also, it turns out, the inscription of some desire) and Vico's mountain, of course, is where Man hears the Name of God.

As will become clear – and as the pedagogical character of the chapter already indicates – the Wake's triangle episode has been conceived above all as a mythological return to the *origin of language*, portrayed in the terms long recognized as most congenial to the Wake; that is, portrayed in terms of Giambattista Vico's *New Science*. Vico's giant hears and echoes – twice, due to a fearful stutter – the plosive

sound of a primordial, post-flood thunder that seems to utter some celestial name. “Pa!” explodes the thunder; and Man, atop the mountain, hears and echoes: “Pa! Pa!” All Names of the Father, according to Vico, derive from this primordial meteorological accident.

Joyce has taken Vico at his word. Ten thunderwords, as is well known, echo throughout the *Wake*, and various other aspects of the *New Science* populate the *Wake*’s pages at the content level. But Joyce’s most crucial appropriation of Vico’s scheme will be a sort of trick played on the original. This trick is precisely analogous to the trick which has already revealed the mountain as the woman rather than the man, and is played at essentially the same instant. For the primordial Name of the history that is *Finnegans Wake* is not, at last, Vico’s doubly echoed Name of the Father, but the Name of the Mother.

This Name, as we would by now expect, is indited on the triangle. This time, though – and in accord with the Joycean tradition of the triangle – it will be a Name more of writing than of speech, more a visible than an audible Name. This Name is in consequence less *echoed* than *reflected*, precisely as the lower triangle reflects the upper. So there, in the lower triangle, precisely where Lynch would indite, we find the *visual echo* of the Name of the Mother. To read it, we must simply read the Name of the Mother – also of course the Name of the Mountain – backwards. The text, in the event, assists us, just as Shem is assisting Shaun to his revelation.

As the geometric proof at last reaches its conclusion – glossed by the right marginalium “*Prometheus or the Promise of Provision*” [297.L2] – on page 297, Shem has something (which, edible as well as visible, will prove precisely provision as much as vision) to show his brother.

You must proach near mear for at is dark. Lob. And light your mech.

Jeldy! And this is what you'll say. [297.14]

The play with a sudden illumination – the “light” of the “mech” Shaun strikes – emphasizes the visual aspect already suggested by fire bringing “*Prometheus*” with his “*Promise of Provision.*” We’re correctly predisposed, thus, to read “say” as “see” pronounced naturally enough with a Dublin brogue. But since the eminently visible word on the page itself does, after all, say “say,” Shem himself is saying not just what Shaun will see but what he will *say*. And this, one of the most crucial things the Wake has to say, is what Shaun says.

Waaaaaa. Tch! Sluice! Pla!” [297.17].

The brothers, as will become clearer, have fused at this moment, which accounts in part for the undecidability of “Waaaaaa. Tch!”, literally split between Shem’s final exhortation to behold the incipient vision and Shem’s own (quite complicated, as we’ll see) horrified and infantile cry. But at the moment it is of course the actual vision in question which concerns us. And this vision – inevitably as we’ve come to recognize – is of the triangle, in this case its lower version. The visual “echo” of the Name of the Mother is reflected in the text as surely as in the picture. We must read the Name of the Mother in the mirror of this vision; read it, that is, as Alice first read *Jabberwocky*: backwards. And then we can see what Shaun is seeing and simultaneously saying. Shaun is saying the Word that corresponds to the triangle he suddenly sees. He’s reading the letters that label the vertices of the triangle that reflects his mother siglum, and thus reading, inevitably, the Name of the Mother backwards: “Pla!” But notice what this inversion effects.

Joyce has exploited the symmetry intrinsic to one of his most persistent tropes to

effect a rather elegant parody of the Vichian primal word, the Name of the Father, here become not “Pa!” but “Pla!” Of course strictly speaking, this visual echo is only half the name. Just as the Name of the Father is received as “Pa! Pa!” so the Wake’s Name of the Mother is – obviously enough and consistent with the duplicity of Joyce’s earlier triangles – doubled. We will learn, thus, that “ALP,” the more “proper” Name in every sense of the Mother, has its *own* germinal role to play. In fact it is there that the germinal character of the Letter – the Wake’s dominant trope of writing *per se* – will be most clearly on display.

Even “Pla!”, however, the parody of Vico’s original thunder, is apparently to be taken as more of a *visible* than an audible event. It is for this reason, as we will see, that II.2 carefully and relentlessly builds up to the discharge of this Name as an instance *not* of the thunder, but of the thunder’s prior and visible cause: the lightning.

A careful textual analysis of this effect will be found in the last chapter of the present work. That chapter will also explore the ways in which the Wake itself – necessarily, in light of its central vision – clearly and repeatedly suggests that the total number of its “thunders” is *not* ten at all, as critical convention has had it thus far, but *twelve*. And when an overall structural situation is taken into account along with the Letter’s career in Book III, it becomes clear that the eleven and twelfth thunders are simply the *two most determinate versions of the Letter itself*, one, the conventionally recognized, found in IV and the other – the germ and original of the first, as we are beginning to see – found here in II.2. The “proper” Name of the Mother, itself reduced as we will see to the material substrate of writing, will prove to be what II.2 itself calls the Wake’s own “word in progress;” that is, the thunder before it assumes its larger and more familiar hundred-letter form.

Various conditions have hindered the detection of this, the saying and seeing that II.2 likewise calls the Wake’s “urutteration” and which forms both the thunder and the

Letter in germ. One, as “pregross” would suggest, is its size. The thunderwords are large, and thereby conspicuous, ALP’s final missive in IV even more so. “Pla!” is small, but such it must be, to be “the word in pregress.” Too, critical tradition, detecting ten thunderwords, has ignored the text’s own retrospectively obvious insistence that there are instead twelve. And of course the Wake’s primordial Name is characterized by the inversions we’ve already described: it’s the Name of the *Mother*, not the Father, and, as we’re learning, it curiously asserts that the origin of language is not voice at all but *writing*. In these respects and others thus its precisely the opposite of what criticism would expect.

Nevertheless, an abundance of themes and motifs indicate unmistakably that II.2 is the site of the Wake’s first thunderword. And for what it’s worth, the genetic evidence – the evidence of Joyce’s compositional progress – bears the hypothesis out.

* * *

The Genetic Situation

The Wake’s order of overall composition is now quite well understood, thanks chiefly to David Hayman, but in part to Danis Rose. Hayman, Rose and the rest of the geneticists are of one voice with respect to issues that pertain to our argument. The bulk of the Wake’s first Book – excluding its first chapter, I.1, conceived late and introduced as an overture – as well as the bulk of Book III were composed relatively early, Book II having taken shape not at all. But late in 1925, Joyce encountered two Freudian texts – “Little Hans” and more particularly “The Wolf Man” – that decisively realigned his vision of his project. Specifically, he noted a peculiar resonance between the Freudian primal scene and the Vichian.

The nature of this encounter will be treated in our chapter IV. Of import for the moment, however, is the result for structure. For it is at this point that the structural form of the entire *Wake* seems to have congealed.

Danis Rose puts the general situation as well as anyone.

While the revision of the four "Shaun" episodes (III.1-4) in the spring and early summer of 1926 proved exhausting for Joyce, it was nevertheless relatively straightforward work and so he was able simultaneously to begin to focus on a framework for a book that had to date, after all, extruded itself cellularly from episode to episode with no pre-existing ground-plan. With ten episodes behind him we was now in a position to consider the overall shape of *Finnegans Wake*. ... The first indication of his new plan is contained in a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver dated 21 May 1926:

I have the book now fairly well planned out in my head.¹³

As Rose notes, the recognition of this critical compositional juncture brings the geneticist to the point where

The remaining outstanding questions can now be addressed: – In what order and when did Joyce conceive of the episodes that yet remained to be written, namely, I.1., I.6, all of part II and the concluding part IV.

¹³ p. 89, Rose, Danis. *The Textual Diaries of James Joyce*. Lilliput Press, Dublin, 1995. Henceforth cited as "Rose."

[Rose 88]

As is generally agreed Joyce had until this moment no plans whatsoever for what is now the Wake's *first* chapter, nor any for its last. As for the second Book, all he knew was that he intended there should be one. It was only when Joyce had put III.4 – at that point intended to remain the Wake's last chapter – into its basically final form that an overarching structural scheme occurred. That some vision of the Wake's totality emerged here is evident in the answer to Rose's question. Having concluded III.4, Joyce was now in a position to begin anew. Accordingly, he almost immediately reached across the entire span of his extant work to begin the composition of the Wake's new "beginning," I.1.

The point of greatest relevance for us, though, is that Joyce did this *almost* immediately, but not quite. The very *first* thing the author of *Finnegans Wake* did once the book was "fairly well planned out" in his head is of considerable interest to us. At this point, which all geneticists agree is the crucial turning point in the production of his last work, Joyce interrupted his balletic leap from his erstwhile conclusion to his new beginning and *lighted in the middle*, to compose the very first piece of the thus far non-existent Book II to be executed. And as it happens, the piece is one with which we are by now quite familiar.

As Rose puts it,

When he had finished revising "Shaun" (III. 1-4), Joyce started to work on a section of the "night studies" (II.2) which he called "the triangle." Later on, when he revised the piece for publication in *Tales Told of Shem and Shaun*, he renamed it "The Muddest Thick That Was Ever Heard Dump." [Rose 91]

Having understood for the first time the full scope and structure of his work, the first thing Joyce did was to compose the triangle scene with which we have been so concerned. At a less certain stage of stage in his work, recall, our author had declared:

I am boring through a mountain from two sides. The question is, how to meet in the middle. [Givens, cited *SMFW* 67]

Having completed what was to have been his last chapter, Joyce had his answer: the triangle of II.2.

Rose is the geneticist who comes closest to putting the pieces together, going so far as to devote a brief chapter – entitled simply "The Triangle" to what is emerging as one of the Wake's most structurally crucial set-pieces. But Rose draws no conclusions of a thematic or structural nature. For Rose, as for others, II.2 remains simply a mass of unintelligibility, though Rose is less charitable than most, viewing the chapter as the greatest stylistic debacle of the Wake [Rose 117-20]. (Rose's spleen, it must be admitted, is easily if somewhat paradoxically vented on the work he has chosen to explicate.)

But several important realizations in fact emerge almost immediately from a recognition of II.2's geometrical vision as structurally central. And one of these involves precisely the role of the thunder.

Is the Vichian parody of "Pla!" compositionally as much an "urutteration" or "word in progress" with respect to the thunder as its location in this crucial vignette would suggest? II.2 itself is relentless in its suggestion that the answer is yes. As we've suggested and as will be demonstrated in the last chapter of this work, II.2 employs a raft of devices at once to augment the suggestions from other parts of the text that

there are twelve rather than ten thunders and to indicate that the special thunder here is strictly speaking less the thunder than its visible cause, the lightning.

But the suggestion that "Pla!" is in some way prototypical with respect to the thunder scheme that echoes throughout the Wake is strengthened even further by the genetic situation. For when genetics traces the dates at which the Wake's ten more ostensible hundred-letter thunderwords were inserted into their contexts (often long after the bulk of the surrounding material was composed), a striking picture emerges. *All* of the thunders were composed after "The Triangle." More to the point: the first thunders to be composed – which are as it happens the first to be encountered in a conventional reading of the text – were composed in late 1926 during Joyce's composition of I.1, the Wake's new "overture" and the piece begun immediately the original sketch of "The Triangle" – complete with its parodic "Pla!" – was finished.

In other words what we know of the composition of the thunders corroborates the idea that this crucial scheme came into being with Joyce's first understanding of the entire structural situation – which included his understanding of "how to meet in the middle" of his mountain – and likewise indicates that the thunder-scheme began, naturally enough, with a parody rather closer to the original "Pa!" than are any of the hundred-lettered thunders that eventually developed. Further, and though this has not been recognized, the thunders are disposed in a deliberate symmetry that uses the same device Hart has detected in the dialogues to point toward some central moment in the text. This structural situation, which at last strongly corroborates the evidence of II.2 itself in indicating that the utterance "Pla!" is as deliberately central as the genetics imply, is addressed largely in my second chapter.

The genetic situation of the Wake as a whole thus strongly suggests that the diagram scene of II.2 is uniquely central and seminal, its function as a textual center rendering it, aptly, the site of the what is both narratively and genetically the Wake's

first thunder. When we recall, however, that "Pla!" itself is situated not just within this set-piece originally called "The Triangle" but, of course, within the *very triangle itself*, we realize that Joyce has chosen for his centerpiece the final instance of an intertextual motif itself almost an authorial obsession. The motif concerns the scene of a writing, and the writing on or of a triangle that means Woman. But as the reader may recall, the trope has consistently evinced a sometimes less savory aspect, the examination of whose role in II.2's situation we have deferred until now.

Genetic evidence colludes with our project once more in reminding us that another and inevitable fate has yet to befall "The Triangle" in its Wakean instance just as it did in the earlier versions. As Rose notes, Joyce quickly renamed "The Triangle" episode "The Muddest Thick That Was Ever Heard Dump." In fact it is this title that the vignette takes in the preponderance of Joyce's notes.

It's a curious title, obliquely suggestive. And for better or worse, it takes us back to that other aspect that *Portrait* and *Ulysses* have led us to expect is *de rigueur*: the triangle remains the object of an *oral desire*, of sometimes questionable taste. The uniquely emphatic development of this correspondence in the Wakean instance clinches the case for the consistent operation of this constellation of ideas in Joyce's fiction. We will conclude this introductory reading of the text with an examination of this aspect of the triangle, which examination will serve a triple purpose.

First, it will allow us to deepen our understanding of how the Wake *must* be read, if its *sui generis* character is to affect our reading at all; and this, always, is with a sense of dense simultaneity. There are many excellent readings of the Wake that trace a one-to-one correspondence between its puzzling utterances and some source template or motif. But however illuminating such exegesis may be, a reading that comes to grips with the *raison d'etre* of Wakean style must eventually synthesize these individual lines of illumination into a braid. At virtually any point in the text – and at

the level of the sentence, the phrase, the word and sometimes even the letter – two or more sustained motifs combine to produce some epiphany of contrast, synthesis, expansion or reversal. The effect is dizzying at first, though finally the source of a unique exhilaration. Exegesis of the effect is difficult, and is for that reason not generally essayed. The present work, however, will essay it, taxing the reader's patience so that something of the Wake's perpetual conflation of turgidity and epiphany may be illumined. A reading of "The Triangle" which accounts for its orality along with its femininity, literacy and vision may example one of the ways patience can be rewarded.

Second, this reading will begin the investigation of the way in which II.2's central specular scene is precisely that; the staging of a sort of mirror that effects, after detours long and rich, various self-recognitions. Prototypical in this regard is the recognition – at last a species of self-recognition – that the Lynch of *Portrait's* episode and the Stephen who excoriates him are in fact a single artist, and that their fusion is the synthesis of abstract meditation with the kinetic desire that facilitates the *act* of writing. In the Wake, this is staged in part as the fusion of the twins.

And finally, the reading will allow us to see one way in which the Wake's overture, composed directly after "The Triangle" piece, in turn gestures toward that piece as a deliberately deferred *telos*, whose nature, unveiled in II.2, is as though for the effect of a certain suspense glimpsed dimly through the veil of I.1. This in itself reveals one of the Wake's best jokes, which will confirm our suspicions that there's always been something fishy about Lynch's appetites, and possibly Bloom's too. The apprehension of this joke, however, is only facilitated by a reading patient and productive of the Wake's ubiquitous polysemy.

II

The Host

In placing the delta of his sacred river in the center of his book Joyce – "weird, I tell you, and middayevil down to his vegetable soul" [423.28] – seems determined to answer the famous medieval question by seeing how many angles can dance in the bed of his pun. Yet part of his mastery here is that a bewildering variety of asides are often enough centripetally constrained, just before they fly off on their irrecuperable tangents, to a handful (sometimes, admittedly, quite a handful) of central themes.

Take for example our own medieval pun above. The geometrical *angles* of the diagram are, predictably enough, made to represent the *angels*, specifically the good and the bad. As the Archangel Michael, Shaun becomes the "right" or justified angel/angle, opposed to Shem's Luciferian "Nick." Thus when Shem asks his brother, seated on the vertex: "Are you right there, Michael, are you right?" [296.13], Shaun responds that "it's awful angelous" [296.16].

But "angle" is also made to suggest a motif which as we will shortly see emerges as one of the Wake's most consequential: the motif of the fish.

The twins are *angling*. Thus the chapter's citation of Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler*, "Isaac's universal" [293.17] there "to compleat anglers" [296.24]. Indeed, the twins themselves are two "compleat anglers" fishing in the river of their mother. And well they might fish for a fish there. As Roland McHugh has demonstrated at productive length [*SFW* 67-71] the diagram is the medieval figure of the *vesica piscis* or "fish bladder," a traditional representation of the womb of the Virgin. At the diagram's summit Shaun accordingly enjoys the "modest mock Pie" or *Pi* of the upper vertex as an "apexojesus" [296.10]; the "anglers" will be "compleat" when the twins

involve themselves in a curious dance that reveals the paradoxical identity of this upper point with the diagram's lower vertex. (The upper and lower points themselves are conjunct with the upper and lower points of the *vesica piscis*; it is in part for this reason that the marginalium immediately adjacent the diagram informs us of the "*Uteralterance or the Interplay of Bones in the Womb*" [293.L1].)

But if the brothers are fishing, what sort of a fish are they fishing for? Well, a bass, of course. II.2 being concluded, the discussion of the twins in the introduction to the next chapter immediately reminds us that "the basses brothers, those two theygottheres" [311.03].

Very well. Joyce, far more than Johnson's Shakespeare, will go out of his way for a pun. But is the peripatesis really worth it? Does the pun do any work? We find ourselves having to ask a certain kind of question for yet a third time. By now we have some sense of why a mountain, and we may even have some idea of why a triangle. But now it seems as though the Wake's curious, quasi-extratextual gesture toward the visible or visionary is being made to bear yet *more* semantic freight. Why a fish?

Of course one of the principle reasons for fishing – aside from the resulting opportunity to tell tall tales – is to *eat* what you catch, and so it is in the Wake. In fact the idea of the eaten fish has been on the table since early in Chapter I.1, the introduction and overture to the whole affair. As will gradually become clear, the diagram is not just a sort of schematic or graph but, as I.1 puts it from the very first, "a fadograph of a yestern scene" [7.15]. An understanding of that scene, however, as well as the deferral implicit in it, will require some explanation.

In some ways the action of the Wake proceeds fairly briskly. Within its first few pages Finnegan has already toppled to his death and been laid out on the table of his wake. This is one of the book's relatively well-known scenes, perhaps because it

occurs before the average reader has discovered that his or her "patients are exhausted." But despite its relative familiarity we would do well to recall its details.

Grace before Glutton. For what we are, gifs a gross if we are, about to believe. So pool the begg and pass the kish for crawsake. Omen. so sigh us. Grampupus is fallen down but grinny sprids the boord. Whase on the joint of a desh? Finfoefom the Fush. Whase be his baken head? A loaf of Singpantry's Kennedy bread. And whase hitched to the hop in his tayle? A glass of Danu U'Dunnell's foamous olde Dobbelin ayle. But, lo, as you would quaffoff his fraudstuff and sink teeth through that pyth of a flowerwhite bodey behold of him as behemoth for he is howwhemoe. Finiche! Only a fadograph of a yestern scene. Almost ruicund Salmosalar, ancient fromout the ages of the Agapemonides, he is smolten in our mist, woebecanned and packt away. So that meal's dead off for summan, schlook, schlice and goodridhirring.

Yet may we not see still the brontoichthyan form outlined aslumbered, even in our own nighttime by the sede of the troutling stream that Bronto loved and Brunto has a lean on. [7.06]

The most striking aspect of the scene is that Finnegan is the Host of his own wake in two senses, the second being the Eucharist. This is the chief reason he's laid out on the table; he himself will be the feast. But in a curious though appropriately Biblical transubstantiation it turns out that if Finnegan is to be the meal, this meal is above all *fish*. Thus Finnegan's deified form is described from the first as "Well, Him a being so on the flounder of his bulk ... platterplate" [6.30], and in the passage above, things get fishier still. In fact our Host is ...

Almost rubicund Salmosalar ... smolten in our mist, woebecanned and
packt away. So that meal's dead off for summan, schlook, schlice and
goodridhirring.

The fish is a type of Christ, of course, but the language also plays here as variously
throughout the text with Finn MacCool's sometime identity with the salmon, eaten to
gain omniscience.

Of course, if Finnegans is simply fish and nothing more, the Host is incomplete.
We'd have the body but not the blood. The corpse, thus, also betrays its identity with
wine, or at least strong drink. That Finnegans should be associated with some sort of
alcoholic beverage is inevitable in any case, insofar as the whiskey is an indispensable
element of the Irish-American ballad from which Joyce took his title and, apparently,
some of his action. More than whiskey, though, the Host increasingly becomes
associated with that even more common Irish sacrament, beer.

In fact the first hint we get that Finnegans is actually being laid out is the instruction
to "Sharpen up his pillowscone, tap up his bier" [6.23], "tap" insisting the pun. Then
...

They laid him brawdawn alanglast bed. With a bockalips of finisky
fore his feet. And a barrowload of guenesis hoer his head. Tee the
tootal of the fluid hang the twoddle of the fuddled, O! [6.26]

Finnegans becomes history itself, stretching from Genesis to Apocalypse, though the
former is a Guinness and the latter a bock. In the extended passage above, thus, the
"tayle" of "Finfoefom the Fush" becomes "A glass of Danu U'Dunnell's foamous old

Dobbelin ayle."

Fish and ale, then, become the principal components of the body of our Host, who is to be eaten, divided, drunk. Most surprising, however, given the care with which the corresponding elements of the feast are laid out, is that *we don't get to eat it*, at least not *now*.

This in fact is the most crucial element of the scene; it's all been a dim memory of some other time.

But, lo, as you would quaff off his fraudstuff and sink teeth through
that pyth of a flowerwhite bodey behold of him as behemoth for he is
nowhemoe.

Though we are brought to table as soon as the Wake commences, the meal itself is an image of an event in fact long past. In fact it's "Only a fadograph of a yestern scene." Hence the narrator is quite correct in informing us "that meal's dead off."

And yet, intriguingly, we're just able to make out something of the *original* table setting, where some "Real Presence" of our eucharist presumably lay.

Yet may we not see still the brontoicthyan form outlined aslumbered,
even in our own nighttime by the sedge of the troutling stream that
Bronton loved and Brunto has a lean on.

Already, perhaps, we begin to recognize certain elements; we can dimly make out two parties – here Bronton and Brunto – linked by the similarity of their names and apparently involved with some "troutling stream." Cued by the possibility that someone is "angling" in the "troutling stream," let's return to II.2 to see if the diagram

or its circumstances recapitulate any of the elements stressed in I.1's "fadograph of a yestern scene."

Right away we can see that the edible forms of the host – fish and ale – populate II.2's diagram scene in abundance. The fish of course is already implicit in the theme of the *vesica piscis* of the riverrine ALP, the stream in which the "angling" twins play Izaak Walton. But the text also makes it explicit enough that the fish to be found there is there to be *eaten*.

As 293's diagram is introduced on 292, we learn that we will "peep inside the cerebralized saucepan" of some "eer illwinded goodfornobody" [292.13], or alternatively, "'inside his loose Eating S.S. collar" [292.29]. In fact we recognize once more I.1's "Finfoefom the Fush" in "Fin for fun! ... Pisk! [297.04]. The Finnegan of I.1's vanishing banquet – the "Salmosalar ... smolten in our mist" has returned. In fact at the final revelation of the geometry exercise, having "flung her headdress on her from under her highlows," we will "wheeze whyse Salmonson set his seel on a hexengown" [297.01]. As II.2 variously remarks, the inverted triangles also make up a version of the six-sided Star of David, or Solomon's Seal. Here though the "seel" (German "soul") is more precisely "Salmonson's." As the *Annotations* remark at this point, "Finn acquired wisdom by eating salmon." This is the moment during which this most Irish prototype of Finnegan acquires – in a somewhat Promethean light, if we recall the marginalim to "Pla!" – his omniscience.

Well, alright, we recognize the Finnegan of I.1, returned as the Salmon here. But does he actually put his *seal* on the diagram? We've already recognized the signature (or perhaps it *is* a seal or stamp, some original that impresses its own reversal on a document) as the mother's. But does any version of the Father sign as well, as the inclusion of the original "Pa!" within the "Pla!" might suggest? Can we read in the diagram the imprint of the fallen Finnegan of I.1's vanishing feast?

Yes. But the proof of that strange fish is precisely in the eating.

* * *

A Question of Taste

The first step is to see what the letters that make up the Name of the diagram become as the final demonstration of the proof impends.

Now, to compleat anglers ... join alfa pea and pull loose by dotties and, to be more sparematically logoical, eelpie and paleale [296.22]

"Alfa" is clear enough, and perhaps "pea," the latter already beginning to convert the diagram into some sort of edible complex. After that we have to pay attention; but there the letters are. "P" and "L" in "pull loose by dotties" let us know we're referring here to the lower triangle with its dotted lines. But the most economical description is simply of the principal triangle and its reflection: A.L.P and P.L.A: "eelpie and paleale."

In other words when Shaun clammers to the upper vertex of the diagram, to his *Pi* in the sky, he's preparing himself, wittingly or not (and it seems not) to see, say and, more to the point here, *swallow* quite a mouthful. We've expected as much ever since Shem's joking reference to "your modest mock Pie out of Humbles." But now we know more precisely what kind of humble pie it is that Shaun (portrayed throughout the text as rather boastful and vainglorious) will be eating: "eelpie;" that is, *fish*. And the other element of I.1's host inevitably follows: "paleale."

And the "Fin for fun!" doesn't stop there. What's the most famous Irish pale ale?

Bass, again, whose trademark is outlined by the very points "paleale" – P. L. A. – that make up the equilateral triangle. This is a fish both eaten *and* drunk. (One thinks, helplessly, of the Saturday Night Live sketch of the "Bass-o-Matic" blender whose aim is precisely similar.) Fish and ale, blood and wine are commingled in a single meal.

But the larger point is that already we can see a double motion at work. Joyce here reaches from the center of his work to its beginning – or from the beginning to the center – and begins to establish the correspondence of the two zones. For Joyce, of course, this wasn't much of a reach at all. These two chapters, I.1 and II.2, now so remote in textual space, are in their times of composition immediately contiguous. And as exegesis proceeds we'll see that this contiguity has apparently facilitated one of the Wake's deftest puns.

But our introduction to Finnegan isn't the only way that origins return to haunt II.2's central scene. A rather low – even a "bass" – pun here begins to situate the Wake's triangle in the trajectory of the earlier fictions. For the lowness of a "Bass" might well remind us, not just of the quotidian counterpart to Bloom's celestial visions, but of the persistent voice of Lynch. Bass ale is not the only way the triangle has suffered the oral desire of its acolytes. Stephen's strange association of Lynch's writing on "the hypotenuse of the Venus of Praxiteles" with coprophagia – and more to the point, Lynch's gleeful, rubbing assent to the suggestion – points in its way to the original of Bloom's ale, to a certain monstrous bread that complements the wine. The time has come to examine Shaun's "pie" more closely still.

It is already a commonplace of criticism that once the twins have "flung her headress on her from under her highlows" they have lifted Anna Livia's skirt and exposed (principally to Shaun) her sex. Does this sex itself – already stylized into a pubic "delta" that could double as a schematic slice of pie – associate itself with the

fish, as in the homosexual argot or the British vulgarity "fish and finger pie?" This seems likely enough; and given the sort of thing to which the Wake is prone (operating under the cover of its all-but-impenetrable language it allows itself a considerably wider latitude in this respect than does even *Ulysses*), more because of than despite the incestuous implications. It also prepares us for yet another version of II.2's old trick: gender reversal. If I.1 promises the totemic eating of some Father's body, the body eventually eaten is, of course, the Mother's. Strictly speaking, though, the meal served in II.2 will be more precisely the *product of the mother's body*.

This is already implicit, perhaps, in Shaun's alarming encounter with his mother's pudenda. Though the full extent of the situation does not strike the reader at first, the "mock Pie out of Humbles" Shaun's being served isn't simply *mock*, it's muck. The first sense of "muck" here is simply "mud." In III.4, that crucial departure point for the revisioning of the Wake and the composition our passage here, the infantile Shaun is described on his "codliverside ... making sharpshape his incissors on some first choice sweets fished out of the muck. A stake in our mead" [563.02]. Of course "Mead" signals the beer once again tangent to our fish, but as *Annotations* usefully notes "stake in our mead" also evokes the idiom "stick-in-the-mud," the very mud or "muck" from which Shaun on his "codliverside" has "fished" his "sweets."

Analogously: when we turn back to II.2 we find that although Shem tries to convince Shaun that the pie is sweet – "apl pla" [298.01] or apple pie – the "Humbles" from which this conspicuously *mock*-apple pie is drawn are indeed the muck and, more to the point, the mud. In fact, as Shaun himself remarks just prior to the ultimate revelation, "it's the muddest thick ever heard dump" [296.20].

Here, of course, Shaun introduces into the vignette the Joycean name of the vignette itself, the name which came to supplant the pithier designation "The Triangle." Taking this in conjunction with the other clues, we are hardly surprised to

discover that when we review the twins' own introduction to the geometry problem, "mud" is from the first the order of the day.

"Problem ye ferst, construct ann aquilittoral dryankle Probe loom!" [286.19] challenges the textbook. Shaun's baffled. "Can you nei do her, numb?" [286.25] teases Shem. But when Shem condescends to play the docent, his inaugural instruction (by which, according to the text, his brother will be made "vicewise" [286.29]) is, tellingly, "First mull a mugfull of mud, son" [286.31]. Shaun's eventual fate is already clear. He's not just being asked to contemplate a faceful of mud, he's being asked to mull it in a mug, as one might mull wine. This muck or mud is already marked for ingestion.

Shaun is understandably indignant. "What the D.V. would I do that for?" he protests [287.01]. But Shem persists. "Now, sknow royol road to Puddlin," he remarks [287.04], implying that Shaun will have to take a very low road indeed, "take your mut for a first beginning, big to bog, back to bach. Anny liffle mud which cometh out of Mam will doob, I guess" [287.05]. And now we are beginning to understand more clearly what the mud signifies. At least the *Annotations* is, for it chooses this moment to signal the advent of the person we now recognize in any case in "Anny liffle." "Mut," says *Annotations*, is to be read not just as "mud" but as "mother."

The context makes the construction plausible, but its plausibility is helped immensely if we recall the common Irish term. Readers of *Portrait* may recall it from the episode in which a little girl, shown a picture of "the beautiful Mabel Hunter" by her mother, asks "What is she in, mud?" and is answered, "In the pantomime, love" [*Portrait* 70]. In Irish slang, "Mud" is simply the familiar word for "mother." If you're Irish, in other words, the pun implicit in "mud" is pretty straightforward, virtually asking for some exploitation of this sort. But the term thus functions with its

own sort of duplicity, conflating, like the triangles of *Portrait*, the idealized and the repugnant; for “mud” is obviously also evocative in a sense somewhat less sentimental.

So when the vanishing Host of I.1 is finally encountered in the flesh, it's a little more fish than flesh and a little more foul than either. After all, as Shem delightedly explains, it's "Anny liffle mud which cometh out of Mam;" not so much the mother herself as some *content of her body* that extrudes like mud. And now we know why, according to the Joycean title of the piece, the triangle, somewhat like Lynch's, has always issued the "muddest thick" that was ever heard precisely "dump."

As always, however, the Host is served with its complementary beverage. Five lines down, Shem continues his instructions. "Mux your pistany at a point of the coastmap to be called a but pronounced olfa. There's the isle of Mun, ah!" [287.13]. The Isle of Man, to be sure; but as the *Annotations* observes, *mun* is another Irish word - this time for “urine.”

Urine, as has occasionally been observed, is an important Wakean theme in its own right; but this motif too comes as it were to a head in this chapter. "Mun's" context seems to echo the implications of the word itself, for instance in the "pistany" above or "pizdrool" [287.31]. But the implication grows more obvious as the final demonstration approaches.

As has long been recognized, when the twins at last "pull" the lower triangle "loose" by its "dotties" they rotate it up and as it were out of the page, thus having "flung her headdress on her from under her highlows" until it coincides with the upper, as it were

lifting the maidsapron of our A.L.P., fearfully! Till its nether nadir is vortically where (allow me a right to two cute winkles) its naval's

napex will have to beandbe. [297.12]

This neat little gesture, evocative of the fusion of the formerly discreet aspects of a single entity, has various consequences. But among these one has by now become painfully obvious. Shaun, already assigned his position at the "napex" labled, all-too-optimistically, *Pi*, now suddenly discovers that the upper and lower points of the diagram are in fact one. It is for this reason that Shem has just assured his brother "Now, *aqua in buccat*. I'll make you to see figuratleavely the whome of your eternal geomater" [296.30]. Indeed, the revelation will involve *aqua in buccat* or, in Latin "water in mouth." "And this," proceeds Shem, "is what you'll say! Waaaaaa. Tch! Sluice! Pla!" 297.16].

This, as we already know, is a complex and crucial little moment. Several elements may be discerned in a brief space; we've attended to some and will eventually attend to more. But for the moment what we particularly wish to note is the way in which Shaun's infantile cry of dismay at the nature of the revelation – "Waaaaaa" – is interrupted by "Tch!". Of course at one level "Tch!" is simply the other half of the "watch" broken along with word that names it. But in its evocation of a particular Wakean motif "Tch!" is also revealed as a *word in its own right*.

The motif is an important one, though its operation in this particular zone has not yet been observed. Hart has done as much as anyone to bring the motif into general critical consciousness; in fact, it seems striking enough to Hart that he gives it the last word in *Structure and Motif*.

When *Structure and Motif* actually turns from structure to motif, it concentrates the bulk of its analysis on only two, which Hart judges to be stylistically and semantically representative. Hart's last chapter, "Two Major Motifs," begins with the relentless parodies of a sentence on Vico from the French historiographer Quinet (which

sentence, as it happens, is cited *verbatim* – and in the original French – only once in the Wake, in II.2) and ends with a treatment of one of the Wake’s better known motifs, the Letter. The curious trajectory of Hart’s analysis, however, leads him to concentrate at last on what should be a rather marginal matter: the Letter’s addendum, variously represented as a signature or a postscript.

Readers familiar with I.5 – the chapter which stages at greatest length a scholarly investigation of the Letter’s form, provenance and (despairingly) content – may already recognize that any discussion of the Letter’s “postscript” is likely to lead us into familiar territory. As the chapter moves toward its conclusion the notion of a “postscript” inevitably loses its innocence, as does the word itself.

For postcrafft see spoils. Though not yet had the sailor sipped that sup
nor the humphar foamed to the fill. [124.32]

Here’s our familiar Host, replete with the *de rigueur* transubstantiations of its bread and wine.

Note, incidentally, that as in I.1, the meal – whose consumption, again, involves some “salar” or “capman” – is *still being deferred*; the “sailor” *will* have “sipped that sup,” but “not yet.” And of course this is chapter I.5. II.2’s infamous eucharist has not yet occurred.

For the moment though we wish to return to Hart’s examination of the Host per se. Hart’s analysis tends to concentrate more as it were on the wine than on the bread. While missing much, this approach has its considerable merits, not least in that it highlights one particularly useful and important concatenation of word-play.

While anal-eroticism is unmistakably present in all of Joyce’s works, it

was the function of micturition which held the most pleasurable associations for him. The Letter usually ends with an act of micturition, a 'pee ess' (118.18). (In one version it bears the subscribed address: 'Dubblenn, WC', 66.18.) The 'P.S.' to the full statement of the Letter (619.17) was originally written 'Ps!'", for the post-script is a flow of urine: 'amber too'. It forms a subsidiary stream proceeding from the 'main body' of water, and hence, if the six main paragraphs of the Letter are the verbal embodiment of Anna Livia, the P.S. is to be identified with her small daughter, Issy. This identification is of major importance, for it is Issy who tempts her brothers with the sound of her micturition to which, Siren-like, she bids them 'Lissom! Lissom!' (21.02, 571.14) [SFMW 206]

Hart may have been aware that the mere sound of feminine micturation apparently occasioned the young Joyce's first orgasm [Ellmann 418]. In any case he concludes his study with the treatment of the way in which this erotic association is transubstantiated into a parody of divine communion. Obviously, this is already beginning to dovetail with our own recent readings; but we will wish to pay particular attention to Hart's treatment of textual detail.

Hart makes reference to Joyce's well-known explanation that Fendant's was his favorite white wine because it reminded him of an arch-duchess's urine, but goes on from there to detect an important transmutation of the idea.

The semi-private joke about Fendant's being the 'arch-duchess's urine' is carried over into *Finnegans Wake* (175.25-27, 209.06, etc.) and in the liturgical chapter III.2 Shaun makes an unusual act of communion

with his sister, who plays the part of the [Blessed Virgin Mary].

Give us another cup of your scald. ... I ingoyed your pick of
hissing hot luncheon fine, I did, thanks awfully, (sublime!). ...
only for your peas again was a taste tooth psalty ... (455.35).
[*SFMW* 207]

Again, note that this time the meal is "another," that is, it's being served for a *second* time. Since III.2 comes *after* II.2, this, too, tallies with the notion that the principal feast is laid somewhere in the center of the book.

But we're principally concerned with Hart's final elaboration on the situation, which brings his last pages into line with our questions about the meaning of II.2's "Tch!".

It has already been observed that [Joyce in *Chamber Music*] saw in micturition not merely a temptation for the flesh, but an act of creation; in *Finnegans Wake* he identifies urine with another symbol of fertility – strong Irish tea – and even with the communion wine itself [*SFMW* 206].

Hart, thus, has identified a beverage which supplements the role we've identified for ale. And after some discussion of the tea-urine-host motif in Buck Mulligan's *Telemachos* antics as well as other zones of *Finnegans Wake* [*SFMW* 207-8], Hart moves toward his final point.

Tea, urine and the baptismal waters are thereby closely integrated in a

single symbolic act. ... Furthermore, the tea-stain on the Letter – ‘tache of tch’ (111.20) – is identical with the impurity spied out by Earwicker on the temptresses’ underwer, whose fabric serves as high-quality stationery: ‘published combinatios of silkinlaine testimonies’ (34.22).
[SFMW 208]

This stain – French *tache* – is perhaps the best-known instance of the Letter’s signature/postscript, but in order to see it we need the context from which Hart’s citation is drawn. The mysterious correspondent of I.5 acknowledges at the close of her letter that she

Must now close it with fondest to the twoinns with four crosskisses ...
pee ess from (locust may eat all but this sign shall they never)
affectionate largelooking tache of tch. [111.16]

The “pee ess” in other words contains predominantly the strange identification of the author as “tache of tch;” in effect, a signature.

“Tache” is “stain” clearly enough, but what has persuaded criticism that “tch” is “tea”? First, the text that immediately follows “tch.”

The stain, and that a teastain (the overcautelousness of the masterbilker here, as usual, signing the page away), marked it off on the spout of the moment as a genuine relique of ancient Irish pleasant pottery of that lydialike languishing class [111.20]

And second, the Wake’s persistent use of “cha” or variants as versions of the

strikingly similar Mandarin and Hindi words for “tea,” most familiar today as “chai” and sometimes transliterated “tcha.” In I.5, Joyce apparently takes advantage of the orthographic and phonetic similarities in order to effect the identity of tea and the questionable stain (somewhat like the imagination of Martha Clifford’s letter in *Ulysses*) that forms the last word and signature of the Letter.

Returning to II.2, thus, we are now in a position to recognize what’s happened to Shaun at the crucial moment of revelation. Although “Waaaaaa” is what he’ll “say,” what he says is interrupted and transubstantiated by the word – or more properly signature – that’s put into his mouth as precisely the promised *aqua in buccat*: the water that enters his mouth, having been released from the “Sluice!” of the river Anna Livia as the tea, ale and the urine of the Host.

In fact to recognize the inevitability of the urine's ingestion all we have to do is look again at lower triangle of the diagram and recall it's transposition into alignment with the upper. For as Shaun suddenly recognizes this coincidence – recognizes, in short, not “Alp” but her reflection in the “Pla!” which becomes the last startled word – he finds that the *Pi* or “Pie” he’s been eating at the apex has been of course transformed precisely into the “P” – yes, the pee – of the lower vertex.

The conclusion of the geometry exercise, thus, is the narrative prototype – as indicated in part by the chronology represented in its other instances – of the urolagnic communion noted by Hart. Of course in the general conflation the body of this host becomes the “mud” of the riverbed as well, or, in keeping with the scatology, “anny liffle mud which cometh out of Mam.” As the postscript is both a “pee ess” and a “postcrafft,” so Shaun has from the first been urged to “mull a mugful of mud,” steeping “the muddest thick that was ever heard dump” into the brew identified by Hart. The same amalgamation of the bread and the wine is of course effected by the now-upright triangle's imitation of the trademark on a Bass, simultaneously an ale and

a fish.

One of the reasons that we can discern "Pla!" as the culmination of the proof's effect is that immediately afterward Shem turns back to regard his work with a triumphant, deictic gesture of *voilà*, exclaiming

And their, redneck, ... the living spit of dead waters, discinct and
isoplural in its ... sixuous parts ... midden wedge of the stream's your
muddy old triagonal delta, fiho miho, plain for you now, appia livia
pluvaville ... first of all usquiluterl threeingles [297.16]

The long-promised identity of "The Triangle" with the mud of the the mother has been effected. "Your muddy old triagonal delta" is "**plain** for you now, **appia livia pluvaville**." But of course by now we recognize that this mud, issued from the esthetic abstraction of the woman into her triangle, is precisely *ingested* by Shaun.

This moment becomes thus a baroque parody of Lynch's coprophagia from *Portrait's* original the triangle scene. This parody, however, also renders the secret affinity between the opposite numbers of that dialectic – affinity suspected by any student familiar with the vicissitudes of Joyce's own erotic life – as explicit as only the heavily veiled and coded obscurities of the Wakean style could allow. However Shaun may protest his identity with the sublimer regions, the esthete is now in his own other; not just by virtue of the now *de facto* identity of their positions (and, as we will see, their persons) but by virtue of the "vice" of which he has been made "wise." In what will continue to reveal itself with ever greater clarity as the Wake's supreme act of writing, Shaun the Post has been delivered the "pee ess" of his own Letter in this, the quintessential instance of the eucharist that Hart has identified with Joyce's "act of creation." Joyce has returned to elements of his earlier fictions and known them –

or at least rendered them clear – for the first time.

Bloom's exercise, too – his quaffing of the ale from, as it turns out, the sublime woman of his vision – takes its place on the line of this same boldly delineated trajectory, (while of course contributing to that trajectory's partial culmination in a pun on "Bass"). In *Oxen's* vignette as in its brethren, the Host that marks the place of writing becomes the *body of the woman*, and more precisely still that body's *contents*. But it's in the first and final instances of the trope – Lynch's triangle and the Wake's – that we see most clearly the coprophagic character of this relentless device.

The result is that what will increasingly reveal itself as the Wake's central gesture of some original and transubstantiating Word is – like its prototype the Word made Flesh – *eaten*; but eaten as a body of the most disgusting as well as the most divine type. That Joyce or his proxy here almost literally eats his Word is one of the most curious and consequential aspects of the entire Wake, more than worthy of a thesis in its own right. One of the most curious aspects of the affair is its theoretical resonance with a scene well-known to those who attempt some marriage of deconstruction and psychoanalysis. For when we consider that this crucial Name of a somewhat Lynchian desire is actually *eaten* in the form of a word associated with the desire of a parent and *turned backwards*, we cannot help but recall that this, precisely, is the character of what Abraham and Torok have dubbed "The Wolf Man's Magic Word." And surely the most curious aspect of the resulting resonance is the crucial role, to be examined at greater length, which "The Wolf Man" played in the composition of the Wake as a whole and, more to the point, of the *very utterance* with which we concern ourselves here.

There's something almost numinous about the coincidence; that, or the suggestion that something genuinely fundamental in the psychology of at least a special type of word-formation is indeed being approached in this curious intertextual conspiracy

between literature and theory. Broadly, we might at least say that our scene – characterized also, obviously enough, by some species of Kristevan abjection – stages an approach to the zero-grade of the Symbolic, where the Symbolic in its origins threatens to become tangent with some oedipally prescribed zone associated with the mother’s body. The suggestion would clearly be that this body, necessarily rejected in ordinary language acquisition, is necessarily if provisionally recuperated in the production of Joyce’s neologistic project, which if not semiotic *per se* evidently traffics with some of the same material.

But a thorough investigation of this compelling condition would at the present time remain, unfortunately, premature. For the theoretical elaborations effected by Kristeva or Abraham and Torok or Lacan all presuppose, of course, foundation in that most crucial and seminal of psychoanalytic scenes, the oedipus. And it is this theoretically prior scene – however provocative may be its instantiation in the specific Freudian text chosen by Joyce – that in fact occasions the *Wake*’s general structural disposition into a center and an “epicenter.” This relationship having gone thus far undetected, let alone discussed, a deeper examination of recent theoretical elaborations must be postponed until the broader situation has been limned.

“You have brought us all this way to show us a French triangle,” Eglinton objects to Stephen in *Scylla and Charibdis* [U 175]. Indeed, Stephen has. And in the *Wake* – though here as in Stephen’s Shakespearean algebra of *Ulysses* the rivalry is as much between siblings as generations – that triangle becomes still more the familiar psychoanalytic structure rendered, again, as the scene of writing. This scene, as we will see, becomes – in ways other than but related to those hinted here – a way for the author to travel back to the origins of his own writing to deliver fully and explicitly on promises that could not, for a variety of reasons, be kept at the time of their initial formulations.

Though the reasons for the delay may be many, in the ensuing pages we will treat the problem as chiefly one of self-recognition. Such a problem of course seems to be implicit from the first triangle scene, at least. In the event II.2's restaging will suggest more than just some synthesis of Lynch and Stephen in the fusion of Shem and Shaun. As rendered perhaps inevitable by its abundantly reflective, mirroring form, the diagram becomes in the fusion of its upper and lower halves a festival – almost an orgy – of auto-affection. The emphatic repetition of gestures or self-recognition seems to have something to do, as we will suggest in at greater length, with the discovery or invention of some sort of self-possession necessary to the artist as agent.

But though we'll begin a census of these gestures here, we'll do so partly for another, short-term end. These gestures themselves become in part the occasion for yet another identity – indeed in a sense an identity of identity itself – effected by the quintessentially pithy “Pla!” This identity enjoys a certain extra-textual corroboration, but its first discernment requires precisely the sort of reception of simultaneity which we have been attempting to cultivate. Once received, though, this joke makes possible another, one which helps us in its way to recognize “Pla!” for the deliberately deferred and central gesture that it is.

* * *

Mutual Implications

"Take your mut for a first beginning, big to bog, back to back" says Shem [287.05] as the geometry exercise commences. Indeed, the Wake's mother is made its comprehensive site of origins. Nowhere, however, is Joyce's last representation of the female muse who has populated his fictions all along made to be more crucially

original than in her recovery of the origins of Joyce's own *writing*, and in the discovery of that writing's promise – uttered, as we will see, in what are very nearly the first words the Joycean novel *per se* – to take its final shape.

The identification of this culmination will be much of the work of the following pages. But having touched on the strange encounter with origins that the twins – long recognized by criticism as fissioned aspects of a single personality – have staged in II.2, it's as well to return to the way in which this comprehensive scene of origins continues its dialogue with what would become the *Wake's* own opening scene. The triangle scene is not just a densely parodic scene of the origin of language or more precisely writing, both as a general and a Joycean practice. It is also the recollection of *the reader's own initial experience of reading the Wake*. Here, too, the effect is of the recovery of some original moment as the anticipated revelation of its truth in a structural center, and eventually we will see how precisely this anticipation is fulfilled in “Pla!”.

The triumphant, summary sentence with which Shem certifies the conclusion of the exercise itself concludes only at the bottom of page 297, where it at last asserts that “when that tidled boare rutches up from the Afrantic, allaph quaran’s his bett und bier!” [297.30]. For this last *Annotations* glosses “bed and beer.” And well it might. ALP's "quarrans" – etymologically both her sex and her body – have been assimilated to the bread and beer of our original Host, whose death in I.1 compelled us precisely to “tap up his bier” [6.23]. We have by now long suspected that the curious ingestion of the Host in II.2 is the narrative – and perhaps genetic – fulfillment of the meal withheld in I.1's “fadograph of a yestern scene. But we might do well, with Shem, to return to this point, for this identity brings us at last to one of the most outrageous puns of *Finnegans Wake*. To understand it, however, we must take brief account of the identity that has been effected at this quintessential site of fusion: that of the

twins, amalgamated by the sudden coincidence of their respective points.

This is the fusion of the esthete and his baser *doppelganger* implicit in the Bloom-Buck/Stephen-Lynch dyads of the earlier triangle scenes. Though the self-recognition implicit in this “meeting in the middle” of *Finnegans Wake* involves at last all of its characters (and is finally more comprehensive still) it remains chiefly centered on the actions of its brothers. As always, though, it is a *vision*.

“And light your mech. Jeldy! And this is what you’ll say” [297.14-16], says Shem. But the “say” that appears immediately prior to Shaun's startled "Waaaaaa. Tch! Sluice! Pla!" receives a footnote, which allows us to realize that when he says "Pla!" Shaun is also saying something else: “Ugol egal ogle. Mi vidim Mi” [297.F2].

Since *Ugol* is Russian “angle” and *egal* German “equal,” the sense of the first part of the note seems to be that we see or “ogle” the equality of the angles brought into “superposition” [299.08], which we do. These angles, of course, have become the sites of the respective “anglers” themselves. Hence the note’s second sentence reorders the Russian *My vidim* – “we see” [*Annotations*] – into a self-reflexive form, the terminal “Mi” suggesting precisely that “we see ourselves” or rather, coincident with the fusion of identities and given the obvious echo of the first-person-object pronoun in “Mi,” “I see myself.”

But in any case there’s a very great deal of reflection going on at this site of sight, perhaps the site *par excellence* where we might say “Here Comes Everybody” [32.18]. “An imposing everybody he always indeed looked,” says the narrator at the point where HCE is introduced by this familiar name, “constantly the same as and equal to himself and magnificently well worthy of any and all such universalisation ...” [32.19]. The text in the vicinity of the diagram’s solution implies this universal auto-affection has been achieved.

ALP, obviously enough, has been found to be self-equal, her baser elements

reconciled with her sublimity. And if Gordon correctly finds HCE staring at his own reflection in the diagram, then the marriage of protagonists becomes in this quintessential hour the mountain's recognition of its androgyny. Truly the bride and groom are now, as II.3 will put it, "one fisk, one flesk" (another pun on the Bass as simultaneously fish and alcoholic vessel) [325.21]. Son and Father are likewise fused when Shaun "lights his mech." A "match" is an identical pair, and just as the Name of the Mother is reflected in the light of this match so are the names of the Father and the Son: HCE, taking its turn at reversal, becomes "ech," fusing with the son's "me" to evoke the German personal pronoun. And the inclusiveness of the general demonstration reaches its zenith when we find ALP revealed as "the constant of fluxion, Mahamawetma, pride of the province" [297.29]. It seems to be ALP herself who adds in the accompanying footnote (though in part perhaps in her capacity as daughter, to whom the footnotes are traditionally assigned): "And all meinkind" [297.F4]. Shaun's vision proves to have been, not simply of all ALP's children (variously given as forty or one-hundred and eleven in number), but of all mankind.

The text might indeed report, thus, that "we see ourselves." The vision here corresponds precisely with the ultimate geometry of the *Paradiso*. Staring into the mystery of three circles in one, Dante peers with special attention into the implications of the second, in order to determine the way in which the Incarnation of the Word has reconciled God and Man. He finds that staring into that ineffability we see, precisely, ourselves.

As the geometer intently seeks
To square the circle, but he cannot reach,
Through thought on thought, the principle he needs,

So I searched that strange sight: I wished to see
The way in which our human effigy
Suited the circle and found place in it –

And my own wings were far too weak for that.
But then my mind was struck by light that flashed
And, with this light, received what it had asked.

[Canto XXXIII, *Paradiso*]

As we'll see in ensuing discussion the fusion of the triangles is also "for seminal rations" the fusion of the "doubleviewed seeds" of the parents in the womb of Alp which stages the conception or Incarnation where, as II.2 promises, "flash becomes word" in the *Vesica Piscis* or medieval womb of Christ. As in Dante, it's a lightning flash that conveys an impossible self-identity to a suddenly illumined mind; but one of the effects is also that the fusing twins, as Shem and Shaun or James and John Joyce, become the identity of the Father and the Son. (Thus shortly after the conclusion of this proof from Euclid's *Elements* Shaun calls Shem "me elementator joyclid, son of a Butt!", "Butt" being Shaun's own name in the ensuing II.3.)

This move is complex and fraught to the degree that its discussion must be deferred. The point in concluding with it for the moment is that despite as it were the catholicity of implicit self-identities, it's the amalgamation of the twins which tends to be foregrounded, by the structure of the chapter as a whole as well as by the bulk of the text-proper. As has long been recognized II.2's marginalia simply *are* the twins, who, as Joyce himself remarked in a letter on the chapter, "switch sides at half-time" [*Annotations*]. The reconciliation of the triangles stages their fusion in the womb and

mirror of the mother. Thus as the demonstration concludes Shem remarks to his brother

And there, redneck (for addn't we to gayatsee ...) mygh and thy, the living spit of dead waters ... [297.17].

As *Annotations* remarks "living spit" is a colloquial phrase meaning "the very image" (likewise "spitting image"). In a trinitarian moment the reconciliation of the triangles reveals each twin's identity with the mother, which mutual identity produces likewise the identity of "mygh and thy."

But despite its structural importance – which we will investigate more fully – this fusion of the twins is to an extent the revelation of a *de facto* identity or fusion which obtains throughout the text. Their effective assimilation to a single zygote here is also characteristic of their infant careers in the "crazedldaze" [562.16] of III.4, which finds them "so tightly tattatched as to maggots to touch other" [562.21]. In fact, Joyce emphasizes the physical contiguity of the twins in a way which is seldom critically remarked. The twins are to some degree *always* literally and physically fused, for they are precisely *Siamese*. Each, thus, is the "*scimmianized twinge*" [344.08] or "soamheis brother" [425.22] of the other.

The condition of being Siamese twins – an obvious enough objective correlative of a problematic identity – might scarcely be worth mentioning were it not that it plays into one of the deftest and most patiently deferred puns in *Finnegans Wake*. Though this requires some explanation, we may start with the surprising observation that "Pla!", for all that it is a most unlikely seme (being in a sense almost a decayed fragment of writing barely rescued from voicelessness by precisely the same strategy that allows the sonorous rehabilitation of "gl" into "glas") actually *is* a "real" word in

an extant language. As anyone who's been to a Thai restaurant is likely to recognize, *Pla* is Siamese for "fish."

It turns out, then, that this word (and we can now more conventionally grant it that status; in a sense here Joyce has for once stayed his neologistic hand) that signals the abrupt coincidence of an image and its mirror twin also signals the *meal* – again, the fish – eaten when twin and image coincide. "Pla!" in other words is in and of itself the very "eelpie" that's been "fished out of the muck." Incredibly, in this most crucial iteration of his doubled-triangle Joyce has been able effect a perfect coincidence between text and image. When the lower triangle is swung up, it becomes the Bass trademark, and thus at once a beverage and a fish. But the text which marks that triangle as the inversion of the original happens to spell out not just the Name of the Mother written as it were in the reflecting mirror of self-recognition, but, yet again though this time in a rather more exotic language, "fish."

We have not yet seen the full effect of this outrageously compound joke. At this point, however, we cannot help but ask ourselves: is the effect deliberate, or some master-stroke of an anonymous contingency, or both? Joyce pillaged dozens of languages – some estimates put the number at over one hundred – with the help of friends, luck and a capacious personal erudition. It must be admitted however that there's no *Siamese Lexicon of Finnegans Wake* to lend the gloss authority, and even the redoubtable McHugh falls silent on the question. The text itself will indicate still more strongly that to a great extent Joyce knew exactly what he was doing here. But already we also know that Joyce availed himself of a linguistic source that suggests that even if the startling coincidence of "Pla!" was in its roots just that, its exploitation was deliberate.

The polymathic Stuart Gilbert recommended himself to Joyce for many reasons, one of which was his 19 years as a civil judge in Burma. Burmese words and phrases

appear throughout the *Wake* (Ellmann notes that Joyce borrowed Gilbert's grammar of the language, and did not return it [Ellmann 600 n.]). However apposite the "wetma" that appears shortly below "Pla!" in "Mahamewetma" may be for the riverrine heroine, for instance, as *Annotations* notes *wetma* is also Burmese for "sow," itself a long-standing Joycean trope for the devouring mother.

Gilbert prided himself on being something of a linguist; readers of his study of *Ulysses* may recall that he read Homer in the original Greek, and of course Joyce found him invaluable as a French translator. But students of geography may already have divined that the principle point of interest here is that Burma shares its longest border with Thailand, formerly Siam. Indeed Burmese has borrowed many words from Thai (including a corruption of the Thai word for "fish-sauce:" *nampla*).¹⁴

Of course the question here is whether Joyce has chosen a Siamese word in part to denote the ultimate fusion of his always-potentially Siamese twins, and thus whether even this notoriously pun-driven author would condescend to make the *name of a language* from which a given word is drawn part of that word's polysemy. But it's long been recognized that he's in the habit of doing just that. Daniel Ferrer, for instance, has noted the abundance of Russian words that surround the *Wake*'s allusions to the Wolf Man, he of Russian descent, and Joyce occasionally takes the device even further. One of the best examples derives from II.2 itself, in which the final culmination of twelve thunders is rendered as the factorialization of the number twelve counted out entirely in Finnish, and thus described as "the finish of helve's fractures!" [285.22].

But the final indication that Joyce knew perfectly well that "Pla!" happens, delightfully and conveniently, to mean "fish" is in fact encoded at the very beginning

¹⁴ Aug Htin Kyaw, "Interesting Burmese Word Origins;" www.viss.wordpress.com.

of the Wake itself, in the very "fadograph of a yestern scene" that anticipates II.2's revelations. Recall what it was that formed the chief and persistent element of the "fadograph":

Yet may we not see still the brontoichthyan form outlined aslumbered,
even in our own nighttime by the sedge of the troutling stream ...

[7.20].

What strange creature has a "brontoichthyan" form? *Annotations* suggests allusions to the brontosaurus and the ichthyosaur, each suitably evocative of a vanished past. But the point of portmanteau is *fusion*, and the Greek etymology immediately supplies the nature of the hybrid that results.

"Pla!," we know, means – not just in its context but now in itself – "fish." And "Pla!" means thunder. And when we turn from II.2's central revelation of this Host back to I.1's ghostly anticipation of it, we now see how precise that anticipation is. For the Host of that "yestern scene" is precisely "brontoichthyan." And as a recollection of the Greek informs, *bronto* and *ichthyo* together spell out, inevitably, "thunderfish."

The first description of the meal in *Finnegans Wake* – indeed, the picture of the feast at the wake which gives the book its title and its punning anticipation of an eventual "regeneration" through the Host – resolves into this strange and at first glance pointless evocation of curious monster. Even by this point in the book "thunder" and "fish" have been established as important elements, but casting about in the immediate vicinity of I.1, the condensation of these themes into a single *seme* is nowhere else in evidence. But of course the correspondence has simply been delayed. It's not until we see the scene of the "fadograph's" original that the finally ingested Host reveals

itself, just as the Wake's opening pages have promised, as the germ of the monster named "thunder" and "fish" in the exquisite concinnity of "Pla!"

III

Synopses of Ensuing Chapters

Near the beginning of *Stephen Hero*, in a place which will acquire tremendous importance for us, we learn that Stephen

doubled backwards into the past of humanity and caught glimpses of emergent art as one might have a vision of the plesiosauros emerging from his ocean of slime. He seemed almost to hear the simple cries of fear and joy and wonder which are antecedent to all song, the savage rhythms of men pulling at the oar, to see the rude scrawls and the portable gods of men whose legacy Leonardo and Michelangelo inherit. And over all this chaos of history and legend, he strove to draw out a line of order, to reduce the abysses of the past to order by a diagram.¹⁵

At various and crucial times, as we'll learn, the Wake conscripts certain of its types and tropes from *Hero*, and at this stage of our reading we can already recognize that it

¹⁵ p. 33, Joyce, James. *Stephen Hero*. New York: New Directions, 1963.

has done so here. As Stephen, like the Wake, deliberately “doubles back” into the primordial origins of art, we seem to see the prototype of our thunderfish, this “plesiosauros emerging from his ocean of slime,” in a context which anticipates his eventual situation in the diagram. “Pla!”, as we will learn, is indeed the primitive or “simple cry” with which Joyce will “draw a line of order” in the apparent welter of his work. For even in the Wake, as the last line of the page facing its diagram reminds us, “you must, how, in undivided reawlity draw the line somewhawre” [292.31].

In *Hero*’s early quest for origins we already see the desire – in its way echoed in the strangely triangular esthetic objects to follow – to “draw a line of order” with the clarity of some synoptic, visual gesture that would “reduce the abysses of the past to order by a diagram.” Thus we’ll begin our own project with an initial approach to the chapter that contains the Wake’s own synoptic diagram – II.2 – by taking that chapter’s visuality as it were at its word.

With its conspicuous visual appeal II.2 has certainly *asked* to be noticed; but in part on that account it has also, somewhat like a too-brazen suitor, been rejected. There are various reasons for this, but the two that most immediately concern us both involve II.2’s somewhat paradoxical advertisements of itself as *de facto* illegible. These advertisements are paradoxical to the degree that II.2’s broad visual gestures would seem at first to offer respite for the baffled eye. But of course we imagine that pictures are not to be *read* in quite the way words are. And though in the event II.2 considerably complicates the distinction between pictures and words, as we’ve seen, even when we move to the words themselves we find that as is broadly recognized by criticism II.2 is the place in the Wake where words reach their greatest opacity.

This increased opacity is a characteristic of the Wake’s central chapters in general, as is also generally recognized by criticism. The notion of a putative centrality (itself excoriated in contemporary readings, a trend which has not facilitated a reception of

the Wake's structure) brings us to a survey of the critical state-of-the-art on the question. Criticism has for the most part contented itself – when it has condescended to the question at all – with terse and apodictic gestures, with one considerable and meritorious exception: Clive Hart's 1962 *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake*.

Hart's is an admirable beginning, but only that. A more careful deployment of Hart's own terms and strategies reveals a strange but retrospectively obvious recommendation of II.2's centrality over II.3's. This condition reveals itself first in the case of the Wake's dialogues, which have to date constituted – aside from the ends and beginnings proper to chapters, Books and the text itself – the Wake's most conspicuous structural features. This is partly because the dialogues are (again like the entirety of II.2 itself) easily apprehended by the eye.

Considerations of a dialectical character however bring us to another aspect of the Wakean text that stands out more on account of its visibility than its legibility: its thunderwords, whose examination we began in our second chapter. The motif of the thunder is perhaps the Wake's best-known, but a careful review of its sources in Vico reveals much of use. First, the scheme in its original evinces a strikingly psychoanalytic – even a Lacanian – character. Indeed we might say that as far as Vico is concerned did Lacan not exist we would have to invent him (though chronology obviously suggests that what influence there may be has flowed, albeit perhaps indirectly, in the opposite direction). Too, and as discussed above to some degree, Vico's choice of locale proves determinate of some of the Wake's most interesting play. But just as crucial as these factors is the thunder's own intrinsically but thus-far unremarked *dialectic character*, reflective in its way – and, likely enough, ultimately the source – of the dialogues themselves.

When this character is taken into account with an aspect of the Wake's curious but well-known temporal structure, the disposition of the Wake's ten thunders reveals itself

as part of a hitherto undetected but retrospectively obvious gesture precisely “reproductive” [298.17] of the dialogic scheme. When this architectonic situation is understood it turns out that the thunders, like the dialogues, make an obvious gesture of structural convergence in II.3. We anticipate, however, that the thunders will mimic the dialogues again in the production of a more decisively central gesture in II.2, and we will not be disappointed. But insofar as that gesture is the scene of a collaboration of several motifs spanning the entire text and having their roots in Joyce’s early fiction, we will first be obliged to understand the Wake – and the novels which anticipate it – in ways thus far unexplored by criticism.

Having now come to an understanding of the thunders as the markers of a structural situation, our first task in chapter Three will be an account of the thunder on the content level; for this, too, will unmistakably indicate some convergence on a central zone.

At the level of content the thunderword becomes, predictably enough, both thunder and Word. As thunder it marks, as has long been known, the Fall. But likewise in accord with the Vichian scheme the thunder marks a chronology or more precisely perhaps an eschatology, a temporality of first and last things. This also proves an aspect of the Word. Again – and again inevitably given their provenance -- the thunder and the Word are indices of Law, including that of Empire. But at last, and again as in Vico, all of these considerations and more beside are reducible to the thunder’s Word as Name.

A genetic investigation reveals that a concern with the Name *per se* was from the first the Wake’s first concern. Indeed this concern is so predominant – and again from Joyce’s first conceptions of the text as we have it – that the text itself stages right away, in a strange hypertrophy of the cratylytic, the deliberate evaporation of its “characters” *into their names*, an effect we will also investigate in chapter Three. In

tandem with this move, however, and again from the first, we begin to discern something of the ultimate and penultimate fates of the Name itself. According to various punning textual treatments, the Name itself is destined for a) non-existence and b) reduction to the characters which constitute it, something along the lines of the ubiquitous acrostics long-recognized to signal the operations of the “characters” themselves.

Something of the Name’s ultimate fate is also suggested by a third structural device which emerges to reinforce the suggestions of the dialogues and thunders: the riddle scheme, whose own structural character has again gone unrecognized. But textual play with regard to the fate of the Name ultimately centers chiefly on the thunders. And as we follow the suggestions of their structure and content to the provisional center or “epicenter” of II.3 we find there the the gesture with which our third chapter closes” the Wake’s certification of a fate sealed for the Name since its emergence in Vico as, all-too-inevitably, the Name of the Father.

Now that we understand more of the motifs that gather, with the thunder, to a head in II.3, we can begin with chapter Four to turn toward a closer examination of this obviously crucial zone. Though this reading itself will ultimately prove but prologue to a more decisive resolution in II.2, it must be done; for thus far criticism has only gestured vaguely at II.3 as a possible textual center, without any effort to take stock of what happens there in light of such a centrality.

Though this obvious architectonic fact has gone unremarked (largely due to an oblivion of the thunder scheme) the two anecdotes – derived from Joyce’s own father, John – which make up the bulk of the chapter’s action are in fact made the deliberate foci of the thunder and dialogue schemes respectively. Their very propinquity in II.3 suggests some ultimate fusion of these heretofore distinct devices – a suggestion strengthened by an analysis of the chapter’s content – though their fusion-proper, as

we by now suspect, will only be achieved in II.2.

The two anecdotes of II.3 concern the wedding and the death, respectively, of HCE. Each is a version of the Father's Fall, though the second is more decisive in this regard. Our fourth chapter concerns itself primarily with the wedding and its echoes and anticipations in the beginnings and the ends of the text as a whole. Other than II.3 the most important and developed resonance with this motif is in the genetically crucial III.4. As is by now well-known, III.4 marks Joyce's sustained encounter with the Freudian text, particularly the Wolf Man. It's also been recognized as the decisive turning point in Joyce's own understanding of the structural situation of his entire text.

A close examination of this chapter reveals that these two features are not at all unrelated. But further: it's not the Freudian scene alone but its *synthesis with Vico's* in III.4 which proves so crucially productive of the structure and content of the rest of the Wake, including its central wedding. Of most import is the genesis of Shem's primal cry, which becomes at once the thunder and of the Wake's other most determining trope of language *per se*, the Letter. These two tropes, thus, are genetically derivative from a single situation – the marriage of Freud and Vico – and the text itself is at some pains to render their filiation and at last their identity clear.

Chapter Five tracks the evolution of this primal cry into II.3's *second* anecdote, the more definitive version of the Father's Fall that at last stages his own destruction as the destruction of his Word and Name. This anecdote, too, gathers material from both ends of the text. It also, however, develops the happy (?) coincidence between a scatological element prominent in the Wolf Man scenario and John Joyce's anecdote of a Russian General shot while defecating. Though this has gone undetected, these elements conjoin in one of the most determining and intertextual puns of the Joycean text. The scatological theme is used to effect the crucial *redivivus* of the *bete noir* of a very particular Father of the Word from Joyce's early fictions, appropriately (and from

the first) named Father Butt. This juvenile pun is our access to a strain of thought in evidence from *Hero's* first pages and which stages its own deliberately conceived and constructed apotheosis in the two crucial centrepieces of the Wake, II.2 and II.3. It provides one of our most useful keys to reading the Wake: reading it in terms of the earlier fiction.

This strategy will prove variously illuminating. Most immediately, it illuminates the previously unintelligible and thus unread *context* of the Father's and the Word's destruction in 2.3. The reception of this context depends on the recognition of a system of contrasting tropes established in *Hero* and developed throughout the rest of the fiction. Joyce's metaphors distinguish between a symbolic system received as the given of ordinary language – the language of “the marketplace” – and a collateral but higher system of “literary tradition” into which Joyce wishes at last to insert himself as the deliberate agent of a radical novelty which would take the saturation of meaning native to this higher mode to previously unimaginable heights.

At first, the elements of the resulting agenda seem clear enough. In order to effect his revolution all Joyce has to do is kill the Father associated with the old linguistic system – more or less consistently and particularly in the Wake represented by Father Butt – and ascend to the locus of patriarchal and symbolic authority as himself the center of the new system. In chapter Six, however, we learn the texts reveal this ambition to be coloured by precisely the sorts of affects Freud himself would predict: oedipal. If the old Word is the Father's, the *new* Word, precisely *qua* desideratum, increasingly becomes associated not just with the son but with a *woman* at last discernible as distinctly maternal. The possibility of self-recognition in this fraught equation produces, however, even in Joyce, predictable results, at least at first: a sort of *mal foi* or *mesconnaissance*, a misrecognition of self predicated on repression and projection. What will at last necessarily be an internal and in a sense a psychological

revolution – whose ultimate success depends on the author’s recognition that the hated apparatus of the "market-place" word has already been necessarily internalized – plays itself out at first in terms of various proxies and projections. The very objectification that obtains in these scenarios however has the paradoxical virtue of making the elements of the struggle easier for us to recognize. Among the things we recognize is that, as theory would predict, a despite of the oedipal injunction against identification with the desire of the mother clearly enough risks precisely madness.

But chapter Seven begins a recognition of *Finnegans Wake* as an imagined resolution of the competing aims of sanity and hubris. II.3’s anecdotes have staged the Father's possession of the mother – and thus the Word – and the resulting necessity of his ensuing murder. This murder, however, so far from constituting the ultimate expression of the author's desire, is necessarily only prelude to the ultimate possession. More or less as in the standard Freudian situation, the only real reason to murder the Father is the resulting access to the mother. It is this, the ultimate triumph of the artist, that Chapter II.2 allows, and in spades. More to the point, however, this access clearly becomes the achievement of the goal first articulated by the artist as very young man – the realization of the New Word Order that the Luciferian upstart would put in place of the assassinated *logos* of Father Butt.

In describing Joyce as *sinthome* Lacan has posited, correctly, that the Wake is Joyce's making of a name for *himself*, which production compensates for the lack of a fallen Father. What Lacan has missed, however, is that this Father has been killed *deliberately*, and that the Name at last made – though it brings Joyce clearly enough into the "know-how" of a self-conscious, masterful agency – is the Name of the Mother. Perhaps most crucially: despite its novelty this Name – also the “trick” Joyce “trick” plays on Vico in the replacement of God the Father by the Mother – is a shrewd compromise, retaining enough of the old symbolic system that the transition to

an exponentially or perhaps more properly geometrically expanded language capacity remains, in principle, legible. Even here, on the last and highest flight of Icarus, some Other remains as the provisional center of a system. Though braving the zones of fusion with the mother, Joyce retains elements of distinction and distance necessary for the ultimate success of his project. The ultimate expression of this compromise is tendered in II.2, in a central re-naming of the Father when the Wake's two largest architectonic gestures, the thunder and the dialogues, meet to answer the riddle of its third: "when is a nam not a nam?" When, that is, is a man no man, and a name less and therefore more than a name? The answer, which predictably and necessarily enough interrupts what would threaten to be the seamless auto-affection of a primary narcissism, is the distillation of writing itself into its quintessence: the letter.

It's not precisely true that Joyce has made a mountain out of a molehill; but he has made it out of something very small.

Chapter I

“In the beginning was the thunder.”

This, essentially, is the first word of Wakean criticism. It appears in the first article of the first book ever written about the Wake, a book which, as though conscious of its subject's disregard for conventional notions of time, appeared ten years before *Finnegans Wake* itself was published in 1939. Joyce knew his latest, strangest work would require canny promotion, and he was as eager to cultivate a forewarned and receptive audience as publishers were to get a hold of whatever scraps of the extant composition were available. Fragments of his experiment were already the talk of literary Paris when Joyce commissioned his handpicked “twelve Marshals” to produce *Our Exagmination Round His Factification For Incamination Of Work In Progress*, the result, as Joyce admitted in a letter to Valery Larbaud, of his “more or less directing [the authors] what lines of research to follow.”¹ William Carlos Williams, who enjoyed at the time the greatest reputation, was given the last word – a retort to Rebecca West's deprecation of late trends in the Joycean *oeuvre* beginning with *Ulysses*. Various other writers, none of them then of Williams' stature, many remembered now chiefly for their association with *le maitre*, were selected by Joyce for their sensitivity, sympathy and expertise in one area or another.

But the first word, the other pride of place, was given to a young man who had as yet barely any reputation at all but who recommended himself to Joyce on the basis of various intimacies: with Joyce's schizophrenic daughter Lucia, whom Joyce was

¹ p. 613 Ellmann, Richard. *James Joyce*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982. Henceforth cited as “Ellmann.”

eager to see involved in any normal human relation; with Joyce's mind, which this young man's unusual intellect and literary talent found congenial; and with the text of what would become *Finnegans Wake*, for which he sometimes served as amanuensis. It was accordingly to Samuel Beckett that Joyce entrusted the opening volley, entitled "Dante ... Bruno. Vico ... Joyce" and principally concerning itself with the relevance of the philosopher whom Joyce more than once suggested was the single most important key to the understanding of his work: Giambattista Vico, whose cyclic history begins when primitive man first hears thunder and learns at that moment language and the fear of God.

In the ensuing years Vico has been such a staple of Joycean criticism that he has grown a bit musty, more appropriate perhaps for an undergraduate seminar than a conference paper. His thunder, after all, occasions the thing about *Finnegans Wake* that nearly everyone with even the most evanescent, cocktail-party interest knows: the "thunderwords," ten of them, each save the last (which is 101) 100 letters long, hypersesquipedalian monstrosities provoking mirth or indignation or befuddlement but all being at least something in the *Wake* which seems unequivocally *there*, and perhaps more intriguingly *repeatedly* there, discernibly raising itself out of the protean flux (whose unintelligibility renders it effectively homogeneous) and suggesting, among other things, though in the faintest and most equivocal whisper, coherence and even, perhaps – though this must certainly test the limits of hope – structure.

Now as it happens the thunderwords themselves have played little role in what structural analysis Wakean criticism has been able to muster, which, perhaps understandably, hasn't been much. In 1962 Clive Hart, in the preface to his *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake*, noted that nothing had been done since Campbell and Robinson's rudimentary efforts in the *Skeleton Key*, the first book of any sort on the *Wake* since the *Exagmination* and the first to give it a critical go without the benefit of

the author's kibitzing. And in the forty-two years since the publication of *Structure and Motif* silence has prevailed once more. The most lauded recent book on the Wake, John Bishop's justly lionized *Joyce's Book of the Dark*, if anything takes pride in its suspension of architectonic concerns in favor of a decontextualized juxtaposition of citations that accrete through repetition into the Wake's motifs and leitmotifs. Thus despite its occasional errors Hart's redoubtable work remains – partly by virtue or vice of its effective singularity – the preeminent effort to discern a shape to the Wake. Many of Hart's observations on structure are now taken for granted, even by writers for whom the mere assertion of a structural aspect does violence to the Wake's spirit (Bishop for example assumes in passing various structural elements which are far from self-evident in a book like the Wake and many of which, such as the notion and location of a structural center, are borrowed from Hart) as well as by those writing in the still developing field of genetic studies. But since *Structure and Motif* no book, no chapter – indeed, so far as I am able to determine no article – has attempted any advance.

The intractability of *Finnegans Wake* is not the only occasion of this reticence. The idea of order is not enjoying its salad days. We are, after all, *post*-structuralists, by era if not always by allegiance, and if the two structures suspended in that pun are not identical they are related, if only by the kinds of impulses that produce and discern them. Of interest, though, is the fact that post-structuralism itself, which often takes the Wake as one of its chief models of reading (and occasionally writing), receives an endorsement of particular precision and prescience if the structure of the Wake is reread. Everyone knows that there are affinities between post-structuralism and the protean, polysemantic, ever-equivocating Joycean word. But the strength and specificity, the mechanics – I am inclined almost to say the very material – of the filiation has not yet been understood. The specificity and power of the relation is in

part a consequence of the fact that Joyce writes himself into Vico's theories of history and language in order to become, with perhaps a trace of the Luciferian pride which Yeats and others remarked (the only comparable literary self-confidence that comes to mind is Hegel's identity of the historical advent of Absolute Knowledge with his enunciation of it), the founding history of language itself – though in a way that at once brings the Vichian theory to its climax and precisely inverts it.

Joyce uses structure, and to a great extent a structural (architectonic) appropriation of Vico, to concentrate his energies and the energies of his text sufficiently for the discharge of a thunderbolt. This discharge (which in the event, for better or worse, does not overlook the somatic implications of that word) is partly, but not entirely, the result of a sort of static or perhaps more appropriately dynamic electricity dispersed through a super-saturated semantic atmosphere in which senses cling in unexpected and inextricable ways to one another. This is by now a well-recognized aspect of the Joycean text, and of course a crucial one: you don't get thunder without clouds. But Joyce has also gone to considerable architectonic trouble to concentrate semantic power into the punctiform epiphany of a bolt, in a small but crucial textual space which the structure of his work – indeed, surprisingly, *all* of his work, up to and including the *Wake* – makes possible, and if we read this space carefully our understanding of his work and of our time grows. As always Joyce's hubris undercuts itself with comic irony; yet in retrospect it does not seem on that account entirely unjustified. It turns out that when Joyce hurls his bolt post-structuralism echoes his thunder. This is a large claim, and it should be recognized in passing that an effort to attribute the effect in question to one or the other of the nominal antinomies "*zeitgeist*" and "influence" is likely to founder on what is bound to be in the historical event the falsehood of that dichotomy. But the claim remains worth making because of the specificity, strength and thoroughness of Joyce's anticipation – or, if you prefer,

determination – of the critical apparatus most congenial to the reception of his novelty. Even post-structuralism, however, has not yet read how precisely or precisely how its apparatus is adumbrated by the *Wake*, and it *cannot* do so until the *Wake*'s structure – and the way its structure informs content – is taken into account. And in order to be taken into account that structure must first be discerned.

A careful reading of the small but crucial textual space which the *Wake*'s structure privileges both requires and facilitates a re-reading of the *Wake* itself. It also requires a retrospection of Joyce's other work, especially the novels, which in turn recontextualize the *Wake* as a particular and in more than one sense ultimate refinement of Joyce's evolving, self-referential meditations on the esthetic. It requires a re-reading of the most important and basic assertions of genetic research. And it requires that we briefly re-read Vico – not only to take into account aspects of his myth of origins that we, though not Joyce, have overlooked, but also to return to the place from which Wakean criticism started and in useful ways know it for the first time.

But in order to contextualize all of these re-readings we must first recall what is known or posited about the *Wake*'s structure at present. And the best way to introduce ourselves to that discussion is to first take account of the surprising number of things we can discern about the *Wake*'s structure for ourselves. What we want to do first is simply to pick up the book and look at it. Not read it yet – that's still too hard. Just look at it.

* * *

**Has any fellow, of the dime a dozen type, it might with some profit
some dull evening quietly be hinted ... ever looked sufficiently**

longly at a quite everydaylooking stamped addressed envelope?
Admittedly it is an outer husk: its face, in all its featureful
perfection of imperfection, is its fortune: it exhibits only the civil
or military clothing of whatever passionpallid nudity or
plaguepurple nakedness may happen to tuck itself under its flap.
Yet to concentrate solely on the literal sense or even the
psychological content of any document to the sore neglect of the
enveloping facts themselves circumstantiating it is just as hurtful to
sound sense (and let it be added to the truest taste) as were some
fellow in the act of perhaps getting an intro from another fellow
turning out to be a friend in need of his, say, to a lady of the latter's
acquaintance ... straightaway to run off and vision her plump and
plain in her natural altogether, preferring to close his blinkhard's
eyes to the equiquethical fact that she was, after all, wearing for the
space of the time being some definite articles ... [FW 109]

Many first-time readers who know “nothing” of the Wake have in fact, especially if they are of a literary bent, osmotically apprehended a few or even several common and justified notions about its content. The work consists of the death and resurrection and/or the sleep and waking of a giant prototypical personality sometimes thought of as Finnegan and sometimes as his usurping successor, Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, variously annagrammatized throughout the book as “HCE.” In some way this figure's wife, Anna Livia Plurabelle, whose initials are similarly dispersed about the text, functions as the book's *magna mater*. The couple have a “schizophrenic” (more properly split-personality) daughter Issy, her name and possibly her character

both variants of the Isolde of legend; some vaguely incestuous affect seems to color her relations with HCE. Her brothers are the battling twins Shem and Shaun, Irish “James” and “John,” who may represent the author and his anti-type, and who in some way despite their differences may themselves be parts of a single personality. Of late, in part because of the rise of critical methods that accent writing’s consciousness of itself, a novice reader is likely also to have learned that the contents and itinerary of some missive, “the Letter,” are in some way implicit in the opprobrium or vindication that attend the character of HCE.

Of the style, the educated reader is also likely to bring to a first reading some basic expectations. The twin lacks of initial capital letter and concluding punctuation are consequences precisely of the *Wake’s cycle* of narrative, itself saturated by a particular triumph of one sort of paranomasia consequent on what are presumably the deliberate misspelling of its constituent words. And the most egregious or gratifying examples of this disdain for orthographical convention are the hundred-letter “thunderwords.” Now the thunderwords are marked by the possession of three attributes of especial appeal to a reader who wants to use *looking* – and first at repeated and recognizable features of the text – as the first step in discovering the contents and discontents of *reading*.

First, of course, the sheer size of the thunderwords makes their existence and repetition discernible. Also, the reader is likely to have heard of the them before, and may thus cherish the half-formulated hope that familiarity will breed content. Finally, the location of these words well “within” what we would ordinarily construe as the text proper – as opposed to in or on any of its margins such as “beginning”, “end”, chapter heading, etc. – seems to suggest that in taking them into account we are pushing beyond the “envelope” and into the stuff of the “sense or even the psychological content of [the] document.”

Despite these hopes, the imagination and intelligence of a reader confronting the *de facto* illegibility of any individual thunderword must remain of necessity arrested at first at the barely formal level. But as it develops this level is not in itself, at least in the case of the thunderwords, completely devoid of grist for speculation. If, for example, one indulges in the purely formal cabalism of counting the letters in each of the thunderwords, one finds that each – save the last with its extra letter – consists of *exactly* 100 letters, and, further, that when one counts the number of thunderwords themselves there are exactly ten of them. This iteration and permutation of the decade suggests something that should already have suggested itself to a reader familiar with Joyce's other work: that the author has allowed at least something (and perhaps, as in other works, a great deal) of formal and deliberate symmetry to condition his work at the level of structure.

Now as it happens there are in addition many other aspects of *Finnegans Wake* that at first reveal themselves as it were rather through looking than reading, and which produce the effect of teasing us – partly because of their recognizability and partly because of the frustrated desire of the bewildered reader – with the suggestion that they might eventually reveal themselves as props to legibility *per se*. Like the thunderwords, these obvious structural features suggest that the *Wake* cannot be entirely “a miseffectual whyacinthinous riot of blots and blurs and bars and balls and hoops and wriggles and juxtaposed jottings linked by spurts of speed: it only looks as like it as damn it” [118.28]. One of the best ways to acquaint ourselves with these features, one of the best ways, in short, to look before we read, is to consider the book simply as a spatial object, suffering the same sort of brute extension and self-division as do other spatial objects of our acquaintance, especially if they are other books.

In all books, including the *Wake* and pointedly despite its heterodox structural gesture of cyclicity, there are spaces where the text suffers conspicuous interruption

by a void. Typically these spaces occupy the ends of paragraphs, sections and chapters, though they may occur at the end of larger subdivisions – sometimes themselves, as they are in the *Wake*, called “Books” – and of course they occur most emphatically (though on that account are least noticed) at the ends and the beginnings of the texts themselves.

The first thing a naïve inspection reveals about *Finnegans Wake* is that like other books it has a beginning and an end. Of course even an inspection so naïve as to be innocent of the book’s infamous circularity cannot long persist untroubled by the twin absences of a capitalized initial letter at the top of page three and of a period after the definite article at the bottom of 628. Despite these peculiarities, however, the text cannot help but evince spatial boundaries that retain traces of conventionally bound texts. Whether or not one wishes to call page three “the beginning” or page 628 “the end” it remains the case in *Finnegans Wake* as is *mutatis mutandi* the case in other books that the continuity of printed matter is broken at the bottom of 628 – beyond that there is simply blank page and more blank pages. Likewise the top of page three consists of an expanse of white until the eye encounters the word “riverrun.”

Now once this perfectly obvious fact has been taken into account we can’t help but notice, almost gratefully, that there are other places in the book where the flow of unintelligible print gives way to simple blankness: for instance at the end of chapters. In addition, it turns out Joyce has arranged his text into four large sections or “Books.” These are even more conspicuous in their delimitation than the chapters; for whereas the chapters receive no headings the Books are announced by a page bearing only the Roman numerals I, II, III or IV and followed in each case by an entirely blank page before the flow of text begins or resumes. The Books are for the most part considerably longer than the chapters; indeed they are made up of them: the first of eight, the second and third of four apiece. The fourth, the shortest Book, is simply a

chapter in its own right. The other three Books, whether consisting of four or eight chapters, are all roughly similar in length, (chapters in Book I are roughly half the length of the average chapter in Books II and III) averaging around 200 pages.

Its major subdivisions and “beginning” and “end” thus taken into account, *Finnegans Wake*, as a spatial object consisting of its own difference between presence and absence of text, consists of seventeen chapters arranged into four Books – the first Book containing eight chapters, the second and third four apiece, the fourth being a chapter itself – and “looks” this:

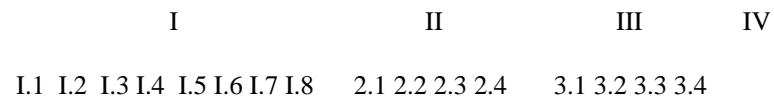


Figure 1.1: The disposition of the Wake's major textual units.

The overall scheme of three large units followed by a shorter fourth is generally recognized as a consequence of Joyce’s adaptation of Vico’s stages of history: the ages of God, Heroes and Men followed by an interstitial lull or ricorso, ending one tripartite cycle and beginning the next. Critics are also uniformly persuaded, on good grounds, that this formal disposition of elements is echoed in the various $\frac{3}{4}$ schemes that inform the content: for instance of three of the four Synoptic Gospels perpetually awaiting a tardy John. But as these aspects of interpretation depend to an extent on reading as opposed to merely looking, we will for the moment defer further discussion and return to the reception of the untutored eye.

As it happens there is one more zone in the Wake that calls attention to itself by a frame of absence, a frame of white page. If one picks up the book and quickly fans through it, the expected monotonous blur of grey typeface prevails until one gets to

page 260. There, roughly in the middle of the book, a new kind of blank space arrests the eye. For the next 48 pages, or for all of the second chapter of the second book – commonly designated “II.2” – the text-proper narrows to allow capacious margins on the right and the left, which margins are themselves interrupted by, appropriately, marginalia; apparently of the kind once used to identify the locations of aspects of discussion. The visually striking exegetical character of this gesture is echoed by footnotes which grace the bottom of the page.

Even more visual (and less “textual”) than the marginalia and footnotes is page 308, the chapter’s last, where Joyce has drawn in by hand two curious figures: an ominous pair of crossed bones (or perhaps eating utensils) in the shape of the letter “X”, and what seems to be a thumb-nose. And the most striking visual element in all of II.2 is a geometric diagram located on page 293 and generally recognized as part of a parodic demonstration of Euclid’s first proposition. The diagram consists of two circles – the center of one tangent to the other’s perimeter – and of two equilateral triangles sharing a single base and whose apices are determined by the points of intersection of the circles. The four apices are labeled, intriguingly, with the Roman and Greek letters which are the initials of the chief female protagonist and mother of the Wake: Anna Livia Plurabelle or A.L.P., generally referred to simply as ALP.

Well now, surely, we’re getting somewhere. A simple inspection, a “looking” at the book, has in fact revealed some zone which bare structure in and of itself seems to highlight as particularly solicitous of our attention. And this initial sense is considerably strengthened when we allow the eye to linger on bare form. All of II.2, on reflection, has clearly been constructed as an enormous and visually attractive exegetical gesture, placed more or less in the center of the book as a way-station, perhaps, for a reader by this time starved for sense. More pointedly, more clearly, even (and here the first tendrils of doubt may begin to creep in) more *condescendingly*,

there are the sketches. Here it's almost as though the author, in dismay at the obtusion of his less than ideal readers, throws up his hands (at least one of them), asking as it were whether he has to draw us a picture and then doing so, not once but twice. Or, more precisely, three times – for the most alluring exegetical siren is surely the diagram: what could promise greater synoptic clarity? And there it sits in the midst of the inscrutable, suggesting all of the ideal simplicity and precision of Euclid.

In a sense it's almost as though the very expanse of white page which first solicited the naïve eye, that expanse which is capable of drawing even the most untutored apprehension (indeed it is the untutored apprehension that is most likely to be so drawn; a sophisticated reader is on account of readership itself more likely to overlook this zone) were itself the first and loudest exegetical gesture, the one most suggestive that things might become “clear.” For in this empty space at the heart of the book the baffling text itself is as it were cleared away; and all of our “scopophilic” appetite to cheat the vexed opacity of the signifier (and drop with relief to the almost maternal embrace of the signified) seems about to be rewarded. It even seems as though the Wake, at least here, is deliberately structured to assist (or pre-empt) interpretation, criticism – reading, if you will – by building the moment of critical reception into its own text and introducing this moment in the way in which it would *have* to be introduced, given the text's *de facto* illegibility: that is, by some other conduit than reading. At least the text seems to want to open itself to these potentially exegetical pages by turning itself into a more “primitive” medium than language: pictures.

But any excitement a shrewd reader (or looker) may be allowed at this point is likely to be tempered by the apprehension that this after all merely visual textual idiosyncrasy acts on account of that very visuality (one might almost say through the “loudness” of the gesture) in perhaps two senses as a siren. “Scopophilic” appetites of the type described above are precisely those likely to dash unwary readers on the

rocks. And when one turns, in this zone, from looking to reading – from the structure of bare form to its promise of legible content – alas, as we feared: surely, it all proves a trick. It's not merely that the persistence (some would say the increase) of textual opacity around the diagram dissolves its exegetical promise (proving it in a sense to be a "blind"): more, the form of the text itself *enacts* a trick, or, rather forces the reader to do so. When, for instance, gladly apprehending the number of a footnote superscripted to the right of the outrageous neologism in the text proper, the eye drops to the foot of the page, well of course its only more Joycespeak; worse if anything than what it pretends to explain. The marginalia, too, obscure where they claim to edify, and the pictures, coming at the end of the whole chapter and by that token promising some summary and almost literally lucid clarification – well, we can read *them* all right. The second is bad: a pair of crossed bones. But the first seems almost fatal to any reader who's believed these enactments of clarity. We "get" the picture, and it's a thumbed nose.

This overall effect – certainly one of duplicity and almost perhaps one of authorial sadism – may account in part for the fact that criticism has never in a wholehearted way taken II.2 up on its offer. Here any reader – and particularly, perhaps, a critic – feels on guard. (And that one hears Joyce chuckling at one's predictable pratfalls through the trap-doors of the footnotes is the more vexing inasmuch as one *should*, after all, have known better.) Insofar as the *Wake's* potential readership is largely academic, it is also perhaps as a class too much a partisan, regardless of its consciousness of or position on Lacan, of the symbolic to trust its imagination to a chapter which seems to rely so much on one version or another of the image. Ever since print and the Reformation, after all, pictures, in books at least, have belonged more and more to the children.

Now as it happens Joyce is quite conscious of all of this, especially of the last, for

which among other reasons he refers to II.2 as “the Children’s Hour.” We know from his letters (and, if we’re persistent enough, from the text) that this chapter, also called, exegetically enough, “Nightlessons,” consists of Shem, Shaun and Issy – the Wake’s children – busy learning the rudiments of reading and arithmetic and, most importantly, writing. Confusingly, especially given our recent disillusionment, Joyce himself seems – if we can believe his letters and the genetic research which corroborates them – to be staging II.2 itself as a primer, a text designed to give the reader lessons in precisely the textuality of the “night” in his “Book of the Dark.”

But this brings us to the last and most vexing affront to our expectations so far. It’s not simply that II.2 is structured like a trick which consists, in the end, of the fact that the text doesn’t let up in this area at all. The final turn of the screw is rather that II.2, whose formal disposition of elements announces it as such a beacon of hope, has since nearly the dawn of relevant criticism been singled out as the single most formidable affront to legibility in *Finnegans Wake* as a whole, even among the chapters of Book II, which is itself by common assent the densest of the Wake’s three books. In short, academic reading itself – invited, staged, mimicked and perhaps mocked in II.2 – announces that very chapter as perhaps the most difficult chapter in the most difficult “Book” in the most difficult book.

At this point even the most intrepid and independent novice might begin to wonder whether some help might not be in order. The untutored eye has given it a good shot, but seems to have been seduced by the light into darkness. So the natural question arises: what about the *well*-tutored eye? What do the experts have to say? And indeed it will now prove for a time useful to turn our attentions from the consideration of the rudely empirical, almost physical ways in which the text of its own accord displays some aspects of its structure even to an utter novice – even, if you will, to an illiterate – and toward the text’s reception by the other and putatively more

sophisticated end of the spectrum of readership: the critical. We want to begin to examine the ways in which actual *readers* – and, by certain criteria, the best readers – have begun to formulate notions of structure and its relation to content. And we’ll begin by examining extant efforts to explain this zone of unusual turgidity to which our appetites for clarification have paradoxically led us. Criticism thus far, though it has not tendered any explanation whatsoever for II.2’s special difficulty, has at least attempted to explain the more general problem of why the Book in which it appears, Book II, might be especially dense. And hope that an investigation of structure might still, despite our disappointments, prove illuminating in this region is tendered, paradoxically, by the very density of this central zone; for the fullest and most commonly accepted explanation of II’s unusual opacity sees it as a consequence precisely of the Wake’s structure: namely, of a motion toward some structural center.

* * *

**PROPE AND PROCUL IN THE CONVERGENCE OF THEIR
CONTRAPULSIVENESS [286.L]**

There are various explanations for the unusual density of Book II, but two of the most common make the most sense. For some critics II’s obscurity is the consequence of the Wake’s chronology, critical accounts of which vary but all of which suggest that night – which fairly recognizably falls at the close of Book I with the last words of I.8, the “Anna Livia” chapter (“Beside the rivering waters of, hitherandthithering waters of. Night!”) – is fairly well along in Book II, whereas Book III is working through the small hours of the morning toward dawn in Book IV. But the more interesting

explanation takes account of the *Wake*'s peculiar temporal structure. Hart summarizes the situation as well as anyone:

Around a central section, Book II, Joyce builds two opposing cycles consisting of Books I and III. In these two Books there is established a pattern of correspondences of the major events of each, those in Book III occurring in reverse order and having inverse characteristics. Whereas Book I begins with a rather obvious birth (28-9) and ends with a symbolic death (215-16), Book III begins with death (403) and ends with a birth (590). ... In his correspondence Joyce implicitly referred to this pattern:

I had a rather strange dream the other night. I was looking at a Turk seated in a bazaar. He had a framework on his knees and on one side he had a jumble of all shades of red and yellow skeins and on the other a jumble of greens and blues of all shades. He was picking from right and left very calmly and weaving away. It is evidently a split rainbow and also Parts I and III. [Letters, pp. 258, 261]

To Frank Budgen he described the process of composing *Finnegans Wake*: "I am boring through a mountain from two sides. The question is, how to meet in the middle." [Givens, p. 24.]

This inverse relationship explains what Joyce meant by his statement that Book III is 'a description of a postman travelling backwards in the night through the events already narrated.' [Letters,

p. 214.] The dream-visions of Book III are a mirror-image of the legends of Book I, while both dreams and legends are rationalized in the underlying naturalism of Book II, on to which they converge.²

The reference to the postman is a reference to one of the Wake's famous pair of twins, Shem and Shaun, who of course bear the Irish versions of the names "James" and "John." Joyce marshalls a host of opposites under the *coincidentia oppositorum* of Giordano Bruno – another of his favorite Italian philosophers – and assigns their poles to the brothers (Shem for example evoking time, introversion, and exile while Shaun embodies space, extroversion and Home Rule).

There are incidentally several explanation for Joyce's choice of names, many of which seem to me at least partially correct, but the most obvious has been noted by John Gordon.³ Criticism has been aware for some time that the eponymous Shem, also "Shem the Penman," is a likely figure of the author, who lards descriptions of Shem's person, habits and circumstances with a wealth of autobiographical reference. In one well-known passage Shem writes his masterpiece on the surface of his own body with excrement, thus becoming a sort of narcissistic author of "dirty" books. The abstemious and much cosseted Shaun is of course Shem's brother, and is thus not unjustly construed as Stanislaus, the brother to whom Joyce was closest and his foil and counterpart in *Stephen Hero*. But the very name "Shaun," as it develops, is surely

² pp. 66-7 Hart, Clive. *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake*.

USA: Northwestern University Press, 1962, henceforth cited as "SMFW."

³ p. 93 Gordon, John. *Finnegans Wake: A Plot Summary*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986.

as determined by biography as that of Shem. James Joyce was not, as is commonly represented, the first child of John and May Joyce. That honor belonged to his elder brother John – named of course after the father – who died in infancy.

This circumstance will eventually prove pertinent to a reading of II.2, but in any case the postman alluded to in Hart's exegesis is Shaun, who also takes his name in part from Boucicault's *Shaun the Post*. Joyce's correspondence is particularly voluminous on the "Four Watches of Shaun" as he called the four chapters of Book III, the book which Shaun dominates as his brother Shem dominates Book I. As Hart notes, whereas Shem, or at least his narrative, is allowed to proceed through Book I in the conventional manner, Shaun's peculiar itinerary in Book III is a consequence of the fact that time there is reversed.

The book as a whole is thus characterized by the chronological peculiarity of the convergence of its first and last large units on its central second. Though critics disagree about the details all agree that the temporal flows of Books I and III converge in Book II, where some sort of synthesis is attempted. This basic relationship is according to Roland McHugh the most important thing to keep in mind when learning to read the Wake. Commenting in part on Hart's analysis and speaking from the vantage of his own researches into Joyce's notebooks, McHugh observes that

We can recognize a ... balance of book I against book II. I believe that the greatest priority for the beginner is to acquire enough familiarity with FW to see the simple equilibrium of [these] two symmetrical half-arches supporting a keystone of greater complexity.⁴

⁴ p. 6 McHugh, Roland. *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake*. London: Edward Arnold, 1976.

This “greater complexity” is precisely the point. For many critics, as for McHugh, the requirement that Book II fuse the various motifs and events separately enunciated in Books I and III accounts for the unusually dense “superfetation” of semantic potential in the central section, and for Joyce’s production in Book II of neologisms which are unusually hybrid and distorted even by the standards of the rest of the text. So, returning to the particular chapter under discussion, we have another explanation for the inevitability of our initial disappointment in II.2: the large central section – the “Book” – in which it appears is, so far from being a realm of clarity, in all likelihood deliberately constructed as one of unusual complexity and turgidity even by Wakean standards.

But worse, as already indicated, most critics agree that even given the exceptional standards of frustration set by all of Book II’s chapters, II.2 is first among equals or, if you prefer, the worst of the lot. Campbell and Robinson observe with comparative calm that II.2 is “perhaps the most difficult in the book.”⁵ Roland McHugh is more eloquent in expression of the common view:

II.2 and II.3 are the most opaque episodes in FW, but they are opaque in totally different senses. ... II.3 is intensely contrived, with an incredible overgrowth of polyglot irreconcilables. But the latter usually prove to be equivalents of senses already manifest, while the exquisite concinnity of II.2 may seal its mystery for all time. It is, supremely, the

⁵ p. 162 Campbell, Joseph and Robinson, Henry Morton. *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake*. New York: Viking Press, 1944.

chapter of ineffables.⁶

At this point our efforts to unlock content with the skeleton-key of structure seem to be in for at best an equivocal reward. Our tracing of the text's self-division into conventional chapter and book structures that precede and frame reading has allowed us to grasp at least the gist of critical remarks that have already been made about the possible wedding of structure and content, but – and especially after taking conventional critical wisdom into account – structure's most promising flirtation with content seems to be a cruel joke, its promised lucidity descending in the event into the text's darkest hour. Of course this descent in itself indicates that II.2 might be of particular interest insofar as Bishop and others have correctly descried the obscurity of sleep and night as one of the Wake's chief conceits in content as well as form. II.2 is dark – perhaps the darkest of the darkest. Is it in some legible sense the semantic as well as stylistic heart of the Wake's darkness? Or does its supreme and possibly eternal ineffability conceal only the void that occasions our desire? Or both? As McHugh *et al.* imply this is hard to decide. It's become even harder in recent years as we've become so used to the idea that hearts and centers are the sorts of imaginary captations that only expose the narcissism of the reader; no one wants to be the Mr. Kurtz of criticism. That the diagram itself is often construed as a mirror into which the male protagonist and/or the author gazes and that the entire chapter has a reflexive visual symmetry compounds the implication of a fatal lure.

But since it's in any case the critic's narcissism that recoils from being duped, we're already in the abyss, fleeing either toward or from ourselves. We should never

⁶ p. 61 McHugh, Roland. *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake*. London: Edward Arnold, 1976.

have opened the book and certainly not the chapter in the first place. We may have no choice now but to persist in our folly. But let's first take brief stock of what extant wisdom has to say about the possibility of a precisely defined structural center in the Wake. Again, many have something but few have much to say on the subject; but at least that makes it easy to summarize.

* * *

But all they are all there scraping along to sneeze out a likelihood that will solve and salve life's robulous rebus; hopping round his middle like Kippers on a griddle, O, as he lays dormont from the macroborg of Holdhard to the microbirg of Pied de Poudre. Behove this sound of Irish sense. Really? Here English might be seen. Royally? One sovereign punned to petery pence. Regally? The silence speaks the scene. Fake! ... [12.32].

With no important exceptions of which I am aware those who assert or imply the existence of any spatial or structural center whatsoever in the Wake assign it either to II.3 or II.2. A brief review of criticism on the subject will give some sense of the general state of the question, and help, again, to indicate the position of Hart's work.

Among the major exegetes notions of centrality fall into three camps. Campbell and Robinson, Frances Boldereff, Margaret Solomon and John Gordon all at least imply the centrality of II.2. Roland McHugh, Danis Rose and William York Tindall express, explicitly or otherwise, confusion. John Bishop and Clive Hart opt for II.3, though only Hart does so with any sense that the issue might make a difference.

In their 1944 *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake* Campbell and Robinson write that the sounding of the ten bells at the conclusion of II.2 on 308 "gear the circling wheels of Finnegans Wake into the cabalistic decade of the sephiroth. This is the powerhouse of the book, with energy currents going to every page."⁷ This is the first critical statement that posits of the Wake anything like a central zone.

Frances Boldereff's 1968 *Hermes To His Son Thoth* is perhaps the most enthusiastic assertion of II.2's centrality. Boldereff's explication of the Wake's debt to Bruno tends in the last analysis toward an explication of the supreme centrality of the diagram contained in II.2, "this central and key section of Finnegans Wake."⁸ Boldereff's work has been largely dismissed, due to her eccentric and sometimes disorganized methods. Indeed Boldereff nearly asks to be taken as the sort of critic that a certain post-structuralism would expect to be deranged by II.2's specular allure. Patrick McCarthy, in his introduction to *Critical Essays on James Joyce's Finnegans Wake*, comprehensively and with reasonable charity assesses nearly every work of Wakean exegesis published by 1992, but finds that Boldereff does not bear mentioning (in the scholarly journals Boldereff barely merits excoriation).

McCarthy is somewhat kinder to Margaret Solomon's 1969 *Eternal Geometer: The Sexual Universe of Finnegans Wake*, noting that though "faulted for her lack of rigor, [Solomon] ... opened up important areas of Finnegans Wake study."⁹ Though not

⁷ p. 193 Campbell, Joseph and Robinson, Henry Morton. *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake*. New York: Viking Press, 1944.

⁸ p. 139 Boldereff, Frances. *Hermes to His Son, Thoth: Being Joyce's Use of Giordano Bruno in Finnegans Wake*. Woodward, PA: Classic Non-Fiction Library, 1963.

⁹ p. 5 McCarthy, Patrick. *Critical Essays on James Joyce's Finnegans Wake*. New

explicitly broaching the question of a center, Solomon tends toward and concludes her work with a close reading of the diagram area of II.2, from which zone the title of her work is taken. Referring to one of Joyce's own names for II.2 Solomon begins her final, summarizing chapter: "All of *Finnegans Wake* is a 'night-lesson.'"

John Gordon's 1986 *Finnegans Wake: A Plot Summary* opens its discussion of II.2 thus:

II.2 is the crossroads of *Finnegans Wake*. Intersections are everywhere: incarnation, transubstantiation, lightning, intercourse, the 'square imposed on the triangle' which is 'the Aristotelian symbol for unified body and soul', the descent of the Kabbala's Ain-Soph into matter, the 'interloopings' circles of the geometry lesson, the crossed utensils of the final footnote, and so on. Like Ulysses' 'Wandering Rocks', in which Leo Knuth has found a wealth of similar insignia, II.2 is the tenth chapter of its book, or, as some write it, Chapter X -- a designation which may remind us of the tradition that the cross is itself a symbol of one reality's intersection with another. The diagram on page 293 is, as many have said, the book's formal centre, introduced with the 'lapis' or philosopher's stone for transmuting one element into another. It is poised (approximately) in the middle of Book II as Book II is posed between past and future, between Shem-dominated vision and Shaun-dominated vision, and in fact just before it appears we hear that 'a poor soul is between shift and shift ere the death he has lived

York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992.

through becomes the life he is to die into' (293.02-5). [FWPS 183]¹⁰

This paragraph is as close to a systematic defense of II.2's centrality as criticism has come and refers intriguingly to several aspects of content which are at least vaguely suggestive. Gordon's discussion does not unfortunately go on to elucidate the diagram or the idea of the *lapis* or indeed any aspect of II.2 in a way which explains the content in terms of the putative structural centrality. What are the consequences of the fact that II.2 is the crossroads of *Finnegans Wake* and how do we know it is in the first place? (Hart, for example, will use a nearly identical metaphor, as well as the notion of intersection, to justify II.3.) What precisely has led "many," including Gordon, to conclude that the diagram is in fact the formal center? Gordon's assertions remain merely that; apodictically, intriguingly (especially the opening list of "intersections") posited, but not defended or explained.

Roland McHugh originally believed in the centrality of II.2. The first tenet of his *A Structural Theory of Finnegans Wake* (published in *A Wake Newslitter*, Vol. V, No. 6, Dec., '68 p. 83) was that "FW is halved by the endless circular sentence of pp. 287-292 which represents the whole work in miniature like 'The Wandering Rocks' in the centre of *Ulysses*." McHugh's subsequent examination of the notebook materials inclined him to dismiss the idea. McHugh's resulting and hugely important *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake* makes no claims of centrality for any zone. Although he does spend a great deal of time on II.2 (particularly, and valuably, on the diagram, as we'll see), the closest to an explicit pronouncement of any special character that McHugh now allows himself is the description of the chapter's inscrutability cited above.

¹⁰ p. 183 Gordon, John. *Finnegans Wake: A Plot Summary*.

Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986.

There's a similar ambivalence in Danis Rose's *The Textual Diaries of James Joyce* (1995). In a way which will be examined more fully later Rose's findings tend to relate Joyce's own sense of the Wake's overall structure to II.2. Rose also notes, importantly, that the "Nightletter" which concludes II.2 on 308 was originally intended by Joyce "to appear on a page of its own after the 'night studies' and thereby at the dead centre of the book."¹¹ But Rose's assessment of II.2 itself is at once similar and diametrically opposed to McHugh's. II.2's obscurity is for Rose not a consequence of an "exquisite concinnity" but of failure. In the chapter titled "Night studies (II.2): how a chapter ate itself" Rose dismisses II.2 as unintelligible in consequence of what he interprets as an essentially random accretion of unused materials from the notebooks, effected simply because Joyce "hated waste." This is the antipodal notion of II.2's centrality: it's central not because it's a summit but because it's a sinkhole – a sort of drain for "waste."

II.2's centrality is also assumed or implied, though again never defended or explained, in various articles as well as in some large studies which concentrate on the range of Joyce's works, such as Mary Reynolds' 1981 *Joyce and Dante: The Shaping Imagination*.

William York Tindall's 1969 *A Reader's Guide to Finnegans Wake* is one of many exegeses that link the notorious obscurity of the central chapters (especially II.2 and II.3) in some way to their centrality. But Tindall somewhat parallels McHugh and Rose in his ambivalence. Oddly it's in the opening of his discussion of II.2 that he seems to imply the possible centrality of II.3. "If Chapter IX [II.1] is denser than what preceded it, Chapter X should be densest; but Chapter XI is even denser." Further, he

¹¹ p. 120 Rose, Danis. *The Textual Diaries of James Joyce*. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1995.

curiously asserts a few lines later that it is in II.2 that we are "in deepest sleep, we are sure."¹²

Perhaps for the same reasons that the drunk in the old joke sought his watch under the streetlamp, any systematic defense or explanation of a center in *Finnegans Wake* has been reserved for analyses of the immediately ensuing chapter – II.3. Despite its own difficulties the light of reading is – as McHugh indicates when he characterizes its neologisms as “equivalents of senses already manifest” – at least arguably better over there (though Tindall disputes even that). John Bishop's *Joyce's Book of the Dark*, however, regarded by some as the state of Wake criticism, does not develop a defense of II.3's centrality but simply assumes it, likely because of Hart's work (although at another point Bishop also seems to assume, and as far as I know uniquely, the centrality of II.1.) Bishop opens his chapter on "The Identity of the Dreamer" thus: "At the center of *Finnegans Wake*, in the darkest hours of its night, the story of a conflict between 'Kersse the Tailor and the Norwegian Captain' occurs to our hero (II.ii, 311-30; cf. U, 61.)."¹³

One oddity of Bishop's remarks, the reader may have noticed, is that though the theme and page numbers clearly belong to II.3, that chapter has been mislabeled "II.ii." The mistake is carried over in the reprint of Bishop's chapter in *Critical Essays*. To paraphrase Joyce on Vico (“I would not pay overmuch attention to these theories ... but they have gradually forced themselves on me through the circumstances of my own life” [Ellmann 554]), I wouldn't pay overmuch attention to

¹² p. 171 Tindall, William York. *A Reader's Guide to Finnegans Wake*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969.

¹³ p.126 Bishop, John. *Joyce's Book of the Dark*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986.

II.2's insistence of itself into Bishop and Tindall's discussions of II.3, but they have gradually forced themselves on me through circumstances of Hart's arguments. Bishop's purely accidental substitution of II.2 for II.3 (a mishap made more likely in any case by the method of enumeration "II.ii ... II.iii"), for instance, is despite or because of its contingency a handy, perhaps even Joycean, synecdoche for a process which takes place at greater length in Hart's unparalleled structural analysis, to which we will eventually turn.

In any case: a review of the literature reveals a basic critical situation. When criticism ventures an opinion at all, it is united in its ascription of the Wake's structural center to somewhere in Book II (an obvious enough intuition given the dimensions of the text) but remains divided on the question whether the most central zone of that Book – the center of the center if you will – is II.2 or II.3. And as will be shown at greater length a further complexity emerges. Whereas a slight preponderance of criticism plumps for II.2, it does so with virtually no analysis to support its conclusions. Extant analysis is indeed all but utterly exhausted by the citations on the subject included above. Other than these I've been able to find nothing of any length or elaboration, whether hare-brained or compelling, in the way of a justification for the assertion of II.2's centrality. Worse, there are no readings of the Wake which take this alleged centrality into account at the level of content. Suppose II.2 *is* the center? So what? How does it help our reading of the rest of the text? Does it resolve the question (first raised implicitly by Beckett) of whether *Finnegans Wake* is about something or is that something itself or both or neither? What, for that matter, *happens* in II.2, at the level of content, that we might expect to happen in some crucial zone? Does II.2 contain a climax? A summary? A moral of the story or a punchline? Or is it really just a thumbed nose and an authorial raspberry?

Now when it comes to II.3 matters are somewhat different. Partisans of this chapter have at least one thing which partisans of II.2 do not: Clive Hart's largely successful realization of a fleshed-out, systematic defense – based on a cogent analysis of structure and even to a degree of content – of his assertion that II.3 is indeed the center. Further, though Hart elaborates on this almost not at all, his work seems to assume and clearly points to some definable and articulable acceleration – some climax – in II.3 which seems at the level of content to justify its putative centrality.

* * *

**Afeared themselves were to wonder at the class of a crossroads
puzzler he would likely be, length by breadth nonplussing his
thickness, ells upon ells of him, making so many square yards of
him, one half of him in Conn's half but the whole of him
nevertheless in Owenmore's five quarters. [475.03]**

Alone among proponents of a center of any sort Hart has justified his conclusions through sustained textual analysis, in great part of the readily discernible large features of the *Wake*. *Structure and Motif*, as its title suggests, divides into an examination of form and content. Its account of form in turn subdivides into analyses of temporal and spatial structures. Eventually we'll examine all three of these aspects: space, time and – especially insofar as spatio-temporal structure is more easily discerned with the help of content and finally makes the special enunciation of a particular and particularly structured content possible – motif. But first we wish to concentrate on a particular aspect of structure.

The *Wake*'s treatment of time, including its cyclicity, is by and large better

known than its play with space, partly because of Joyce's relatively celebrated twitting of Wyndham Lewis, who saw in the 20th century's reappropriation of the problems and opportunities of temporality nothing less than the decline of the West itself. But it may prove wiser – and again partly because we imagine we are familiar with the terrain – to defer the question of time until we can discuss it with Joyce's appropriation of Vico, whose major preoccupation is historiological. Hart's spatial analysis is in any case more pertinent to our immediate concerns, partly because it contains his explanation of II.3's centrality.

Hart's spatial argument is compelling because of its empirical and, at first, visual (which seems appropriate if we recall Lessing's aesthetic association of space and the visible as discussed by Stephen in *Proteus*) approach to the text. He was the first reader to notice, and remains the only one to substantially address – though many others assume the justice of his argument – the complex relationship that likely obtains between two conspicuous structural features appearing, conveniently for the reader, at the beginning and the end of *Finnegans Wake*, in chapter I.1 and Book IV: the dialogues between “Mutt” and “Jute” and “*Muta*” and “*Juva*” respectively.

The first dialogue incidentally seems to be conducted in some rather demotic idiom whereas the second is, as its italic font and names would suggest, more latinate (“*Quodestnunc fumusiste volhvuns ex Domoyno?*” is *Muta*'s opening question). This apparent congruence between structure and style is not for the moment important in itself but brings us to an important point. One of the intriguing things about the dialogic form as it thus appears in the *Wake* is its promise of the beginning of a discernible contiguity between form and content. It's not simply that the dialogues Hart observes are available to be looked at for typographical reasons, though of course they are – by virtue of indentation, punctuation and, in the case of the latter, italics. It's also that this merely visual form is a recognizable convention. When we see

sections of the text set aside and prefaced in rapid alternation by first one name and then the other— even, of course, if we don't recognize the names or even at first that they *are* names – followed by a colon or a dash we suspect, based on our experiences of other texts, a dialogue. And that means that right away we are perhaps somewhat justified in entertaining suspicions, based on the form, about *content*. For even if we can't at all tell as yet what is being spoken about, we can tell something about what is likely going on: simply, that two characters *are* speaking to each other. And with this we are already, at however minimal a level, reading. What we hope of course is to continue to capitalize on this possible conjunction of form and content: to continue to use the edge of form's wedge, however thin, to pry open more meaning. And it is in any case in the facilitation of some reading that any examination of structure will at last justify itself.

The first dialogue, incidentally, consists mostly of HCE, specifically his death and entombment in the earth. The last, fittingly, discusses his resurrection. But Hart mentions this content not at all, and this omission is understandable, for at this stage of the discussion content is still little of his concern. For Hart the important things here are, first, the very discernibility of the dialogues as structurally discrete instances, and, second, the way in which the repetition of this formal convention suggests some shape to the *Wake* as a whole. Even if, as Jute aptly puts it in the first dialogue, we "can beuraly forsstand a weird from sturk to finnic in such a patwhat" [17.13] – even if we are utterly reduced from reading to looking – looking proves sufficient to inform us that the text of *Finnegans Wake* is suddenly broken on page 16 and there begins a series of brief if still only faintly legible exchanges between conveniently labeled characters. By the end of the dialogue we may at least asseverate, whatever our understanding of the text in general, that we have seen "Jute" and "Mutt" before. But in addition, and importantly, there is repetition not just of the names within the

dialogues but of the dialogues within the book. For there the form is again on page 609, and apparently spoken by characters whose names are recognizable if slightly distorted repetitions of the speakers in the first dialogue. And if we consider that these readily discernible textual features conveniently appear at the beginning and the end of the book, we have the possibility of one kind of conventional structure: perhaps, for example, the “hour-glass” structure that E. M. Forster discusses in *Aspects of the Novel* and to which Hart refers at the opening of his discussion of the Wake’s spatial aspects [SMFW 109].

Hart’s simple astuteness is that he has noticed a large feature – recognizable even if it remains relatively illegible – at the beginning, and its echo at the end. He then in effect asks himself (and is no doubt inclined to inquire thusly not merely because of Forster’s suggestion but because of the extant notion of the convergence of Books I and III on Book II) whether there might not be an analogous feature associated with the middle – in the wasp-waist of the hour-glass as it were – and lo, finds it in II.3, in the dialogue of “BUTT” and “TAFF.”

This synthetic *a posteriori* judgement of Hart’s is a minor critical coup; once apprehended, the structural gesture is too symmetrical to be accidental. A dialogue in the first chapter, a second in the last, and a third dialogue in one of the chapters which is at least a plausible candidate for centrality. Further, the names of the speakers are in each dialogue fairly recognizably versions of each other. “Mutt” and “Jute” in the first, “*Muta*” and “*Juva*” in the second, and “BUTT” and “TAFF” in the third, central, dialogue. Clearly something is up, and with it our hopes that we can begin to tell what that something is. Further, and once again, form here begins to suggest, however faintly, content. For there are two structural features of the central dialogue that suggest that if the dialogues in I.1 and IV are versions (perhaps, for instance, latinate and demotic) of each other, those versions themselves in some way fuse in this central

gesture.

In II.3 the dialogue (which reveals that its participants are themselves responsible for the murder of the character whose death and resurrection they discuss in the other dialogues – it begins to look as though there *is* some contiguity of content and form in the Wake, though for the moment we must still defer a fuller engagement with the question of reading *per se*) has developed a sort of hyperthyroid which makes it at first more difficult to discern. The dialogues of I.1 and IV don't take more than two pages a piece; indeed the comparative brevity of their remarks, each of which is introduced by the comforting recurrence of their names, guarantees their rapid alternation and thus makes the dialogical form quite apparent on a single page. In II.3, by contrast, each speech in the dialogue – which extends from 338 to 355 – is long ; the labeled alternation of roles doesn't leap out at the reader as readily as it does in Books I and IV. Nevertheless the form is discernibly – even, in a sense, more – *there*. In addition, this increased size of the dialogue seems in some way seconded by its participants. The names of the speakers are here entirely capitalized; they are, if you will, simply bigger than their counterparts in I.1 and IV.

Whatever the implications for content, we have at least begun to discern a pleasing, even reassuring, symmetry of form, almost redolent of classical architecture: two dialogues of roughly comparable size at either end of the book (at least of the book considered as spatial object) and a larger central one. Further, if two things *were* added to each other to make a third, we *might* indeed expect the third thing to be bigger than either of its components; but the increased size of the dialogue and its characters is not in the event the chief suggestion of some synthesis.

The dialecticians, recall, receive the names “Mutt” and “Jute” on page 16 and “*Muta*” and “*Juva*” on page 609. “Jute” gets the last word, whatever it may mean, on page 18 of his dialogue and “*Juva*” the last word in his on 610. We are of course

gratified to be able to recognize another version of the dialectic pair in the names “BUTT” and “TAFF” in the central dialogue. Throughout the bulk of the dialogue the speakers have alternated regularly, each speech introduced by the name of the speaker in capital letters, exactly as we should expect and exactly as has been the case in the other dialogues. However: the concluding speech of II.3’s dialogue is delivered according to the text not by “BUTT” or “TAFF” but by “BUTT and TAFF.” Whereas in I.1 and IV the dialecticians retain a clean distinction, II.3’s speakers, as a final gesture, collude; perhaps, in a sense, fuse.

This, taken with the persistence of similar names in all dialogues and the added size of the central one in II.3, certainly seems to indicate some special condition obtaining in that central dialogue, in which antinomous elements, elsewhere distinct, synthesize in a way that may even obscurely suggest some reconciliation of beginning and end in the middle. Hart does not approach the situation in precisely this way, but this is the situation he notes. Now moving slightly further in the direction of content: how does he *read* this situation? What, according to Hart, does the *content-based evidence of the text* suggest as the most salient correlative content for this overarching structure of dialogue and synthesis? The answer is a characteristically Wakean appropriation: not, this time, of Vico, but of Plato. An actual *reading* of the Wake, suggests Hart, enables us to recognize that the dialogues are all intersections in “a pair of great archetypal crosses stretching across the total structure” which Joyce has borrowed from the prototypical cosmology of the *Timaeus*.

If, incidentally, we were on the lookout for instances of textual self-reference, we might do worse than to discern a Timaeian theme, for Joyce has of course in his previous works – as for instance *Portrait* – more than once compared the work of the artist to the “God of Creation.” There’s even a small critical cottage-industry, perfectly justified, of theological analysis of Joyce’s aesthetics. But although Hart

seems at various points to assume some such implication on Joyce's part, he does not treat it at any length. Rather he is concerned simply to demonstrate the resonance between the text of the *Timaeus* and that of the *Wake* in a way that suggests textual evidence of structural intent.

Hart quotes Plato's description of the Demiurge's construction of the World-Soul from the primordial fabric of the firmament into strands associated with the fixed stars and the ecliptic.

Next he cleft the structure ... lengthwise into two halves, and laying the two so as to meet in the centre in the shape of the letter X, he bent them into a circle and joined them, causing them to meet themselves and each other at a point opposite to that of their original contact

[SMFW 129]

Indeed, for Hart, the two fundamental geometries alluded to here – the circle and the cross – are very largely determinate of the whole of the *Wake*'s spatial architecture. Chapter Four of *Structure and Motif* has already discerned – largely through an analysis of content – each of the twins in orbit about the Earth, reaching and returning from those twin extremities of the Irish diaspora – America and Australia, the lands of emigration and exile respectively. Their orbits are inclined to one another. Shaun, the good brother and hope of the race, visits the New World in his East-West peregrinations, partly that he might, in his capacity as Shaun the Post, retrieve the *Wake*'s famous letter from its provenance in Boston, while exiled Shem, in Luciferian condemnation to points below (and mimicking Satan's orbit of the Earth in *Paradise Lost*) revolves North-South. The two circles cross twice, on opposite sides of the globe. The crux as it were of Hart's argument – and his idea of the

Wake's spatial center – develops out of a wedding of circle and cross as put forward in Chapter Five.

It is clear that *Finnegans Wake* is woven out of two such strands of World-Soul, represented by the Shem-Shaun polarity. [W]hen their orbits are in close proximity they war with each other and – at a moment of exact equilibrium – even manage to amalgamate ... The two structural meeting-points are at the coincident beginning and end, I.1 and IV, and at the centre, II.3 – that is, diametrically opposed on the sphere of development. The strands spread out from the initial point of contact – the conversation of Mutt and Jeff, who have just met – widen throughout Book I and converge until they meet once more during the Butt and Taff episode, at the end of which they momentarily fuse, only to cross over and separate again during Book III before the final meeting (identical with the first) when Muta and Juva converse. 'Mutt and Jeff' and 'Muta and Juva' are the same event looked at from opposite sides; the book begins and ends at one of the two nodal points, while, when Joyce has cut the circles and stretched them out flat, the other nodal point falls exactly in the center of the fabric. Represented in this way, the basic structure of *Finnegans Wake* thus looks rather like a figure 8 on its side, which forms the 'zeroic couplet' (284.11) or the symbol for infinity. [SMFW 130]

The “figure 8 on its side” is thus in a sense the consequence of a sophisticated three-dimensional version of Forster's hour-glass. North-south geodetic lines intersect at two points of the globe; but when the three-dimensional globe is “flattened out” to

accommodate the linear nature of a publishable product, one point of intersection is split; its two halves now occupy the “beginning” and “end” of the circular text (which could in principle be “rolled up” into the sphere which would re-unite the parts of the split intersection). The other point of intersection remains “intact” and occupies the center of the book considered as a linear artifact, which thus as a whole seems at the “two-dimensional” level to have a comparatively orthodox hour-glass shape. And at the central point of intersection – the wasp-waist of the hour-glass – the twins, as Hart puts it, “amalgamate.”

This seems a plausible explanation for the situation of the three dialogues. Shem and Shaun, the Brunoesquely coinciding opposites, each run throughout the book as one of the strands (indeed Joyce's own associations of Shaun with motion and Shem with stasis may suggest the wandering planets and the fixed stars, respectively), and their dialogues mark their points of meeting and intersection. This overarching formal situation in which the twins find themselves, however, also has great consequences for content:

The divergence of the orbits in the first half of the book ... reaches its extreme at the end of the ‘Anna Livia’ chapter (I.8), where the river has grown so broad that all communication across it from bank to bank becomes impossible. The two washerwomen, forms of Shem and Shaun, stand isolated as the mute tree and stone; this is the ‘Night!’ of the soul, a total failure to connect. The two were already so distant in the previous chapter (I.7) as to be reduced to the unsatisfactory procedure of hurling abuse from side to side; the communication is still no more than verbal during the children’s singing-games in the chapter following I.8. Only in II.2 are they close enough to come to blows,

while the really cataclysmic conflict does not arise until II.3. This, the longest chapter in *Finnegans Wake*, is the most important of all, the nodal point of the major themes, a clearinghouse and focus for motifs. Only Book IV and the opening pages, preparing the way for a new cycle, can compare with II.3 in this respect. [SMFW 130]

The twins in short enact the intersections and divisions of two out-of-phase sine-waves, receding from and approaching each other at regular and identifiable intervals. But here, more importantly, we notice that Hart's scheme has among others the advantage, which he exploits, of accounting for the action – that is to say the content – of one of the Wake's most well-known episodes (well-known partly because Joyce plumped for its alleged accessibility by recording his reading of it) in which the dialogue of the washerwomen – as Hart suggests likely forms of twins – gradually succumbs to blindness, deafness and distance. Just as important for Hart, though, is the way in which convergence will move both form and content toward some crescendo, apparently in II.3 where we will have, in short, *a center for the text*, and not merely a formal one. The way in which the dialectic situation apparently announces the meeting of the twins in II.3 suggests to Hart that this central zone is “the most important of all, a clearinghouse and focus for motifs.” And thus, one presumes, a particularly rich field from which to begin to glean content or meaning; perhaps, given the ways in which the center seems to reach out to embrace the book's perimeters, even some meaning of *Finnegans Wake* as a whole.

These are strong claims, and claims which, if they can be substantiated, are well worth making. Hart will have done more than merely give a shape to the text; he will have indicated particular zones – and one zone above all – to which an actual *reader* might with profit bring sustained scrutiny, a desideratum of unusual pitch and moment

with the Wake. Structure, in short, will have proved a help to content. Further, Hart has I think to a large degree been successful. Although, vexingly, *Structure and Motif* does not go on at any point to explain or exploit II.3's putative richness of theme and motif – its richness of content – reading, in the event, is substantially helped by its analysis. And yet: it is precisely in the analysis of content, precisely at the moment that *reading* begins, that Hart's argument begins to complicate itself.

* * *

**O, undoubtedly yes, and very potably so, but one who deeper
thinks will always bear in the bacchuccus of his mind that this
downright there you are and there it is is only all in his eye. Why?**

[118.14]

This complication ensues from the necessity that Hart, like the rest of us, enter the hermeneutic circle somewhere. His structure informs content, it's true, but content has here of course informed structure. And this brings us to the question of evidence. What is Hart's justification for adducing the *Timaeus*? What textual evidence supports this reading? Well, this evidence, as Hart notes, is moderately abundant.

Part of the appeal the structure of intersection in the middle has for Hart is that it corroborates what's generally recognized about Books I and III respectively. As Hart himself puts it, "Book I is characterized by an excess of 'Shemness' over 'Shaunness' and with Book III the situation is reversed." So bearing in mind that the participants in the dialogue are in fact generally construed as versions of the twins – whose synthesis in Book II is anticipated – Hart justly expects that the middle point of Timaeian intersection would be where

The two have crossed over and changed places, as they do in II.2, which is the clearest single-chapter epitome of this overall structure and which contains most of the direct allusions to the Platonic model.

The central passage of II.2 – where the marginal notes are allowed to dissolve into the main body of the text before their reappearance with exchange of tone – corresponds to the central point of contact on the sphere of development; here, in a single six-page sentence with neither initial capital nor final stop, Joyce bewilderingly fuses and confuses the personalities ... in the middle of II.2 they have become inextricably mixed. That in disposing of his materials in this way Joyce had the *Timaeus* in mind is made clear by the inclusion of a whole shower of allusions to it. At 288.03, in particular, the creator-artist is said to be 'doublecrossing twofold thruths' ... Shaun reminds us of the theme at 305.L1: '*The Twofold Truth and the Conjunctive Appetites of Oppositional Oresses,*' and of course the World-Soul is depicted geometrically in the two circles of the figure on page 293 ... To ensure that his intention shall be quite unambiguous, Joyce makes undistorted use of the terminology of the *Timaeus* at 300.02, where Shem and Shaun are called the 'Other' and the 'Same' respectively, while the 'Other,' as in Plato, is made to move to the left 'with his sinister cyclopes.' These are the 'twinn Platonic yearlings' (293.30) whose mutual rotation is described as 'spirals' wobbles pursuing their rovinghamilton selves.' [SMFW 132]

Now at this moment, when Hart begins the systematic adduction of textual

evidence to support his reading, it's important to take stock of something rather striking about the provenance of that evidence. In reading the above it's helpful to bear in mind the division of the *Wake's* chapters, and particularly their pagination. II.3 runs from 309 to 382; II.2 from 260 to 308. But this acquaintance only supplements one's apprehension of a peculiarity to which Hart himself – though surely unintentionally – has already called our attention in the citation above: virtually all of the evidence and analysis tendered by Hart himself indicate the centrality *not* of II.3, the chapter Hart arranges his system to defend, but of II.2.

This curious dislocation of the putative center cannot help but strike the reader, starting with – but by no means confined to – the citation's first line, which tells us that it is not II.3 but "II.2, which is the clearest single-chapter epitome of this overall structure and which contains most of the direct allusions to the Platonic model." Further, "[t]he central passage of II.2 – where the marginal notes are allowed to dissolve into the main body of the text before their reappearance with exchange of tone – "corresponds to the central point of contact on the sphere," which central point Hart has previously, and by now confusingly, assigned to the large dialogue in II.3. (Even Hart's previously cited reference to the shape of the flattened cut-out, the infinity sign, as the shape of the book as a whole, is in fact itself a reference to II.2 [284.11], where that sign actually occurs.)

The savor of paradox that attends *Structure and Motif* on this point is oddly augmented by its not unjustified observation that clarity – that in which we would have hoped, given its exegetical gestures, II.2 would abound and of which nevertheless our initial efforts at reading seemed to cheat us – proves to be the hallmark of the chapter after all, at least as it concerns II.2's own presentation of the Timaeian theme and its structural implications. It's not just that as Hart puts it II.2 is "the clearest single-chapter epitome of the overall structure." It's "[t]hat in disposing

his materials in this way Joyce had the Timaeus in mind is made clear by the inclusion of a whole shower of allusions to it.” This clarity, which contrasts so markedly not just with the opacity of the text in general but of the obscurity which seems to cloud Book II in particular, is in fact according to Hart the result of authorial intent. “To ensure that his intention shall be quite unambiguous, Joyce makes undistorted use of the terminology of the Timaeus at 300.20 ...”. It’s of course precisely the distortion of its words that makes the Wake ordinarily so frustrating to read. But in II.2, according to Hart – and in striking contrast to our disappointed and perhaps premature (mis?)apprehensions, as well as in contrast to the majority of critical opinion – this distortion is cleared away; not merely by devices like the substitution of pictures for the vexing words, but by the clarification, the “undistortion,” of – at least of the crucially Timaeian – words themselves.

It must be admitted that Hart does not utterly fail to adduce any evidence from II.3 that that chapter is in fact the center he claims. He does so exactly twice: with citations which, although they do *not* occur strictly within the central dialogue (which ends on 355) may be construed as pertinent because they do occur shortly after it. 356.10's "taylorised world" may refer to the Demiurge's cutting of strips; Henry Taylor, in addition, was a Cambridge Platonist. Taken with the nearly immediately ensuing "nother man, wheile he is asame" on 356.12 there's a likely case for the Timaeian theme (though not, note, the “undistorted clarity” of II.2’s more abundant references). Nor is II.3’s dialogue itself utterly bereft of content that could be construed as Timaeian. After a careful reading I have found one instance: at 348.08 Butt remarks “I now with platoonic leave recoil”

So it’s not as though II.3 completely ignores the Timaeian situation. It’s just that its accumulation of evidence is – both by an independent reading and more to the point by Hart’s – less weighty, less clear and less suggestively placed than is the

corresponding crop of evidence in II.2. Further, it's not simply that Hart all but completely fails to cull any Timaeian evidence from II.3, from whence we might like him to cull it if in fact he were eventually to make an argument about the reconciliation of structure and motif; he also fails to tender any analysis which would suggest why the curious dislocation of form and content which he himself has helped us to note should in fact prevail.

At least the beginnings of such an analysis might be tendered. When, for example, Hart, in the passage above, seems to locate the “amalgamation” of the twins in “[t]he central passage of II.2 ... [which] corresponds to the central point of contact on the sphere ...”, the sense of his assertion might depend on the way in which we take the word “corresponds.” The “central point of contact” could by this reading “really” be in II.3, and the passage in II.2 (287 to 292) to which Hart refers might merely “correspond” – perhaps in the sense of “refer” – to it. Even if the “shower of allusions” to the *Timaeus* occurs nearly exclusively in II.2, perhaps these allusions stand as it were to the side (and alongside the six-page run-on “sentence” that in Hart’s own words “fuses and confuses” the twins) in order better to effect some deictic gesture which points out of and away from itself and towards precisely the large structural feature in II.3.

Hart himself proposes no such answer – indeed he does not seem to have framed the question – but were he to do so he would discover that the chief objection to it is highlighted again, though indirectly, by the nature of his own argument. The problem is more vexed than the question of deciding which gesture points to which (or, more interestingly, whether they point to each other) – though even there, we might intuitively (naively?) expect the “center” of a Timaeian crux to be where the *Timaeus* itself is adduced. But even if we attempt to discern a “decentering” of reference – to posit that in some way II.3’s large dialogue and its concluding gesture of fusion exert

a gravity that pulls the reference of II.2's Timaeian content away from II.2's own more obviously propinquitous fusion of the twins in the six-page run-on "sentence" that Hart himself adduces – our efforts are considerably complicated by at least two even "louder" or more "massive" structural gestures made by II.2 itself.

Of course we already know II.2 is as a whole the book's most conspicuous structural fact. The whole chapter can't help but leap out at the eye even more readily than the dialogues Hart discusses. But II.2 also contains two specific, conspicuous and well-recognized features that clearly recommend it as a much better candidate for a centrality of precisely the type that Hart's structural hypothesis leads him, justly, to expect. These features are themselves recognizable in part through a third feature which frames them. In order to begin to understand why the structure of the text compels Hart more or less despite himself to indicate the centrality of II.2 where he would prove the centrality of II.3, and to understand the way in which II.2's structural features do in fact recommend it as a much stronger candidate for the sort of center Hart has proposed, we must now turn to an examination of these features and of their framing device.

The first of these features is of course the very six-page run-on "sentence" Hart himself mentions. As he notes, this passage has been traditionally construed to represent precisely what he's looking for: the fusion of the twins. Indeed Roland McHugh's *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake*, discussing the general theme of the fusion of the twins into some third character (as revealed in part by Joyce's notebooks and in part by the text itself) discusses II.3 not at all (perhaps because, likely on the strength of Hart's influence, he assumes its gesture as a critical commonplace) other than to say that

The fusion of [Shem] with [Shaun] in II.3 is certainly anticipated in

II.1-2. We notice the names ‘Mick’ and ‘Nick’ melting into ‘Mak Nakulon’ in 258.10-18 Far more striking is the attribution of the archetypal histories of Tristan and Patrick to ‘Dolph’ in 287.18-292.32. [SFW 88]¹⁴

The next two pages of *Sigla* are devoted to a description of these pages, 287-292, which of course comprise precisely the run-on “sentence” in question. Note that in this way McHugh strangely recapitulates Hart’s own dislocation, assuming and referring briefly to II.3 as the site of “the” fusion of the twins while deriving a reading that supports the very idea of this fusion *not* from II.3 at all but from II.2. This recapitulation is the more striking when we recall that the evidence so culled is from the “sentence,” that Hart himself has confusingly suggested as central and which McHugh himself at one point posited as the Wake’s structural center.

But as it turns out the *situation* of the “sentence” – its structural context – makes it even more strikingly a gesture of fusion of the kind Hart would expect than either Hart or McHugh note. Of more immediate moment than the willy-nilly fascination this “sentence” from II.2 seems to hold for critics (and precisely those we would expect to find exerting themselves rather in II.3) is the *frame* which has facilitated the tradition of interpreting the “sentence” itself as a zone of fusion. This frame is first mentioned by Joyce himself in his July 1939 letter to Frank Budgen, discussing the already famous difficulty attributed to II.2, a difficulty the author at least pretends to find relatively specious.

¹⁴ p. 88 McHugh, Roland. *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake*. London: Edward Arnold, 1976.

The part of F.W. accepted as easiest is section pp. 104 *et seq.* and the most difficult of acceptance pp. 260 *et seq.* -- yet the technique here is a reproduction of a schoolboy's (and schoolgirl's) old classbook complete with marginalia by the twins, who change side at half time¹⁵

McHugh [*Sigla* 61] observes that the indicated scheme is also referred to in Joyce's compositional notes. The gist seems to be that Shaun begins on the right margin (his margin being as it were "justified") whereas the sinister Shem naturally takes the left, deflating Shaun's professorial and theological latin- and hellenisms with pungent and allusive slang. Criticism – as we see somewhat with Joyce's help – is indeed universal in its assertion that the marginalia constitute the voices of the twins and that the "half time" to which Joyce refers is precisely the run-on "sentence" of 287-292, after which the respective tones of the notes – and thus, presumably and as Joyce himself suggests, the twins – change sides.

Now if this view is correct the first interpretation of import we may extract from it is that the entirety of II.2 itself is – or if you prefer is framed by – an *enormous dialogue*, taking place precisely in the exegetical margins of the text. This in itself is quite suggestive. For if II.3's central dialogue recommends itself for centrality in part because of its size (including the typographically conspicuous gesture of its capitalized speakers), we can't help but notice that II.2's dialogue is much larger – *indeed coextensive with the chapter itself* – and much more visually striking.

In addition, however, the dialogue as framing device facilitates the recognition of the feature that Hart's Timaeian scheme expects to find associated with a large, central

¹⁵ Ellmann, Richard. *Selected Letters of James Joyce*. Viking Press, 1966.

dialogue: the fusion of the twins. For if the independent utterances of the twins constitute the marginalia, then we must take account of the conspicuous, visually striking moment when the marginalia themselves disappear. But as Hart himself puts it, recall:

The central passage of II.2 – where the marginal notes are allowed to dissolve into the main body of the text before their reappearance with exchange of tone – corresponds to the central point of contact on the sphere of development; here, in a single six-page sentence with neither initial capital nor final stop, Joyce bewilderingly fuses and confuses the personalities ... in the middle of II.2 they have become inextricably mixed. [SMFW 130]

The marginalia, in other words, apparently disappear precisely at the point where the twins lose their separate identities and fuse in what the layout of the page already visually suggests as the mediating point between marginal extremes: the central text proper, which, as though it were attempting to “swallow” the margins and add their bulk to its own, expands in size, now filling the space erstwhile occupied by the frame.

Already we can see that all of II.2 frames itself as a large central dialogue, complete with a gesture of synthesis or fusion which itself recapitulates the notion of increased size consequent on an “amalgamation,” in a way far more emphatic than the smaller corresponding gesture contained in II.3. But as it happens the central passage of II.2 is not the only place in which that chapter’s format implies reconciliation of two peripheral terms in a central third. If, bearing in mind that in II.3’s dialogue some synthesis is suggested by the fact that neither Butt nor Taff but “BUTT and TAFF” utter the concluding speech, we turn now to the concluding page of II.2 on 308, we

cannot help but be struck both by the physical disposition of the typographical elements and by a particular sort of “signature effect.” As already noted II.2 concludes with two pictures. But the conclusion, on 308, of the central text proper as a whole is announced by and as the “NIGHTLETTER.”

This “letter” is situated conspicuously: separated from the text above and flanked, once again, by no marginalia (which, in obvious contrast, do densely flank the remaining central text proper above). The visual appearance suggested by the layout is of the text itself funneling to a conclusion. The content of the letter need not detain us unduly for the moment; it’s a telegram to the parents from the children wishing the former Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year. The point at hand is the way in which the telegram is “signed” (at 308.27) – which signature forms the very last words of the central text proper for the entire chapter:

from
jake, jack and little sousoucie
(the babes that mean too)

Thus, bearing in mind the dialogue that frames the whole chapter and plays out in the margins, *all of II.2 itself turns out to be* – and precisely like the dialogue in II.3 to which Hart wishes to direct our attention – *a long dialogue which concludes with a joint utterance.*

A defense, then, of II.3’s centrality which would rest on the brute fact of its demonstrable formal gesture of synthesis to exert a sort of decentering “gravity” on II.2’s content – dislocating its reference to II.3 – must contend, as we now see, with II.2’s own much more conspicuous formal gestures of fusion. Bare form clearly conscripts Hart’s own heuristic mechanisms in the service of II.3’s rival – II.2 – in a

way which tends to confirm our original suspicions when we noted that nearly all of the actual textual evidence Hart derived for the very existence of a Timaeian theme was in fact not extracted from II.3 but from II.2 instead. Our hope, indeed, was that an abundance of Timaeian content should appear precisely where formal structure itself appeared to suggest some sort of Timaeian synthesis. That appears to have been at least somewhat justified. But do we find any further evidence that II.2 seconds form with content in a way that suggests a structural imbrication with – and possibly exegesis of – meaning? Indeed we do.

Returning to the the central run-on “sentence” of 287-92 and bearing in mind the interpretation of II.2 as an enormous dialogue, we can’t help but notice something peculiar about the way in which *content*, as well as form, seems to frame and situate this “sentence”: namely, at precisely the point where begins – this time not in the margins but in the column of central text proper – *a dialogue between the twins*. Heretofore the voice in the central text has been that of a neutral omniscient narrator. Now, though, the text begins to alternate rapidly between the voices of the brothers. Shem (here called Dolph) is going to help Shaun (Kev) with his geometry homework.

Can you nei do her, numb? asks Dolph, suspecting the
answer know. Oikkont, ken you, ninny? asks Kev, expecing
the answer guess. ... Oc, tell it to oui, do, Sem! Well, ‘tis oil
thusly. First mull a mugful of mud, son. ... And to find a locus
for an alp get a howlth on her bayrings as a prisme O and for a
second O unbox your compasses. I cain but are you able?
Amicably nod. Gu it? So let’s seth off betwain us. ... Now,
whole in appelpine odrer [286.25-287.13]

At this point the marginalia disappear, and the central text proper expands to introduce, between parentheses, the six-page “sentence.”

The structural device of dialogue is thus curiously emphasized by an echoing or embedding structure. It’s not simply that the “fusing and confusing” passage occurs more or less in the center of the dialogue-in-the-margins that spans II.2’s as a whole; rather, in the central text proper it is again “contained” within a dialogue, precisely between the twins. The “sentence” as a zone of fusion is emphasized by its double frame: a dialogue within a dialogue. But further, and gratifyingly, this embedded dialogue itself presents – just at the point where the “sentence” (which turns out now to have been an “aside” in this dialogue of the central text proper, which continues after the “sentence” ends on 292) begins – a gesture of fusion, and at a level which we could at least provisionally identify with that of content, and of something that can now be “read” as well as “looked at.”

Note the suggestion of some “agreement” of the twins in a third term just before the run-on “sentence:” “I cain but are you able? Amicably nod. ... So let’s seth off betwain us.” Cain, Abel and Seth: the last appearing as a mediating term between his famously quarreling brothers. And in the “sentence” which follows McHugh (and others, but McHugh is most detailed in his exposition) indeed describes some third figure of the type which his analysis of Joyce’s compositional notes on this scene have led him to expect.

Before going on with an examination of evidence it may be worthwhile here to ask the question whether the gesture effected in Joyce’s punning presentation of the the “third brother” is in fact one of content or rather one of form. It is clearly not a formal gesture of the broad, visual type we have been intermittently considering so far. There is no particular deployment of capitals, layout, font or diagrams; the reader is only asked to consider the word proper. The problem, though, is that even though we have

now descended from a more or less visual consideration of the broad features of the page to something approaching actual “reading” we find that the word is not at all its proper self; or, if you prefer, its “proper” or “essential” self remains, but its *form* has been tampered with. On the one hand Joyce’s “trivial” method here facilitates the merely “accidental” corollary felicity of his tri-part pun on Cain, Seth and Abel. But on the other the “content proper” of the sentence *also* seems to denote the emergence of a third term between two: the twins here agree when they “amicably nod” to “seth off betwain us”: so the “merely” formal distortion of the word “set” (or the word “between”) itself produces – and indeed may chiefly facilitate – a seconding of the content-based apprehension that the twins are about to fuse.

This effect is to be expected, and was first noted by Beckett in *Exagmination’s* introductory article.

Here form *is* content, content *is* form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not to be read – or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not about something; *it is that something itself*. ... When the sense is sleep, the words go to sleep. (See the end of ‘*Anna Livia*’.) When the sense is dancing, the words dance. ... How can we qualify this general esthetic vigilance without which we cannot hope to snare the sense which is for ever rising to the surface of the form and becoming the form itself?¹⁶

¹⁶ p. 14 Beckett, Samuel. "Dante ... Bruno. Vico ... Joyce," *Our Exagmination Round His Factification For Incamination Of Work In Progress*, Samuel Beckett et al, New York: New Directions, 1939

If this idea of the book is right the twins aren't the only things we should expect to find "inextricably fused and confused": so should be form and meaning, structure and content. As Beckett might put it, looking and reading should fuse in a language which is, on the one hand, not about something – being rather than something itself – and on the other *is* about something, precisely *itself*.

Now as it happens the Wake – and appropriately in its most exegetical zone – underscores and presents with a flourish the precise nature of the material that allows it to pull off this trick. But this gesture remains to be examined. For the moment I simply wish to emphasize that a wedding of form and content is – in all likelihood and as suggested by our gradually accumulating evidence – in effect not merely at the level of the individual word or sentence but at the level of the broad visual gesture and thus at the broadly architectonic level of the text with which we and Hart in his way have been engaged. Further, since one of the implications of Beckett's dilation is that this wedding should be at least in part local – that is, the effective fusion of form and content requires that form go to sleep precisely *where* in the text sense goes to sleep, otherwise the effect of the felicity is rather considerably blunted – we should expect form and content to be propinquitous. Indeed, Hart himself expects them to be so: hence his characterization of II.3, which he believes to be the structural center, as "the nodal point of the major themes, a clearinghouse and focus for motifs." But this expectation conditions not only our reception of Hart's citation of structural evidence from II.2 instead of II.3; it also recommends our return to a further examination of II.2's imbrication of form with content.

At the level of "reading," the fusion of the twins in the run-on "sentence" is suggested not only by the introduction to that "sentence" in the text proper but at various points by the content of that "sentence" itself and in particular of its "conclusion," in the likely Timaeian reference of "Plutonic loveliaks twinnt Platonic

yearlings” [292.30] or of the fusion of the tutor Shem with his brother as suggested by “our pupilteachertaut duplex” [292.24]. The twins have effected some “undivided reawlity” [292.31]. But the content of the “sentence” itself also facilitates the reading of II.2’s central structural gesture in a way which has implications for the structure that Hart’s argument begins to discern in the Wake as a whole.

The disappearance of the marginalia is usually read as the disappearance of the twins from the “riverbanks” of the margins and their subsumption in the stream (often construed as Anna Livia Plurabelle) of the text proper. This interpretation is based in part on a long aside in Latin with which the run-on “sentence” itself begins. In *Annotations* McHugh translates the aside as follows:

Come without delay, ye men of old, while a small piece of second grade imperial papyrus, concerning those to be born later, is exhibited with more propriety in the Roman tongue of the dead. Let us, seated joyfully on fleshpots & beholding in fact the site of Paris whence such great human progeny is to arise, turn over in our minds that most ancient wisdom of both the priests Giordano & Giambattista: the fact that the whole of the river flows safely, with a clear stream, & that those things which were to have been on the bank would later be in the bed; finally, that everything recognizes itself through something opposite & that the stream is embraced by rival banks.¹⁷

¹⁷ p. 287 McHugh, Roland. *Annotations to Finnegans Wake*, Third Edition. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. As *Annotations* has been designed so that its pagination corresponds precisely to that of the Wake, I’ll henceforth follow critical convention

This as it turns out is rather pregnant, but we must defer a fuller examination of its implications. For now, first note that this comparatively accessible content does in fact suggest the conflation which has also been signalled by the structure of the text itself as it appears on the page. It's not necessary to be able to *read* Latin let alone *Finnegans Wake* in order to see that the marginalia have disappeared and that the central text proper has expanded; a move which seems to suggest the "amalgamation" of two smaller terms in a larger and central third, precisely as Hart's structural considerations suggest. In the quite legible transposition of "those things which were to have been on the bank" into the "bed" of the river, we can certainly discern a content that seems, again, to be seconding structure.

But of greater interest is the fact that the long-standing interpretation of the banks of the river as the sites of the twins derives in part from a reading that, taken with a reading of this part of II.2, suggests a striking twist on one of Hart's key structural ideas. Hart has already drawn attention to the way in which his scheme, with its account of the twins' alternating distance and proximity, alienation and fusion, has accounted for the action of I.8, the "Anna Livia" chapter, in which the twins as washerwomen find themselves confounded by their distance from each other at the point where the river widens. But if this is true, then of course we have here – as opposed, again, to II.3 – the corresponding point not just of proximity but of fusion. As the Latin indicates, here the "contents" of the banks, so far from being separated by the river, are confounded *in* it: the twins are fused.

By this time it would certainly seem as though II.2 had made its point. Apparently,

by briefly adverting to its glosses simply as "Annotations" or
"McHugh."

however, it wishes to drive this point home through repetition. As already noted 287-92 is not the only place that II.2's structure seems to stage a synthesis more conspicuous than II.3's. And in the concluding joint utterance of II.2's chapter-long dialogue form and structure once more collude to appropriate the mechanism of II.3's gesture of fusion and up its ante, trumping II.3 through a sort of emphatic doubling or repetition.

For the "Nightletter" is subscripted not just by the twins but by their "schizophrenic" sister Issy, here doubled but unified in "sousoucie." The concluding parentheses of course include a gloss for any reader who might remain puzzled whether in fact actual content suggests some fusion of these doubly-doubled children: in a sense, the very question of content – or meaning – is answered by "the babes that mean too." If in II.3 the twins fused through the joint attribution of their final speech, we have in II.2 not only the "amalgamation" of Shem and Shaun themselves but their additional "amalgamation" with the already doubled personality of their schizophrenic sister. If the dialogue of II.3 concludes with a fusion, II.2 concludes with a fusion of a fusion with a fusion: a "fusion of fusions" if you will.

Further, II.2's concluding exegesis of itself, its self-reference (which is gradually proving less of a trick, or at least not the kind of trick we thought) does not end with the self-explaining signature. The very "amalgamation" staged effects at least one more way in which the text pits Hart's own language against itself.

If, for instance, we look at the last lines of the italicized marginalia on the left, we see an apparent reference to the "*Balance of the factual by the theoric Boox and Coox, Amallagamated.*" Are two different "Boox," the Wake as brute physical fact and as interpreted or critically received entity – as looked at and read – in fact likely to find here some sort of balance, some intersection or synthesis, as the Wake's very inclusion of an exegetical format would suggest? We already, like Shaun, suspect the answer

“yes,” but the full effect must await a subsequent demonstration. For the moment we may content ourselves with extant critical interpretation. As McHugh notes, “Boox and Coox” are John Box and James Cox, two Irishmen celebrated in the play by John Maddison Morton and occasionally showing up in the Wake as the twins James and John, or Shem and Shaun (who as a matter of fact at one point in II.2 engage in pugilism, that is, box). But here, according to the marginalium – and as already indicated by the signature of the Nightletter in the central text proper which has itself been already identified as the zone of fusion – the twins have in Hart’s choice of words (which choice I suspect has been conditioned by his reading or at least looking at this part of II.2) precisely “amalgamated.”

When we realize that form and content in II.2 likely signal that zone as the site of a synthesis of the twins, much of the “ineffability” of its “exquisite concinnity” seems to yield to the reader fairly readily, certainly by Wakean standards. Certainly many of appositely placed marginalia now seem to reveal their exegeses as more than merely notional or ironic; on the contrary, they tell us, though in a somewhat fraught parody of high academic tone, what’s happening. For instance the last right marginalium before the run-on “sentence” of 287-92 announces “PROPE AND PROCUL IN THE CONVERGENCE OF THEIR CONTRAPULSIVENESS.” The presentation of Issy’s own letter (note the way in which fusion seems in some way consistently bound up with the production of language) in the nearly page-long footnote of 279 is prefaced by the right marginalium “MODES COALESCING PROLIFERATING HOMOGENUINE HOMOGENEITY”. As the chapter begins to wind up on 304 the left remarks “*The rotary processus and its reestablishment of reciprocities*” then immediately following on 305 “*The Twofold Truth and the Conjunctive Appetites of Oppositional Orexes.*” The disappearance of individual identity is suggested by 304’s left “*Service superseding self*” and 306’s “*Abnegation is adaptation,*” which last is

adjacent to (and thus presumably glosses) the twin's final exhortation to themselves in the text proper and perhaps referring to the single voice of a final joint utterance: "With this laudable purpose in loud ability let us be singulfied."

But to return to the question of the strikingly *visual* gesture; the gesture which, we hope, can be "read" by being "looked" at: it turns out that all of II.2 concludes with a striking gesture of precisely that sort and suggestive not only of a fusion of form and content, not only of the related fusion of the chapter's two structural gestures toward synthesis, but suggestive most conspicuously precisely of Hart's Timaeian scheme. Recall the description of the demiurge Hart cites to found his argument:

Next he cleft the structure ... lengthwise into two halves, and laying the two so as to meet in the centre in the shape of the letter X ... [SMFW 129]

Well, there it is, on the very bottom of 308, as the Wake's last word, or, if you prefer, last picture. The last *word* proper is the footnote; but even if we concentrate on this we find a reference to the "X." Although its first reference is, according to the superscript in the text proper above, to the word "Geg" with which ends a count-down (based on a parody of the first ten Celtic numerals) prefatory to the Nightletter, the footnote also seem to gloss the picture: "And gags for skool and crossbuns and whopes he'll enjoyimsolff over our drawings on the line!" ("X' for skull and crossbones" Further, as though to make assurance of doubling doubly sure, the footnote *also* refers, according to McHugh's *Annotations*, to the last line of the run-on "sentence," that other likely textual gesture of synthesis: "... – you must, how, in undivided reawlity draw the line somewhawre" [292.31]).

To return to the fullest extant critical defense of II.2's centrality, it seems as though

Gordon may have been right when he remarked (and without any reference whatsoever to Hart's emphasis on some structural convergence), that

II.2 is the crossroads of Finnegans Wake. Intersections are everywhere: Like Ulysses' 'Wandering Rocks', in which Leo Knuth has found a wealth of similar insignia, II.2 is the tenth chapter of its book, or, as some write it, Chapter X -- a designation which may remind us of the tradition that the cross is itself a symbol of one reality's intersection with another. [FWPS 183]

The "X" – whether number, picture or here, perhaps, most suggestively, letter – may stand as the example *par excellence* of the unknown quantity of the Timaeian intersection that Hart discusses but does not detect in its most conspicuous place.

* * *

No, so holp me Petault, it is not a miseffectual whyancinthinous riot of blots and blurs and bars and balls and hoops and wriggles and juxtaposed jottings linked by spurts of speed: it only looks as like it as damn it: and sure we ought really to rest thankful that at this deleteful hour of dungflies dawning we have even a written on with dried ink scrap of paper at all to show for ourselves, tare it or leaf it ... our home homoplate, cling to it as with drowning hands, hoping against hope all the while that, by the light of philophosy, (and may she never folsage us!) things will begin to clear up a bit one way or another within the next quarrel of an hour ... [118.28]

Let's review the implications of our comparison so far. A careful "look" at II.2, modestly supplemented by a simultaneous "reading" of it, strongly suggests that – by the same criteria Hart adduces in support of the centrality of II.3 – II.2 is central only precisely *more* so. Recall that II.3 was a good candidate for the centerpiece of the dialogic scheme that scans the Wake for at least three reasons. First, obviously, it was discovered roughly in the "middle," if there is such a thing, of the text. Second, it stood out – and importantly by contrast with recognizably "junior" versions of itself at the Wake's "beginning" and "end" – by virtue of its size. Third, it enacted the putative fusion occurring within it at its content level at the level of form, through the relatively conspicuous formal gesture of the joint attribution of its concluding speech.

Now II.2, as it turns out, is also roughly in the "middle" of the book. In this respect it seems merely to be on a par with, and not superior to, II.3 as a candidate for centrality (though this "parity" will emerge as more complicated later). But with respect to the other two structural criteria for centrality, II.2 emerges as a much stronger candidate. If the dialogue in II.3 is long, that in II.2 is longer. Indeed, instead of occurring within the chapter as a brief set-piece, it is precisely co-extensive with the length of the chapter itself, suggesting, and as it will develop not incidentally, that *the chapter itself is the important central structural feature*. The way in which the dialogic form of II.2 thus "stands out" more than does that of II.3 is supplemented by the fact that the actual physical disposition of the text – its typesetting – makes the formal features of II.2 much more conspicuous: the marginalia, for instance, by their nature literally (and visually) stand *out*. The same comparative conspicuity characterizes one of II.2's chief gestures of synthesis, the concluding "joint speech." Not only is the Nightletter a more obvious formal gesture at the typographical level than is the concluding speech of Butt and Taff in II.3: it is also, when compared to the

latter, simply *more* of a gesture of fusion: for if the twins are fused by being joint “signatories” to II.3’s final dialogic gesture, then not only the twins themselves but the two “halves” of their schizophrenic sister are conjoined in the Nightletter.

Further, when we bear in mind the entire notion of some structural gesture of synthesis and centrality, we must note that II.2 has apparently not one but *two* points in which a fusion of antitheses is enacted: one where we would expect it based on II.3’s model, at the end, and *another* – as if the chapter were redoubling its emphasis on the very notion of some central fusion – in the conflation of the “riverbanks” that begins shortly into the dialogue at the heart of the central text proper where the marginalia disappear and the run-on “sentence” once suspected of centrality by McHugh occurs. Finally, and gratifyingly, we find at least the beginnings of a wedding of form and content, though the full implications of this are as yet not at all clear.

But of the various questions which obviously remain two at the moment are most salient. Though the first of these does not seem as obvious a question as it once did, it remains and must be taken into account. It is, simply: where’s the trick? For if, on the one hand, II.2’s exegetical gestures have not revealed themselves as simple blinds, if they themselves are in fact imbricated in at least the effect of some discernible nexus of form and content, the fact remains that now not merely form (the merely visible, whether as type-setting or picture) but content (the word as signifier) refer, in II.2’s closing moments, to some trick or “gag.” But if this trick is not – or not simply – what we thought, what is it?

The answer to this question is as it happens related to the answer to another, which is: given the all but overwhelming way in which the textual evidence – conspicuously including precisely the evidence Hart himself cites and glosses – suggests II.2 and not II.3 as the site of the Timaeian intersection he seeks, what after all has persuaded Hart

of the centrality of II.3? Here, in fairness to Hart's argument, we must note that although II.2's structural features – especially when taken in the context of their proximate content – trump II.3's, they do not by that token erase them. If II.2 as a whole seems to constitute the largest dialogue (and one which contains within itself its own echo, effecting almost a dialogue of dialogues preparatory to a fusion of fusions), it remains the case that II.3 contains a large one, certainly larger than the two at the Wake's "beginning" and "end." If II.2 has two textual gestures suggesting the fusion of speakers in a single voice, obviously and perhaps especially at its conclusion, II.3 does have its version of this gesture, also at *its* conclusion. Too, the participants of II.3's dialogue are *named* in a way which suggests an obvious, recognizable filiation with the speakers of the dialogues in I.1 and IV. II.3's "Butt and Taff" seem more obviously versions of I.1's "Mute and Jute" or IV's "Muta and Juva" than do II.2's "Kev and Dolph" or "Mick and Nick," especially insofar as II.2, although it does render its dialecticians typographically conspicuous through the marginalia, does not introduce their speeches either in the margins or in the text proper in the way that the other three dialogues do: with the names of the speakers.

It almost begins to seem as though there are two centers, or perhaps a center and an epicenter. By this model II.3 would be the epicenter and would have proved, like the epicenter of an earthquake, more immediately accessible to study – perhaps more on the surface – than the center itself, which is in some sense perhaps "subterranean" or more deeply buried. And this, paradoxically though by no means on that account impossibly, despite the fact that II.2 seems to the *eye* so obvious, so glaring. Or perhaps II.2 is, as Hart himself seems to suggest at one point, a sort of epitome of *Finnegans Wake* as a whole, enacting in a single chapter structurally determined vicissitudes that span the entire text. If, as some of the evidence and certainly Hart's hypothesis suggest, the structure of the Wake as a whole is to a degree Platonic, then

this “epitome” may stand as a sort of extra-temporal archetype whose Idea (the
visuality of the *eidon* might here be adduced) is mirrored in the mundane progress of
the temporal text in the comparatively conventional remaining chapters of the Wake.

Now as we will see the language of II.2 itself strongly suggests that something at
least similar to this last model is indeed in play. And though the moment for the fuller
exposition of this idea has not yet come, perhaps I should here hasten to reassure the
partisans of time. The Wake effects no uncomplicated triumph of the sort of chastely
eternal Being which current thought finds precisely unbecoming; Joyce’s sense of
irony and doubleness are proof against this bogey. But neither does this very duplicity
permit what Lewis feared: the utter triumph of the temporal. In the Wake eternity
returns, though in part as an abject blot around which the escutcheon that would
blazon time’s triumph must despite itself arrange its pattern.

But to appreciate the subtlety of Joyce’s duplicity on this score we must now
return, oddly, to what we have suggested as the “epicenter,” where, despite the
foregoing arguments, we will note that content as well as form does in fact stage *some*
sort of fusion. Hart perhaps takes this effect too much for granted to treat it at any
length. But as it turns out an appreciation of the effect of the Wake’s “center” – and
particularly of the most strikingly visual element of II.2 for which we have still to
account: its diagram – depends to a great degree on the effects of its “epicenter.” So
we must now explore the way in which content clearly does after all stage some
synthesis – and some climax – in II.3. For this climax brings us into our thus far
deferred examination of the Wake’s temporal structure, and in so doing both echoes
and clears the way for the thunder.

Chapter II

Then spoke the thunder

DA ...

DA ...

Shantih shantih shantih

What The Thunder Said;

The Wasteland, Canto V

Form is in the event emerging as a help to content. One of the oldest architectonic notions about the Wake – the convergence of the first and third Books on the central second – has proved robust. But better, when the terms and evidence of the proof of this notion are examined closely, they at once augment our sense of the Wake’s shape; the split or doubled centrality of two separate dialogic forms now producing, with the dialogues at the “beginning” and “end” of the text, some fourth element where we had thought there were but three. Best, this strategy has helped us begin to read what we can now recognize as the rather more central of two centers and what is by all accounts one of the Wake’s least legible sections if not its most opaque outright: II.2.

In thus strengthening our understanding of the Wake’s shape and sense we have however for the moment abandoned the conspicuous formal features which drew our attention first. These features – in their familiarity to the general reader second only to the Wake’s cyclicity and far better known than the tripartite (now quadripartite) dialogic structure or the related notion of the convergence of Books I and III on II – are the thunderwords.

Recall that the first hope offered by the thunders concerned at least the rudiments

of recognition and consistency. They differentiated themselves, by virtue of their consistent and consistently large size, from the hopeless and effectively homogeneous melange that constituted much of the rest of the text. And their very repetition seemed to promise some vague design. This promise was reiterated, if not entirely kept, by their play with the powers of ten, each of the ten words being 100 letters long save the last at 101. These almost immediately discernible traits coupled with an unrivaled critical antiquity have fixed the thunders in the lists of the things about the Wake that “nearly everyone” knows even prior to opening the book; which makes it all the more astounding that after some eighty years of criticism we know so very little about them.

The chief thing we still do not know is that which, given their obvious status as conspicuous formal features, we would think we would come to know first: the way in which the thunders might be a part of or suggest some structure. Explanations of any kind, whether based on context, narrative or simple enunciation of motif, are few and unconvincing; but no critic has attempted an architectonic account of why these ten words are placed where they are. Of course most critics eschew explanations of why anything whatsoever in the Wake is where it is. Hart, as we have seen, is the first, best exception to this recusal, followed closely by McHugh and the geneticists. Still, none of these doughty readers take the thunders on, though both the nature of his enterprise and the context of his omissions make Hart’s silence the loudest.

The silence is understandable. Of the Wake’s visually accessible gestures the thunders prove the least tractable to understanding through an architectonic scheme. Whereas the Book and chapter divisions and the placements of the dialogues lend themselves readily to relatively simple and symmetrical geometric hypotheses, the thunders are scattered with what must at first appear mere carelessness; nothing of beauty or simplicity promises to emerge from an initial assessment of their disposition.

Where, precisely, are the thunders to be found? At the following sites: 3.15, 23.05,

44.20, 90.31, 113.09, 257.27, 314.08, 332.05, 414.19 and 424.20. Once again translating the Wake’s brute spatial extension into a conventional left-to-right linear diagram, the disposition of the thunders thus “looks” like this:

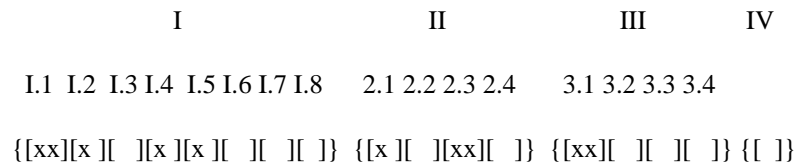


Figure 2.1: The Disposition of the Thunders

But though this reduction to the visual clarity of a synoptic helps us grasp the positions of the thunders, relative both to one and another and to other of the Wake’s conspicuous formal features, it does not at first seem to extricate any elegance or symmetry from chaos.

And it remains the vexing case that the Wake itself immediately leads us to expect that with respect to the thunders some overarching sense of formal disposition *would* emerge. For other than the omitted initial capital of the Wake’s famous “opening” sentence the thunder is in fact the conspicuous formal gesture with which any reader is likely to become first acquainted simply because it occurs – like that initial anomaly of typography – on the Wake’s first page.

The introductory flourish of the hundred-letter thunderword could of course simply announce that the reader, in the ensuing pages, will encounter various extraordinary permutations of the legible and had better be prepared. But this, really, has already been signaled by the famous lower-case “r” of “riverrun” as well as by that word’s own aptly fluid oblivion of ordinary boundaries and, as the text proceeds, by *inter alia* “wielderfight,” “mumper” and “tauftauf.”

Of course anyone who has read Beckett's article already suspects that there is some other way in which the placement of a thunder on the Wake's first page announces and effects some mutual reinforcement of form and content, and the reasons for the placement of this *first* thunder, at least, are in fact well-known and even, as these things go in the Wake, obvious enough. The Wake opens with a thunderword because Vico does. As Hart puts it Vico's cyclical history

began with a thunderclap which frightened primitive, inarticulate man out of his bestial fornication under the open skies, caused him to conceive of the existence of a wrathful, watchful God, to utter his first terrified words -- "Pa! Pa!" -- and to retire modestly to the shelter of caves to initiate the history of family and society. [SMFW 47]

This formula is worth quoting not simply because – with Beckett, Campbell and Robinson *et al.* – it tends to inform subsequent critical understanding of the subject but because of its clarity and concision. It lays out a great deal of what the Wake finds useful and important about Vico: largely, his vision of the origins of language and history. But a slightly broader and deeper examination of Vico's scenario and its circumstances will help a reading of the Wake in a variety of ways, and most immediately when it comes to understanding a particular aspect of an architectonic scheme that evidently structures the disposition of the thunderwords. This structure will prove – unsurprisingly, given that the substance of Vico's theme is history – to be related to the question of the Wake's temporal structure, somewhat in the way Hart assumes (apparently with some justification) the dialogues to be related to space.

First, though, a fuller examination of Vico must provide three things: 1) a fuller account of the causes, consequences and implications of the primordial thunder that

generates history and language; 2) some understanding of the pre- or proto-linguistic symbolic systems which seem to at once precede and inform the inception of language-proper at the crucial moment and 3) the way in which this second question abuts on a curious doubling of origins, obscurely linked to the parallel history of the Jews and reflected, as it develops, in the architectonic disposition of the Wake's thunderwords.

* * *

Jute. – Whoa? Whoat is the mutter with you?

Mutt. – I became a stun a stummer. [16.16]

... you (will you for the laugh of Scheekspair just help mine with the epithet?) semi-semitic serendipitist, you (thanks, I think that describes you) Europasianised Afferyank! [191.01]

Since *The New Science* treats of humanity's progress since the Flood, its history emerges from Noah. Noah has three sons. The pious (and thus in the event the properly Hebraic, and not simply Semitic) sons of Shem save the antedeluvian ways, but the rest, and the sons of Ham and Japheth, degenerate into the specifically gentile history with which Vico will be principally concerned.

[T]he founders of gentile humanity must have been men of the races of Ham, Japheth, and Shem, which gradually, one after the other, renounced that true religion of their common father Noah which alone in the family state had been able to hold them in human society by the

bonds of matrimony and hence of the families themselves. As a result of this renunciation, they dissolved their marriages and broke up their families by promiscuous intercourse, and began roving wild through the great forest of the earth. ... By fleeing from the wild beasts with which the great forest must have abounded, and by pursuing women, who in that state must have been wild, indocile, and shy, they became separated from each other in their search for food and water. Mothers abandoned their children, who in time must have come to grow up without ever hearing a human voice, much less learning any human custom, and thus descended to a state truly bestial and savage.¹

Without the law of a “common father” humanity descends into a chaos of “promiscuous intercourse” producing “a state truly bestial and savage.” Since the abandoned children “grow up without ever hearing a human voice, much less learning any human custom” one of the principle results is the oblivion of language, which merely negative condition will be redressed by the famous thunder.

There is another result however which, obvious and alarming enough though it is to Vico, tends to escape critical remark, perhaps because to a later age it will seem – conceptually at least – inevitable, almost cliché. Without “that true religion of their common father Noah which alone in the family state had been able to hold them in human society by the bounds of matrimony”

¹ From section 369 of Vico, Giambattista. *The New Science*.

Translated by Bergin, Thomas Goddard and Fisch, Max Harold.

Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984. Henceforth cited as “NS”

followed by section number.

parents, since they are held together by no necessary bond of law, will proceed to cast off their natural children. ... If humanity, public or private, does not bring them up, they will have to grow up with no one to teach them religion, language, or any other human custom. So that, as for them, they are bound to cause this world of nations, enriched and adorned by so many fine arts of humanity, to revert to the great ancient forest through which in their nefarious feral wanderings once roamed the foul beasts of Orpheus, among whom bestial venery was practiced by sons with mothers and by fathers with daughters. This incest is the infamous *nefas* of the outlaw world, which Socrates by rather inappropriate physical reasons tried to prove was forbidden by nature, whereas it is human nature that forbids it. [NS 336]

Indeed, as Vico stresses again in his brief concluding summary of *The New Science*, unregenerate men are

... impious in having no fear of gods, unchaste in their use of shameless bestial venery, and nefarious in their frequent intercourse with their own mothers and daughters. [NS 1098]

For some reason this nadir (or zenith) of debauch has not figured in assessments of Vico's importance for Joyce, though there are reasons, as we will see, to suspect that it may not have entirely escaped the latter's attention. For now it will suffice to note that, for Vico, the scene on which the reconstitution of the lapsed law (and with it the reconstitution of language) will obtrude is evocative on the one hand of HCE's

famously disturbing interest in his daughter and on the other of the *bete noire* identified by psychoanalysis.

The absence of paternal law occasions in addition a rather peculiar somatic condition.

Mothers, like beasts, must merely have nursed their babies, let them wallow naked in their own filth, and abandoned them for good as soon as they were weaned. ... [T]hese children ... would be quite without that fear of gods, fathers, and teachers which chills and benumbs even the most exuberant in childhood. They must therefore have grown robust, vigorous, excessively big in brawn and bone, to the point of becoming giants. ... Of such giants there have been found and are still being found, for the most part in the mountains (a circumstance with an important bearing on what we have to say below), great skulls and bones of an unnatural size [NS 369]

The unchecked “exuberance” of childhood in the fatherless races leaves them “robust, vigorous, excessively big in brawn and bone.” But an understanding of the way in which lawlessness occasions hypertrophy is of more than anatomical concern. When we understand the primordial body we understand the primordial mind..

... [T]he first wisdom of the gentile world, must have begun with a metaphysics not rational and abstract like that of learned men now, but felt and imagined as that of these first men must have been, who, without power of ratiocination, were all robust sense and vigorous imagination. [NS 375]

Giantism is in a sense the outward and visible sign of the absent law. For the absence of law as the absence of language is likewise a triumph of *soma* over *psyche*; indeed, the latter to a large extent becomes the former. This, too, is corollary to the oblivion of language.

[T]he nature of our civilized minds is so detached from the senses ... by abstractions corresponding to all the abstract terms our languages abound in, and so refined by the art of writing, and as it were spiritualized by the use of numbers ...[that] [i]t is ... beyond our power to enter into the vast imagination of those first men, whose minds were not in the least abstract, refined, or spiritualized, because they were entirely immersed in the sense, buffeted by the passions, buried in the body. [NS 378]

The primitive, lawless imagination, bereft, as it were, of the symbolic, is necessarily “real” – corporeal – though *qua* imagination it remains, apparently, in addition vastly “imaginary.”

Specifically, according to Vico, it is prone, as children are, to anthropomorphic projections, and because of its robust corporeality to the projection of bodily affect in particular. Early men thus gave ...

... the things they wondered at substantial being after their own ideas, just as children do, whom we see take inanimate things in their hands and play with them and talk to them as though they were living persons.

In such fashion the first men of the gentile nations, children of nascent mankind, created things according to their own ideas. But this creation was infinitely different from that of God. For God, in his purest intelligence, knows things, and, by knowing them, creates them; but they, in their robust ignorance, did it by virtue of a wholly corporeal imagination. [NS 375-6]

With this conditioning of primitive psychology the flood and its consequences have now shaped the inner as well as the outer world. They will produce at once the catalytic event and the psychic chemistry of its reception. The thunder, long muted by the risen seas, will return to a mind peculiarly conditioned to take it at its Word. With the stage set and the principals properly disposed towards the projection of a robustly somatic anthropomorphosis, we may cue light and sound, to which corporeal, anthropomorphizing primitive man will be particularly susceptible.

Of such natures must have been the first founders of gentile humanity when at last the sky fearfully rolled with thunder and flashed with lightning, as could not but follow from the bursting upon the air for the first time of an impression so violent. As we have postulated this occurred a hundred years after the flood in Mesopotamia and two hundred years after it throughout the rest of the world; for it took that much time to reduce the earth to such a state that, dry of the moisture of the universal flood, it could send up dry exhalations or matter igniting in the air to produce lightning. Thereupon a few giants, who must have been the most robust, and who were dispersed through the forests on the mountain heights where the strongest beasts have their dens, were

frightened and astonished by the great effect whose cause they did not know, and raised their eyes and became aware of the sky. And because in such a case the nature of the human mind aids it to attribute its own to the effect, and because in that state their nature was that of men all robust bodily strength, who expressed their very violent passions by shouting and grumbling, they pictured the sky to themselves as a great animated body ... [NS sec. 377] ... [A]t the same time that the divine character of Jove took shape – the first human thought in the gentile world – articulate language began to develop by way of onomatopoeia, through which we still find children happily expressing themselves. ... Human words were formed next from interjections, which are sounds articulated under the impetus of violent passions. In all languages these are monosyllables. Thus it is not beyond likelihood that, when wonder had been awakened in men by the first thunderbolts, these interjections of Jove should give birth to one produced by the human voice: pa!; and that this should then be doubled: pape! From this interjection of wonder was subsequently derived Jove's title of father of men and gods ... [NS 447-8]

It is, thus, precisely the degeneration of gentile humanity which has rendered it susceptible to the imagination of its regeneration. Though after a fashion and in pagan form, the Father – or more precisely his name – is restored and with him, language and the progress of history under paternal law. It is not the least happy aspect of Vico's fable that it accounts for the ubiquity of the bilabial plosive in Indo-European cognates of the father's name; the plosive, it devolves, is simply and aptly mimetic of an explosion.

But why *precisely* does this fearful enunciation of the Name of the Law effect humanity's regeneration? Precisely because it effects the sublimation of desire into will and, thus, body into (specifically human) mind. As Vico puts it, the thunder occasioned

... that frightful thought of some divinity which imposed form and measure on the bestial human passions of these lost men and thus transformed them into human passions. From this thought must have sprung the conatus proper to the human will, to hold in check the motions impressed on the mind by the body, so as either to quiet them altogether, as becomes the wise man, or at least to direct them to better use, as becomes the civil man. This control over the motion of their bodies is certainly an effect of the freedom of human choice, and thus of free will, which is the home and seat of all the virtues ... [NS 340].

And this intrusion of a meteorological superego effects principally the sublimation of sexual impulse. Thus

between the [newly effected] powerful restraints of frightful superstition and the goading stimuli of bestial lust ... [primitive men] had to hold in [check] the impetus of the bodily motion of lust. Thus they began to use human liberty, which consists in holding in check the motions of concupiscence and giving them another direction; for since this liberty does not come from the body, whence comes the concupiscence, it must come from the mind and is therefore properly human. [NS 1098]

Given the principal elements of the scenario (and particularly taking into account the father's negation of the pre-linguistic license which culminates in the hitherto unremarked incest) we might agree with John Bishop that what Vico provides is "the thunder of the patriarchal 'NO!' in Freud's accounts" [JBD 191]. The comprehensive founding power of this proscription is however almost post-Freudian, generative as it is of the specifically human subject as well as language, culture and, most importantly for Vico, the unfolding of history under patriarchal law. The Law of the Father interrupts the promiscuity whose *ne plus ultra* is incest and desire is channeled into the re-institution of marriage.

Moral virtue began, as it must, from conatus. For the giants, enchained under the mountains by the frightful religion of the thunderbolts, learned to check their bestial habit of wandering wild through the great forest of the earth, and acquired the contrary custom of remaining hidden and settled in their fields. ... With this conatus the virtue of the spirit began likewise to show itself among them, restraining their bestial lust from finding its satisfaction in the sight of heaven, of which they had a mortal terror. So it came about that each of them would drag one woman into his cave and would keep her there in perpetual company for the duration of their lives. Thus the act of human love was performed under cover, in hiding, that is to say, in shame In this guise marriage was introduced, which in a chaste carnal union consummated under the fear of some divinity. [NS 504-5]

And marriage guarantees, crucially, patriarchal legitimacy.

Thus, with the first human, which is to say chaste and religious, couplings, they gave a beginning to matrimony. Thereby they became certain fathers of certain children by certain women. Thus they founded the families and governed them with a cyclopean family sovereignty over their children and wives [NS 1098]

We know, incidentally, that this paternal sovereignty is “cyclopean” because

In Strabo [13.1.25] there is a golden passage of Plato [L.3.677-684] saying that, after the local Ogygian and Deucalionian floods, men dwelt in caves in the mountains; and he identifies these first men with the cyclopes, in whom elsewhere [in the same passage] he recognizes the first family fathers of the world. [NS 296]

For Vico, of course, the cave-dwelling Cyclopes are the primordial giants.

In any case Pa’s in his haven and all’s (perhaps too far to the) right with the world. After these rude beginnings history does not necessarily become more polite but it does become more organized and as a consequence passes cyclically through the three ages of Gods, Heroes and Men, with their respectively characteristic languages and theological, territorial and civil wars. The over-sophistication of the final stage always devolves at last into the brief intermediary stage Vico calls the *ricorso* and which constitutes at once terminus and (qualified) return to the initial conditions of history.

The nations mean to dissolve themselves, and their remnants flee for safety to the wilderness, whence, like the phoenix, they rise again.

[NS 1108]

As Joyce writes in a May 13 '27 letter to Weaver, the phoenix is Michelet's apt symbol for Vico's theory as a whole.

This fuller explanation of the causes, consequences and character of the Viconian thunder-scenario will prove useful in a variety of ways. Before we move on to the first of these, however, at least three minor complications in Vico's presentation of the origin – involving as it were the condition of language before language – need to be observed.

The progress from speechlessness to “articulate speech” is, though central, itself supplemented by two other primordial linguistic modes of which, apparently, degenerate primitive gentile humanity availed itself. The exposition of these modes does not elicit from Vico himself the sort of complex, psychologized myth of origins we saw in the case of the thunder. It also lacks the sort of punctiform event which would position the advent of these modes in a clear chronological chain of cause and effect.

The sense, however, seems to be that the thunder-scenario involves the inception of language in what is generally construed to be its form proper – “articulate speech” *per se* – but that before the decisive advent of “Pa!” there flourish (in addition apparently to a native penchant for onomatopoeia) at least one and possibly two forms of proto-language.

The first is song:

Mutes utter formless sounds by singing, and stammerers by singing teach their tongues to pronounce.

Men vent great passions by breaking into song, as we observe in the

most grief-stricken and the most joyful.

From [these axioms] it follows that the founders of the gentile nations, having wandered about in the wild state of dumb beasts and being therefore sluggish, were inexpressive save under the impulse of violent passions, and formed their first languages by singing. [NS 228-30]

This inarticulate expression under the duress of strong affect is, recall, an extant habit which, when projected, forms the basis for the anthropomorphism of the thunder. Language proper, thus, articulate speech, has a matrix in – one might almost say is “anaclitic” on – an admixture of bodily impulse and music which prevails before the return of the father and to a degree facilitates his reception. One thinks of the Kristevan semiotic.

The second candidate is a peculiar one, not least in that it seems to put the horse before the cart.

[A] difficulty [has been] created by ... scholars ... all of whom regarded the origin of letters as a separate question from that of the origin of languages, whereas the two were by nature conjoined. And they should have made out as much from the words “grammar” and “characters.” From the former, because grammar is defined as the art of speaking, yet *grammata* are letters, so that grammar should have been defined as the art of writing. So, indeed, it was defined by Aristotle [*Topics* 142b 31], and so in fact it originally was; for all nations began to speak by writing, since all were originally mute. ... Moreover, if these letters had been shaped to represent articulated sounds instead of being arbitrary

signs, they would have been uniform among all nations, as the articulated sounds themselves are. [NS 429]

As the first lines suggest, Vico is somewhat conscious of the fact that in this curious reversal of the priorities, at least chronological, of speech and writing his *grammatalogy* is in conflict with academic orthodoxy and its “hopeless ignorance of the way in which languages and letters began” [NS 429].

Of course Vico is also somewhat in conflict with himself. Questions of origin are vexed; never more so than here. Other sections of *The New Science* for instance tend to emphasize that origin can never be utterly untangled from what ensues and that indeed the three succeeding stages of gods, heroes and men are distinguished from one another more by emphasis than by the utter hegemony of the mode proper to each and are further, somewhat like the stages of Lacan, to a degree always contemporaries, and nowhere more so than in the zone of origin. But there is also the strong suggestion that song and letters are more *ur* than the *ur* and especially in the first case the anterior condition for language itself. Their priority will also eventually prove helpful to an understanding of the Wake’s structure.

There is, however, in addition to these, strictly speaking a third “language before language,” which distinguishes itself from the first two insofar as it does not according to Vico in any way predispose the evolution of gentile speech and is not, further, itself strictly a “proto-language” at all, being rather an anterior but fully developed language *per se*. It is involved with one of the complicating conditions of Vico’s account of origins which will prove helpful, and sooner rather than later, in understanding the Wake’s architecture.

As we’ve implied, by Vico’s own terms the entire scenario of origins – and all of the carefully explicated cyclic history that ensues it – can only be supplemental to the

history of the Jews. It is after all “the true religion of their common father Noah” which antedates the flood and is neglected by all but a portion – which portion will become of course the Jews – of the sons of Shem. It is further a curiosity of Vico’s prose that this necessarily supplementary status of the ordinary history with which he principally concerns himself is constantly insisted through his perpetual description of it as “gentile.”

The editors of the standard edition of *The New Science* comment obliquely on this situation.

The adjective for the noun *gens* is “gentile.” This adjective has two chief uses. One is a technical use in Roman law, where it denotes a degree of relationship for purposes of inheritance, as in Vico’s recurring phrase “direct heirs, agnates, and gentiles.” The other and much more frequent use is to emphasize the fact that the nations with whose nature the new science is concerned are the “gentile” nations. Such a nation as he contemplates is isolated in the first place from the Hebrew people, and only in the second place from other gentile nations. Vico, of course, never uses the redundant phrase “gentile gentes”; the term “gentes” has the emphatic meaning without the adjective. But we are to understand throughout that the families, gentes, peoples, and nations in question are gentile. All statements about the Hebrews are to be understood as *asides* or *obiter dicta*; they are no part of the science.

[NS B4]

At least the Hebrews are *supposed* to be no part of the science. But in addition to constantly reminding the reader of their existence, if only negatively, through his

unflagging iteration of “gentile” Vico can’t help commenting directly on them, if only in order to stress that they are no part of the science, which is in a sense true. The engine of their history is the direct intercession of God as opposed to the somewhat mechanical (and thus scientific) ineluctability of the cycles which, though “established by divine providence” [NS 348] and thus evidence of a quasi-Platonic “ideal eternal history traversed in time by the history of every nation” [NS 349], tend to leave the gentiles in a comparatively deist cosmos.

But the strangest thing about the exclusion of the Jews from history is their undeniably pre-eminent sense of history *per se*. And this is necessarily the case, for the Jews spring only from those sons of Shem who did *not* renounce “that true religion of their common father Noah” and who did not, therefore, precipitate themselves into the degradation which was the common lot of mankind. No promiscuous intercourse, no incest; indeed the Jews of early times are distinguished at a glance from their degenerate cousins precisely because they do *not* come to embody the hypertrophy of unchecked somatic impulse.

The Hebrews, on account of their cleanly upbringing and their fear of God and of their fathers, continued to be of the proper stature in which God had created Adam and Noah had procreated his three sons; and it was perhaps in abomination of giantism that the Hebrews had so many ceremonial laws pertaining to bodily cleanliness. ... Thus ... the entire first world of men must be divided into two kinds: the first, men of normal size, which includes the Hebrews only; the second, giants, who were the founders of the gentile nations. [NS 371-2]

Only when the thunder-chastened gentiles institute their own species of this

hygiene, incidentally, do they begin to approach just proportions.

This is the origin of the sacred ablutions which must precede sacrifices, a custom which was and is common to all nations. It was by becoming imbued with this cleanliness of body and this fear of gods and of fathers ... that the giants diminished to our normal stature. [NS 371]

But the chief thing about this preservation of the Jews from the ruinous consequences of a post-deluvian “second fall” is of course that they do *not*, as do the gentiles, lose language. Hence, though

every nation barbarian or civilized has considered itself to be the oldest and to have preserved its records from the beginning of the world [this is] a privilege, as we shall see, of the Hebrews alone. [NS 53]

True, there was the tower of Babel, but this fission of language, divinely ordained by God unlike the oblivion of language which was the lot of the bestial gentiles, was apparently insufficient to disrupt the transmission of tradition. Vico is in fact so adamant about the Jews as a link to the *original* origin (the Creation, as opposed to the genesis of gentile history in thunder) that he seems to retrospectively hypostasize them into a sort of always-already nationality, extant as a special class even before the apostate birth of the degenerates from which alone they could be contradistinguished.

... [T]he first people of the world were the Hebrews, whose prince was Adam, created by the true God at the time of the creation of the world.
[NS 51]

The bulk of *The New Science*, thus, cannot help but be in a sense an account of “history” and “language” implicitly unfolding inside the vaster, more continuous and divinely sanctioned patrimony of History and Language. After all, again, there is

invincible proof that the Hebrews were the first people in our world and that in the sacred history they have truthfully preserved their memories from the beginning of the world. [NS 54]

We may thus now add to our list of Vico’s “languages before languages.” In the beginning was the thunder, it’s true. But *before* the beginning there may have been letters and song. And there was *certainly* Hebrew, or some version thereof. But this division of original language into Jew and Gentile in a curious way reinscribes itself in one of its halves, in a curious division that splits the origin of what is putatively gentile history alone.

Primitive man, it begins to appear, is not the only one that stutters. In a sense Vico, or at least *The New Science*, also has trouble getting started, or more precisely riddles its beginnings with their own echoes. The stuttered or doubled “Pa! Pa!” is of course itself a double of the preceding atmospheric disturbance, but this doubly-doubled origin of language is itself doubled inasmuch as there are two original languages for the reason that there are two origins, God’s and Man’s, Jew’s and gentile’s.

But the pattern doesn’t stop there. Even when we move more squarely into what Vico construes as history proper – gentile history – we find for some reason that the origins of history are doubled *again* and in a way which retains, even in the gentile camp, a reflection of the gentile/Jew division.

The moment of the original thunder is in the event not one moment but two. In

fact, after the deluge it is the region of Mesopotamia that seems to dry out first and thus, given 18th-century meteorology, becomes the region of the *original* original thunder.

As we have postulated [62, 195] ... [thunder] occurred a hundred years after the flood in Mesopotamia and two hundred years after it throughout the rest of the world; for it took that much time to reduce the earth to such a state that, dry of the moisture of the universal flood, it could send up dry exhalations or matter igniting in the air to produce lightning. [NS 377]

Why does Mesopotamia dry out first? According to Vico's geography it is the most elevated region of the ancient world (topographically as well, apparently, as spiritually) and, for related reasons, given that the waters of the flood recede to the shores of the seas as presently constituted, the furthest inland. We may deduce this in part from the respective antiquities of the various early civilizations, which

give us a great argument to prove the antiquity of the Hebrew people, which was founded by Noah in Mesopotamia, the country farthest inland of the first habitable world; so it must have been the most ancient of all nations. [NS298]

Mesopotamia, higher and thus drier, is thus presumably the earliest region to emit the "dry exhalations" Vico recognizes as the necessary condition for lightning.

But the consequence is that the thunder sounds *twice*: once for the gentile sons of Shem, who have not wandered far from their pious brethren, and once for the rest of

gentile, non-Semitic humanity, who have.

[F]rom the dispersion of fallen mankind through the great forest of the earth, beginning in Mesopotamia ... a span of only a hundred years of feral wandering was consumed by the impious [part of the] race of Shem in East Asia, and one of two hundred years by the other two races of Ham and Japheth. [NS 736]

The Semitic peoples, thus, which include but are not exhausted by the Hebrews proper, constitute even in their “impious” variety a special class. The gentile Semites were the first to be set, by their earlier thunder, upon the project of reconstituted law and history. The Chaldeans are an example:

Thus Zoraster is honored as the first wise man among the gentiles. [NS 63]

The temporal structure of Vico’s own account of origin is thus above all a doubled one, down to its brute, physical occasion. It’s not just that “Pa! Pa!” is itself a doubled double of the original thunder, nor that history consists of the Jews and the gentiles. Rather, even the thunder inaugural of gentile history sounds not once but twice: once in Mesopotamia for the races of Shem, and once in the rest of the world for the races of Ham and Japheth.

Our treatment of Vico above will have, as we will see, a variety of consequences for reading the *Wake*. But first one to take into account is the way in which Vico’s insistence on this iterating duplicity, and especially the duplicity of the original thunder, informs the *Wake*’s temporal structure and hence the disposition of the

thunders. That the thunders are, logically enough, in fact associated with time is strongly suggested at the content level of *Finnegans Wake*.

* * *

By the watch, what is the time, pace? [154.16]

**... which is in reality only a done by chance ridiculisation of the
whoo-who and where's hairs theoric of Winestain. [149.26]**

We are by now fairly practiced in the apprehension of the Wake as brute spatial extension and have discovered that this extension, so far from really being utterly brute, suffers the administration after all of some structure, some logos. Now, our considerations of Vico's historiography raise the question of the other broadest aesthetic category. For one of the points on which the text of *Finnegans Wake* is relatively clear is that it performs a relationship, unsurprisingly, between Vico and time.

Recognition of one form of this relationship is by now a critical commonplace. Vico is of course an historian, and since Campbell and Robinson criticism has recognized the operation of Vico's three principle historical ages and the *ricorso*, roughly reflected in the Wake's three chief Books and its shorter fourth. But the text of *Finnegans Wake* is equally clear in its assertion of some relationship – again, unsurprising, really, given the nature of history's origin for Vico – between time and the thunder in particular. And the suggestion of the text is that this relationship is rather precise, even somewhat chronometric. Indeed the Wake provides us with an axiomatic injunction to this effect, as though giving directions for solving a problem:

Let thor be orlog. ... Now measure your length. Now estimate my capacity. Well sour? Is this space of our couple of hours too dimensional for you, temporiser? [154.24]

"Orlögg" is, as it happens, one of the original names of Thor, but as McHugh points out also suggests *horologe*, which reading is supported by context ("couple of hours;" "temporizer").

In this construction, incidentally, we also note a conflation of time with something extratemporal, in this case space, but this subtlety need not detain us unduly for the moment. Note instead that we find the same sort of association between time and thunder, and conveyed in nearly the same terms, near the beginning of I.4:

our misterbuilder, ... exploded from a reinvented T.N.T. bombingpost ... out of his aerial thorpeto, Auton Dynamon, [was] all differing as clocks from keys since nobody seemed to have the same time of beard, some saying by their Oorlog it was Sygstryggs to nine, ... [77.03-13]

Once again the "Oorlog" is associated with Thor, smuggled in this time in "his aerial thorpeto." This time the construction of "Oorlog" as *horologe* is almost insisted upon by the proximate and rather straightforward presentation of "clocks" (though some uncertainty perhaps faintly redolent of relativity again seems to obtain). We can also see that Thor seems to be less time *per se* than a device for keeping or measuring it: precisely an *horologe*.

This as it happens is commensurate with the description of HCE on the last page of III.4 as "Mista Chimepiece," in a context redolent of Michelet's Vichian phoenix of

historical rebirth, here occasioned by the thunder-bolt of "Pa! Pa!":

Pepep! ... On never again, by Phoenix ... His reignbolt's shot. Never again! How do you like that, Mista Chimepiece? [590.4-11]

The reader has likely noticed that strictly speaking this must be one version of an end of time, though it evokes time's beginning. As we will see there is a reason we might expect such a terminus at the end of III.4. But the suggestion to note for the moment is simply that the timepiece may be a "Chimepiece" in part because the bells of a clock sound with the regularity of Vico's thunder. Thus one of the attributes of HCE in the catalogue at the beginning of I.6 "is a horologe unstoppable and the Benn of all bells" [127.36].

Likewise, we find that "watch" is the word of choice during another description of an *horologe*. In Book IV Vico's four ages (including the *ricorso* or "changeover") are

even a little odd all four horolodgeries still gonging restage ... before cymbaloosing the apostle at every hours of changeover. The first and last rittlerattle of the anniverse; when is a nam nought a nam whenas it is a. Watch! [607.07]

The way in which "horolodgeries" oddly persuade time into some sort of spatial construction – possibly a dwelling – is seconded by

Our wholemole millwheeling vicociclotometer, a tetradomational gazebocroticon ... transmitted by the ancient legacy of the past, type by tope, letter from litter, word at ward ... [614.27]

This is generally taken as an instance of textual self-reference – the Wake discussing itself. If so, though, it emerges as a sort of temporal edifice constructed of Vico’s ages into a “tetradomational” (and the suggestion of the four-dimensional may reinforce the spatialization of time here) gazebo.

It is also, of course, a “vicocicrometer,” and the cyclical return of thunder is generally taken as one of the chief instances of renewal necessary for the waking of Finnegans. During the bulk of the text proper, thus, when, presumably, some sort of history is still under way, we might find that HCE is, during his sleep of thousands of ages or

(hypnos chilia eonion!) lethelulled between explosion and reexplosion
(Donnaurwateur! Hunderthunder!) ... [to] abide Zeit's
summonserving, rise afterfall. Blueblitzbolted ... [78.04].

Here it might almost seem as though the entire dream takes place between Vico’s first and second thunder (a space here of a thousand rather than a hundred temporal units), though the cyclic return of the ages suggested by “vicocicrometer” is doubtless pertinent too. Although Hart is not strictly correct when he states that Vico himself uses “another terrifying thunderbolt to start a new cycle rolling [SMFW 47],” his mistake is not only understandable but illuminating insofar as Joyce, in his adaptation of Vico's scheme, does, perhaps ten times at least.

Our aversion to Hart here, however, brings us athwart another peculiar critical condition. Hart’s work with the Wake’s sense of space has been, as we’ve seen, at once trenchant and in some ways proleptic of our thesis. But of course a treatment of the aesthetics of space does not exhaust the pages of *Structure and Motif*. Chief

among Hart's remaining considerations is, unsurprisingly, time. And here it would seem at first as though the thunders would be features with which Hart would particularly like to concern himself. They are, like the dialogues which he has exploited to such effect, features which can be discerned – merely seen or “looked at” – before they are read. Further they offer clear hints of structural affinities between as it were the microscopic and the macroscopic levels of structure – between the word (indeed, perhaps, the letter) and some large structural fact. Each thunder save the last is exactly 100 letters long and ten of these words (or 1001 letters) are distributed about the text. Finally these words are associated with time, which with space makes one of the two great matrices in which the cyclical forms Hart discerns will play out and by which they will be conditioned.

But when it comes to time there's something strange about the structure, not just of the Wake, but of Hart's book about the Wake. When in fact we look at the Chapter titles of *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake* an odd asymmetry begins to emerge. Ignoring for the moment the appendices and concentrating on the chapters the latter are *I: Some Aspects of Finnegans Wake, II: Cyclic Form, III: The Dream-Structure, IV: Spatial Cycles I – The Circle, V: Spatial Cycles II – The Cross, VI: Correspondences, VII: Leitmotiv* and *VIII: Two Major Motifs*. As its title suggests the book divides itself roughly into an examination of structure and motif, in that order. After the general survey of the first chapter there follow four chapters on structure and three on motif.

Concentrating on the structural chapters we must be struck by the predominance of cyclic form. Indeed three of the four chapters announce this as their concern (so it should be no particular surprise to the reader to discover that the remaining chapter, *The Dream-Structure*, discovers that structure to be cyclical). But what must then additionally strike Hart's reader, especially one who has already read through his

book, is that whereas – if we are to judge by titles – not one but two chapters are devoted to space, none are devoted to time.

Yet when we open the book proper and begin to read we discover that the titles have misled us. *Cyclic Form* – the first chapter on structure and the first to advance any of Hart’s original theses – is entirely devoted not to cyclic form in general but only to cyclic form in its temporal aspect. Why then, since the chapters dealing with spatial cycles are called simply Spatial Cycles I and II, isn’t this chapter called Temporal Cycles? Is time the “natural” or naturalized matrix for cyclic form, so that chapters which deal with its spatial supplement must be specially labeled? But if space is less determinant of cyclic form why does it get roughly twice as much coverage as does time?

In any case it turns out that when we examine *Cyclic Form* – the chapter which treats of time – we find that a particular kind of time, traditionally construed as most central to the Wake’s project, is, somewhat like the problem of time itself at the level of the chapter-title, naturalized only in order to be dismissed. And that kind of time is Vico’s.

It is by now thoroughly well known that in *Finnegans Wake* Joyce made use of the cyclic theories of history set out in Gimabattista Vico’s *La Scienza Nuova*. ... Since the publication of Beckett’s article almost every commentator on *Finnegans Wake* has, as a matter of course, discussed the Viconian theories and shown how they apply in general to the book. ... Many major and minor developmental cycles in *Finnegans Wake* follow the Viconian scheme quite closely, but ... I shall not pursue the Viconian structure in any detail. [SMFW 46-7]

Despite the obvious pertinence, thus, of Vico to the question of cycles (presumably temporal – Hart mentions Vico not at all in his spatial chapters) he will not be discussed here because we already know all about it. But the problem, as we've seen, is that we don't know all about it at all. In fact from a structural point of view – the very point of view which Hart has found missing from criticism and which he has roused himself to address – at least when it comes to the thunder we know virtually nothing other than that Vico's history begins with the thunder and so does *Finnegans Wake*.

In the ensuing pages Hart goes on, very usefully, to describe the *other* temporal schemae – theosophical, astronomical, calendrical and so on – which indubitably do influence the *Wake*'s form and content and many of which receive scant or no attention until Hart's work. Vico, however, remains an absence that shapes – I'm almost inclined to say distorts – Hart's critical *magnum opus* at its own level of structure. Yet, as was the case with the dialogues, Hart's own arguments – here concerning precisely the other (I'm almost inclined to say substitute) temporal schemae – offer our first clues to a recontextualization and possible resolution of the problem.

The first and perhaps chief of these alternatives chronological orders is a cyclic vision of history derived from Madame Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* (which has been variously documented by other writers, notably McHugh, as a substantial source of *Wakean* allusion) and based largely on the cosmic calendars of Hinduism. This addition is structurally important in part because, as Hart remarks,

There is one vital point of structure distinguishing the Viconian cycles from almost all the cyclic patters which obsessed Blavatsky, for whereas Vico's theories are based on a tripartite formula, with a short

interconnecting link between cycles, nearly every Indian system uses a primarily four-part cycle, with or without a short additional fifth Age. Since in some respects a four-part cycle suits Joyce's purposes better than does a three-part, he extends Vico's fourth age, on the analogy of the Indian cycles, and gives it a great deal more detailed attention than it receives in the *Scienza Nuova*. [SMFW 50]

Further,

The kind of cyclic counterpoint here implied is basic to the structure of *Finnegans Wake*. It has already been noticed that within the three Viconian Ages of Books I, II, and III, Joyce allows four four-chapter cycles to develop. [SMFW 62]

Here again critical consensus is – and justly enough, I think – squarely on Hart's side. Hart cites Tindall's 1950 *James Joyce* as an early instance of the now standard interpretation of the quadripartite division of the *Wake*'s first sixteen chapters into four-chapter cycles as Viconian, but the idea is in fact already present in germ in Campbell and Robinson. It stems principally from the observation that Book I's eight chapters are in fact implicitly divided into two four-chapter cycles – thus producing with III and IV four four-chapter cycles in all. *A Skeleton Key* seems to be the first to notice that Finnegan/HCE goes through an entire cycle of death, resurrection, trial, inhumation and second ghostly resurrection or “escape” from his tomb/womb/cell in chapters I.1 through 1.4 (1.4 being the scene of his inhumation and escape). After this “male cycle” HCE more or less disappears for the next four-chapter cycle, often called the “female cycle” since 1.5 and 1.8 concern ALP (though 1.6 and 1.7 feature the

brothers).

The notion that Joyce has constructed the Wake in this way also derives curious and thus far unremarked support from Ellmann's discussion of Joyce's dreams. Appropriately, Ellmann introduces this subject at the beginning of his discussion of the initial compositional stages of *Finnegans Wake*, which treatment he interrupts in order to interpose Joyce's own dream of

a Persian pavilion with sixteen rooms, four on each floor. Someone had committed a crime, and he entered the lowest floor. The door opened on a flower garden. He hoped to get through but when he arrived at the threshold a drop of blood fell on it. I could know how desperate he felt, for he went from the first floor all the way up to the fourth, his hope being that at each threshold his wound was not capable of letting fall another drop. But always it came, an official discovered it, and punctually at the sixteen rooms the drop fell. ... Can you psychoanalyze it? [Ellmann 547]

Ellmann can.

So the Biblical crime in the Garden became the crime in the garden in Joyce's dream and finally the crime in the Phoenix Park which Earwicker is alleged to have committed. [Ellmann 550]

This may seem a bit rapid but as we will see relatively soon *Finnegans Wake* is structured so as to make both central and, if you will, epicentral a specifically psychoanalytic crime. But our interest must be drawn for the moment rather to the

rather striking congruity between the oriental building of Joyce’s dream and the notion of the Wake as structured primarily of four groups of four chapters. This tends to strengthen the interpretation of the “tetradomational gazeboctoticon ... type by tope, letter by litter, word at ward” as the book itself.

In any case, of course, a quadripartite division of sixteen elements has its intuitive appeal. If with Hart and the rest of Joycean scholarship we grant the plausibility of the division of the book into four four-chapter cycles, instead of (or more to the point in addition to)

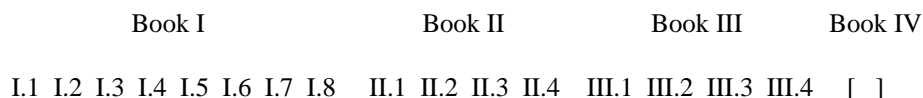


Figure 2.2: Major textual units.

we get

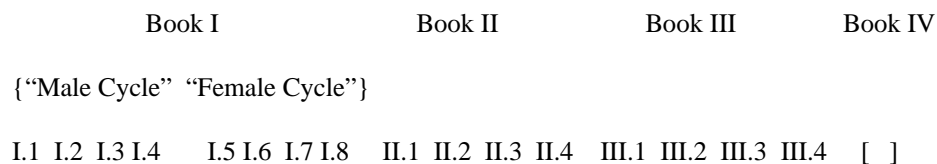


Figure 2.3: Quadripartite rearrangement of major textual units.

As Hart points out this bivalent formal situation finds various echoes in content.

Throughout Finnegans Wake, in fact, it is very often possible to group a series of symbols, phrases, or people into either a three-part or a four-

part configuration, depending on our point of view. There are three children, but Isolde has a double, making a fourth; the four evangelists each have a house, but one of them is invisible since it is no more than a point in space (367.27). [SMFW 63]

And as Hart and others have noted John, the gospeller often associated in the Wake with time as opposed to the space whom the synoptics represent, always seems to arrive late. In any case criticism generally allows that Joyce has inscribed himself in the tradition of one of literature's most venerable equivocations. Like the Plato of *Timaeus*, like Aristotle, like Vico, like Jung, like Derrida and Lacan (and Derrida and Lacan) Joyce seems to be exploiting both the tension and the supplementary relationship between three elements and four. Three elements, for instance, predominate and a fourth supplements in the arrangement of the Wake's Books. I, II, III, each of roughly equal bulk, are followed by the shorter IV which is generally and plausibly construed as a version of Vico's *ricorso* which both completes and reintroduces the cycling of his ages of Gods, Heroes and Men. And our own examination of the Wake's dialogues of course finds that the three exchanges between the twins in I.1, IV and II.3 are supplemented with – if not dominated by – the dialogical structure of the entirety of II.2.

The juxtaposition of the two diagrams above however highlights a condition which although not strictly speaking abyssal is as it were supplementary to the supplementary. Whether we hew to the first or to the second construction of the Wake's subdivisions Book IV remains external to the principle scheme. On the one hand it thus remains as it were peculiarly itself, regardless of perspective. On the other it is, though it remains a supplement in either case, a supplement in the first instance to a three-part and in the second to a four-part scheme and is thus itself as it

were either a fourth or a fifth wheel.

A fifth age, even a supplementary one, does not at all accord with a Viconian schema. It accords admirably however, as Hart discerns, with Blavatsky's Hindu system.

All the diverse cycles find a common culmination in Book IV, whose single chapter is one of the most interesting and successful in *Finnegans Wake*. ... For the theosophists ... the moment of change from one major cycle to the next was filled with a mystical significance which Joyce seems to have found attractive. This brief interpolated Age was called a 'sandhi', a twilight period of junction and moment of great calm. Blavatsky sees it as the most important moment of all in the resurrection process – a period of silence and unearthliness corresponding to the stay of the departed soul in the Heaven-Tree before reincarnation. ... Book IV accords with this. It is immediately identified as a 'sandhi' by the triple incantation with which it begins: 'Sandhyas! Sandhyas! Sandhyas! (593.01).'" [SMFW 52]

But further: regardless of whether one views IV as the supplement to three or to four stages of history, it remains in some sense outside of history proper. Thus

[a]ll the complex time-schemes of *Finegans Wake* are ultimately resolved in a mystical 'Eternal Now'. The Eternal Now, the *nunc stans*, is a very old idea involving the mysterious simultaneity, in the eyes of the Absolutue, of all that in ordinary experience is called past, present and future. The idea in one form or another was very much in

the air in Joyce's lifetime, after the rediscovery at about the turn of the century of the importance of time and its problems. ... Of the several symbols which have been used in attempts to render the concept intelligible, the most familiar must be that developed by T. S. Eliot in 'Burnt Norton' and the other Quartets: the revolving wheel or sphere with its central 'dancing' point, a point which, since it is a point, cannot be said to spin, and yet from which the whole circular movement emanates. The movement of the wheel represents, of course, common Time, while the tantalising mid-point serves as symbol for the Timeless. Joyce uses the same symbol but, always more given to literal interpretation, he provides within *Finnegans Wake* itself – that 'gigantic wheeling rebus', as the *Skeleton Key* calls it – a passage corresponding with the central point. Towards this point of eternity the rest of the book's content is constantly impelled by the centripetal forces of death, dissolution and atonement. The central passage is, of course, Book IV: 'There's now with now's then in tense continuant' 9598.28; 'in a more or less settled state of equonomic ecolube equalobe equilab equilibrium' (599.17). [SMFW 76]

It begins, in fact, to seem as though we have been anticipated in our intuition that *Finnegans Wake* sports not one but two centers. We've seen Hart's case for the centrality of II.3. That case, though not bereft of persuasion, is troubled, as we recall, by Hart's curious tendency to extract virtually all (and there's a lot) of his evidence not from II.3 but from the chapter before, II.2. Hart's presentation of his candidate for his own version of a second center, IV, is, however, though briefer, somewhat more convincing; not least because all of the textual evidence Hart adduces to support IV's

candidacy does, in this instance, actually derive from the chapter in question. “Sandhyas! Sandhyas! Sandhyas!” (in addition to constituting its own echo of Eliot) does indeed derive from IV; better, as Hart himself points out, the words constitute the chapter’s first, and are thus plausibly construed as suggesting an overall tone or the theme for the rest. His other two citations above derive from the chapter as well. In fact Hart is able to continue quite plausibly in this vein.

The timeless nature of Book IV is perhaps most clearly expressed in the St. Kevin episode. At Gendalough Kevin retires:

centripetally ... midway across the subject lake surface to its
supreem epicentric lake Ysle, wherof its lake is the ventrifugal
principality. (605.15)

St. Kevin’s hermitage, as described by Joyce in these pages, is a very effective symbol of renunciation and spiritual stillness. At the mid-point of the universe – the ‘no placelike no timelike absolent’ (609.02) – Kevin, at one with Brahman, gives himself over to memoryless meditation: ‘memory extempore’ (606.08) – *ex tempore* since no memory of the past can exist in an Eternal Now. [SMFW 76-77]

All of the citations are 1) obviously pertinent at the content level to the assertion they are intended to support and 2) derived from the zone about which the assertion is being made. (Thus some curious dislocation of evidence from a plausible matrix is not, it seems, a necessary condition of Wakean centers nor even of their analyses.) Further, as the first, largest citation in the passage immediately above suggests, the

text itself almost seems to be discussing itself precisely as a center at this point.

Or more precisely, note, as an *epicenter*. This goes unremarked by Hart, of course, since it's not his axe to grind. We, however, will wish to bear it in mind. In any case,

The symbol of the circular universe with its timeless centre is also found in the figure of the Buddhist *mandala* which is of such importance to Jung. This is the symbol [of a circle enclosing a cross] which, in the MSS, Joyce gave the highly important ninth question II.6. His use of it to designate a passage dealing with the structure of *Finnegans Wake* suggests that in one structural sense the whole of the book forms a *mandala*, as in Figure I, opposite, in which the four four-part cycles make the Wheel of Fortune, while Book IV lies at the 'hub'. [SMFW 77]

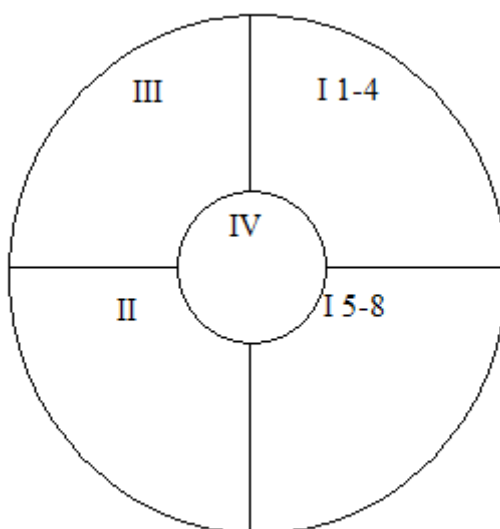


Figure 2.4: Hart's *mandala* centered on "eternal" Book IV.

In a move somewhat reminiscent of more recent strategies of reading, Hart has, in his discussion of IV – indubitably “extra” whether it’s the fourth wheel of a tricycle or the fifth of a cart – discovered that the supplement is central after all.

Hart intends none of this, of course, to efface his efforts to discern the centrality of II.3. On the contrary, it is the superposition – or “superfetation” to use a Joycean word – of *schemae* which will characterize the *Wake*’s structure as surely as it does its content: its “seams” as surely as its *semes*, it seems. None of these cyclic schemes undo the equally important sense of convergence on a center to which Hart has devoted so much of his chapters on space. As we recall from our own discussion of the dialogues:

To Frank Budgen [Joyce] described the process of composing
Finnegans Wake:

I am boring through a mountain from two sides. The question
is, how to meet in the middle [Givens, p. 24].

This inverse relationship explains what Joyce meant by his statement that Book III is ‘a description of a postman traveling backwards in the night through the events already narrated’ [*Letters*, p. 214]. The dream-visions of Book III are a mirror-image of the legends of Book I, while both dreams and legends are rationalised in the underlying naturalism of Book II, on to which they converge. On this ground-plan Joyce builds up a dynamic set of relationships between youth and age which reproduce the outline of the [Blakean] ‘Mental Traveller’.

This particular citation, however, is derived interestingly from Hart's discussion of time in *Cyclic Form*. It does of course correspond well with his (and our) sense of converging dialogic scheme(s) already discussed. But the sense of convergence to which Joyce alludes is explicitly temporal. This suggests then, though for the moment it must remain a suggestion, that, in addition to the progression – whether Vichian or Hindu – of ages from Book I through to Book IV, there will emerge a sense of convergence of these ages from either “end” of the text onto some sort of center.

In the rest of *Cyclic Form* Hart goes on to address the instances and operations of various standard calendrical divisions such as the day, the week, the seasons and the year. He also does some very interesting things with the arithmetic of the Hindu scheme; and since his evidence for this derives, again, almost exclusively from II.2, we will wish eventually to take it into account. The schemes elaborated above, however, basically exhaust Hart's treatment of Wakean time as a broad architectonic device. And it has been worthwhile to bring Hart's efforts along this line into clear focus because of what it begins to suggest when we reintroduce a consideration of the broad architectonic device which Hart has so conspicuously left out: the Vichian thunderwords.

Let's remind ourselves of the basic situation encountered when the Wake is considered as brute extension. A first reading of the thunder seems to offer some hope for a wedding of form and content, at least if “first reading” is understood rather literally. The Wake's first page contains its first thunderword, and this of course is how we would wish it. The thunder, after all, occasions for Vico the origin of language, and surely, we suspect, Joyce's parodic appropriations are a consequence precisely of the Wake's conspicuous linguistic self-consciousness. Joyce, thus, like

Vico, puts the thunder at the beginning. This makes eminent, self-evident and satisfying sense; but after this things go immediately and steeply down hill. The placement of the remaining nine thunders seems to make no sense whatever, especially when considered in terms of beginnings, ends *or* middles.

If, for instance, we *begin* with a thunder, and history and this story are cyclical, we might like to end with one, as well. But we don't. It's not simply that the last page, or even the next to the last, lack a thunderword: all of the concluding Book IV (itself, recall, in a way a chapter of its own and structurally suggestive of some sort of exordium), is conspicuously thunder-free. Of course, since Book IV is obviously in some way special, extra, perhaps we should look rather in the conclusion of text as constituted by the remaining, "ordinary" Books. Here again, though, empiricism must disappoint. It's not simply that there's no thunder in the concluding pages of III.4; there's none in the chapter anywhere.

Now we might consider that since the Wake is cyclical, then surely its initial and concluding thunders are one and the same. This might relieve us of the obligation to discern a thunder in the later chapters. After all, we don't find the word "riverrun" at the bottom of page 628: it's understood we're supposed to turn back to page 3. By this reading the absence of a thunder near the end should not exercise us; there's text enough and time, and the silence of final pages simply anticipate the reassertion of the first.

But unfortunately for such an intuition Joyce seems to have born in mind no sense of any equitable, just distribution of these precious exegetical resources amongst the remaining members of his text. It's not even that there's no thunder in IV, or III.4. The entire final third of the text is bereft. The last thunder occurs in the middle of III.1. Worse luck for any sense of symmetry or balance, it's preceded by *another* a mere ten pages earlier. Why such profligate distribution of thunders in such a small

space when vast tracts of the concluding work go unrewarded? Is there some sense in which we are to imagine the text, absurdly, ending in III.1? And as we have seen a census of the other loci brings no happier news, but simply the sense that Joyce has abandoned his celebrated penchant for *schemae* and the architectonic to the genius of the higgledy-piggledy.

And yet if, as we have before, we conscript Hart’s own architectonic methods to explicate what he leaves out, the first suggestions of order begin to coalesce. In this case what we need, appropriately, is a superposition of schemes. What happens if we superimpose the thunders on Hart’s quincuncial diagram? Recall that Hart *et al.* wish us to take account of an extra division in Book I, which is thus divided into its own first (I.1-I.4) and second (I.5-I.8) halves, producing the quadripartite division of the major text with Book IV remaining supplementary and the four ages of Hinduism constituting the ordinary progress of time circling the timeless “sandhi” of Book IV. In such an apprehension of the *Wake* as linear artifact the thunders are disposed thus:

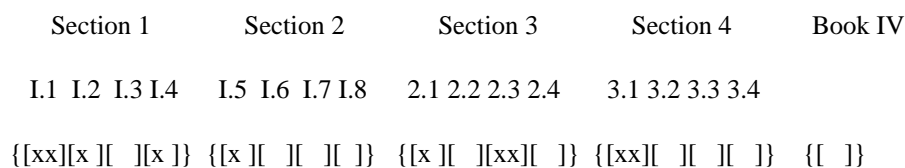


Figure 2.5: Disposition of Thunders in the quadripartite scheme.

Now let us superpose the thunders on Hart’s *mandala* and, just as we counted the thunders in each chapter, determine the number of thunders in each of the four major sections. If we compile the locations of the thunderwords (again, at 3.15, 23.05, 44.20, 90.31, 113.09, 257.27, 314.08, 332.05, 414.19 and 424.20) and insert them into Hart’s diagram, we get:

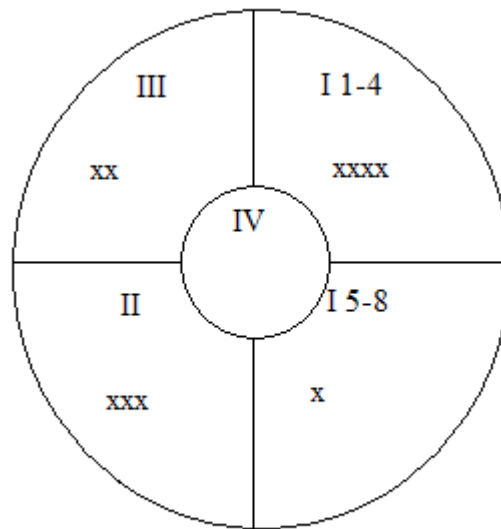


Figure 2.6: The quadripartite disposition of Thunders in Hart's *mandala*.

The first thing we notice is that the center of the *mandala* is free of thunderwords, as though Book IV has in fact in some way escaped the ravages of Vico's (or Blavatsky's) historical time, being precisely the zone of eternity that Hart suggests. The dialogues, according to Hart's treatment, are primarily (never exclusively) an aspect of spatial structure, part of the Timaeian construction of space (in both the geometric and "outer" senses). Thus they may – and do – without inconsistency include within their reach the merely extratemporal but *not* extraspatial Book IV. But the thunders, the marks and causes of history – and, as we have seen, relentlessly conflated with chronometers of various types – would have to eschew the pristinely eternal Book IV, leaving it unviolated by the temporal.

Next we note that throughout as it were the sublunary remains of the Wake the thunders appear thus: four in the first quadripartite section comprised of Books I.1-4; one in the second, I.5-8; three in the third (II) and two in the fourth (III).

This as it turns out is just the tip of an iceberg whose strange and elegant shape we'll explore later. But even now we may discern some pattern. One section has one thunderword, another two, another three and another four. This gesture toward the first four integers seems at least consistent with the various aspects of the Wake's quaternity and especially, here, the four distinct Hindu ages which Hart sees circling the "silent" eternity of IV's *sandhi*. Of course the four – each assigned one of the first four cardinal numbers by its thunder or thunders – would by a conventional linear reading be somewhat out of order. It can already be noted, however, that in thus distributing the thunders among his four "horolodgeries" Joyce has in fact effected a remarkable symmetry. If the four four-chapter groups are themselves divided into two groups of two each – in other words if we look first at the first eight and then at the last eight chapters – we can see that each half of the "sublunary" text has been assigned exactly the same number of thunders. Four and one make five and so do three and two. This is cleverer, incidentally, than it appears at first; Joyce has managed to wed a bilateral symmetry with the apparent necessity of enumerating elements in ascending groups of one, two, three and four. It's somewhat as though the top and bottom levels of a Pythagorean tetraktys greeted the reader on the recto, and the middle two levels on the verso. Ten dissolves into the symmetry of itself as five mirrored. Thus while not, perhaps, utterly transparent at this point, the scheme does seem to offer some hope of a discernible *logos*.

But returning for the moment to the question of the text as linear artifact: we can see at least that it seems the chronometric progress of the ages, Blavatskian or Vichian, linear or cyclical, proceeds throughout as it were the sublunary bulk of *Finnegans Wake* until "the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more" in Book IV. And this, in the event, accords roughly with the context of the thunderwords as given in the text. Reading conventionally the "first" on page three

does indeed signal itself as the beginning – of Biblical time at least – for it is, according to the words which immediately precede it, “The fall” [3.15] which is “retaled early in bed and later on life down through all christian minstrelsy” [3.17]. Likewise the Wake’s “last” thunder, occurring in III.1 on 424, is announced quite insistently as somehow terminal. It is the “last word of perfect language” [424.23], the “last word in stolentelling” [424.35] and its own last syllables – “rackinarockar” – suggest, as McHugh notes, the Norse apocalypse Ragnarok.

But if the suggestion is that the thunders mark the progress of time throughout the “sublunary” Wake, the problem remains: why do they stop so soon? At page 424 there are still more than 200 pages of the Wake to go; and even if we exclude Book IV, there are still 166 pages of “sublunary” text unmarked by thunder. Why stop time at the *beginning*, as opposed to the *end*, of Book III? An answer to this question must begin with an assessment of another structural peculiarity which emerges in a linear consideration of the thunders and which, though subtle, is obvious enough on reflection. The distribution of thunders is not, even at a first glance at the linear synoptic which takes account of their placement, utterly random. Rather those chapters graced with thunders receive either one thunder or two; never three or more.

This observation does not in itself, of course, answer all our questions, and tends in fact at first to raise a version of one raised before. With sixteen chapters of “temporal” text-proper, one might expect that a mere ten thunders would be rather more parsimoniously and symmetrically distributed; perhaps along the lines of something close to one per chapter. Yet such is not the case. Even with the paucity of elements, Joyce has extravagantly doubled the allotment of thunders for three of the chapters. Why? And why double the thunder at all?

For the last point, at least, an aspect of *The New Science* already suggests a possible explanation: Vico’s thunder has revealed itself, after a closer reading, as itself in fact

intrinsically doubled or dialogic. It's not simply that the first word, itself stuttered into duplicity, is already Man's reply to God's (or the weather's) opening salvo; that salvo itself sounds twice, which duplicity in turn echoes history's two origins, Jew and gentile. For the moment the point is simply that Vico's scenario contains not one inaugural thunderword but two. In order to mimic Vico's scene of origin the first chapter of the *Finnegans Wake* would thus require not one but two thunders.

And it has them: at 3.15 and again at 23.05. Very well. Yet some confusion remains. For the initial chapter is not, as we recall, the only chapter favored with such a surplus. Two other chapters contain two thunders too, and neither II.3 nor III.1 are at the beginning.

There is, however, this at least: we would not necessarily expect a book like *Finnegans Wake* to refer to origin only at its "beginning." In the first place what is already known of its eccentric construction would tend to complicate the notion of a beginning; and in the second, the Wake's well-known cyclical structure is, likely, already influenced by Vico's cyclical history, one of whose chief points is of course that it repeats itself; as already demonstrated the text itself calls attention to this effect. It would thus in a sense be surprising if origin did *not* repeat itself. Further, we know by now that the text is fond of certain kinds of repetition. There is however the question, already raised, of whether or not the Wake's very cyclicity make its points of departure and return identical. Clearly the book is constructed thus in at least one way: "riverrun" both "begins" page three and "concludes" page 628. There is, however, a structural problem with this kind of perfect textual circle, and it is precisely the problem of the absence of difference. In fact when the text is taken – and left – at this sort of face value, it is necessarily the case that *every* "word, letter, penstroke, paperspace" [115.07] is the beginning and end – and thus no beginning or end can be discerned.

Of course this is its own way a fabulous trick, and beyond doubt one of the Wake's textual effects. There are however two problems with making this sort of oblivion of difference the *only* trick. One is that by depriving the text of the capacity to distinguish – in this respect at least – it deprives the text to that extent of the capacity to *mean*. Joyce's practice, as his other texts demonstrate, is rather to accrete than to pare away; whether meanings or strategies for meaning. Too much fun can be had with the sense of an ending – or a beginning – to be given up to the production of an ideally smooth surface.

The other problem, of course, is that the surface can never be ideally smooth in any case. Oblivion of difference cannot in fact be accomplished. In the case of the Wake this is evident simply by virtue of the fact that given its means of production it must – as we've already noted – despite its daring unorthodoxies accommodate itself to at least some of the prosaic interruptions of ordinary books. Bound as ordinary books are bound, it's bound, as we've seen, to have bounds. White space runs out at the top of page three, text runs out at the bottom of 628. The snake bites its tail but not, as Derrida might observe, without injury in this successful act of auto-affection. This is to an extent an effect of the material condition of the medium; and a large part of the thesis developed here will be that Joyce's success in *Finnegans Wake* depends on his increasingly successful appropriation of the material condition of his medium less as limit than as opportunity.

But this is to be demonstrated. Aesthetic considerations of this type aside for the moment, it remains the case, as we've seen, that the Wake obviously does take rather self-conscious account of ends and beginnings and even of middles, as a reading of (or looking at) the dialogues suggests. Is there any way in which the structural distribution of the thunders mirrors the sense of structure suggested by the dialogues? That we will find that they do is first suggested, perhaps, by the reflection that the

duplicity of Vico's first thunder and first word reflects that they already enact, of course, a species of dialogue. "Pa! Pa!" is in the event already an answer; to God, perhaps, or to contingency or to the answering mind itself – but an answer. And if we take the echoing iteration of the terrified primordial stutter as allusion, witting or no, to the fact that that dialogue is in some sense necessarily narcissistic – or at least caught in the mirroring structure of some projection – no less are we reminded that by critical consensus Shem and Shaun are simply shards of a single mind, generally construed as the mind of their father (Joyce, HCE, both); hence in part their fusion in the book's centers.

And as it turns out (and as the reader may by this time have noticed) this intuition is strengthened by the fact that the chapters favored by *doubled* thunders happen to be for the most part those which contain the dialogues to which Hart first drew our attention.

For there the dialogue is in the Wake's first chapter – I.1 – and there, too, are the doubled thunders. There the dialogue is in II.3 – and this, perhaps, intrigues us most, for this is of course the chapter that Hart has identified as a point of convergence that and we have identified as at least an "epicenter" – and there, too, are the doubled thunders. It begins to seem self-evident that it is not only the case that one brother answers the other, or that one thunder answers itself, but that the placement of the doubled thunders answers the placement of the dialogues; and even, we might suspect, if we take the respectively spatial and temporal character of these two kinds of doubled structure into account (as well as the Wake's tendency at the content level to conflate time and space, as we've already seen to some degree), that time answers space.

We must note, however, that the structural symmetry in this regard does not seem to be itself an utterly untroubled surface. True, there are three chapters that Hart has

identified as dialogical, and there are three chapters containing doubled thunders. In the cases of I.1 and II.3, these chapters are identical. But what of the remaining disparity? Why, as the book winds to a “close,” does it permit the vagary of what promised to be a thoroughgoing scheme? Why is it the case that whereas the last dialogue appears in IV – the Wake’s last Book and, in a sense, chapter – the last pair of doubled thunders (and indeed the last thunder *per se*) does not?

Of course when the question is asked this way the likeliest answer is by now, perhaps, evident. The extratemporal character of Book IV excludes the thunders, even as it allows the spatial dialogues. But no sooner is this question laid to rest but the next raises its head. The exclusion of the thunders from IV has been made sensible. But why then do the doubled thunders not appear in III.4, the last of the Wake’s “sublunary” chapters, but rather at precisely the wrong end of Book III?

The answer is that as we recall Joyce has pulled an eminently temporal trick with all of Book III. As his correspondence asserts, and as the text itself (as we’ll see later) suggests, Book III is narrated backwards. As Hart puts it,

This inverse relationship explains what Joyce meant by his statement that Book III is "a description of a postman traveling backwards in the night through the events already narrated." The dream-visions of Book III are a mirror-image of the legends of Book I, while both dreams and legends are rationalized in ... Book II, on to which they converge.

[SMFW 67]

This sense, as we recall, is seconded by McHugh, for whom, again, the chief thing about the structure of the Wake is the

balance of book I against book III. I believe that the greatest priority for the beginner is to acquire enough familiarity with FW to see the simple equilibrium of [these] two symmetrical half-arches supporting a keystone of greater complexity.”²

If one takes the reversal of time in III into account then the three instances of double thunder span the temporal text precisely as the three dialogues span its spatial analogue. Though it's not obvious at first, both the temporal and the spatial schemes place their respective dyads at their respective beginnings, ends and middles. It's simply that in the case of the thunders, Book III's reversal of time presents us, as Hart notes, with a condition in which time seems to start as it were simultaneously from both ends of the book and to converge on itself somewhere in the middle.

We have, thus, a rather striking congruity between the situation of the dialogues and what at first appears a mere helter-skelter muddle but which resolves, after Vico, Joyce's own description of Book III and the very shape of the dialogic structure already discerned are taken into account, into what is likely an analogous convergence on the same chapter.

Book I	Book II	Book III	Book IV
I.1 I.2 I.3 I.4 I.5 I.6 I.7 I.8	II.1 II.2 II.3 II.4	III.1 III.2 III.3 III.4	[]
[xx]	[xx]		[xx]

Figure 2.7: The Dialogues.

² p. 6 McHugh, Roland. *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake*. London: Edward Arnold, 1976.

Book I								Book II				Book III				Book IV
I.1	I.2	I.3	I.4	I.5	I.6	I.7	I.8	II.1	II.2	II.3	II.4	III.4	III.3	III.2	III.1	[]
[xx]									[xx]							[xx]

Figure 2.8: The Thunders with the temporal reversal of Book III.

II.3 is the site, as we now discern, not simply of the two large dialogues which form the centerpiece of Hart' scheme, but of the central of the three pairs of doubled thunders which span the Wake understood as temporal entity. As we will see the content of the chapter reflects this.

But speaking of middles, do we, in the case of the temporal thunders, encounter a situation analogous to that which obtains in Hart's reading of the chiasmic structure of the spatial dialogues? Recall that a closer analysis of the dialogues revealed that though 2.3 was *a* center, 2.2, where the dialogue form assumed special dimensions (involving indeed the entire chapter), emerged as a stronger candidate for *the* center. Does a comparable situation, in which II.3's apparent centrality cedes to a more compelling centrality evinced by II.2's special version of the central point of a chiasmus, obtain in the case of the (temporal) thunder cycle? As the reader is by this time likely to suspect, the answer is yes.

One of the ways in which II.2 announced itself as the crescendo of the dialogic motif was, recall, by repetition. The chapter seemed almost to stage a dialogue of dialogues – one dialogue running the length of the entire chapter in the margins and concluding with the doubly-joint missive of the twins and their schizophrenic sister at the bottom of 308 (II.2's last page), the other dialogue erupting in the center of II.2

while in addition staging its own version of a fusion where the marginalia, as though in anticipation of chapter's end, suspend their exchanges, disappearing from the sides to conflate for a time in the sudden re-emergence of full-page text with normal margins. In addition, of course, Issy responds to the boys above with her footnotes, which also run the length of the chapter and constitute its *last* last words (and possibly pictures).

Having polished our Vichian glosses and sensible of some conflation of time and space, thunder and dialogue, we're now already, perhaps, inclined to recognize in these gestures an additional reflection of (or response to) Vico's own insistently doubled dialectic of origins. And as a matter of fact II.2, as the chapter itself is at pains to point out, contains what is both genetically and thematically the Wake's original (more to the point its *original* original) thunderword. Further, through a very clever and very Joycean textual trick, this original word is – somewhat like Vico's original but in a sense I think rather more pregnant – its own double. We'll want to return to II.2, and read it more closely.

But in order to understand the way in which II.2's peculiarly concentrated utterance emerges out of the convergences staged by the rest of the book, we need first to take account, as indicated earlier, of the Wake's undeniable tendency to stage a convergence and, as Hart implies, a climax of *some* sort in II.3. For the climax proper to II.3 is not simply an anticipation of a somewhat more resounding one in II.2; it is also – both through an abstract, aesthetic, almost theoretical meditation and through what reveals itself at last as a rather straightforward narrative structure – the necessary condition for II.2's enunciation of the first word in “stolentelling.” In fact, II.2's thunder is an answer to II.3's. The thunder does after all sound in II.3; twice in fact. Our next step, thus, is to turn to the question of what it says.

Chapter III

**In the buginning is the woid, in the muddle is the soundance and
thereinofter you're in the unbewised again ... [378.29]**

The dialogues – as we’ve seen and as has been to an extent already understood by criticism – span and in a sense define the Wake as spatial artifact, marking its “beginning,” its “end” and what has for some time forwarded itself as one plausible candidate for a center. Now, though, the thunders – reassessed both in terms of the doubling that characterizes their Vichian provenance (which renders them in their own sense dialectical) and in light of Joyce’s “trick” of the temporal inversion of Book III – emerge to second in an emphatic and, in retrospect, obvious way the architectonic gesture of the dialogues. Marking the Wake’s temporal as the dialogues mark its spatial terms, the thunders likewise seem to converge in the chapter Hart has long tendered as the center of the text: II.3.

Though this chapter, as we’ve indicated, will eventually prove less central than “epicentral,” the Wake’s large architectonic gestures clearly mark it as central enough to be deserving of our attention. In fact as we will see II.3 marks the final disturbance in the surface of the Wake before its eddying waters funnel toward the center that lies in a sense beneath. The powerful currents of the Wake’s complementary temporal vectors meet in II.3 in a dizzying vortex which, before it precipitates the reader at last into some other zone, commingles motifs and identities. Thunder and dialogue, Shem and Shaun, life and death, beginning and end will all collude there; and though their collusion will at last prove chiefly prologue it will demand our audience, if only to let us understand the drama that ensues.

We must prepare ourselves, then, first for an understanding of II.3. But as

indicated such an understanding will require that we survey, as much as time and space allow, the broader text of *Finnegans Wake*. Time and space won't allow much; but we can cheat them somewhat. This in part is what an approach to the whole *via* the structurally salient part has attempted, and we'll pursue that strategy still. Thus far we have remained on the shores of structure, weaving exegetical nets on the looms of the Wake's grand architectonic devices. The time has come though that we must cast these nets over the face of the deep.

What we're trying to catch will reveal itself at last as a very small fish indeed. That's one reason it's never been caught, though it's been glimpsed more than once. On the other hand and as we'll see, it's almost literally a leviathan; at least that's what the Wake itself calls it. If it's too small to be seen, it's also in a sense too large to be held; and if in some ways it wants us to catch it, it doesn't want to go without a fight. Coincident with a paradoxical (and perhaps eminently Joycean) sense of exhibitionism our quarry has a fierce will toward "silence, exile and cunning;" and it has the leviathan's power to break our lines or pull us into the waters of oblivion with it, drowning our recognition of what we've caught. Accordingly we'll have to be canny enough to give our nets some play, to bring them in and let them out and bring them in again. This will take time. We will eventually cinch our reading in II.3 and weigh our catch. But then, just as the game seems over, we'll have to let go once more and follow this strange fish as it all but disappears into the depths. Jung said that Joyce and his daughter were like two people going to the bottom of the river, one of them falling, one of them diving. As much as we can we'll dive. If we give the leviathan its head, we'll also keep our own, and fall into the heart of the Wake's darkness with our eyes open.

So far we have had the luxury of surveying the Wake from a certain distance. Though we've already made our first tentative forays into the text *per se*, for the most

part we've been concerned with the preparatory steps of grasping the outlines of a large structural situation and – somewhat of a piece with this – the outlines of a system which, though it informs the Wake comprehensively, is also apprehensible independently of the difficult text itself: Vico's *Science*.

Now, however, we must encounter content. This, really, is the *bete noire* of criticism, since the Wake's hydra-headed word turns on the reader as quickly as it turns on itself. Meanings multiply too rapidly for a standard exegetical approach; indeed, they may multiply too rapidly for standard processes of cognition. There are, however, some propaedeutic methods at our disposal. Though we can't really hope to keep our heads above water forever in such a project; we can execute a relatively controlled dive.

One way to stay in control is to sharpen our sense of structure. Another is to recall Beckett's observations on the relationship of form to content.

Here form *is* content, content *is* form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not to be read – or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not about something; *it is that something itself*. ... When the sense is sleep, the words go to sleep. (See the end of 'Anna Livia'.) When the sense is dancing, the words dance. ... How can we qualify this general esthetic vigilance without which we cannot hope to snare the sense which is for ever rising to the surface of the form and becoming the form itself?¹

¹ p. 14 Beckett, Samuel. "Dante ... Bruno. Vico ... Joyce," *Our Exagmination Round His Factification For Incamination Of Work In Progress*, Samuel Beckett et al, New York: New Directions, 1939

Beckett reverses the terms of our aqueous metaphors into something perhaps less sinister. Though an encounter with content remains an encounter with the depths, the fish seems to come to the surface of its own accord. I'm not quite so sanguine; or perhaps we're simply after different game. For Beckett, in any case, an implicitly presupposed content bubbles to the top as form. Our reading strategy implies the reverse of this process. *We're* starting with intrinsically senseless but easily apprehensible features, often on the all-but-depthless, merely visible formal surface. So far, indeed, content has remained a level to which we can only hope to sink. But insofar as the two approaches are in a sense the two vectors of a single critical trajectory, Beckett's assessment, if we may be allowed to qualify it somewhat by our own species of esthetic vigilance, implies for us sound advice and a sound agenda.

The *Wake* does not always present form and content as quite the identity Beckett suggests; in fact the text often draws a sharp and almost pedagogical line between them, as we will see. Form and content are, however, perpetually caught up in a dynamic synthesis redolent at once of Hegel and a species of Taoism. On the one hand the *Wake* seems determined to move the text toward the "purity" of an absolutely formal condition, almost as though *Portrait's* Stephen had never abandoned the esthetics of stasis more suited by his own analysis to the visual and spatial register than to the temporal character which even written language must in part evince. At the apex of this trajectory form in fact refines itself, like the God of Stephen's aesthetic creation, out of existence. At this point, however – and somewhat as in *Portrait* we hear Lynch's skeptical voice suddenly giving all-too-human flesh to an alleged transcendence – a sort of fall seems to precipitate form's very self-reference into a content that cannot help but acquire, apparently, a collateral and rather incarnate freight. This content, however, in turns begins its refinement into formal purity, and

the process is repeated. And all the while the text moves toward some central expression of the synthesis Beckett finds so central.

But how, to borrow Beckett's terms, may we qualify our esthetic vigilance so that we can eventually snare this synthesis? First by being esthetic and then by being vigilant: by taking stock, as we have, of the Wake's formal being as temporal, spatial and in a sense even material artifact, and then going on to read very closely at the content level. This last, however, by Beckett's definition and our own, presents unusual difficulties. To an extent these are the difficulties (and opportunities) of reading in general, but they are considerably increased by the nature of the Wakean beast. The synthesis of form and content is at once the Wake's felicity and miasma. Our vigilance, however, by taking stock of their occasional distinction, may begin to trace the various ways in which form and content perpetually supplement, replace, constitute and evaporate one another.

In beginning thus with distinction, we may as well begin with a deeper examination of the thunders, for the very first thunder on the Wake's very first page distinguishes form and content with a visual and almost synoptic economy into the word and its context. This distinction is effected by a gesture which, though it at first seems rather negligible, in fact has consequences for our larger understanding of the strategies through which the Wake's peculiar formal exertions produce at last and unusual richness of content, and for our understanding of the sign by which it eventually as it were signifies strategy -- or, again, a sort of trick -- itself. In anticipation of that sign we'll dilate briefly on these consequences before attempting again the vigilance which a close reading of the rest of the text demands.

* * *

Yet to concentrate solely on the literal sense or even the psychological content of any document to the sore neglect of the enveloping facts themselves circumstantiating it is ... hurtful to sound sense (and let it be added to the truest taste) ... [109.12]

All of the words in the Wake are strange, if only by context, but at first reading none are so strange as the insistently and interminably compound thunders, those types of the Wakean word *per se*. But what do the thunders mean? In fact, this is one of the questions the text seems readiest to answer. Indeed it's answered almost before it's asked, when we see that the first of the Wake's ten thunders is introduced by what remains its most ostensible and remembered denotation:

The fall (bababadalgharaghtakamminarronkonnbronntonnerronntuonnthunntrovarrhounawnskawntoohohoordenenthurnuk!) [3.15]

In some ways this is one of the Wake's kindest moments. On the one hand, we're confronted immediately with a hyperpolysyllabic monstrosity whose syllables seem mostly nonsense. But on the other hand by the time we get to it we already know what it means. In fact the parenthesized word itself is introduced by the content which conveniently appears immediately to the left of the opening parenthesis. Ever since page three of both the Wake and its *Skeleton Key*, thus, we've known that "*Finnegans Wake* is a might allegory of the fall and resurrection of mankind" [SK 3].

But if that's all the thunderword itself contains why bother with this outrageous form? At one level the question of content seems to have been answered, and that in advance. But that very gesture of anticipation leaves the word itself, trailing

parenthetically behind, reduced at least at first to an opaque and purely formal monstrosity. In fact the question of form is raised as soon as the question of content is answered, and by the same device. For if the text obligingly provides a meaning for the word, a content for the form, it does so only parenthetically.

Or, more properly, we might say it parenthetically provides a form for the content. For in this case the meaning isn't parenthesized, the word is. In fact the evisceration of its no-longer-contained contents, placed alongside and outside it, is a gesture which by virtue of its very pedagogical intent cannot help but with unusual clarity and emphasis cleave the word into form and content as distinct moments of reading. Meaning is no longer content, but is exiled; outside rather than within the word.

The word's very enormity of course cannot help but from the first call attention to it as a formal exercise; in fact this is one of the things that recommended it to our attention. Surely such an outrageous formal gesture has implications for content. If *The Fall* is heralded by such a fuss, we can tell it's probably going to be important. But the parentheses themselves in their own way also call attention to the barely formal aspect of the word. At first it would seem to make little difference whether explication takes the form "The Fall, by which I mean (the thunderword)" or "(The thunderword), by which I mean The Fall." But unless a text as a whole consists largely of parenthetical observations, parentheses tend if not to emphasize at least to sequester what's between them. Thus they set this already strange word-in-itself even farther apart from the rest of the text. They frame it, almost like a picture; which – as opposed to the eminently legible specimen of content which their surgery has so obligingly excised – it is, since all we can do at least at first is look at it, dumbfounded by this parody of speech. Further, and contrary to expectation, a resolve to read regardless of illegibility does not seem to go very far toward turning the picture in to a window.

On turning to the actual word we might expect that its sequence of letters would reveal themselves as effecting more than some faintly cratylytic onomatopoesis of the precipitate descent invoked without, and that given the fabulous erudition of the author, surely some signified of unusually recondite and evocative complexity awaits the “too paned whittlewit” [108.06] willing to go to the trouble to discern it. Fortunately for exegesis the Wake’s readership abounds with such as these. In this instance, however, their labours have revealed the etymology of the Wake’s first thunderword as tending toward the tautologically uninformative.

Admittedly the word is, precisely as we should expect, a conspicuous display of acquaintance with an improbably wide array of languages (or more likely, from what we know of Joyce’s methods, with an improbably wide array of acquaintances). But when, as McHugh *et al.* have shown, we compile the various foreign words contained and translate them, they all mean one thing, repeated over and over again: “thunder.” Page three’s introductory thunderword *per se*, isolated and showcased by parentheses, is thus in a sense nothing more than the critical nonce-word which denotes it. It’s a word that means “thunder:” a thunderword. As Oscar Wilde might put it, that is all.

Well, perhaps not quite all. Our disappointment is, admittedly, somewhat qualified. “Bababadal” evokes Babel, as well as a battle (described on the ensuing page). It also likely evokes some infantile anticipation of speech and almost certainly the stuttering characteristic of primitive man’s reception of the primordial word in Vico. Too, we may notice a rather insistent doubling of letters throughout much of the rest of the word, a formal gesture likely not without import at the content level, though in part effected to bring the enunciation up to the formal requisite of precisely 100 letters.

But once form is penetrated content becomes largely repetitive and obvious. At first the word seems as though it might be saturated with all sorts of arcane and

heterogeneous references. Chiefly, though, it consists simply of the word for “thunder” in various languages, repeated – in another formal gesture, this time toward the macroscopic formal structure of ten thunders – precisely ten times.

When the text was first published this would have seemed less tautological and more informative. Joyce was clearly at pains to establish something about the word’s importance; that’s why it’s so large or, again, so easily *seen*. One thing he wanted to establish was of course the Vichian theme. And even today the gesture remains at first reception far from obvious. The erudition of even the recondite Moderns might have been taxed for instance by Japanese *kaminari* or Hindu *karak* (and Joyce was not above prompting his audience with authorially guided kibitzers: in this case, Beckett). But if this characteristic Joycean tension between the desire to hide and the desire to show – which tension is crucial to the revelation at last of how clever the author is – accounts in part for what is in a sense an unexpectedly drab uniformity lurking beneath the ostentatious heterogeneity of the thunderword, it produces in addition the effect of a curious and circular arrest at the level of the signifier. The word means the word means the word and there you have it; in fact we’re compelled to cycle back to this non-epiphany no less than ten times. Vico’s is a cyclical history after all, and especially in its Wakean instance. What else should we expect?

On the other hand we’ve still got ten thunderwords to go. Joyce still has ample opportunity to dazzle us with a welter of outrageous asides. But when, encouraged by this reflection, we turn expectantly to the Wake’s next thunder we’re likely to be outraged indeed.

Our hopes begin to deflate when we note that the second thunder, like the first, has taken the parenthetical veil:

And the duppy shot the shutter clup (Perkodhuskurunbargruauyagok-

gorlayorgromgremmitghundhurthrumathunaradidillifaitillibumullun-
ukkunun!) [23.05]

In passing we observe that context again hints at some content. This time the word is apparently the (presumably thunderous) sound of either a closing window, or, as the broader context in fact suggests, a door. If this is the case the Wake seems with the one-two punch of its opening thunders – or more properly their contexts – to be linking the notions of the Fall and some door. This in fact it is; but we must for the moment leave this suggestive denotation again on the other side of the parentheses and turn to a consideration of the veiled word itself. And this is what proves vexing; for once unblinking scholarship removes the veil this word, too, turns out to consist of nothing more than the word for “thunder” (or occasionally “it thunders,” “thundering sky” or “thunder thunders”) once again rendered no less than ten times, though now in languages even more removed from the European mainstream.

Will the text really keep this up indefinitely? Will all the iterations of the Wakean thunder resolve at last into no more than themselves? This would accord with certain receptions of postmodernity; and if we found the empirical verification of the hypothesis tedious and unrewarding we might at least console ourselves with this further evidence that the intuitions of genius coincide with those of our own shrewd age. Fortunately or not however this isn't in the event quite the case. Things beside the thunder are in fact discernible in some of the thunderwords; some of these things will concern us more than others.

It is, however, undeniably true that if we follow our structural method we discern a particularly tautological emphasis of the sort we've described. The Wake, recall, marks the bounds of its “temporal” text in part by initial, central and terminal pairs of doubled thunders. The chapters – I.1, II.3 and III.1 – corresponding to each of these

zones are thus each graced with two thunders a piece; other “thunder-chapters” just get one. In keeping with our structural investigation of textual beginnings, middles and ends, we’ve turned first to the first pair. But if this introductory gesture wants to tell us anything, it seems that the telling either founders on or simply *is* tautology. With respect, at least, to the words themselves, we find a peculiar identity of form and content, or the predictably modern or postmodern arrest at the opacity of the former.

Of course this is in a sense precisely the effect Beckett recommended to our attention. Even so we can’t help but feel – or perhaps merely wish – that in the case of the thunder there must be something more than seems to be meeting the eye. After all, if “It is not to be read – or rather it is not only to be read,” the qualification implies that this “this stuff” *is* also to be read to *some* degree. “When the sense is dancing, the words dance.” Very well: when the sense, apparently, is a thunderword, the word thunders. But where’s the sense? Within the thunder itself, the would-be identity of form and content seems less a triumphant synthesis than the abject capitulation of meaning to ostentatious formal demands.

On the other hand we may console ourselves that the means to meaning remain nevertheless, precisely in the context. In fact the dynamic implicit in this exile of content to context, so far from rendering a formal hegemony of the sign the Wake’s last word, calls attention to one of the chief methods for effecting what is after all Joyce’s famous and sometimes critically fatal semantic superabundance.

This propinquity and contrast of a meaning-rich context with a formally emphatic but meaning-poor expression is in fact in keeping with an important aspect of a long-term two-part strategy. Having remade writing, Joyce must necessarily remake reading into an instrument capable of receiving the various formal and semantic imports of a new kind of word. The initial opacity of *Finnegans Wake* is in crucial part an invitation to come to the reading experience as though once more for the first

time, confronting a signifier whose signified is at first merely potential. The text will accordingly on the one hand repeatedly call attention to a barely formal signifier; not only because at least at first that's the only way for us to get as it were "inside," but also because the barely formal signifier is, as we will see and as to a degree we might expect, at last a great deal of the point. Indeed, here, form *is* content. On the other hand, though, if the introductory thunders are in fact taken as the advertisements and warnings of such a condition, their context highlights another crucial aspect of reading which – though it is once more a condition of reading in general – the Wake deploys with particular insistence and effect.

Really, the peculiar evisceration and exile of content effected by the presentation of the first thunder isn't that peculiar at all. It's simply a rather pointed reminder of a general and obvious condition. A word's content is *always* to a great extent external to itself; not merely in the "slide" of signification into the perpetually deferring metonymy of the dictionary-game (which we begin to play when we look up "kaminari") but insofar as it is determined by context. The text is simply teaching us this lesson here. We've already learned it long ago, of course, otherwise we couldn't read anything. But the text wants us to learn it not as we learned it first but somewhat as we learn it in school – graduate or otherwise – when we become sensible for the first time of a mechanism we have long deployed insensibly.

On the one hand, as we've seen, this archetypal Wakean word variously calls attention to itself *qua* formal gesture: by its "sequestration," by its size, by its repetition. The most vexing aspects of its presentation at this level are its initial and terminal opacities. We can't tell what it means without a host of dictionaries; and when we've played the dictionary-game to the end it scarcely seems worth the candle. The poverty of the parenthesized word however in this instance encourages us to look precisely outside the parentheses, to where denotation -- not, in this case, far to seek --

conveniently and pedagogically becomes as ostentatious as form is within. Even if the word you're looking at is monstrously strange, the "secret" of its content isn't entirely in the books on your shelves; it's in the book you're holding. Although the Wake's polysemy is often and famously effected within the formal signifier itself through sometimes obscure and obscuring "misspellings," it's also effected, naturally enough, by context. The Wake, admittedly, accelerates this condition to an unnatural – or perhaps in a sense supernatural – degree. But the accelerating mechanism itself is plain enough.

If the strategy is to effect the dense polysemy Joyce seems to want, various contextual suggestions will necessarily, to a degree and at least on occasion, point to some *single signifier* that is deliberately highlighted as the potential vessel of diverse contextual significations. The text will gather itself into a knot, condensing sense into the formal emphasis of some particular word. Two devices – spelling and context – are the Wake's two chief ways of producing what Pound might call "language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree." Here, the semantic emphasis is on context.

In a particularly pedagogical hour, however, *Finnegans Wake* will eventually present its "transcendental signifier" in a way which rather clearly highlights both strategies. The way in which this central moment becomes a deliberately heightened act of *spelling* will, though it has gone undetected, become relatively obvious within the signifier itself. Context, however, is a more difficult matter. Joyce has in fact apparently determined that virtually the entirety of *Finnegans Wake* will serve as the relevant, determining context that is precipitated into a single and structurally central expression. There's something faintly absurd about this ambition toward this particular kind of language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree, but as it happens the Wake will encourage us to laugh less at its "central signifier" than the

language which adumbrates it and makes it possible. Though the signifier's size will seem at first to render it comically incapable of bearing the weight context will demand, this same size will ironically confirm our already growing suspicions. The Wake's more obvious gestures toward overdetermination – the ten recognized thunderwords whose monstrosity would seem at first to make them cornucopias of content – are largely bluster, a type of the word made to signify, as we will see, at last its own extinction and consequent resolution into precisely nothing. In fact all of language's power to variously signify will be gathered at last into a thunderhead that destroys itself with its own bolt in a structurally central *auto da fe* of the word. This will have been necessary to clear the decks; for reading and writing will then go on to effect the waking of the dead in, and, as the "seim anew" [215.23] in part suggests, precisely as the seme anew.

Context, thus, will build a house of cards. This structure will collapse, producing, not incidentally, and in precise accord with that well-known Wakean citation *The Masterbuilder*, the death of the architect. It will also, however, collapse into a single seme, the germ not just of reconstruction but of construction itself. A digestion of the entire contents of *Finnegans Wake* into this doubly collapsing context is of course impossible of exegesis. But in part perhaps on that account the text allows us to discern the frame of the house that falls. Structure highlights certain contexts, and these we will continue to follow.

Partly because the Fall itself, despite or because of its precipitation of the word as non-entity, is pregnant with something closer to content in the ordinary sense, we will save it for later. Instead we will for the moment return to the other contexts that gather around and insist themselves into the thunders. It important to hear the noise the empty vessels of these thunders make, for the eventual destruction of the word at its own hands entails as well, perhaps too predictably, the destruction of history, law

and paternity; all of the things in short that Vico's seminal word creates.

Further, many of these contents seem, like the ostensibly more formal thunders themselves, to conform at last with form itself and thus with the initial strategies of our exegesis. First, accordingly, we'll examine the ways in which context too suggests that one of the most important contents of the formal word is the word itself. In fact a curious, almost absurd, condition emerges. As though in anticipation of their own academic reception, the thunderwords, taken both as the initial gestures of I.1's doubled pair and as the structural whole of an architectonic device that spans the "temporal" text and calls particular attention to gestures both of initiation and conclusion, seem – both at first and at last and in word and in context respectively – to almost literally spell out the terms of which the term "thunderword" is itself conjoined: "thunder" and "word." That is, if the form of the Wake's first thunder suggests the content "thunder," the context of the last thunder – both in I.1 and in the Wake as a whole – just as strongly suggests the content "word."

* * *

**Arrorsure, he's the mannork of Arrahland oversense he horrhorrd
his name in thuthunder. Rrrwwwkkkrrr! [378.05]**

That a thunderword means "thunder" is by now perhaps sufficiently demonstrated. But does it in addition mean "word?" Its conspicuously formal self-reference and sequestration of course already suggest in their way that it does: the word seems in a sense at once to refer to and to be itself alone. But there doesn't seem to be any corroborating play at the content level with the notion of words or language *per se* either within or without the first thunder itself, either in the word or its context.

But with the second thunder there does. If – having once located it – we read on, we discover two lines below that its echoing clamor in fact constituted a word, and no mean word at that. For

that was the first peace of illiterative porthery in all the flamend floody
flatuous world [23.09].

The reader can perhaps see why we cling so long to the shores of form. No sooner do we dip into content and context than their vagaries threaten to whirl us away into the indefinite synchronicities of the text. Nor are the waters uniformly pristine. We will have occasion, whether we like it or not, to learn why this “first peace of illiterative porthery” is “flatuous,” tending in more than one sense to put the “end” in “flamend.”

The point for the moment though is that context rather strongly suggests that this thunder, at least, is to be taken precisely as a *word*. In fact it is, like its Vichian prototype, a *first* word. In this case, however, the sense of self-reference is augmented by a literary consideration. This is not just any first word but the first word of “illiterative porthery;” in other words of some poetry in which the words are, apparently, spelled wrong. Not for the first or the last time the Wake urges the reader: “look what you have in your handself” [20.21].

If they threaten to whirl us away, then, the context and content of these early explorations also promise to return us with tautological speed to precisely where and what we are: readers reading (or at least looking at) this strange text’s strange word. If the tautology begins to fray a bit with broader exploration that’s perhaps not only to be expected but to be welcomed. But when we turn from the first thunders to the last we find an even clearer instance of this strange pattern in which a first thunder means

in itself “thunder” while a second or last means in its context “word.”

None of the Wake’s other thunders denote thunder, either in themselves or in their contexts, with nearly the emphasis that its first two do. And, aside from I.1’s second thunder, none insist the denotation “word” with anything approaching the emphasis effected once again by the deictic and really almost pedagogical contexts of the final pair. This is particularly clear when we examine III.1’s second thunder, the Wake’s last of all. First, though, we should take account of the way content clearly seconds structure in presenting the Wake’s last thunder as – though complexly – precisely last.

As far as structure itself goes, the sense of an ending is in one respect at least unexpectedly unequivocal. The position of the Wake’s final thunders renders them final whether or not the “temporal trick” of Book III’s reversal is taken into account. Book III, after all, has only two thunders, both situated in III.1. Granted, there would at first appear nevertheless to be the question of which of the final two thunders was really more “final” than the other. After all, if time is going backwards then 414’s thunder would really come “after” 424’s. But in this case content both within and without the word itself comes to the rescue with a force that equals the force of structure. The text rather clearly demarcates the thunder of page 424 – the last if the text is read conventionally – as terminal.

It’s uttered by Shaun (though in context its ultimate provenance is ambiguous, as we will see) in the course of his virulent denunciations of his brother Shem, who, he asserts, has wrongly claimed authorship of the Wake’s famous letter. Shaun accordingly has just tendered his own version of the word, rendered in part in the foregoing parable of “The Ondt and the Gracehoper.” This fable is appropriately bracketed by III.1’s thunders, which respectively introduce and, though complexly and ironically, epitomize it. At its conclusion Shaun avows again that he has always held his brother in the deepest disdain. This provokes a question from the parable’s

audience:

– But for what, thrice truthful teller, Shaun of grace? weakly we went on to ask now of the gracious one. Vouchsafe to say. You will now, goodness, won't you? Why?

– For his root language, if you ask me whys, Shaun replied ... which he picksticked into his lettruce invention.

Ullhodturdenweirmudgaardgringnirurdrmolnirfenrirlukkilokkibaugima
n-dodrrerinsurtkrinmgernrackinarockar! Thor's for yo!

– The hundredlettered name again, last word of perfect language. But you could come near it, we do suppose, strong Shaun O', we foresupposed. How?

– Peax! Peax! Shaun replied in vealar penultimatum. [424.14]

In itself, this final thunder is somewhat less tautological than the first two. It is, however, somewhat repetitive, as we will see, and self-referential enough to at least imply the predictable thunder. If we miss Thor's hammer, Molnir, in the middle of the word, we can't miss Thor himself in Shaun's immediately ensuing taunt. Too, some may detect the thunder in the rumbling onomatopoeia, though the insistent iteration of the dog-letter also becomes Shaun's all-but-inarticulate growls of rage (you can almost hear him tearing up his brother's manuscript). This time though the fall seems to have moved from without to within. On analysis this thunder's syllables prove to consist chiefly of the enumeration of various Norse deities, tending, with the final "rackinarockar," toward an evocation of Ragnarok. The word itself thus helps to establish its own structural position as the "terminal" term of a cyclical situation. The Fall of Man that starts the Wakean ball rolling is of course the beginning of history;

but the fall of the Gods is the end of time. Once again, though, surrounding text provides content more clearly than does the word to which it points.

This, after all, is as Shaun's audience helpfully points out (and in English as plain as that which introduced us to the fall in I.1), the "last word of perfect language." Note that if by now this unusually emphatic gesture seems supererogatory to us, it's only because our close examination of the broader structural situation has already informed us that this is -- not just by a conventional reading but by the strange structural terms of the Wake's own time -- in fact the Wake's last thunder. Early receptions of the text -- for that matter, any first reading -- would be considerably assisted, at least in the detection of a structural situation which if only on the evidence of this gesture the author seems to be eager for us to detect. But before moving on to this thunder's other contextually suggested contents, we must take brief stock of the fact that as is often the case after a close reading complications of this terminal status ensue. Context once again is helpful (or vexing) here. In one sense the word "perfect" re-emphasizes the finality already secured by "last." But there's a small but apparently deliberate irony in what should be 424's instance of perfect language. The audience is wrong, strictly speaking, to hail Shaun's ejaculation as "the hundredlettered name again;" for it has not one-hundred letters but one-hundred and one.

Genetic research has been able to trace Joyce's hand painstakingly counting and juggling the letters of all of the thunders to bring the first nine up to the century-mark and this last to a century plus one. The "thousand-and-one" theme which cumulatively results echoes variously throughout the Wake, in part evoking (not least for its fabulous and nocturnal associations) *The Thousand-and-One Nights* of Scheherazade. But the point here is that though the extra letter clearly sets this thunder aside as something special and perhaps terminal -- the last word in thunders,

perhaps – it also becomes an instance of the kind of mathematics of the supererogatory which Joyce’s sometime model Dante used to mark Hell. The *Inferno* has thirty-four cantos instead of the usual (and divine) thirty-three; and precisely, according to critical tradition, in order to indicate the imperfection proper to perdition (though by a sort of *coincidentia oppositorum* the total number of Cantos is brought to a perfect hundred). Whether or not Joyce has this structural juggling in mind, the signal imperfection in this last word renders Shaun’s utterance less an ultimatum than, apparently, precisely what the text here calls it: a “penultimatum.”

Now it might be observed that this penultimate status would make sense if time were running backwards. 414’s thunder – only a few pages before this one (but those few pages would be crucial) – would thus in a sense be the real ultimate. Vexingly, however, neither 414’s thunder nor its context yield anything – so far as I can tell not even beneath the most *recherche* lens – to suggest such a status. This doesn’t mean that sheer absence is not in this instance the presence of an unusually subtle stroke. Restraint, however, is seldom the Wakean style; when the Wake means “silence,” as we will see, it says it right out loud. Something is up here, and it doesn’t seem to be resolved on 414. And this suggests – though at this point only suggests – that it’s resolved elsewhere. As we will eventually see it is in a sense Shem, not Shaun, who at last and at first puts the pen in the ultimatum. But this, whose full sense must be deferred, also brings us to the most obvious characteristic of this final thunderword: it’s a *thunderword*.

This is the thing the gloss of the audience indicates most clearly (and more accurately) by calling it the “last word of perfect language.” This characterization is in part again a tautological one; what else is a discreet collection of letters – even a very odd and long one – in a text likely to be than a word? But as was the case with I.1’s second thunder, context stains the word with enough local colour that what would

be the citation of a merely abstract signifier begins to acquire collateral content.

This word, for instance, is special. For one thing it's not just the last word. Like I.1's second thunder (and, presumably, the structurally first thunder to which the second in part no doubt points) it's also the *first* word. Better, it's a first word which bears precisely the kind of relationship to succeeding words which philologists and philosophers might wish it would; it's a "root language." In Shaun's excoriating context, of course, the implication here is immediately doubled. Part of the fun is that Shaun's efforts to deny his brother's creative priority – his authorship – wind up perversely affirming it. What Shaun *means* to do is to condemn Shem's *rude* language (which suggests of course another imperfection).

But it's the response of the audience which once again affords what will prove the most resonant and salient specificity, the content of what would otherwise be alone content as form. For even if it gets the math wrong, the response reminds us that this word – like, apparently, its anticipating brethren – is not just a word generically but is more specifically the "hundredlettered name." And that the word is in fact more specifically a *name* will remain, of all its increasingly various qualifications, the chief.

At first, though, this would seem to raise the question again of whether we're making any progress. The transition from word to name does not seem at first a particularly vigorous break from tautology. If our exploration of the abyss is not yet quite a free-fall, it nevertheless seems, that each descent to content transforms content once again to form, and that all we may expect is the repetition of the transubstantiation of signified into signifier – whether word or name – at each succeeding (or failing) step.

But the knowledge that a word is a name is a real, if at first apparently slight, augmentation of understanding. However susceptible this understanding might be to the Wake's infamous and inevitable destabilizations, we know more about what *kind*

of word this is. It's not so much a preposition or an article (and there are reasons, the reader may recall, that we might construe the Wake's last word precisely as the latter) or a verb or a conjunction (though the Wake's first-and-last word will prove at least in one sense that last too) but more of a noun; more properly a proper noun and more properly than that a proper name. And this begins to bring us somewhat further out of the cleverly constructed but slightly frustrating reference of the text to itself alone and a little closer once more to at least one extra-textual Archimedean point. Not only has this point rather considerably informed our own initial approaches, it's precisely what we should expect to find in the particular parodic gesture under investigation.

On the one hand, Vico's primordial word is itself -- somewhat like the word we're reading here -- rather substantially determined by self-reference. But this very condition is in effect precisely because the primordial word is in fact none other than the Name of He who utters it, whether we construe the speaker as God or Primordial Man. Vico's word is a name. More to the point -- and if this seems rather too theoretically pat we must remember that Vico was writing in the 18th century -- we cannot help but observe that it is, twice, at least, the Name of the Father.

This is one of the things about the Wake which is so obvious that it has tended to be forgotten. Of course the thunders are a citation of Vico. This is almost the first thing we know. Curiously, though, no criticism has taken as the basis for exegesis the fact that in consequence the thunder must be, above all, a name, and above all doubly the name of the father. If the key to the formal disposition of the thunders is relatively obscure, the key to their content, surely, is lying right on the *escritoire*. Perhaps on this account it has not been turned in the lock.

To be fair, the sense that the thunder must be a name, though clear enough in Vico, tends at first to be obscured in the Wake. After all thunder introduces itself explicitly as the Fall. In consequence in part of this explicitness this introduction has

overwhelmingly determined critical reception. It's only the *last* word of the thunder that "retroduces" itself – and indeed all of its preceding kin – explicitly as a *name*. And despite context's vigorous reminders that this last word is, substantially, precisely the last word in thunders, the structural importance of the gesture has perhaps been overlooked in part because the overall structural disposition of the thunders has itself gone undetected.

Further, the text throws up another not-inconsiderable obstacle to reading. None of the thunders, not even the last, is couched in any grammatical context that would make it function syntactically as a name. The last thunder, it's true, forms its own one-word sentence. But this seems to be more at once an angry ejaculation and an instance of "root language;" and none of the other thunders leave themselves open to any syntactical interpretation of the sort that would be helpful even to this degree.

Nevertheless: when we read on, we will discover that other structurally salient zones of the text unquestionably corroborate at the content level our somewhat structurally determined reception of the thunder not just as a word but as more powerfully and specifically a name of the sort it was for Vico. This will resolve at last into an actual textual instance of an actual name which a very great deal of the text's architectonic and semantic ingenuity is at pains to mark as seminal, and as a textual center *par excellence*. That this name has eluded reading is in part a consequence of the curious fact, as we will see, that just before we grasp it it appears to disappear entirely. We have hinted broadly at some of the reasons this should be so.

But before recollecting our critical will to go at last beyond the name's appearance of disappearance and at last to its reappearance (in part as appearance *per se*), we should take stock of the fact that Joyce is initiating us into an august if dangerous tradition.

Joyce and his reader are now approaching, with Vico, a linguistic Holy Grail: what

Shaun here calls, despite himself, the “root” language. It seems we haven’t found it yet. We press on, but not without noting briefly the possible (and in the event contextually emphasized) fatality of this siren’s lure. By its nature it has long called to philologists and philosophers but sometimes too – and sometimes indistinguishably – to cranks. This alone should not dissuade us, but it may remind us of circumstances which though they must occasion caution may also occasion hope.

In fact this sort of Grail quest – whether proposed or disposed by the reader or writer or both – is inevitably embroiled with all the desire and dialectic bound up in “the quest for the proper word and the unique name” or “the marriage between speech and Being in the unique word, in the finally proper name” which characterize “the other side of nostalgia ...[the] Heideggerian *hope*” of *Differance* [*Speech and Phenomena* 160]. It has also guided – under auspices which must to a certain contemporary imagination reveal themselves as finally psychoanalytic – the quest for the Adamic language, and perhaps even the etymological and philological impulses *per se*. And with Joyce, at least, we might suspect that hope and nostalgia in turn commingle with Faustian ambition. For the style of the text itself seems sometimes a palpable effort to divert the stream of language (and thus, some would imply, psyche) at its wellspring; to seize at last the root of language and thus to uproot language root and branch. “My soul frets in the shadow of his language,” a rankled Stephen muses as the bumbling Dean of Studies attempts to correct his English. “I have not made or accepted its words.”² But isn’t this the case with all of us? We all were born *infans* and in the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh whether we willed or no. What sort of hubris would rewind time to the moment when the Law calls to

² p. 205, Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Penguin USA, 1993, 2003. Henceforth cited as "*Portrait*" or "*P*."

the speechless child to there declare *non serviam* and remake the word in its own image? What but the hopeless privacy of madness could ensue?

Put the question another way: Is Joyce serious?

To answer the question we must of course traverse a labyrinth. But clues have been left trailing in its corridors; clues so neatly tailored to the imaginations of certain contemporary detectives that one sometimes seems to hear a prescient laughter echoing down the halls. Certainly it seems to echo in the perpetually doubling thunders. If their somewhat tautological self-emphasis can help at all to bring us to the ultimate character of the Joycean *non serviam* – or, more modestly, at least at first, to an outline of the structure of *Finnegans Wake* – it will be in part because they speak, both in themselves and as Vichian citations, at last of the “finally proper name.” For that, at last and first, is what Vico’s first word is: not just a name but the Name, and thus the proper name proper which, as it turns out, is in all-too-inevitable addition the Name of the Father.

The reader who regrets this inevitability may take solace in the fact that as we will see Joyce himself regretted it – less despite than because of its inevitability – with unusual ferocity. But insofar as Joyce’s revenge entails the seduction of inevitability itself we will have to be patient. We will have to trace the lineaments of his seduction and play, with our author, the Name game; for this is the game which from the inception of the *Wake* was afoot.

There are many subtleties in this subtle game. For one thing the notion of the Adamic language will again raise the question of a corollary Hebrew tradition. For another, a name remains a term, and a term is not just an end in itself but a space – and sometimes an end – in time; so the terms of time are signaled by the cyclical recurrence of the Vichian primal word somewhat as they are in *The New Science* itself. Recursive plays on the word “term” could in fact be sustained indefinitely without

losing their footholds in this, the most overdetermined of all texts. We could for instance almost adduce the terms of a contract. This would be justified in part by a certain predictable emphasis on what has come to be known as the Law, and in part, and more surprisingly, by financial considerations, for the text will not be at all above reminding us that if terms are time time is money.

But the chief thing is that we must now brace ourselves for the pressures proper to the greater depths of the abyss. In an even more sustained way we must encounter content. This will continue to evince its by-now familiar (and again in some ways inevitable, even in less peculiar cases) penchant to turn into form as soon as it becomes the surface on which we stand. In fact as we approach the central depths it will even seem to evaporate utterly, staging at last a formal destruction of form and leaving our fall apparently completely free, somewhat as though we had traversed Wittgenstein's ladder of language in reverse. The evaporation of thing into word and word into thin air will be part of a finally necessary evaporation of the Law, and content will along the way suggest as well some of this law's imperial associations for an Irishman. In the event, however, language will spectacularly reassert itself, and with the unexpected jolt of a final step where none should be.

As we descend we will also discover another ladder than the one we're on, some third architectonic device, subtler than the thunders and the dialogues, that this perpetually perverse but necessarily pedagogical text has built into its labyrinth, though this ladder too will seem at last to melt into a negation, and in terms identical (if identity may be predicated of absence) with the first.

Now, though, we must at least begin a closer reading still, and in keeping with our predilection with the *ur* we will effect this first through an examination of what Joyce's notes tell us the Wake's chief content from the first has been. And that, as revealed in the Wake's second chapter, is, predictably enough, form.

* * *

**... sure, we ought really to rest thankful that at this deleteful hour
... we have even a written on with dried ink scrap of paper at all to
show ... the hidmost coignings of the earth ... [118.31]**

Criticism, given recent preoccupations and especially of course if it is psychoanalytic, has begun to detect the Name of the Father in the Joycean text with more vim than erstwhile. *Portrait*, *Ulysses* and, as we will see, *Stephen Hero* abound with instances which lend themselves to this reception. Of course the operation of fathers in these books has received its share of attention from the beginning, helped by observers as early and seminal as Louis Gillet and by such authorial asseverations as that *Ulysses*, for instance, is, like the Telemachiad, simply *about* a son's search for a father. *Finnegans Wake* has likewise received some treatment of this type, and well it might. Indeed, one of the earliest things we learn about the Wake is that it plays some sort of game with the name of its father: famously, his initials are acrostically disseminated throughout the text with the consistency with which Saussure more ingeniously (if less plausibly) detected the subject's name in his investigations of Roman poetry. Criticism has however neglected to draw attention to one striking fact about the Wake's composition which seems – to our delight or disappointment depending on our tastes in these matters – to indicate that the father's name was, in the author's original conceptions at least, of more import than even signature effects or psychoanalytic enthusiasms have suggested. For Joyce's very first draft of the very first words of what he intended as the very first section of *Finnegans Wake* suggest that the ensuing book will be, not so much about the father *per se* or about his

character, as an ordinary novel would be, but instead about this father's *name*. Joyce was asked once if his methods were trivial, to which he famously replied that some were trivial and some were quadrivial. This comeback neatly trumps the interlocutor with the suggestion that his own methods may be inferior to the author's in both wit and learning; but surely, the promise to write a book about a character's *name* rather than the character himself is no trivial threat to the book's critical fortunes, let alone the reader's interest. Yet this, more than we would suspect, is what Joyce has done.

What do we mean by this? We've already alluded to the ubiquitous acrostics; but these, at least at first reading, are bound to seem more ornament than substance; do they allude to more than themselves, or to a certain facility (and not at last a desperately clever one) on the author's part? Then again, insofar as the bulk of the material dealing with HCE involves not so much some picaresque as it does the generously circulated, recapitulated and elaborated speculation, innuendo and judgment which attempt to define the sin and its commission, and as it is at last this gossip which is responsible for the fall of the father's fortunes, we might say that the *Wake* is largely about the father's "impressive private reputation for whispered sins" [69.04]; that is, about his good and finally bad name. And this is certainly true.

But even if it is – that is, even if the bulk of the information we have on the character of HCE himself comes to us through this questionable mediation in its way more concerned with his vilification or defense (with the fate of his good name) than it is with he himself – it is nevertheless necessarily true that along the way we learn a good deal about this father. To a certain – often, obviously, ambiguous – extent he *is* certain things and *does* certain others, just like ordinary characters in ordinary novels, and it can't be denied that some of *Finnegans Wake* is *about* these characteristics and things. But when we use an examination of structure, as we have begun to do, to help us understand what *Finnegans Wake* might have in common with ordinary novels in

an architectonic sense, we discover (eventually) that Joyce has staged a climax around the Name of the Father in an especially literal (that is in a literally literal) sense. And this has in its way been suggested from the beginning – or more properly from the beginning of the beginning – in Joyce’s first conception of what the first part of his story would be.

Virtually all of the raw data which form the basis for any genetic history of *Finnegans Wake* were once confined to the Lockwood Memorial Library in Buffalo but are now, thanks to the efforts of Michael O’Hanlon, Danis Rose and David Hayman, widely available in the sixty-three volume publication of the entire contents of the library’s genetic Joycean material. The first paragraph of David Hayman’s preface to volume dealing with chapter I.2 is worth quoting in full.

‘Work in Progress,’ which began with the notebooks now in the Lockwood Memorial Library at Buffalo, first took form as six sketches: ‘Roderick O’Connor,’ ‘Tristan and Isolde,’ ‘St Patrick and the Druid,’ ‘St Kevin,’ ‘Mamalujo,’ and ‘Here Comes Everybody.’ Of these, only the last two saw print before the final publication of *Finnegans Wake*, but together these brief and distinctive parodic treatments of Irish themes were to constitute the beginning-middle-end of this book without beginning, middle, or end. ‘Mamalujo’ was eventually (in 1938) to be combined with ‘Tristan and Isolde’ to make the ricorso chapter of Book II, but the first chapter actually to be assembled grew (in 1923) out of ‘Here Comes Everybody’ with its jocoserious portrait and defense of the great plebeian. We might even say that the first three chapters were drawn from that sequence, adding that I.2 was for several years the true opening of the *Wake*. Until the conception of the

overture (I.1) and the ‘questions’ (I.6), Book I was a neat six-part unit comprising three male-oriented and three female-oriented chapters, dealing with the fall and disappearance of the hero and his replacement by the word which begins in mystery and degenerates into gossip.³

Perhaps the first thing to note here is that according to the genetic evidence, or at least its standard construction, the origins of Joyce’s compositional process gratifyingly mirror our own approach in conceiving of the work from the beginning – and this conspicuously despite its well-known circularity, to which Hayman duly adverts – in terms of its terms and their relation to a center, or, in other words, as “beginning-middle-end.” As Hayman further remarks in his *The Wake in Transit* (the most thorough and authoritative book-length examination of Wakean genetics to date),

Joyce committed himself early on to the unification of these passages. That commitment, attested to by their survival and eventual location in the beginning, middle and end of the book, is most emphatically demonstrated by what I will be calling the prime nodal system.⁴

Thus,

³ p. I Hayman, David. *Finnegans Wake, book I, chapters 2-3 : a facsimile of drafts, typescripts & proofs / James Joyce*; prefaced by David Hayman ; arranged by Danis Rose, with the assistance of John O’Hanlon. New York : Garland, 1978.

⁴ p. 34 Hayman, David. *The Wake in Transit*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.

It seems that, from the outset, Joyce viewed this collection of mini-narratives as the signifying skeleton and perhaps even one of the keys to his masterwork.⁵

Too, genetic studies detects the early symmetric disposition of the terms of gender into the first and last parts of Book I; this arrangement apparently persisted discernibly enough to be remarked as early as *The Skeleton Key* (which proceeded necessarily without the benefit of any comprehensive or systematic treatment of Joyce's not-yet-available notes), and is part of the reason for the division of Book I's eight chapters into two four-section units, producing the overall quadripartite division of the *Wake* into four four-chapter sections followed by the exceptional Book IV. But of greatest immediate interest to us is the observation that the beginning of the *Wake* was originally (and for some years) *not* the present I.1, which was composed later and even now is commonly received as in a sense an "overture" to the story proper. It was what is now strictly speaking the *second* chapter, I.2.

The beginning of I.2 began as the last of the six sketches adverted to above, which Joyce produced between March and August of 1923 and which constituted the first writing of *Finnegans Wake* proper. The very first of these to be written – generally called "Roderick O'Connor" and constituting a portrait of the patriarch who will become HCE passing out after drinking his customers' dregs at closing time – make up what is now the end of the chapter so much criticism has found central: II.3, whose obvious if qualified centrality we are eventually though not ultimately concerned to understand. Indeed; if as many have suggested the *Wake* can be conceived in some

⁵ p. 9 *Ibid.*

sense as converging on its own center, then the fact that II.3's end is the first thing composed lends some authority to those – such as Hart – who find that chapter structurally central. In part for this reason Hayman himself is of this camp.

Thus a book supposedly without a beginning or an end has an Aristotelian center clearly demarcated by a portrait of the aging male in “Roderick O’Conor,” an inexperienced tippler.⁶

As remarked, the bulk of the remaining sketches eventually dispose themselves about what will become the *Wake*’s last and central chapters, while the last to be composed during this early period becomes what was for a long time its first. And, as Hayman remarks,

Even after 1926, when [Joyce] wrote his overture [I.1], “Here Comes Everybody” retained its position as the narrative and expository lynchpin, the true beginning of what could be described as the male “action” of this ostensibly plotless text.⁷

Already, then, we can see that in a sense *Finnegans Wake* starts in the middle. It’s true that by the end this middle will have shifted a bit. But for now we might also note that this composition seems to be one of the genuine starting points of the *Wake* in another sense. Genetic criticism is mildly puzzled by the way in which it seems to emerge rather suddenly, without conspicuous genetic preamble or anticipation; not

⁶ p. 33 *Ibid.*

⁷ p. 30 *Ibid.*

quite *ex nihilo*, but somewhat in the “from-the-brow-of-Zeus” mode.

Exceptionally, this is an ink first draft, composed in a quick fluid hand and corrected in ink with only a few pencil markings.⁸

With respect to this seminal passage Hayman too notes that, genetically,

the preparations for HCE are remarkably slight. But then, it is his absence rather than any marked presence that generates the action, or rather it is the rhetorical presence behind chapters I.1-4.⁹

This last remark in its way likewise acknowledges that from the beginning the character of the Wake’s father seems to thaw and resolve into language *per se*, somewhat at the expense of traditional physical or psychological substance. In fact as the preface to Joyce's Buffalo notebooks puts it, we are, precisely, “dealing with the fall and disappearance of the hero and his replacement by the word.” As we have suggested this move is rather strongly anticipated by the odd but evident fact that, as Joyce’s original version of “Here Comes Everybody” makes clear, his concern was from the first less with the father himself than with his name.

⁸ p. V Hayman, David. *Finnegans Wake, book I, chapters 2-3 : a facsimile of drafts, typescripts & proofs / James Joyce*; prefaced by David Hayman ; arranged by Danis Rose, with the assistance of John O’Hanlon. New York : Garland, 1978.

⁹ p. 29 Hayman, David. *The Wake in Transit*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.

The critical designation “Here Comes Everybody” – itself a citation from the passage in question – already signals that an operation of this sort is at work. It’s not simply that the phrase tends, by its inclusivity, to expand character until character disappears through the failure of contradistinction; this is also, genetically, the first instance of the ubiquitous acrostic that spells out the name (more properly – and, as will eventually devolve, crucially – the initials) of the father. This is particularly apt; for the first line of the first draft of what was for years the first chapter (and remains in some sense the first chapter proper, as opposed to the overture) of *Finnegans Wake* is

Concerning the genesis of Harold or Humphrey Coxon’s agnomen the most authentic version is that it was this.¹⁰ [Facs. FW I.2 1.*0].

We are concerned, thus, not with versions of the genesis of Harold or Humphrey himself but with versions of the genesis of his name, which the ensuing lines duly relate.

If it is true that all good writing is about making choices then *Finnegans Wake* is bad writing indeed. As his notes indicate, Joyce, over the years, revised his originals rather extensively but almost always by adding and almost never by taking anything out. By the time we’ve followed the development of this passage to the beginning of I.2 in the Wake where it now stands, one substitution is evident: the middle name “Chimpden” for “Coxon.” Otherwise, the final version, as is often the Wakean case,

¹⁰ [Facs. FW I.2 1.*0] Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake, book I, chapters 2-3 : a facsimile of drafts, typescripts & proofs / James Joyce*; prefaced by David Hayman ; arranged by Danis Rose, with the assistance of John O’Hanlon. New York : Garland, 1978.

seems to be the result of gradually stuffing every syntactic nook and cranny with parentheses, elaborations, second thoughts and subordinate clauses. Still, the opening of I.2 makes its ancestry clear.

Now (to forebare for ever solittle of Iris Trees and Lili O'Rangans), concerning the genesis of Harold of Humphrey Chimpden's occupational agnomen (we are back in the presurnames prodromarith period, of course just when enos chalked halltraps) and discarding once for all those theories from older sources which would link him back with such pivotal ancestors as the Glues, the Gravys, the Northeasts, the Ankers and the Earwickers of Sidlesham in the Hundred of Manhood or proclaim him offsprout of vikings who had founded wapentake and seddled hem in Herrick or Eric, the best authenticated version, the Dumlat, read the Reading of Hofed-ben-Edar, has it that it was this way. We are told how in the beginning it came to pass that like cabbaging Cincinnatus the grand old gardener was saving daylight under his redwoodtree one sultry sabbath afternoon, Hag Chivychas Eve, in prefall paradise peace by following his plough for rootles in the rere garden of mobhouse, ye olde marine hotel, when royalty was announced by runner to have been pleased to have halted itself on the highroad ... [30.01].

The riot of addition in this final version has by now pushed the phrase "Here Comes Everybody" a couple of pages into the chapter's future, but the insinuation of the name's initials persists even "back in the presurnames prodromarith period, of course just when enos chalked halltraps" and continues at least through "Hag

Chivychas Eve.” (It will also eventually prove worth noting that some symmetry of inversion suggests itself in the chapter’s first couple of signature effects and is seconded by the founding of the authoritative word in the “Dumlat” rather than the Talmud.) Some play with the first and last initials may even be detected in the primordial settlements of “Herrick or Eric,” and more appositely in the “Hofed” who takes his father’s name in “Hofed-ben-Edar.”

As it turns out HCE gets his own patronymic not quite from a father but from another figure of the law, the king, the “royalty ... pleased to have halted itself on the highroad.” HCE’s job, at this point, is apparently to man the toll-booth to the royal road; but when he rushes out to meet the king he comes

jingling his turnpike keys and bearing aloft amid the fixed pikes of the haunting party a high perch atop of which a flowerpot was fixed earthside hoist with care [31.01].

The king inquires as to the function of this last peculiar apparatus (in which we detect the by now familiar code) and on being informed that it is a device for catching earwigs (which in the British Isles it is) remarks, in an all-but-arbitrary *fiat* of the naming Law (whose gesture in this instance remains somewhat cratylytic):

Holybones of Saint Hubert how our red brother of Pouringrainia would audibly fume did he know that we have for surtrusty bailiwick a turnpiker who is by turns a pikebailer no seldomer than an earwigger!
[31.25]

The genesis of the “occupational agnomen” has thus apparently been established,

and although a debate immediately ensues over “the facts of his nomenclature,”

The great fact emerges that after that historic date all holographs so far exhumed initialled by Haromphrey bear the sigla H.C.E. and while he was only and long and always good Dook Umphrey for the hungerlean spalpeens of Lucaliod and Chimbers to his cronies it was equally certainly a pleasant turn of the populace which gave him as sense of those normative letters the nickname Here Comes Everybody. An imposing everybody he always indeed looked, constantly the same as and equal to himself and magnificently well worthy of any and all such universalisation ... [32.12].

The reader has already noted, perhaps, that HCE, that “grand old gardener,” is in the Garden indeed, enjoying the “prefall paradise peace” under the “redwoodtree.” The fall, then, anticipated from the Wake’s first page, should be just around the corner. At the content level, however, it will in take some chapters to arrive. In fact, as we will see, it comes in II.3. Here, we will have to be content, as the text is, with what proves the equally crucial fall at the level of form. This, as Hayman suggests, will prove “the fall and disappearance of the hero and his replacement by the word.” The ensuing chapter will develop this more fully, but first we must turn to the seeds of this development here, for they already outline concerns resolved in what will eventually prove the Wake’s strongest wedding of form and content.

Here, HCE’s name, once conferred, quickly expands to the status of a sort of universal signifier. The effect of the “universalization” of HCE into “everybody” is the curious – and again, perhaps, semantically fatal – suggestion that the name names directly or indirectly absolutely everyone in the world. As suggested in our

introductory discussions, however, this equivocally useful zenith of content seems immediately to invite a consequent reduction to what threatens to be utterly non-semantic form. The hinge of this moment in fact lays bare the workings of one of the Wake's chief engines, in which as it were the cathode and anode of form and content constantly replace one another at some locus of maximum charge and drive the reader on with the teasing promise of some ultimate synthesis.

For just as content threatens to expand in more than one sense indefinitely, the text for the first time explicitly – rather than through the coy insinuations of the acrostics which have anticipated the move – reduces the omniseptic name to its initials. Appropriately, this reduction reminds us of the fall we know HCE has taken, one way or another. For if “H.C.E” stands for “Here Comes Everybody,” it's also true that:

A baser meaning has been read into these characters the literal sense of which decency can safely scarcely hint. [33.14]

This reduction of a character to his name and at last to the characters that compose it already, note, goes beyond a replacement by the word and looks forward to more linguistic reductions. Broadly, though – and though we may already detect the germ of the complementary trajectory which we will shortly discuss – it's the replacement of content by form. And after a brief aversion to content which we will shortly examine, throughout the bulk of the remaining chapter we indeed see and hear no more of HCE himself, but are instead presented with his “replacement by the word” in the succession of rumor-mongers who discuss him, starting with “The Cad” and moving through “Our cad's bit of strife, Bareniece Maxwellton,” her Jesuit confessor the “overspoiled priest Mr Browne” who in turn relays the story to “one Philly Thurston, a layteacher of rural science.” The tale passes through the ears and mouths of various

other parties, some of whom begin to bear a suspicious resemblance to HCE himself, until by chapter's end it reaches one Hosty (who quite definitely bears a resemblance to the story's subject). Hosty is the composer and publisher of the "rann" or The Ballad of Persse O'Reilly" which, coincident with I.2's only (the Wake's third) thunderword closes the chapter. Unlike the bulk of the chapter, the closing Ballad is also willing to dilate on the question of psychological character and even the deeds that betray it, to which we will eventually come. Structurally, however, its most emphatic gesture is perhaps the one with which it and thus the chapter as a whole ends. This, though, presents once more the reduction of HCE's character to characters, quite literally, as we will shortly see.

When, thus, we once again apply our familiar methods of reading structurally salient zones like ends and beginnings, we find that as if in obeisance to the very formal ostentation that recommends them these resolve at the content level into curious discussions of form, even, as here, going so far as to act out the actual deliquescence of content into form of a more and more abstract and less and less semantic character. We first noted this textual strategy in the case of the thunders, which tend at last to present themselves as a matter of naming. Now though, partly following the structural suggestions of genetic evidence and partly the notion of the names of the fathers implicit in the Vichian prototype, we have turned to what was at first the Wake's first chapter only to find that its first and last pages too stage the reduction of this father precisely to his name and the further reduction of this name in turn to the bare, abstract and increasingly "material" formality of its arranged letters. The textual engine exposed at crucial moments of this process, however, will not rest yet.

As though to rescue content from its own hubris, form reduced the name from the omni-semantic to the non-semantic. Were things to stop here, though, the cure would

be at least as bad as the disease. If the hyper-referential name by naming everything fails to name at all, mere letters would seem at first to arrive at the same condition from the other end; for in the conventional text these are not themselves semantic units but as it were the subatomic particles of which semantic atoms are subsequently compound. The extremes of the engine's revolution thus alike threaten the extinction of "the beast of boredom, common sense" [292.28]. But the engine continues to revolve. The reduction of the word from the problematic zenith of universality to the nadir of the sub-semantic is not just the reduction of pure content to pure form. Pure form in addition immediately becomes itself the germ of a new content. In fact it is precisely in this fall that reading begins. In order to see this all we need to do is to re-read this rather formal fall with an eye for a different emphasis.

It's precisely some "baser meaning" – some content not just basic but precisely low or fallen – that in fact emerges as contextually insisted into what will be revealed as the Wake's central character in the most literal sense. This content will eventually prove to be a fall indeed, and one more charged and *verboten* than even the Biblical version; one at which "decency" in fact "can safely scarcely hint" (which may be, pragmatically enough, one of the reasons why the Wake has hidden it; it goes rather further in the event than anything presented in *Ulysses*).

But for the moment we can take this formula as a reminder that it is precisely at the moment of greatest formal abstraction that content begins to reassert itself; for in the Wake, at least, it is precisely at that moment that reading begins. If the letters are themselves, as the bases for the presumably more important words they form, in one sense too base to warrant our attention, they are also, apparently, here at least, precisely the things that must be "read into." The text will eventually help us to insist into the letters themselves content of a particularly base and salacious character. Even here, though, it remains the case that no sooner is the father reduced to the letter than

we are reminded that his character has other characteristics, precisely those of characters in conventional novels who are and do certain things. In other words we're reminded that the Fall is about something. HCE did something, after all, and the fact that we can "read into these characters" even in a "literal sense" some "baser meaning" suggests that we can still tell what that is. And at precisely this point, at this conclusion of I.2's opening play with HCE's name and its derivation, the text clearly signals a move at last from words to deeds and from form to content.

Need we remark that the Wake's perpetually dynamic engine of synthesis will soon enough reconstitute this content too as form? Deeds, too, will quickly enough resolve themselves once more back into words, words, words. It's amusing to note the facility and speed with which the text effects these transubstantiations. With each repetition, however, the signifier becomes in a sense less pure, more laden with signified; with each adversion to content the barely formal word picks up more meaning, if only in the memory (though the text is at pains to offer its mnemonic aids in this regard) of the reader reading the text further and further to the letter. And though these collateral meanings will in part eventually and paradoxically inform the word's oblivion, we may as well on that account at least see what they are. Accordingly we can now turn from I.2's rather formal reduction of itself to pure form in its opening and closing gestures and to what in the chapter attempts to pass itself off, at least at first, as content.

* * *

From ... Diggerydiggerydock down to bazeness's usual? He's alight there still, by Mike! Loose afore! Bung! Bring forth your deed! Bang! [378.15]

What is it, precisely, that HCE is rumored to have done? The text, of course, is various and self-contradictory on this score, but not in the event utterly without suggestion. I.2's first of these, quickly dismissed by the narrator, is that HCE's guilt consists of having suffered from a "vile disease" [33.17], presumably venereal. Of course strictly speaking a disease is not a deed, though it may imply one; the first rumor involving something HCE may have actually *done* is that

he lay at one time under the ludicrous imputation of annoying Welsh fusiliers in the people's park. [33.25]

The character of the charge is worth remembering when we come to II.3. It is not, however, substantially developed in I.2.

The chapter does on the other hand go on to speculate that Earwicker may have "behaved with ogetilmensky immodus opposite a pair of dainty maidservants in the swoolth of the rushy hollow" by having committed "a partial exposure." But it saves for last the version, theoretically derived from HCE himself – "for once at least he clearly expressed himself ... and hence it has been received of us that it is true" [34.35] – of his being accosted in Phoenix Park and, under pretext of being asked the time, threatened with a revolver. This meeting, with a "cad with a pipe" [33.11], is in fact a passage well-known as the closest the Wake seems to get to committing itself as to the facts of what happened. Precisely what that is remains less known.. But since these pages do announce themselves on the narrative level as among the Wake's most important and veridical, it seems worthwhile to try to understand them. They will form the basis of our most sustained investigation of content so far, and if they ask us accordingly to be patient in our audience, at least

They tell the story ... how one happygogusty Ides-of-April morning ... when the tried friend of all creation ... was billowing across the wide expanse of our greatest park ... he met a cad with a pipe. The latter, the luciferant not the oriulate ... hardily accosted him ... to ask could he tell him how much a clock it was that the clock struck had he any idea by cock's luck as his watch was bradys. Hesitency was clearly to be evitated. Execration as cleverly to be honnisoid. The Earwicker of that spurring instant, realising on fundamental liberal principles the supreme importance, nexally and noxally, of physical life ... and unwishful as he felt of being hurled into eternity right then, plugged by a softnosed bullet from the sap, halted, quick on the draw, and replying that he was feelin tipstaff, cue, prodooced from his gunpocket his Jurgensen's shrapnel waterbury, our by communionism, his by usucapture, but, on the same stroke, hearing above the skirling of harsh Mother East old Fox Goodman, the bellmaster, over the wastes to south, at work upon the ten ton tonuant thunderous tenor toller in the speckled church (Coughounin's call!) told the inquiring kidder, by Jehova, it was twelve of em sidereal and tankard time, adding, buttall, as he bended deeply ... to give more pondus to the copper-stick he presented ... that whereas the hakusay accusation againstm had been made, what was known in high quarters as was stood stated in Morganspost In greater support of his word (it, quaint anticipation of a famous phrase, has been reconstricted out of oral style into the verbal for all time with ritual rhythemics, in quiritary quietude ... from successive accounts by Noah Webster in the redaction known as the Sayings Attributive of H. C. Earwicker, prize on schillings, postlots free), the flaxen Gygas tapped

his chronometrum drumdrum and, now standing full erect, above the ambijacent floodplain, scene of its happening, with one Berlin gauntlet stuck in the hough of his ellboge (by ancientest signlore his gesture meaning: [backwards E]!) pointed at an angle of thirty-two degrees towards his *duc de Fer's* overgrown milestone as fellow to his gage and after a rendypresent pause averred with solemn emotion's fire: Shsh shake, co-comeraid! ... I am woo woo willing to take my stand, sir upon the monument, that sign of our ruru redemption ... and to make my hoath to my sinnfinners, even if I get life for it, upon the Open Bible and before the Great Taskmaster's (I lift my hat!) and in the presence of the Deity Itself andwell of Bishop and Mrs Michan of High Church of England ... and of every living sohole in every corner wheresoever of this globe in general which useth of my British to my backbone tongue and commutative justice that there is not one tittle of truth, allow me to tell you, in that purest of fibfib fabrications [35.01-36.34].

Before proceeding we should note that criticism traditionally identifies HCE's attacker, the Cad, as Shem, and not without reason. The text itself suggests this conflation at least as early as the middle of I.1, when it discusses the birth of the twins at one of the Wake's puzzling *ur*-dates.

1132 AD. Two sons at an hour were born until a goodman and his hag. These sons called themselves Caddy and Primas. Primas was a santryman and drilled all decent people. Caddy went to Winehouse and wrote o peace a farce. Blotty words for Dublin [14.11].

The relative positions suggested by “Caddy and Primas” become clearer, incidentally, if we trace the etymology of “cad” in its derivation from “cadet,” one of whose meanings is younger son or brother. Shaun, “Primas,” is – like Joyce’s elder brother John Jr. who died in infancy – the first born. The disreputable writer “Caddy” is, with his “Blotty words” (also “bloody;” recall Shaun’s charge that Shem writes a “murderous mirrorhand”), of course the Penman. In fact I.2’s encounter with the Cad suggests as much when, in telling the time, HCE responds to “the inquiring kidder.” It’s not just that HCE (himself, incidentally, often and perhaps for sacrificial purposes referred to as one form or other of “mangoat” [353.02]) is in fact addressing one of his own kids; he’s addressing the one who’s a “kidder.” Shaun in particular often complains that Shem is a trickster, speaking in lies and, as we’ll see, riddles. This tendency will itself eventually prove pertinent to the Wake’s own chief trick. But in any case we can’t always take his language seriously; after all he’s the one “who wrote o peace a farce.” Now, however, we must turn from his word and back to his father’s.

As told the story brings together many of the themes we’ve explored so far and many others as well. Among the things we’ll wish to chiefly note are the references to time and the Law. Already though, we can see that by the end of the passage content resolves again into a rather formal emphasis. And although a casual reading may at first overlook this, with care it becomes obvious that the first two terms – time and the law – are in fact designed to telescope into the third term – that term of terms, the word – which in turn becomes versions of the first two terms. We’ll take these in order: time first, then the law, then the Word in which they become consubstantial. First for the time.

Despite the ominous overtones, much of the “attack” on HCE involves nothing

more ostensibly sinister than being asked the time. Even without gloss this establishes itself clearly early on, though I for one find it helpful for McHugh to remind that “oriulate” – meant in part to distinguish our hero from his devilish or “luciferant” adversary the Cad (generally read by critics, with some justification, as a version of Shem) – derives from the Italian *oriuolo*, “watch,” that “bradys” derives from the Greek *bradus*, “slow,” and that both Jurgensen and Waterbury are manufacturers of clocks.

Well, since the Cad’s so curious, we too may wish to determine as nearly as we can what time it is. In fact the timing of the encounter itself seems to be emphasized through a certain somewhat overdetermined brand of synchronicity; for no sooner does HCE extract his watch (itself converted by its extraction from a “gunpocket” into something suggestive of a weapon brandished in response to the threat of the “softnosed bullet from the sap”) than he hears the bells of the steeple sound in “the ten ton tonuant thunderous tenor toller.” Despite the curious echoing of the syllable “ten” in this description of the clock, the time is apparently in fact “twelve of em sidereal and tankard time;” or at least that’s what HCE says.

Of course we shouldn’t be completely surprised by the emphasis on “ten,” even if it does effect a striking dissonance with “twelve.” The time sounds after all from a “toller” that is both “tonuant” (Italian again, this time *tonante*, “thundering;” McHugh) and “thunderous.” Thus it can be nothing other than that familiar marker, both for Vico and the Wake, of the terms of historical time: the thunder that sounds ten times. Though any sort of conventional denotation is missing from the gesture, a rather formal play implies the time is ten; adjacent content, however, clearly enough denotes it as that venerable hour of fairy-tale transubstantiation, twelve. This equivocation of the hour is puzzling; but though we may never understand all of the reasoning behind it we will come to understand some.

Already though we might reflect on what the numbers ten and twelve have in common. Each marks the completion of the most common numerical cycles of our experience: the progress of the Roman numerals of our base-ten counting system on the one hand, and on the other the clock.. It seems the Wake's comprehensive ambitions cannot be satisfied with the evocation of one or the other of these; that choice would diminish the overdetermined universality of the text. But to this roster of simultaneously terminal and initial times we must in fact add a third and even stranger candidate; and this last is wrapped up with the fact that as we've suggested previously HCE in a way becomes time – or at least the clock – itself.

For the Cad doesn't look to a watch to learn the time: he looks to HCE. And it is in fact (somewhat unnecessarily; one would think the bells were audible to the Cad as well) HCE who tells him or rather who tells, accurately or not, the time. In fact HCE seems to oddly re-emphasize his conflation with a clock when, having "tapped his chronometrum drumdrum and now standing full erect" (like the hands of a clock at twelve?) he rigidly extends his own hands in a "rendypresent" (French *rendez present* but also, perhaps, some "rending" of the present as in the split second of a "spurring instant") gesture of "thirty-two degrees."

This may involve some obscure Masonic gesture of the 32nd degree but is also, with "ellboge," likely a reference (McHugh for one construes it such) to the Wake's most iterated time: 11:32, which, as we've already seen, is among other things apparently the hour at which the twins are born.

The reasons for the iteration of this figure are obscure. Some suggest the that "32" is the time of the fall, as it is in its way in Bloom's meditations on gravity in "thirty-two feet per second per second" and that "11" is the renewal that follows the playing out of the decade. But iterated it is (see Hart's concordance for instances), particularly in II.4. Indeed in Hart's calculations of time throughout *Finnegans Wake* [SMFW 17]

“11:32” is given pride of place, perhaps most tellingly, as the time at which the book itself begins. However this may be, it’s certainly the case that the Wake associates the number somewhat with the beginning of Vichian history. II.4 cites “the year of the flood 1132 S.O.S” [387.23], and the Flood, recall, is what obliterates Vichian “pre-history” in preparation for the thunder that will be discharged from the evaporating waters. Hence HCE gives the time “standing full erect, above the ambijacent floodplain, scene of its happening.”

So we must add 11:32 to our roster of candidates, though we may comfort ourselves with the observation that the Wake, at least, makes this number too the ending and beginning of a cycle. The particularly striking thing here though is that HCE himself is made to tell this time by the rigid extension of his own hands; that is, by becoming a clock. This is also likely suggested when immediately after giving the time as twelve HCE seems “to give more pondus to his copperstick.” “Pondus,” McHugh glosses plausibly, is “moral force,” and “copperstick” slang both for a policeman’s truncheon and a penis. Thus HCE becomes – appropriately enough given not just his paternal but as we will see his imperial associations – perhaps doubly a figure of the Law. “Pondus” and “copperstick” together though also seem to evoke the pendulum or weight of a grandfather clock. In any case such an interpretation jibes with the fact that the Cad turns to HCE for the time and that the latter may in fact himself be “oriuloate,” or clock-like.

The Cad, incidentally, is clearly in a Wakean world, having received at least three simultaneous answers to a single question. The simultaneity itself may even imply the “superfetation” of eras or the inevitable reappearance of past and future in present, as a cyclical history would suggest and as the Wake in various ways suggests as well. But however this may be, the point for the moment is HCE’s conflation with a clock, and one which here seems to tell the time according to Vico. This, recall, is something for

which our previous examinations of the text have prepared us. It's not just that HCE is himself associated with the processes of Vichian time, as when the signature effect dubs him

(hypnos chilia eonion!) lethelulled between explosion and reexplosion
(Donnaurwatteur! Hunderthunder!) ... [to] abide Zeit's summonserving,
rise afterfall. [78.04].

It's that on other Vichian occasions he seems himself to become the method of temporal reckoning, often enough a clock, as he becomes at the end of III.4 (as it happens one term of the Wake's "temporal" text by a conventional linear reading), which parodies both the primordial "Pa! Pa!" and Michelet's Vichian phoenix.

Pepep! ... On never again, by Phoenis ... His reignbolt's shot. Never
again! How do you like that, Mista Chimepiece? [590.4-11]

It's true that, as in the "Cad" encounter in I.2, HCE is often a duplicitous – even triplicitous – timepiece, but this, recall, is to be expected as

our misterbuilder, ... exploded from a reinvented T.N.T. bombingpost
... out of his aerial thorpeto, Auton Dynamon, [was] all differing as
clocks from keys since nobody seemed to have the same time of beard,
some saying by their Oorlog it was Sygstryggs to nine, more holding
with the Ryan vogt it was Dane to pfife. [77.03]

In any case, HCE "is a horologe unstoppable and the Benn of all bells" [127.36].

But when in I.2 HCE transforms his hands into the hands of a clock, they point, recall, at once to the time and to one of the most famous and most controversial landmarks in Phoenix Park, and thus, perhaps, to his own clearest association with a species of the Law..

When HCE executes his peculiar gesture of “thirty-two degrees” he points not just in time but in space, and “toward his *duc de Fer’s* overgrown milestone.” He’s pointing at the monument – once popularly called, as McHugh informs, the “overgrown milestone” – to that archetype of British military power, Wellington, the “Iron Duke.” This emblem of Empire has of course a history of desecration – in Joyce’s day in fact it was blown up. But note HCE’s unabashed identification with it. The monument and its subject are “his;” HCE’s. HCE is demonstrates his fealty to the imperial power with a gesture rendered unmistakable by the protestations that close the paragraph:

I am woo woo willing to take my stand, sir upon the monument, that sign of our ruru redemption ... and to make my hoath to my sinnfinners, even if I get life for it, upon the Open Bible and before the Great Taskmaster’s (I lift my hat!) and in the presence of the Deity Itself andwell of Bishop and Mrs Michan of High Church of England ... and of every living sohle in every corner wheresoever of this globe in general which useth of my British to my backbone tongue and commutative justice that there is not one tittle of truth, allow me to tell you, in that purest of fibfib fabrications [36.23].

This rather sycophantic burst of British nationalism, which pointedly includes HCE’s identification with the “**H**igh Church of **E**ngland,” reminds us that if HCE is

Irish, he's not very. As his "sibsubstitution" of the Irish giant Finnegan at the end of I.1 underscores, he's a version of that old Joycean bogey, the usurper, in this case the invader of Ireland and thus alternately Scandinavian or, as here, British. Given this status he needs to do little to earn the contumely of the native Irish, who suspect him of exploitation from the go. The Wake is of course somewhat ironic in its treatment of its nationalist "sinnfinners;" but we'll want to bear HCE's allegiances in mind when we examine the middle of the work more fully. Most particularly, we'll want to remember HCE's assertion of the power and scope of the English language as the language of empire, and his own identification with it, when he refutes the damning "fibfib fabrications" by appeal to

every corner wheresoever of this globe in general which useth of my
British to my backbone tongue. [36.30]

As his stutter reminds, HCE has taken the language of the lord into his lineaments as thoroughly as did Vico's cringing, onomatopoetic giant. Indeed when he finally responds to the Cad he doesn't so much tell the time as swear to it, and by the thunder-god, "Jehovah."

Whose chief issue remains His word. In fact – and, by now, predictably – the entire anecdote boils down once again to the question of this freighted signifier. HCE's peculiar, somewhat clock-like and eminently imperial gesture – finally toward his "British to my backbone tongue – is offered precisely

In greater support of his word (it, quaint anticipation of a famous phrase, has been reconstricted out of oral style into the verbal for all time ... in quiritary quietude, ... from successive accounts by Noah

Webster in the redaction known as the Sayings Attributive of H. C.

Earwicker, prize on schillings, postlots free) [36.07]

In greater support of this interpretation the parentheses duly trot out a catalog of words for words and language: “phrase,” “oral,” “verbal,” “redaction,” “Sayings,” as well as that author of the English word *par excellence*, Noah Webster. In passing, however, we must note as well that HCE’s word has apparently been “reconstricted ... into .. quietude,” which “reconstruction” will prove more pertinent as we proceed.

I.2’s initial presentation of some of the text’s most salient content thus resolves, like the other gestures we’ve examined, at last into a concern with form. This is not accomplished however at the utter expense of content. Though much of the content itself has formal implications, at least these are in addition sensibly adversions to the Vichian prototype. Time, language, and a stammering obeisance to authority. Just what we should expect; if not from a caddish inquisition then from a parody of Vico. And when we take them simultaneously into account it’s clearer why the insubstantial character of HCE, threatened perpetually with evaporation into his own word, should also be loaded with so much freight. He’s Vico’s God and Man at once, both receiving and transmitting the Word that starts and stops historical Law and Time. As Man, he tells time and language by pointing to some other, prior figure of the law. As guilty and ironic God, though he gives the Word to the Cad, who, now in the position of primordial man, in his reception appropriately stutters too. Once HCE has stoutly asseverated the time and his veracity the Cad is on his way, having

thanked um for guilders received and time of day (not a little token
abock all the same that that was owl the God’s clock it was) ... and with
tag for ildiot repeated in his secondmouth language as many of the

bigtimer's verbaten words which he could balbly call to memory ...

[37.05]

That the clock is God's is clear enough by now. But note that the Cad, as Vichian Man, has "repeated in his secondmouth language as many of the bigtimer's verbaten words which he could bably recall to memory." HCE is a "bigtimer" not just because he's a big timer, or clock, but because he has himself become the authority, indeed perhaps the English law and language which the equivocally grateful (and, as Shem, rather more Irish) Cad has to learn as best he can. But the Cad in turn learns this language "balbly;" that is, as McHugh points out, as a derivative of Latin *balbus*: "stammering."

One further conflation we'll wish to note here is of HCE's word with money. Indeed the "guilders" are a "token" that this word has always been, as the passage earlier observes, in a sense for sale as "the Sayings Attributive of H. C. Earwicker, prize on schillings." Readers of *Ulysses* will recall that this is not the first time Joyce has associated the imperial and the mercenary, as in the wonderfully unattractive figure of Deasy.

But more of this anon. For now we must note that the Cad's derivative "secondmouth" language precipitates the word of the book's father into its career of hearsay which culminates in the slanderous "rann" of chapter's close, "The Ballad of Pearse O'Reilly." This, the chapter's last word (appropriately introduced by a thunder), will at last predictably announce itself as a strangely formal concern. Along the way though it begins to supplement our sense of content. Chiefly, it presents an account of the reasons for HCE's fall, which fall begins to tally with notions, derived at once from Vico and Genesis, of the Fall which we bring with us to our reading.

"Persse O'Reilly" sounds authentically Irish enough but is in fact primarily a

version of the French for “earwig:” *perce-oreille* [McHugh], for it is in fact Earwicker himself who is the subject of the broadside which becomes, in its conflation with the thunder, the latest version of the Wakean word. This word is, again, a version of the fall, this time of HCE whose meteoric career has arced in a single chapter from the royal “nominigentilisation” which apparently dubbed him “Dook” (and allied him, as we now see, with his “*duc de Fer*”) through a descent – apparently a consequence of his ruined reputation – to sub-plebeian status. We can actually hear that fall in the “crash” of thunder that introduces and in a sense becomes the ballad. (Though in “cla” we can also almost hear the applause which, in II.1, will evoke some symmetric redemption; indeed the neologisms of this thunder consist nearly exclusively, as McHugh indicates, of borrowings and permutations of various forms to “to clap” or “to applaud”).

(All cla) Glass crash. The (klikkakkakkaklaskaklopatzklatschabatta-
creppycrottygraddaghsemmihsammihnouithappluddyappladdypkon-
pkot!

{*Ardite, ardit!*

{Music cue.

“THE BALLAD OF PERSSE O’REILLY.” [44.19]

And the ballad ensues (complete with musical score, not reproduced here):

Have you heard of one Humpty Dumpty
How he fell with a roll and a rumble
And curled up like Lord Olofa Crumple

By the butt of the Magazine Wall

(Chorus) Of the Magazine Wall,

Hump, helmet and all?

He was one time our King of the Castle

Now he's kicked about like a rotten old parsnip. ...

He was fafafather of all schemes for to bother us ...

Small wonder He'll Cheat E'erawan our local lads nicknamed him ...

Sweet bad luck on the waves washed to our island

The hooker of that hammerfast viking.

And Gall's curse on the day when Eblana bay

Saw his black and tan man-o' war.

(Chorus) Saw his man-o' war,

On the harbour bar.

Where from? roars Poolbeg. Cookingha'pence, he bawls ...

Bargearse Boniface ...

Thok's min gammelhole Norveegickers moniker

Ogas ay are at gammelhore Norveegickers cod.

(Chorus) A Norwegian camel old cod.

He is, begod.

...

It was during some fresh water garden pumping,

Or, according to the *Nursing Mirror*, while admiring the monkeys

That our heavyweight heathen Humpharey

Made bold a maid to woo

(Chorus) Woohoo, what'll she doo!

The general lost her maidenloo!

He ought to blush for himself, the old hayheaded philosopher,

For to go and shove himself that way on top of her.

Begob, he's the crux of the catalogue

Of our antediluvial zoo,

(Chorus) Messrs. Billing and Co.

Noah's larks, good as noo.

He was joulting by Wellington's monument

Our rotorious hippopotamuns

When some bugger let down the backtrap of the omnibus

And he caught his death of fusiliers,

(Chorus) With his rent in his rears.

Give him six years.

...

Suffoclose! Shikespower! Seudodanto! Anonymoses!

Then we'll have a free trade Gael's band and mass meeting

For to sod the brave son of Scandiknavery.

And we'll bury him down in Oxmanstown

Along with the devil and Danes ...

And not all the king's men nor his horses
Will resurrect his corpus
For there's no true spell in Connacht or hell
(bis) That's able to raise a Cain. [45.01]

This rather gleeful celebration of the father's fall omits neither his Vichian nor his British provenance. We hear the familiar Vichian stutter in "fafafather" and The Castle, as Dubliners know to this day, was simply the Dublin seat of British administration, which apparently inspires "our local lads" to nickname HCE "He'll Cheat E'erawan." The last name evokes at once Erin and a notably fictitious Paradise; the name as a whole again evokes the imperially mercenary HCE, known from his first presentation in the Wake as "Humme the Cheapner, Esq." [29.18] and who becomes "our hugest commercial emporialist" [589.10] who must "Honour commercio's energy" [264.01]. Note too though the deft imbrication of this mercenary British imperialism with Ireland's earlier conqueror, the "hammerfast viking." Where is this "son of Scandiknavery" from? Copenhagen, perhaps, but translated to "Cookingha'pence." (The most iterated Scandinavian provenance however is Norway: this "Norveegicker's cod" [46.25] with the "Norveegicker's moniker" [46.24] is, after all, "Norwegian" [46.26]. The reasons for this will become clearer.

In the "rann" the attack on HCE is more substantial than at the beginning of the chapter. So far from reducing itself to a comparatively innocent if dreadfully complex question of the time, it's less ambiguously fatal. This time though there are two or more attackers, the culprits, apparently the "fusiliers" who HCE was "annoying" on page 33 when speculation as to the nature of his crime began. We'll meet them again.

There are also to the encounter in the park in terms which seem to revive the

implications of homosexuality:

He was joulting by Wellington's monument
Our notorious hippopotamuns
When some bugger let down the backtrap of the omnibus
And he caught his death of fusiliers,
(Chorus) With his rent in his rears.

But the corollary heterosexual sin traditionally implicit in the Fall and Vico's own scene of origins has by this time become more fully developed. Apparently "our heavyweight heathen Humpharey" (also, like Wellington, "the general," though other reasons for this appellation will become clear) "Made bold a maid to woo." As the rann remarks in the next stanza,

He ought to blush for himself, the old hayheaded philosopher,
For to go and shove himself that way on top of her.

This, in fact, begins to emerge as the chief construction of his sin: that he "Mad bold a maid to woo." We might note, though, the faintly nuptial air of the verb "woo." Of course this may be ironic, and it's only a detail. But it will prove worth keeping in mind.

In any case this seems to be the substance of HCE's sin. He'll take the fall for it; indeed in this version pay for it with his life, and we'll have to "sod the brave son of Scandiknavery." His death, however, also threatens appropriately to evaporate his substance, and perhaps the very substance of his name.

By now we can see that HCE has been associated with patriarchal, imperial

authority from the start, either in his person or his allegiances. This is particularly evident in the encounter with the Cad, it's true, but is in fact crucial even in the history of his naming with which the chapter opens. He is named by none other than the King; indeed, the King's whole purpose in the story seems to be naming. In the ensuing anecdote of the Cad HCE thus continues to assert his fealty and eventually, as his conflation with the "Dook" has adumbrated, becomes in the Ballad a deputy or species of royalty himself: "one time our King of the Castle."

But the very substance of the King's authority resolves in the chapter's last words at last not just into a question of the name but of the letter. The gesture here is subtle, but the most conspicuous stylistic crotchet of the Wake's "illiterative porthery" has prepared us to receive it. If, with HCE's death, we find the utter abrogation of Kingly power and that

... not all the king's men nor his horses
Will resurrect his corpus ...

it's precisely because

... there's no true spell in Connacht or hell
(bis) That's able to raise a Cain.

The last lines of I.2 – the chapter which from its first conception as the Wake's opening and even to the final draft introduces itself as a meditation on the father's legally and regally acquired name – calls into question the imperial, the economic, the legal, the regal, in fine the paternal authority of naming. The power of the king *would* be, apparently, a kind of magic, specifically necromancy, capable of raising the fallen

father from the dead and delivering on the promise of resurrection implicit in the title of the book or in the Fall as *felix culpa*. That power, though, is helpless.

But do we detect a characteristic equivocation, and if we do, what is its promise? There is, apparently, no *true* spell “That’s able to raise a Cain.” But since when has the Wake been concerned to spell according to the King’s English? If there’s hope for the father here, it may be in breaking his Law.

“I can call spirits from the vasty deep,” says Glendower; to which Hotspur responds: “Why, so can I, or so can any man/But will they come when you do call for them?” How would a necromancer invoke the dead? Why by *name*, of course; yet if that were enough, *anyone* could do it. Some permutation, some subtlety that we’ve overlooked must be requisite, and especially, perhaps, if the name of the deceased has suffered as HCE’s has. And we have not, as it turns out, yet explored the depths of its suffering. The character of the Father has been refined to a name and the name to its characters. This last has been suggested not just by the chapter’s closing lines but of course by its earlier reduction of “Here Comes Everybody” into the “baser meaning” of its “characters.”

But even this reduction is apparently insufficient to effect all the text wishes. For in fact the Father must be, as Stephen would in one sense have him, refined *out of existence*. Thus, as the rhymer of the rann reminds us in introducing us to the title of his ballad,

Some vote him Vike, some mote him Mike, some dub him Llyn and
Phin while others hail Lug Bug Dan Lop, Lex, Lax, Gunne or Guinn.
Some apt him Arth, some bapt him Barth, Coll, Noll, Soll, Will, Weel,
Wall but I parse him Persse O’Reilly else he’s called no name at all.

[44.10]

It isn't obvious at first, but after suffering the various vagaries of various "secondmouth languages" the name of the father here finds respite from its wandering in a non-being rendered particularly appropriate by its coincidence with the death of the subject it names. At first we're inclined to read the ballad's own "Persse O'Reilly" as the final decision of the list of possible names from which we're asked to choose; but of course that name is only penultimate. The final choice in fact suggests that "he's called no name at all."

As the reader may recall this would not be the first time that Joyce has treated of a hero famous for his sometime anonymity. But this does, it must be admitted, seem a rather peculiar conclusion to a chapter so concerned with the father's name. So much effort, one would assume, would suffice to secure it from such oblivion. But when we turn from I.2 to the chapter that would eventually become the Wake's first, we find that such a negation has in fact instantiated itself from the very first moment that – in Joyce's re-vision of his work – we are introduced to HCE.

Before noting this initial and perhaps in every sense determinate negation we should take this opportunity to briefly examine the text's first and most crucial substitution, for it will determine our eventual reception of the center. In its final version *Finnegans Wake* opens not, of course, with HCE but with Finnegan, who immediately precipitates himself to his death and, after a *precis* of his life and works, is laid out on the table near the end of I.1 to be waked. Wake, of course, he does, like the Finnegan of song, and he must be appeased by the anxious watchers, who assure him that his own time, great as it was, is past, and that he has in any case been replaced by his successor, whose introduction comprises the chapter's closing lines.

For, be that samesake sibsstitute of a hooky salmon, there's already a

big rody ram lad at random on the premises ... as it is told me. Shop
illicit, flourishing like a lordmajor” ... [28.35].

It’s true that already contested versions of culpability cloud the reputation of this
mercenary figure of the law:

But however ‘twas ‘tis sure for one thing, what sherif Toragh
voucherfors and Mapqiq makes put out, that the man, Humme the
Cheapner, Esc, overseen as we thought him, yet a worthy of the naym,
came at this timecoloured place where we live in our paroquial
fermament one tide on another, with a bumrush in a hull of a wherry,
the twin turbane dhow, *The Bey for Dybbling*, this archipelago’s first
visiting schooner ... and has been repreching himself like a
fishmummer these siktyten years ever since ... [O]ur old offender was
humile, commune and ensectuous from his nature, which you may
gauge after the bynames was put under him, in lashons of languages ...
and, totalisating him ... he is ee and no counter he who will be
ultimendly respunchable for the hubbub cause in Edenborough [29.16].

HCE is, from the beginning, a namesake or “samesake,” as well as a “sibsubtitute.”
This last adverts to the various rivalries and fusions of the twins, of course, but will
develop more import as we will see. Also, and as implied in the close of the rann, we
note that HCE arrives by sea from foreign parts in “this archipelago’s first visiting
schooner,” and, after suffering the various permutations of his name and reputation as
he will in I.2 – “which you may gauge after the bynames was put under him, in
lashons of languages” – “will be ultimendly respunchable for the hubbub caused in

Edenborough.”

For the moment, though, most signal event of the passage is that this is, despite the already ubiquitous acrostics, the first time that we are explicitly introduced to HCE. Of course he is introduced to us by name: that’s how characters are introduced. But if we look more closely we see that his introduction at the end of I.1 already anticipates the fate that awaits him at the end of I.2. For HCE is, strictly speaking, not introduced to us by the name, but by “the naym.” Some version of the sustained meditation on the fate of the word and name of the father that characterizes the trajectory of I.2 has been economically condensed, with characteristic elegance, into the *coincidentia oppositorum* of a single term. No sooner is the name invoked than it is unsaid; advertised as “no name at all.” If the last word of the mother in *Ulysses* is “yes,” the first word of the father in *Finnegans Wake* seems to be “no;” that at least seems to be what’s putting the “nay” in “naym.”

At this point we can see that the text has from the beginning anticipated its curious and as we will see repeated pattern of the replacement of content by form, signified by signifier and an increasingly bare and formal signifier by the void. Our ladder is beginning to melt.

But before it utterly thaws and resolves into *adieu* in II.3, this ladder points to another, third and subtler architecture which like the dialogues and thunders marks the Wake’s most structurally salient zones. This ladder, too, predictably dissolves; but before it does it variously augments our sense of content. It acquaints us with one of the Wake’s peculiar adaptations of that most venerated bromide of patriarchy, “like father like son,” and by traversing a tradition that accomplishes perhaps the most venerable and well-known effacement of the Name of the Father. In so doing it links the text to one of the most salient and unexamined aspects of *The New Science*: its strangely central supplement of that language more original than the original, Hebrew.

* * *

**... our great ascendant was properly speaking three syllables
less than his own surname (yes, yes, less!) ... [108.20]**

Both of the Wake's beginnings – the genetic opening of I.2 which remains in a sense the start of the story proper and the subsequently added “overture” of I.1 – stress the importance of the tradition of the name in question. Our introduction to “Harold or Humphrey Chimpden's occupational agnomen” in I.2, recall, dismisses various genealogical dead-ends before informing us that “the best authenticated version, the Dumlat, read the Reading of Hofed-ben-Edar, has it that it was this way.” And when we turn to HCE's introduction in I.1 we find a similar exegetical pattern. From the first various digressions are tendered only to be brushed aside at last by language which gestures toward the definitive.

But however 'twas 'tis sure for one thing, what sherif Toragh
voucherfors and Mapqiq makes put out, that the man, Humme the
Cheapner, Esc, overseen as we thought him, yet a worthy of the naym
... [29.16]

In each instance of our introduction to HCE (and, more to the point, his name), we eventually discover that the truth of its origin lies in the antiquity of the Hebrew scriptures. These are not, note, even so much antecedents to Christian scripture, whose emphasis on the *logos* would seem to recommend them as an implicit segue. Instead what is insisted here is a specifically and somewhat exclusively Jewish

tradition. Ironic, perhaps, as the inversion of the Talmud into “Dumlat” suggests, but insisted. In I.1's version “Toragh” is perhaps the first thing to catch our attention; but if we turn to McHugh's annotations we find Hebrew, to the relative exclusion of other languages, dominating the entire page with a hegemony rare (though not utterly unrivalled) in the *Wake*. *Mapqiq*, for instance, is “a dot on the [Hebrew] letter HE” [McHugh], and thus no doubt another play on the name (or in this case the letter) of the father, as is the apparently authoritative “Hofed-ben-Edar.” And in this case the implication of unusual attention to orthographic minutiae may be rendered particularly appropriate by the reference in the lines just previous.

Though Eset fibble it to the zephiroth and Artsa zoom it round her
heavens for ever. Creator he has created for his created ones a
creation. White monothoid? Red theatocrat? And all the pinkprophets
cohaleting? [29.13]

“Eset” is Hebrew “woman” while “cohaleting” derives, according to McHugh, from Hebrew *qohemoth*, “preacher.” The reader is perhaps most likely to recognize however the Sephiroth, the ten “vessels” or emanations from the infinite of the Cabala, famous of course for its attention to textual detail. Joyce was well acquainted with this tradition in part on account of the Dublin theosophists. In fact for a brief time he was a rather enthusiastic reader of Blavatsky. He may have deprecated her work later but he certainly made a great deal of use of it in *Finnegans Wake*, as McHugh [SFW] and others have shown. *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* are likely sources for Joyce's cabalistic lore, though he probably also availed himself of the book on the subject most popular with the theosophical crowd, *The Kabbalah Unveiled* by MacGregor Mathers, he of the Golden Dawn.

In addition to justifying the almost-too-close reading necessary to detect some of the textual play, the Hebrew sacred tradition here of course resonates once more with Vico. Hebrew is after all the *ur* before the *ur*; a “root” language at once parallel to and necessarily preceding the development of the language (and eventually languages) of the gentiles. Thus its location here, at the Wake’s story of origins (and indeed in the zone of the Wake’s origins proper) might be expected. We will wish to bear the relevant implications in mind, but there’s another aspect of Hebraic lexicography which we might allow to detain us for the moment.

Though it’s hard to say for sure on this score, it seems that the Wake’s negation of the name may owe something (and if anything certainly not everything, as we will see) to the well-known suppression of The Name in Hebrew tradition where, of course, the Name of the Father may not be spoken aloud except by a *Kohen* within the (no longer extant) Temple, resulting in the various evasions, circumlocutions and silences which attend its inevitable occasion. Of course some version of the Tetragrammaton had to be indited in order to preserve the scriptures themselves, though traditionally the scribes would pause before putting pen again to paper. Mathers himself adverts to the oral corollary of this tradition.

The name of the Deity, which we call Jehovah, is in Hebrew a name of four letters, IHVH; and the true pronunciation of it is known to very few. I myself know some score of different mystical pronunciations of it. The true pronunciation is a most secret arcanum, and is a secret of secrets. ‘He who can rightly pronounce it, causeth heaven and earth to tremble, for it is the name which rusheth through the universe.’”

Therefore when a devout Jew comes upon it in reading the Scripture, he ... does not attempt to pronounce it, but instead makes a short pause

The radical meaning of the word is “to be,” and it is thus, like AHH, *Eheieh*, a glyph of existence.¹¹

Finnegan, at least, is, like Bloom, a Freemason; indeed, he may be a Master Mason, which would make eminent sense insofar as he is certainly a Masterbuilder. In fact our introduction to his profession on page four – “Bygmester Finnegan, of the Stuttering Hand, freemen’s murer” [4.18] – tends to conflate the possibilities; *Freimaurer* is, as McHugh reminds, German for “Freemason.” The Freemasons of Joyce’s place and time made particularly great use – as they do to an extent today – of Cabalistic ritual and lore in their rites. Joyce’s acquaintance with this lore is, on the evidence of *Finnegans Wake*, extensive, and conditions the text in various ways, including in its most formal presentations. As some readers may know much Masonic ritual revolves at last around the imparting to the initiate of one form or another of the secret word which forms the true name of God. This is a fascinating subject on which more should be written; given the late recrudescence of this sort of thing in the popular imagination such an exercise would in addition no doubt more effectively “Honour commercio’s energy.”

It cannot detain us too long here. But insofar as McHugh also detects Masonic ritual in HCE’s telling of the time to the Cad (partly in that HCE swears, like the Masons, on an open Bible), Mathers’ pronouncements on The Name above may be particularly pertinent to HCE’s when, recall, he swears “by Jehovah” and

In greater support of his word ... pointed at an angle of thirty-two

¹¹ p.30 Mathers, MacGregor. *The Kabbalah Unveiled*. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser and Co., 1970.

degrees ... and after a rendypresent pause averred with solemn
emotion's fire: Shsh shake, co-comeraid! [36.07-20]

According to the vignette, thus, before speaking at last HCE effects a "rendypresent pause." Is this pause before his own first words also the pause before The Name? It's likely, in any case, that Joyce read Mathers' phrase, and it certainly seems that HCE's ensuing stutter reminds us that "He who can rightly pronounce it, causeth heaven and earth to tremble." "Shsh shake" says HCE, finding his first words after his hesitating silence. But more tellingly, the stuttering iteration reminds us to keep precisely silent. That, after all, is what "sh" means. This in fact seems to be one of the text's "reconstructions" of the word into "quietude," which recur as we will see with increasing force and eventually in conjunction with what will reveal itself as the Wakean Word *par excellence*.

This sort of close reading is not, admittedly to everyone's taste, though there is a great deal of evidence (not least the existence of the Wake itself) that it was to Joyce's. But however overwrought or over-read the text may seem at this point, its motifs here become entangled with others which more explicitly encourage our train of thought. These come to light when we turn our attention from HCE himself to the son with whom, apparently, the author of *Finnegans Wake* most identified. And though this has not been clearly recognized, this son in fact resolves himself with unusual speed – even by the standards set in the rest of the text – first to a name and then to bare negation.

As we've seen, the fate of HCE's good name hangs in the balance between his detractors and defenders. The narrator has thus far seemed primarily of the latter camp, though more text is given finally to those who, like Hosty, conspire to gradually amplify and embroider the father's failings. These two competing versions of HCE in

a sense split apart in the ensuing chapters of Book I and throughout the rest of the *Wake* function as his twin sons, Shem and Shaun.

Shamus of course is Irish for “James.” I.5, the “Letter” chapter, in its last words famously names him “Shem the Penman” [125.23], but in any case the text makes the author’s signature effect clear at various points. The first words of the chapter devoted to Shem’s desecration (I.7 is narrated nearly exclusively by Shaun) remind us that “Shem is as short for Shemus as Jem is joky for Jacob” [16.01]. Various execrable works have been penned “by Maistre Sheames de las Plume, some most dreadul stuff in a murderous mirrorhand” [177.30] such as “his usylessly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles, *edition de tenebres*” [179.26] and we are all advised to “Shun the punman!” [93.13].

These and other allusions have long and justly suggested that “Shem” is the name of the author of *Finnegans Wake*. Such it certainly is. But almost equally obvious – and surely, given his preoccupations, it was obvious to Joyce – is that *Shem* is simply the name of another author; or, more properly the name of His Name.

This of course once more adverts to the Hebrew sacred, historical and linguistic traditions. No careful reader of Vico’s *The New Science* would be likely to miss the conspicuous identification of the Biblical Shem with his descendants, the Semites and particularly the Hebrews, those curious supplements of history who (in an irony which lived history has rendered increasingly painful) escape the ravages of gentile historical time. I suspect Joyce didn’t miss this either, and it has consequences which will become clearer. But that the name “Shem” is itself very nearly the name of what will become Israel merely underscores its more pertinent denomination here. That is – and the abundant aversion to Hebrew scripture in the vicinity of the father’s name should predispose us to note this – *Shem*, is, of course, simply the Hebrew word for “name.” More compellingly; given the ritual necessity of ellipsis or periphrasis when

encountering the Name of the Hebrew Father, *Shem* has become, in the discussion of the scriptures, one of the commonest inventions of necessity. IHVH (or however you wish to render Him) has long become, as often as not, simply *ha Shem*: “The Name.”

For some reason virtually no critical hay has been made of this. But given the cabalistic predilections of Joyce’s youth and their return in *Finnegans Wake* coupled with an obviously seminal meditation on the nature of names, naming and the Name, it seems a bit much to assume that this would have escaped the author. He has, apparently, insisted a version of his own name into the text, but has thus, instead of signing it outright, produced instead of his name a name for that name which happens to mean “name.” And of course not just any name, but the name of God as precisely under erasure. This bit of simultaneous hubris and self-effacement, however ironically carried out, is neither above nor beneath the author in question, who, perhaps, like the artist of Stephen’s final aesthetic meditations in *Portrait* and “like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence [P 233].

And if, as Lynch might critically observe, the author of *Finnegans Wake* is, and precisely through this bit of Luciferian showmanship, not yet quite out of existence (being in fact in fidelity to his own name even more authorially extant than is the Stephen of earlier works), he is, apparently, subjecting himself to a process of refinement which threatens to produce that end. This in fact is one of the things that makes the name of *Shem* somewhat consubstantial with the name of the father, as is noted in various ways.

The hubris of the gesture does not, for instance, escape the excoriating Shaun. Nor does a certain duplicity suggested by a simultaneous implication of non-existence.

[Y]ou have become of twosome twiminds forenenst gods, hidden and

discovered, nay, condemned fool, anarch, egoarch, hiresiarch, you have reared your disunited kingdom on the vacuum of your own most intensely doubtful soul. Do you hold yourself then for some god in the manger, Shehohem, that you will neither serve nor let serve, pray nor let pray? [188.14]

That Shem is *ha Shem* here is in fact particularly clear. McHugh recognizes Stephen's famously Luciferian *non serviam* in "neither serve nor let serve," but we can recognize in addition Shem's achievement of Lucifer's goal in the transubstantiation of his own name into "Shehohem." Through this parody Shaun's rant reminds us again that Shem is in a sense himself The Name his father swore by: Jehovah.

But the passage goes on to amplify this suggestion in terms which further adduce the traditional ineffability. Shaun's last words in I.7 (the chapter's final page-and-a-half are finally given mercifully to the voice of its putative subject) condemn Shem's already demonstrated megalomania in terms that urge him to silence, and in terms identical to those used by HCE in I.2's parallel. As he was during his utterance of the final thunder, Shaun has been principally offended throughout his rants by Shem's "root language," and hence abjures his brother to desist language altogether: "Sh! Shem, you are. Sh! You are mad!" [193.27]. But as he urges Shem to silence his stuttering also recalls HCE's tremulous evocation "Shsh Shake." This was uttered, recall, after the pause suggestive of the Name. Now, naming the Hebrew name of The Name (while curiously decomposing it into linguistic fragments, as though it were already half-way reduced to the literal), Shaun too shakes and suggests (or demands) silence.

For us, this recognition points two ways. On the one hand a construction of HCE's first words in I.2 as the trembling, post-pause – and stuttering post-thunder – Name of the Father seems in retrospect much less far-fetched. On the other, we begin to uncover a system of motifs in the presentation of Shem which strikingly corroborate (and thus help us to discern) their parallels in the presentation of HCE. The son, like the father, quickly reduces to a name and then to the name's negation.

And this, in retrospect, has in fact been evident from the beginning of the chapter, just as the general motif is evident from our first introductions to HCE. If the character is the name and the name is non-existent, the character himself must be made, whether by death or "naym-calling," to disappear almost from his first appearance; and such indeed proves to be the case with Shem. Somewhat like Glendower, perhaps, Shaun must invoke his brother to make him appear. But this is how he does it: "Stand forth, Nayman of Noland ... Shem Macadamson" [187.28-34].

Precisely like his father the primordial man (whose particular paternity is particularly emphasized by the almost parodically patronymic "Macadamson"), Shem thus puts – or perhaps simply *is* – from his first appearance the "nay" in "naym." In fact the fidelity of the repetition makes the text particularly precise on this point. This "nay" in itself is also perhaps suggestive of the species of Joycean *non serviam* that is shaping up here; for it is after all none other than James the Penman whose elaborate antics serve in large part, so far as we can detect, to effect the non-existence of one particular kind of "root language." But the "glyph" as Mathers might call it is here even more suggestively one of non-existence of character *per se* than it is in I.1's introduction of HCE. Shaun invokes "Shehohem" but immediately recognizes as well the non-being of his brother implicit in the "vacuum" of the latter's "soul." But now we see this absence has been evident in any case from the first invocation. "Nayman" negates not just the name but the man who bears and who derives, in any case,

apparently from “Noland.”

Some of this might seem a bit baroque and recursive, and it certainly is, partly because that’s the way the *Wake* is written and that, for better or worse, is the way it often must be read. But when these scattered hints and resonances are noted and collected into something approaching legibility they expose systems of mutual reinforcement which aid our readings of various textual zones. This latest examination of the negation or non-existence of character and name helps us thus to read the Son as the Father and the Father as the Son. It also, however, goes further, and facilitates our recognition of yet a third structural device which, though subtler than the other two, conspires like them to strikingly emphasize some convergence on a center. We’ve already looked at the Father’s first word. This device asks us to consider the first Word of the Son, and its subsequent career. This new first word emerges first at the beginning of the chapter we’ve been looking at: the chapter devoted to Shem, 1.7.

* * *

**GLUGG (Mr Seumas McQuillad, hear the riddles ... in his dress
circular and the gagster in the rogue's gallery) ... [219.22]**

It should by now occasion no surprise that the first line of the chapter putatively devoted to the character Shem instead betrays at once a preoccupation with his name: “Shem is as short for Shemus as Jem is joky for Jacob” [169.01]. Precisely as was the case with HCE in the opening of I.2, the ensuing lines go on to perform, though more briefly, the excavation of a variously contested genealogy that in fact only effects the evaporation of substance into signifier which evaporates in turn. I.2, the chapter of the

father, in fact seems to function to a degree as the template for I.7, the chapter of the son. This time, though, there is a stronger implication that language goes missing in part to effect an evasion of the law.

A few toughnecks are still getatable who pretend that aboriginally he was of respectable stemming (he was an outlex between the lines of Ragonar Blaubab and Horrild Hairwire and an inlaw to Capt. the Hon. and Rev. Mr Bbyrdwood de Trop Blogg was among his most distant connections) but every honest to goodness man in the land of the space of today knows that his back life will not stand being written about in black and white [169.01]

If “outlex” is “outlaw” (as suggested by the complementary “inlaw” of the next line) it is also some sort of *outré* reading, as the immediately ensuing “between the lines” suggests even more strongly. It is perhaps in part for this reason that Shem’s “back life will not stand being written about in black and white.” But with the same gesture, in any case, the text defers itself as well.

After this, however, the chapter seems as though it will get down to matters of substance with more robust empiricism than was evident in the case of HCE. “[A] shot may be made at what this hybrid actually was like to look at” [169.09] and we may begin to discuss “Shem’s bodily getup” [169.11]. A deprecatory anatomical catalogue, however, concludes with a peculiar segue. The last listed feature of his “bodily getup,” “a bladder tristended” (which, implausibly, will come to make more sense), apparently in itself occasions the inevitable linguistic turn to what is in a triple sense – biographically, in the chapter and in the Wake itself as conventionally read – Shem’s first word. This time however the word is (appropriately, given the kind of

writing Shem and his prototype produce) a riddle. In fact it seems to be something of a trick, to Shaun's predictable irritation, but one which if seen through to its end at last returns us yet again to the motifs we've been examining.

Shem's bodily getup, it seems, included ... a bladder tristended, so much so that young Master Shemmy on his very first debouch at the very dawn of protohistory seeing himself such and such, when playing with thistlewords in their garden nursery, Griefotrofio, at Phig Streat 111, Shuvlin, Old Hoeland, (would we go back there now for sounds, pillings and sense? would we now for annas and annas? would we for fullscore eight and a liretta? for twelve blocks one bob? for four testers one groat? not for a dinar! not for jo!) dictited to of all his little brothron and sweetsureens the first riddle of the universe: asking, when is a man not a man?: telling them take their time, yungfries, and wait till the tide stops (for from the first his day was a fortnight) and offering the prize of a bittersweet crab, a little present from the past, for their copper age was yet unminted, to the winner [169.11-170.09].

The somewhat Vichian "firstness" of this word is duly stressed. Shem utters it "on his very first debouch at the very dawn of protohistory;" and if we follow the etymology of "debouch" we realize the riddle is indeed the first thing out of his mouth. We note once more the parenthetical question of language and money in "sounds, pillings and sense" and the catalog of world currencies (including the intriguingly Wakean *anna* of India). This time though the question is literally parenthetical as well as literally a question, and whatever the question is the answer seems to be "no." The primary sense of the narrator's (Shaun's) assertion seems to be that you couldn't pay him to go back to this garden. In addition there's the implication

that money *per se* is a stranger to this particular word at least, and to the zone of its provenance. The prize the faintly satanic Shem would offer the winner is a “bittersweet crab,” presumably an apple from his “garden nursery.” But this is “a little present” from a “past” in which the “copper age was yet unminted;” there were no pence, at least, and presumably no pounds or shillings either.

But in any case no one claims the prize. A variety of answers are tendered, all of them amusing, as the sufficiently curious reader may aver, and all of them wrong.

All were wrong, so Shem himself, the doctator, took the cake, the correct solution being – all give it up? – ; when he is a – yours till the rending of the rocks, – Sham [170.21].

This riddle is fairly well-known to criticism and has probably been explored at greatest length in Patrick McCarthy’s *The Riddles of Finnegans Wake*. It seems to announce itself as fairly important. Not only is it apparently some *ur* utterance of the figure variously identified with the author of the great riddle, *Finnegans Wake*, it is, apparently, “the first riddle of the universe.”

At first the riddle seems to be summarily disposed of by its poser’s own fairly straightforward answer. But as McCarthy documents, this is in fact but the first of seven times the riddle is asked. Its iterations span the *Wake* starting at this point and ending in the book’s last “chapter,” Book IV. Its various instances and their relations themselves comprise a riddle, whose answer has been presumed to be in some way about the *Wake* itself. But of this answer criticism has tended to despair.

Right away, though, we may discern that in this first version, at least, both the riddle and the answer conform to one of our recurrent themes. The question “When is a man not a man?” is after all in part the question “when is a man his own negation?”

The answer, of course, is Shem himself. He is “Nayman of Noland” or no man in part because he is – as Shaun is happy to report here – a self-confessed “sham.” But if, following our (and, apparently, the author’s) predisposition for beginnings and ends to its conclusion, we turn to the riddle’s last instantiation, in Book IV, we find, along with a characteristically Wakean symmetry of reversal, an elegantly condensed recapitulation of at least three of the major motifs we’ve been following: the negation of the man, the negation of the word and name, and an identity with the dawn and death of time. In fact the form of the riddle suggests the identity of these three concerns.

As it happens we’ve seen this riddle before; this is one of the citations we adduced in support of Vichian time as in some sense specifically chronometric. Recall, it’s

even a little odd all four horolodgeries still gonging restage ... before
cymbaloosing the apostles at every hours of changeover. The first and
last rittlerattle of the anniverse; when is a nam nought a nam whenas it
is a. Watch! [607.07].

This final instance of the riddle does indeed seem to announce itself as unusually summary. Somewhat like the final thunder – “the last word of perfect language” that nevertheless concerns itself with the “root” – this final “rittlerattle” is “first and last.” It also evokes the first with a precision that intervening instances (for example “where was a hovel not a havel” [231.01] and “When is a Pun not a Pun?” [307.02]) don’t. In fact it’s nearly the same question; the only difference is that the subject has been symmetrically reversed. That a man is not himself – or is his own opposite – here is suggested simply by spelling him backwards, as “nam.” (Compare Shaun’s indictment of Shem as a “god in the manger.”) But this reversed spelling of course

tends to suggest another word whose importance we've come to recognize. The suggestion that a thing rather than a man is in question is augmented by the use of the neutral pronoun "it." And indeed, though it does so with "no true spell," in asking of the "nam" the riddle also sensibly asks: when is a name not a name?

Though it's not obvious at first, Shem's "first riddle of the universe" – posed as soon as the Wake introduces him and in a chapter that starts with a consideration of his name – proves, when its trajectory is completed, to involve our familiar doubled-negations: those of a man and his name. And when we take stock of this along with the negations intrinsic to the very utterance of Shem's name in I.7 and the resonances between that chapter and the strikingly similar effect produced in I.1 for HCE, the mutual imbrication of father and son in a motif of reduction of character to name and name to nothing (or silence) becomes inescapably obvious. Further, the riddle's final form is one of the text's strongest assertions of the identity shared by these strangely vanishing "characters" and a clock (which clock, note, is here associated with the juncture of cycles in Vichian time just as it was in HCE's encounter with the Cad). For the answer to the question of this peculiar "nam" is, again, straightforward: he and/or it is simply "a. Watch!"

Well, the answer is *relatively* straightforward. Not for the first time, the formal disposition of the text itself amplifies the semantic potential of its words, even when these are spelled truly. The oddly punctuated separation of "Watch!" from the sentence of which it should be part renders it an isolated imperative, precisely a command to watch: to look or see. The peculiar effect, thus, is that in a sense the riddle is simply not answered at all; or, more precisely, is not answered in *words*. It's as though the poser throws up his hands at the impossibility of framing a linguistic answer and resorts to an utterly deictic gesture. He can't tell, so he'll have to show. Unfortunately no picture follows, either figuratively or literally. The text here does

not advert to any visual eccentricity of the sort we've explored before, nor does it offer any striking or relevant linguistic imagery. The eye remains bereft. If there's actually something to watch, it must be somewhere else. We can, however, see plainly enough that the word is sensibly absent.

But there's one more peculiarity proper to the formal situation of the riddle's answer: the suspension of its sentence at the article. This, as we've noted before, is a type of one of the Wake's most famous gestures, its quasi-final "the." As we'll see, the text plays with this form of "sentence" elsewhere as well. But as readers of *Ulysses* already know, this is not the first time Joyce has done this sort of thing. Bloom, famously, attempts in Nausicaa to write some word definitive of himself – some autonomous name, if you will – but succumbs to a variety of hesitations that break up and punctuate his "sentence" at every word and leave it at last suspended utterly: "I. ... AM. A."¹² A critical tradition has arisen however of taking this suspended sentence "literally." That is, as Gifford puts it in *Ulysses Annotated*, the sense of the "sentence" derives from taking it

Just as it reads: "I am A" (the first letter of the alphabet). Also: "I am alpha" (the first letter in the Greek alphabet; hence, the first of the beginning); the phrase is repeated four times in Revelation¹³

¹² p. 317 Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. New York: Random House (Modern Library) 1961 Rpt. as *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior. New York: Random House, 1986. Henceforth cited as "U" followed by page number(s).

¹³ p. 404 Gifford, Don and Seidman, Robert J. *Ulysses Annotated*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. Henceforth cited as

This would certainly be a rather striking instance of the evaporation of the man into a barely formal signifier; though one cannot help but note the way in which this reduction to the sub-semantic immediately resurfaces freighted with a signified inversely proportionate to the signifier's tiny size. In fact this becomes in a literally literal way the ultimate signified, at once terminal and infinite but above all foundational or, if you will, precisely initial. As William York Tindall more directly and economically suggests, "Bloom's 'A' stands for Alpha (or God)."¹⁴ But this reduction of The Name to a status beneath even the word is itself merely prelude to its ex-termination or silence. For of course Bloom's sentence never reaches its end, and the noun that would name this particular Hebrew God is left at last unsaid.

But Bloom's intriguing parallels with the the Man/God of the Wake do not end here. For

Frances M. Boldereff remarks that "AM.A. is a quote from *Annals of the Four Masters*; it represents the way time was signified in the pagan world, it stands for 'Anima Mundi Anno': 'In the Universal mind [world soul], year ...'" [UA 404].

The *Annals of the Four Masters* as it happens constitutes one of the Wake's most well-known source texts, as we will see. Here though, their telling of the time helps answer the riddle of Bloom's writing as a rather striking Wakean anticipation. When

"UA" followed by page number(s).

¹⁴ p. 195 Tindall, William York. *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce*. New York: Noonday Press, 1959

is an Alpha not a male? Whenat he is a. Watch. When he's "a," and when he's a marker of the time.

But could the reduction of character to character really be one of the implications of the curiously suspended sentence of the final riddle in the Wake, which is thus absurdly answered by the suggestion that a man is not a man and a name not a name when they are both the letter? Articles are so common, and after all are likely enough to proceed the (here doubly punctual) isolation of some final noun. It's hard to say for sure. But it bears, perhaps, watching.

Gifford, incidentally, loads the letter with one more signified. "Alpha is also the sign of the fish, a traditional symbol for Christ" [UA 404]. Bloom's parallel with Christ is long established. Less evident in *Ulysses* is his identification with a fish. But this, as our rather extended introductory metaphor has likewise suggested, will eventually prove strangely apposite for the Wake.

But the parallel with Christ already proves in its way pertinent to our more immediate situation. Even if the view is not quite orthodox, Christ, according to the Arian heresies adduced in *Proteus* and in *Ulysses passim*, is the Son precisely consubstantial with the Father. And the Wakean son is begins to look like this sort too, even if this consubstantiality is predicated on the precisely insubstantial. This is situation rendered more complicated and intriguing when we recall that HCE's traditional antagonist, the Cad, is generally, and with good reason, conflated with Shem.

The text suggests in short the consubstantiality not just of father and son but – and in part on that account – of protagonist and antagonist. And as it happens this suggestion receives more support if we briefly take further stock of the structure of the riddle motif itself in a way analogous to our structural assessment of the thunders; that is, by noting the placements of the riddles and the implications of the resulting

structure for content.

McCarthy collates the instances of the riddle and finds that they are seven in all, at 170.05, 231.01, 307.02, 356.12, 495.06, 586.18 and 607.10. We've already taken account of the first and the last, and seen that as well as treating of the man, his name and their negations they obviously signal a certain structural self-consciousness in designating themselves respectively "the first" and "the first and last."

But what, then, of the middle? It's easily enough found by counting; the fourth of the seven instances occurs, as luck would have it, once again in II.3, the chapter in which the thunders and the dialogues converge as well. It occurs, further, immediately after a zone which will prove of particular interest to us as we explore the negation of the name, as we will learn. But even now we discern an intriguing resonance with some of our themes in this central version of

the farst wriggle from the ubivence, whereom is man, that old offender,
nother man, wheile he is asame [356.12].

If the riddle in its first and last formulations tends to amplify our suspicions of an identity between father and son – even if, puzzlingly, one of the consequences is an identity between HCE and his "attacker" – we shouldn't be too surprised, since the riddle in its central formulation suggests that at least in the case of "man, that old offender," this sort of identity-melding is the order of the day. As I.2 in its way suggests, HCE is both sinned against and sinning. As the central form of the riddle suggests – and especially when taken with its initial and terminal variants – this may be in part because he is at once the offender and the offended.

Structurally, thus, the riddle, dialogue and thunders speak with a single voice. Seven instantiations of the riddle spread themselves across *Finnegans Wake*; the

fourth or mathematically central of these occurs, as form by now evidently demands it should, in II.3.

But content, too, augments the sense of this convergence. This is already suggested, of course, in the central riddle's amalgamation of HCE's two aspects. But though Hart does not treat of the riddle motif *per se*, the amalgamation it stages also evinces a peculiar resonance with his structural ideas. This central riddle, in fact, turns out to be the only instance of support for the conflation of the "Same" and "Other" of the Timaeian theme which Hart adduces in the first place in order to build his case for the centrality of II.3. One of the hallmarks of that centrality, recall, was to be precisely the fusion of the twins, which is in fact a conspicuous feature of the chapter. Now, though, the dispositions of the Wake's seven riddles lend their own clear, structural sense of convergence to this evident keystone, and precisely in the fusion of antagonistic aspects. Criticism – Hart conspicuously included – has always taken this to be the twins as aspects of their father susceptible to fusion, and criticism, as we will see, is justified. The central riddle gestures obviously enough toward this fusion when it frames the repeating question of the Man (who is indeed in his way an eminent figure of the establishment and the law) as one of when he is "nother man, wheile he is asame."

There is however one additional peculiarity of the riddle's neologistic construction of which we should take note. It does not just posit this strangely hybrid identity; it simultaneously asks after its provenance. Thus it is that this is the "farst wriggle from the ubivence," the "*ubi*" suggesting the question, raised again in the strange portmanteau "whereom," of precisely where this man might "wriggle from."

Good question. Where? But this brings us inevitably to the last question the riddle poses. Will the riddle itself, like the thunder and dialogue, yield at last some obvious but qualified centrality in II.3 to a less obvious but in its own way more striking –

even “trumping,” in the senses both of one-upmanship and a trick – centrality of a final answer in II.2?

As Shem might put it, “Watch!”

* * *

**He had fled again (open shunshema!) this country of exile,
sloughed off, sidleshomed ... and was even now occupying, under
an islamitic newhame in his seventh generation, a physical body ...
[98.04]**

**(here keen again and begin again to make soundsense and
senseound kind again) ... [121.14]**

This return to the question of formal centrality however reminds us that our examination of the thunder’s content has, thus far, involved only its ends and its beginnings. A deeper examination of the central thunders at the content level will emerge as we explore the form and content of II.3 and its relations to the text as a whole, to which examination we will shortly turn. We might however preface a consideration of that “epicentral” chapter by briefly noting the way in which its double thunders seem to situate themselves with respect to the “first and last words” which open and close the Wake’s thunder cycle. Again, their centrality is clearly enough indicated by their position in the text. But various textual circumstances and expressions suggest that this centrality will in fact be reflected in content.

Recall that III.1’s final thunder confessed itself to be at last less ultimate than “penultimate,” leaving us with the question of where the ultimate might be found.

This will not in the event be quite entirely in II.3, for as we will see the entire thunder-scheme will be at once completed and transcended by a curious but retrospectively obvious supplement. But confining ourselves as it were to the “immanent” thunders we do in fact find that while both of II.3’s thunders announce themselves as central, the second in particular (the Wake’s seventh) derives this centrality in part by being at once more original than the first and more final than the last. And as was the case for the name-game of the father in what was at first the Wake’s first chapter, this sense is first tendered by genetics.

II.3, as those who plump for its centrality occasionally point out, was the site of some of Joyce’s final – often substantial – revisions. It thus should not surprise us unduly to learn that the thunder at 332.05 – the second and latter of the chapter’s pair – was in fact the last of all of the thunders to be composed. In the final version of the text as read conventionally, the second thunder of III.1 at 424.20 is “the last word of perfect language.” Genetically, however, this honor belongs to the second of II.3’s thunders. Perhaps unsurprisingly, its context signals this.

Snip snap snoodly. Noo err historyend goody. Of a lil trip trap and a big treeskooner for he put off the ketyl and they made three (for fie!) and if hec don’t love alpy then lad you annoy me. For hanigen with hunigen still haunt ahunt to finnd their hinnigen where Pappappapparr-assannuaragheallachnatullaghmonganmacmacmacwhackfallther-debblenonthedubblandaddydoodled and anruly person creeked a jest [332.01].

“*Snip snap snude, nu er historien ude,*” as McHugh informs, is a Danish formula to end a fairy tale, somewhat along the lines of “and they lived happily ever after.” Of

course we hardly need a translator to get the sense of an ending from “Snip snap snooty. Noo err historyend goody.” We hear the end not just of the story but of history, and maybe even Atropos cutting the thread of mortal fate and the text (the termination of which last, incidentally, would produce by definition the absence of the word; but we’ll get to that). Further, the text inserts the Irish equivalent of the Danish formula: “So they put on the kettle and they made tea and if they don’t live happy that you and I may.” This appears clearly enough here as “for he put off the ketyl and they made three ... and if hec don’t love alpy then lad you annoy me,” Likewise Danish “trip trap traesko,” here transformed into “a lil trip trap and a big treeskooner,” is a Danish expression used to signal victory – and thus conclusion – in a game.

Now on the one hand it must be recalled that all of these expressions in one sense simply signal the end of the first of the chapter’s two major anecdotes, as we’ll eventually see. On the other hand the repetitive insistence of some formula of finality seems – and particularly when taken with the genetic evidence – to suggest that historical time is ending. And this, as we will eventually see, the chapter will shortly assert to be the case.

Yet despite all its terminal overtones, this central and genetically final thunder – the thunder toward which, if our hypotheses are correct, the temporal vectors of the Wake’s historical and story-time converge – also announces itself as precisely the most original of all; more original in fact even than the Wake’s “opening” thunder (the first, incidentally, to be composed) on page three. For of all the thunders, this is far and away the most faithful evocation of the Vichian original.

That original, recall, is simply “Pa! Pa!” heard and then onomatopoeically stuttered by Vico’s primordial gentile giant. For the most part, however, the Wake’s thunders do not seem to pay it much onomatopoeic homage, though the first comes pretty close. It starts, as we recall, with a “bababa” (and we may be reminded that in

Hindi *Baba* can be the name of the father or grandfather). But after that the rest of the thunders tend to deviate pretty sharply. Opening syllables like “Perkodhusk ... [23.05]” or “Ullhodturd ... [424.20]” or “Thingcrookly ... [113.09] don’t call *The New Science* to mind, nor, formally, do any of the other thunders -- with the striking exception of II.3. Here, it seems, even more clearly than in the Wake’s first thunder, the thunder wishes to announce in and of itself its filiation with the Vichian prototype. Indeed, it does the prototype at least one and possibly two better. If echoes and echoes of echoes seem to perpetually double the Vichian word at its root, this citation doubles the doubling. “Pa! Pa!” becomes “Pappappappappa.”

If, thus, the various tropes that play about the word and the name are affiliated with Vico’s thunder, it is here, at the structural center of the tripartite scheme of doubled-thunders, that we find content’s clearest evocation of its debt on this score. And structural convergence too of course colludes to highlight the Wake’s most faithful echo of name of the Vichian father and the *ur*-word. If this center is the focus of some sort of temporal convergence, as criticism, Joyce’s correspondence and the text suggest, then its status as an end of history that recalls with textually unparalleled fidelity history’s origin – its closure of a cycle, in short – makes sense.

In addition, of course, this gesture – so preposterously proleptic of subsequent and all-too-familiar theoretical preoccupations that it seems at once to demand and defy explanation (though strictly it does neither) – makes the Name of the Father quite literally the center of the text. As we deepen our examination of II.3 however we will do well to recall what we have to a great extent already learned: this name is written in disappearing ink. But before moving on, there is one more condition of this more central of the Wake’s two central thunders which we should take into account.

Our examination of the content of the thunders began, recall, with an examination of the way in which this content, conveniently if paradoxically, immediately

subdivided itself again into formal and semantic aspects. Content indeed seemed in a sense – though rather formally – to stage its own exile. The Fall, thus, became for us what it has become for criticism and what it is in textual fact: the Wake's initial and most obvious assertion of what the thunders mean. This meaning, however, remained outside and alongside the parenthetical word, almost as though to clear the way for a consideration of the parenthesized word-in-itself.

Further reading revealed this presentation of content-as-context to be persistent, and even, perhaps, part of an efficacious strategy, though the full effects of this strategy have not yet been revealed. Various other denotations were found to crowd around the thunders. Especially around those singled out by structure these denotations, curiously, though likewise exiled to context tended to encourage again and again the apprehension of the adjacent thunder as precisely a word *per se*; though so far from effecting a sterile arrest at the level of the signifier, their aversion to abstract form itself facilitated through contexts both textual and extra-textual the gradual acquisition of increasing depths of resonance. Moving beyond the thunders themselves, we found analogous patterns played out in motifs throughout the text; now emphasizing the evaporation of the signifier by the signified, now the reverse, but tending always again toward as it were the impregnation of the one by the other.

With the exception of the examinations of the content of I.2, however (which examinations quickly and predictably resolved themselves into questions of form), we were compelled to leave to one side any substantial examination of the content the thunder first suggests by its strange but eventually characteristic aversion to context. It's the word "fall" which, appearing as it does to the immediate left of the Wake's parenthesized first thunder, has above all others characterized critical reception of the thunder as a whole, and this less despite than perhaps because of its exile. This word, written in eminently plain English, is also sensibly enough embedded in what remains

perhaps Western literature's most venerable critical tradition: Biblical exegesis. And the content implied by that tradition of course meets resonantly with the formal presentation effected by our introduction to the thunder and its most ostensible theme: here, at least, "fall" is in both the formal and semantic sense a word of exile.

But in II.3, and more specifically in the latter of that chapter's thunders -- which thunder remains in several senses the Wake's last of all -- the exile returns home. The very textual device which undid form and content, exiling the latter to leave the former in its phenomenological glory, is undone. For alone among the thunder's, II.3's second has the plain, resonant English of the "fall" contained, not in the context, but at last in the word itself:

Pappapparrassannuaragheallachnatullaghmonganmacmacmac-
whackfalltherdebbledonthe dublandaddydoodled. [332.05]

In fact in situ the "fall" here immediately compounds itself with the fellow whose name is, for us, the other most salient feature of the word, and quite appropriately. As we will learn (though by now this is not entirely news), "Pappappappa" is the name precisely of the "fallther."

Perhaps we shouldn't make too much of this, but the formal disposition of the Wake's first thunder seems to ask us to make at least something of it. The carrot-and-stick approach of abject incomprehensibility immediately juxtaposed with the quintessence of the traditionally legible cannot help but encourage -- in fact, has produced -- the inclination to seize on the legible propinquity as the content which the form so emphatically denies us; indeed our readiness would be unseemly did not the text as whole substantially bear out our first and slightly desperate semantic inference. But when, in addition, we take the Wake's first thunder with the more central of its

central thunders – at once more primal than the first and more terminal than the last – we find, on the one hand, a situation which through its explicit division produces as it were an epistemophilic tension, and on the other a situation which through the reunion of what had been sundered seems to resolve it, gratifying desire as it confirms our intuitions in a long-deferred and on that account more keenly felt wedding of form and content.

* * *

Naysayers we know. To conclude purely negatively from the positive absence of political odia and monetary requests that its page cannot ever have been a penproduct of a man or a woman of that period or those parts is only one more unlookedfor conclusion leaped at ... [108.29]

Our situation, inevitably, is complex. The content of the *Wake* cannot really be understood by the reductive flourish of a handful of summary gestures; our hope, though, is that by facing and taking account of its complexity – and to recognize that the *Wake* is intrinsically complex is surely one of the simplest things we can ask of our understanding – we may eventually discern enough particular instances of characteristically Joycean repetition that generalization elucidates more than it obscures. Our fondest hope would be that pregnant confluences of signal, repeated motifs would occur at places in the text which some theory of its structure might anticipate as crucial. We have begun our analysis in the hope that structural zones as obvious as beginnings and ends might reward a search for content, and even point to some formal and semantic *tertium quid*, a middle. This notion, to some degree

anticipated by criticism, has begun to reveal our hopes, however fond they may be, as less than fatuous; we may even allow ourselves to be cheered somewhat in this respect not just by our provisional successes in reading but by a genetic account of Joyce's compositional methods.

But this review of our means and ends reminds us that we must push on, our grail still some understanding of that *tertium quid*. The thunders have seconded the dialogues in recommending II.3, at least provisionally, as one of our hoped-for nexes of form and content. Now the riddle joins them, while forwarding in its own way the importance of motifs derived at first (and likely enough in the writing as much as the reading) from the thunders. Collateral with the elucidation of these themes however we have begun to discern the first hints of a characteristically Wakean play of opposites, and of a particularly intense kind.

The *telos* of a reduction to "pure" form begins to suggest itself as not just unachievable but as the victim of an almost Newtonian equal-and-opposite reaction. Any traditional sense of the signified – whether character, action or sometimes even predication *per se* – seems at first to evaporate through an increasingly formal reduction to an increasingly reduced signifier, itself at last reduced to utter absence. In one sense, however, such a trajectory brings the sign further from this goal the more it nears it. The text itself is at pains to collude in this effect. The more the man is reduced to his name and the name in turn to nothing, the more the resulting silence seems to echo with overtones of the Ineffable become precisely the signified *par excellence*, with all its implications of priority, transcendence, and authority. Indeed this quest for pure form, in announcing itself as precisely the "quest for the proper word and the unique name" and then approaching its goal in the annihilation of words and names themselves, seems to tremble on the brink of "the marriage between speech and Being in the unique word, in the finally proper name." Indeed one might almost

call this clearing away a species of Heideggerian silence did not something rather *buffo* perpetually radiate from the event horizon of the absence; in a sense the destruction of speech begins with HCE's sycophantic stutter, which, with his humpty-dumpty tumbings and the perpetual *auto da fe* by entendre of his protested dignity, tends at last to make God's lapse into Being less a fall than a pratfall. This itself is of a piece with the paradoxically simultaneous advance on and retreat from the formal purity of a vanishingly small signifier, whose purity is put in greater doubt with every further effort to secure it.

Einstein may supply the better metaphor. If a massy particle could achieve the speed of light, its too, too solid flesh would thaw and resolve into pure energy. In the asymptotic event however the approach to light-speed perversely brings the particle ever closer to infinite mass. Likewise, signifying nothing promises and threatens to signify everything; not just because of infinities that may be predicated of God or Being *per se*, but, at least in the Wake, because of the perpetually polysemantic overdetermination of the context that crowds first around the word and then – almost as if by habit – its absence.

The promise of the asymptotic overload is the realization of "language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree." The threat of "light-speed," however, is paradoxically the triumph of Hegel's night in which all cows are black; that is, the failure of the semantic that follows from the failure of diacritical distinction.

The purification of the signifier to the point of its absence, thus, is at best equivocally effective, whether absence is taken as nothing or as everything. The absence of the signifier in fact produces the absence of signification. Whatever surprise this epiphany affords is, it must be admitted, rather a consequence of the paradoxical textual and theoretical terrain traversed on the road to the "purity" of this absence than of any violation of that "beast of boredom, common sense." But it

means – and the text, in the event, knows this – that the *telos* of any text that *remains* a text cannot alone be the destruction of the word. The Wake will hold a wake for the word but wake it too, for in order to make his mark Joyce must, after all, make a mark. We need a marriage in fact: not just between form and content nor even speech and Being but between the very being and non-being of the word.

And we will get it. In its beginnings all of this will in fact be staged rather literally – even clinically – as a marriage. Whatever content or discontent they bring, weddings tend to be formal affairs, and this one is no exception.

FINNEGANS WAKE: THE AGENCY OF THE LETTER IN THE CONSCIOUS

Volume II

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Cornell University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Jonathan Warren Pickett

May 2008

Chapter IV

For some time the Viking editions of *Finnegans Wake* sported on their back covers Alfred Kazin's assessment of its author. "Alone among the artists of our time, Joyce has slowly and with relentless patience assumed the overpowering importance of his soul and written as though the world were well lost for art." The assertion of singularity may be a bit much. Woolf lost her world, too, and perhaps on the same terms. But the panegyric tone does capture what the text of *Finnegans Wake* demands, and as much from the reader as the writer. Slowly and with relentless patience we have begun to amass an understanding of what in the Wake recurs at structurally suggestive zones, coloured anew each time by collateral implications of the obscure, the profound or the absurd but tending toward a discernible aggregate of sense.

So far that sense has been the Word. We've traced it – and its foliating complements and contradictions – from its most conspicuous instantiations in the thunders to its operations in the larger text. We first took stock, recall, of an initial self-division into formal and semantic aspects, presented respectively in a meaning-poor expression and its meaning-rich context. Context first suggested the content of the word to be the Fall. But we've thus far deferred a closer examination of this content – in some ways the word's first – in order to explore the text's almost theoretical preoccupations with the word *per se*. These we may here briefly review.

Like Vico's, the Wake's is a *first* word; in fact "the first peace of illiterative porthery in all the flamend floody flatuous world" [23.09]. But in the Wake's cycles of time it's last as well, a "root language" [424.17] that's also "the last word of perfect language" [424.23]. In fact its bivalence renders it "The first and last rittlerattle of the anniverse" [607.10]. (And the riddle it poses has yet to be answered in full.)

Again like Vico's Word this word is a Name: more specifically the Name of the Father. But just as "Pa!" names at once the imagined God and the onomatopoeic giant (who, in naming the divine father becomes himself the temporal) this name also names the son whose name, "Shem," happens to mean "name."

In keeping with the status of Vico's Word as historically determinate marker – indeed the condition of historical time *per se* – this word keeps time; in fact it seems in some sense itself to *be* the time, as its utterer becomes a clock or "Watch!" [607.12]. And it's also, oddly, money. When the Cad receives HCE's word as the time in 1.2 he thanks the latter "for guilders received ... not a little token" [37.05].

Its Wakean contexts also seem to link it with the Law; appropriately, since the Vichian prototype becomes the foundation of all civil and religious authority. HCE first utters it in stuttering obeisance to Empire and her deputies.

In Vico, however, there seem almost to be suggestions of the "Law" as it would be received by recent theory. In part this is due to the sort of thing John Bishop has aptly discerned.

Generating the internal perception of fear in a body aboriginally all appetite, this external sound operates like the thunder of the patriarchal "NO!" in Freud's accounts of the sexual organization and toilet-training of modern infants [Bishop 191].¹

This condition, however, reveals itself as even more resonant with later versions of psychoanalysis when we bear in mind that the thundering constraint of desire simply *is*

¹ p. 191 Bishop, John. *Joyce's Book of the Dark*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986.

in itself – both in echo and origin – the Name of the Father which in turn becomes in Vico’s accounts the foundation not just of patriarchy but of language itself. This rather thorough coincidence of theory and anticipation will play itself out in the Wake to signal effect. Already, though, we note that HCE’s aversion to authority in general devolves, by the end of his protestations, into avowed fealty to Empire’s *language* and more precisely to his “British to my backbone tongue.” Further: as the genetically seminal I.2 reminds us in its beginning and its end, the power of the king or his viceroy has been from the first the power to name.

But this question of the name brings us as well to the Wakean word’s most peculiar complement or contradiction: it bears the germ of its death from its inception. Although a reception of the subsequent text greatly facilitates the recognition, the name of the Wake’s father is from the very start not just a name but a “naim;” and ensuing developments tend likewise to accomplish its “unsaying.” On the one hand the name suffers a reduction to a barely formal status which eventually threatens its dissolution into the sub-semantic characters that make it up; on the other it seems bent on disappearing entirely, leaving HCE, in his vaguely imperial and mercenary usurpation of Finnegans, “The unnamed nonirishblooder that becomes a Greenislender overnight” [378.10].

But this “unsaying” of the word or “unnaming” of the name gradually associates itself not just with the father *per se* but with an aspect of himself with which he is at once consubstantial and at odds: his son, Shem. Perhaps, as his name implies, Shem wants to make a name for *himself*. In any case he shows up as the Cad, and begins to effect a rather subtle and insidious sedition. His questioning of HCE, ostensibly innocent, is in fact recognized as tantamount to assault with a deadly weapon. And though the ensuing conversation tries to situate the encounter once more as innocuous, the Cad’s obeisance to the Word of the Father is mere appearance. Though he seems

all Vichian reception when he “repeat[s] in his secondmouth language as many of the bigtimer’s verbaten words which he could balbly call to memory” [37.14], his own stuttering echo culminates at last in I.2’s closing ballad, the word which reports and effects the death of HCE and his name while undoing the power to name at all. “Not all the king’s men nor his horses/Will resurrect his corpus/For there’s no true spell in Connacht or hell/(bis) That’s able to raise a Cain” [47.31]. But if the son’s faintly parricidal misconstructions undo in two senses the character of the father, the riddle suggests they also undo himself – “that old offender, nother man, wheile he is asame” [356.13] – as a “Sham” [170.24].

We’ve compared the Wake to a sort of whirlpool. When water funnels toward the center of a whirlpool it seems inevitably to converge on absence. This, at last, is itself in part mere seeming. Of course the water is really going *somewhere*; if it were going nowhere the result would be less a whirlpool than an eddy or stagnation. But on the surface, at least, the “context” of the water is necessarily organized around a void, and so it seems to be here. This organization is semantic as well as structural. The various architectonic devices which have coordinated our apprehension of the Wake – the thunders, the dialogues and now the riddles – all seem to converge on II.3 where, after a climactic celebration in some ways quintessentially life-affirming, the Word as Absence will achieve its quintessential and climactic (non)expression in death. Life and death will themselves eventually fuse elsewhere in a climactic *tertium quid* that amalgamates and transcends the moments of which it is compound. But in order to understand this moment we will first have to read II.3 as in its own sense deliberately climactic. And such a reading, though it has been suggested more than once, has not to date been done.

* * *

The Mountain

Criticism, largely though not exclusively through the efforts of Hart, has long recognized (though it has not I think done a great deal with the information) that the Wake performs a large architectonic gesture with its dialogues. But once we recognize that the Wake's characteristic multiplication or doubling has resulted in the complementary gesture of the thunders, the structure of II.3 becomes immediately legible.

II.3 effects in its way a synthesis of two great dramatic forms. The catastrophe of (an inevitably somewhat farcical) tragedy is juxtaposed with a comic climax. The latter, as traditionally, is a wedding; one that form and content seem to anticipate with their reunion in II.3's second, central and genetically terminal thunderword, which thunderword itself forms, as we will see, the comic climax of the comic climax.

The tragicomic propinquity of these moments is a consequence of the meeting of both of the Wake's largest architectonic gestures in a single chapter. The Wake's central pair of doubled-thunders converge to frame the first of II.3's two protracted anecdotes, whereas the second anecdote in itself constitutes the Wake's large central (by our lights "epicentral") dialogue which, with Hart, we've already examined to an extent. Both vignettes are related to the patrons of the Earwicker pub by HCE. Immediately the second anecdote – the dialogue – is concluded, the central of the seven riddles seconds its gesture of amalgamation. Though as we will see the riddle is in its way a final, hovering grace note that echoes the two previous crescendos, these are not yet in themselves the riddle's final answer.

We'll treat II.3's two anecdotes in the order in which they appear. The present chapter will be substantially devoted to the anecdote that becomes – despite its

imbrications with the themes of the second – primarily the scene of the Wake’s climactic wedding, and to the anticipations and retrospections of this wedding in the Wake’s own beginning and ends. The ensuing chapter will treat the second anecdote – whose muse is primarily death, though this theme as we’ll see also colours the first – in a similar way. Before moving to a deeper examination of these structurally central contents, however, we must introduce them twice: once by the text’s own introduction of them, and once by way of their extra-textual source. These introductions help to decisively situate the chapter as structurally, semantically and biographically central.

First we’ll take brief gauge of what II.3 has to say not just for but about itself. This it says immediately, in its very first lines.

It may not or maybe a no concern of the Guinnesses but.

That the fright of his light in tribalbalbutience hides aback in the doom of the balk of the deaf but that the height of his life from a bride’s eye stammunct is when a man that means a mountain barring his distance wades a lymph that plays the lazy winning she likes yet that pride that bogs the party begs the glory of a wake while the scheme is like your rumba round me garden, allatheses, with perhelps the prop of a prompt to them, was now or never ... for much or moment indispute.

[309.01]

These two initial paragraphs constitute II.3’s first words on itself. That there are in fact two paragraphs is at first difficult to detect, due to the brevity of the first, which is in a sense not so much a paragraph as one of the Wake’s characteristically “suspended sentences,” this time rather awkwardly truncated not by an article but by a conjunction. In fact not just the truncation but the entire syntactical situation is rather

awkward, even by Wakean standards. As it turns out there are good reasons for this bad form, and for its placement at the very head of the chapter in question. Our understanding of these must however be for the moment deferred. Instead we can turn with profit to the import of what is strictly speaking the second paragraph, for this adumbrates with greater clarity the themes of the chapter as a whole.

These themes are life and death. The latter is at this point perhaps not quite as clearly present as the former, but it's clear enough in some "doom" at which someone should take "fright." In fact as McHugh points out "the balk of the deaf" is none other than *The Book of the Dead*, the Egyptian funerary text (more properly texts) which saturates the Wake and which has occasioned a great deal of worthwhile criticism by Bishop, Atherton, and others. As in Genesis, death will be the fruit of the sin of "pride that bogs the party" in the "rumba round me garden;" indeed, the sin "begs the glory of a wake." But we might as aptly call it the "sin of bride." For HCE's descent to death's nadir in the second anecdote will be the consequence of his fall from the height of the first, which is precisely "the height of his life from a bride's eye stammpunct."

Surveying the paragraph from "the fright of his light" to its final if equivocal assertion of certitude, McHugh summarizes it thus:

[T]hat man hides from thunder, but that marriage is the height of his life, yet that pride kills him, while the scheme is cyclical, was never much in dispute [*Annotations* 309].

A recognition that the thunder (and presumably the accompanying lightning) is indeed the "light" from which the man hides is facilitated by McHugh's own detection of *balbutiens*, "stammering," which Latinism likewise inflected, recall, the Cad's

“balbly” recollected version of his father’s word. The concision of McHugh’s digest however also helps us to recall the aspect of Vico’s inaugural thunder which is most pertinent here: Vico’s thunder is the cause and origin of marriage.

Recall that in consequence of the “fright” generated by the thunder each of the primordial giants

would drag one woman into his cave and would keep her there in perpetual company for the duration of their lives. Thus the act of human love was performed under cover, in hiding, that is to say, in shame In this guise marriage was introduced [NS 504-5].

In ensuing discussion, we will do well to recall that marriage itself is in turn the foundation of the patriarchal authority whose permutations drive succeeding history.

Thus, with the first human, which is to say chaste and religious, couplings, they gave a beginning to matrimony. Thereby they became certain fathers of certain children by certain women. Thus they founded the families and governed them with a cyclopean family sovereignty over their children and wives [NS 1098]

But can the Vichian context help us with the introduction’s other mysteries? Why, for instance, is HCE in this structurally crucial zone “a man that means a mountain”? Here we might allow ourselves to briefly trace the Joycean genealogy of this identity, for it has both structural and semantic implications not simply for the present chapter but for the ultimate answer to the chapter’s central riddle: “wherom is man, that old offender, nother man wheile he is asame?” [356.13]

Ellmann's introduction of HCE in the biography presents one conventional and justified reception of the Wake's principals.

Earwicker was a primordial giant, a mountain, a god, with a double aspect suggested by the sons, and Anna a river, a principle of nature, her daughter a cloud [Ellmann 545].

That Earwicker is a primordial giant is perhaps better known than that he is a mountain. This is partly because he is a version of Finnegan. In accord with his derivation from Finn MacCool, who figures as a giant in some Irish fables, Finnegan is famously (and relatively legibly) described as a giant in the Wake's first chapter, in any case written to comply with Harriet Shaw Weaver's request for a "set-piece" on the giant's grave she'd visited in Scotland [Ellmann 581].

Of course "a man that means a mountain" would be almost by definition a giant. And these first two attributes of HCE in Ellmann's list are imbricated nowhere more than in II.3. When, on the page following the introduction, the chapter turns to an actual presentation of HCE at the bar (where he will remain, essentially, throughout the chapter, at once the raconteur and principal of the stories he relates), the first thing we learn of him is that he is "that host of a bottlefilled, the bulkily hulkwright" [310.26], and that he is "the Patagoreyan, chieftain of chokanchuckers and his moyety joyant" [310.32]. "Patagoryean," notes McHugh, evokes the legendary giants of Patagonia. Joyce's principal source for this notion is almost certainly Vico, who repeatedly [NS secs. 170, 338, 369, 449, 708] adverts to the Patagonian as a contemporary, still unregenerate version of the ancient Cyclopes who, as our discussion of Vichian marriage has just reminded, roamed the Earth in the inception of history. But this brings us to our other genealogical strand.

Cyclopes figure prominently in another history famously seminal for Joyce: the *Odyssey*. In fact readers of *Ulysses* are likely to recall that this is not the first time that the author of *Finnegans Wake* has set a giant at the foundation of the state, or at the bar. Michael Cusack, the fiercely nationalist Citizen of *Ulysses*, presides over a chapter whose muse, like II.3's, is barroom gossip and anecdote. In his physical description [U 243] he too, becomes conflated with the mountain on which the Cyclops of Homer was to be found. This particular collapse of character and setting probably derives from the most well-known template for *Ulysses*, in this case Homer's own first presentation of the Cyclops. Butler translates it thus:

He was a horrid creature, not like a man at all, but resembling rather some crag that stands out boldly against the sky on top of a high mountain.²

But Lamb, whose *Odyssey* Joyce knew first, gives a formulation more in accord with Joyce's conrescence and with Cusack's psychology.

He looked more like a mountain crag than a man, and to his brutal body he had a brutish mind answerable.³

This psychology might well detain us for a moment. It is, recall – and not least in

² p. 105 Butler, Samuel, trans. *The Odyssey*. West Valley City, UT: Waking Lion Press, 2006

³ p. 5 Lamb, Charles. *The Adventures of Ulysses*. Boston: Ginn and Co., 1892.

its implicit conflation with the somatic – the psychology of Vico’s Cyclopes as well, who, in consequence of the late and crucial flood, we in fact first discern on the mountains. Although, as we will see, II.3 will in no small measure develop the Homeric parallels which begin to imply themselves in our textual genealogy of giants, it of course makes as much or more hay out of the Vichian implications. Vico also notes, recall, that

In Strabo [13.1.25] there is a golden passage of Plato [L.3.677-684] saying that, after the local Ogygian and Deucalionian floods, men dwelt in caves in the mountains; and he identifies these first men with the cyclopes, in whom elsewhere [in the same passage] he recognizes the first family fathers of the world. [NS 296]

The Cyclops, thus, is prominent in two of Joyce’s chief source-texts; and in each of these is identified (in Homer almost literally) with a mountain.

Given his sources and his own earlier writings, it’s not surprising that mountain, giant, primordial man and marriage should coalesce in Joyce’s mind, nor that II.3 should give evidence of their coalescence. We have not yet exhausted, however, the antecedents that overdetermine the choice of this metaphor.

In fact Ellmann’s biography notes not only the conflation of the mountain with HCE but, in the same textual vicinity, the conflation of the mountain with the Wake itself:

‘Then what is the title of it?’ asked Suter. This time Joyce was less candid: ‘I don’t know. It is like a mountain that I tunnel into from every direction, but I don’t know what I will find’ [Ellmann 543].

This, recall, is not Joyce's only use of the metaphor in this context.

I am boring through a mountain from two sides. The question is, how to meet in the middle [Givens, cited SMFW 67].

Our investigations of structure thus far imply the author was indeed able to answer his own question. The full extent of the answer will only become clear eventually. We can already see, however, that among the things that II.3 accomplishes in its introduction is in a sense a signal conflation of form and content. Textual genealogy suggests that in Joyce's mind both the text as a whole – and in a particularly structural sense, as suggested by the citation above – and its chief character were assimilable to a single metaphor. In fact the text at this point as it were steps back to survey itself from a distance and discerns the overall shape of its career and its protagonists in “the height of his life from a bride's eye stammpunct” or a bird's-eye standpoint.

Of course there's more than one sense to the word “bird.” ALP is occasionally represented as the Hen; and as she will be the bride, context obviously invokes her. But the idiom also suggests a retreat from an object of scrutiny sufficient to allow its grosser outlines to emerge. The amalgamating metaphors thus suggest what is in fact the case: that in the theme of marriage Joyce found the structural middle he sought.

Whether at this point the “bride's eye stammpunct” derives from our situation on the mountain itself or is itself the “stammpunct” from which we can discern its shape, the mountain also lets us recognize that the coincidence of marriage and structural climax is strongly anticipated by the text itself, in its well-known “*Mime of Mick, Nick and the Maggies*” [219.19] which opens II.1 (and thus Book II itself) and seems to look forward

Till the summit scenes of climbacks castastrophear, *The Bearded Mountain* (Polymop Baretherootsch), and *The River Romps to Nursery* (Maidykins in Undiform).” The whole thugogmagog ... to be wound up for an afterenactment by a Magnificent Transformation Scene showing the Radium Wedding of Neid and Moorning and the Dawn of Peace, Pure, Perfect and Perpetual, Waking the Weary of the World [222.11].

Though not all of its import is pellucid as yet, this language, as we can see, is rather precisely evocative of the opening of II.3. The return of the mountain we recognize clearly enough (though why precisely he’s bearded will only become clear eventually). Further: if we recall that in II.3’s opening paragraph “a man that means a mountain barring his distance wades a lymph that plays,” we know why “*The River Romps*” here, though this is easier to see after McHugh has reminded us that *lympa* is Latin for “clear water.” Indeed, ALP’s water in II.3 is still clear; the Liffey is a bride, young and pure, still in the Wicklow Mountains and free of the load she will bear and at last disgorge into Dublin Bay.

There are other signal anticipations. As II.1 predicts ALP will indeed come in II.3 “*to Nursery*”, though this becomes clearer with the text’s retrospections of itself. And as predicted the riverrine ALP is not just a virginal bride but “Maidykins in Undiform;” that is, kin to the groom and in more perhaps than a prospective sense.

But for the moment the most important aspect of II.1’s passage is its clear evocation of “the Radium Wedding” as the site of the Wake’s “summit scenes” or “climbacks,” or more precisely the “climbacks catastrophear.”

This last formula economically anticipates two confluations. The juxtaposition of

“climbacks” and “phear” is mirrored in II.3’s introductory juxtaposition of “the height of his life” and “the fright of his light.” But as we already suspect, a “catastrophear” – not just fright but catastrophe in the literal or literary sense of a fall – will indeed characterize the “climbacks” of the wedding while anticipating the “nadir” of the second anecdote. II.1’s formula thus announces the structural importance of both of II.3’s anecdotes and their mutual imbrication

In any case the wedding is clearly central, “epicentral,” or both. And when we recall the genetic situation, this should not surprise us. As we know, Joyce’s six early sketches were long intended to be what to a great extent they remain: the beginning, middle and end of *Finnegans Wake*. The two first sketches to be completed found their places next to one another in the central Book II. The first to be written, “Roderick O’Connor,” became as we’ve seen the end of II.3, with a bibulous HCE collapsing into everyone else’s cups. But this is immediately ensued by the final version of the second sketch composed: the honeymoon of Tristan and Isolde – early versions of HCE and ALP – that opens II.4, Book II’s smaller coda to the three more substantial chapters that precede it.

It begins to be clear that Beckett’s authorially sanctioned disposition of the *Wake*’s largest textual units, while rough in its outlines, is apt.

Part I. is a mass of past shadow, corresponding therefore to Vico’s first human institution, Religion, or to his theocratic age, or simply to an abstraction – Birth. Part 2 is the lovegame of the children, corresponding to the second institution, Marriage, or to the heroic age, or to an abstraction – Maturity. Part. 3. is passed in sleep, corresponding to the third institution, Burial, or to the Human age, or to an abstraction – Corruption. ... The consciousness that there is a great

deal of the unborn infant in the lifeless octogenarian, and a great deal of both in the man at the apogee of his life's curve, removes all the stiff interexclusiveness that is often the danger in neat construction.⁴

Beckett's observation – again, likely derived from and certainly vetted by Joyce himself – that Book II concerns itself with marriage has for some reason been largely ignored; yet it is, aside from the questions of the author's own sanction or genetics, on reflection self-evidently (that is, textually) true. Further, the critical notion that parts I and III in some way converge on II – which our researches thus far have tended to confirm – might as well start with Beckett's formulation here, which suggests that the beginning and end – and not just of the *Wake* itself but of the time of its protagonist – will conflate in the middle.

We will search, incidentally, without success for any substantial presentation of “the unborn infant” in II.3; if that particular manifestation of time's (and one principal's) beginning has a place in the middle of Book II it must be elsewhere. But we cannot help but be struck by the suggestion that Book II is “man at the apogee of his life's curve.” Beckett, or “perhelps the prop of a prompt” of a kibitzing author, has in mind something very like HCE's “height of his life from a bride's eye stammpunct,” a sort of “apogee” or “climbacks.”

At this point we've taken stock of some of the most helpful features of II.3's introduction of its own place and themes. But now the anecdotes must introduce themselves as it were by name – or Name – situating themselves, as strangers must, by

⁴ p. 7 Beckett, Samuel. "Dante ... Bruno. Vico ... Joyce" in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification For Incamination Of Work In Progress*, Samuel Beckett et al, New York: New Directions, 1939

indices of kinship or provenance.

Recall that our extended examination of the motif of the Word or Name brought us at last again to II.3, when “exiled” content returned to inhabit form in the chapter’s second and genetically final thunder, which as we’ll see forms the “climax” of the climactic wedding and begins the segue to the second anecdote. This was effected in part by this thunder’s unusually faithful mimesis of Vico’s Word of the Father: “Pappappappapa.” It’s apt, then, that the two anecdotes which make up the bulk of II.3 are, as is well-known, simply Joyce’s appropriations of the words of his father John.

* * *

The Norwegian Captain

Finnegans Wake is a frenzy of eclecticism. It does not, of course, draw from every myth, philosophical system, dime-store novel and advertisement in history, it only seems to do so through a relentless citation which blends the canonical with the perversely obscure. But whatever the importance of Vico, or Bruno, or Blake or Milton or the Egyptian Book of the Dead or the Bible, Joyce has deliberately structured his edifice so that its stresses converge, at least in large part, on a keystone mined from a quarry not merely obscure but almost utterly private. John Joyce’s personal fund of anecdotes is simply not a part of our general heritage.

That may change. But whether it does or not, it is into the received words of his biographical father that all of Joyce’s text, at this point in our reading, seems to devolve.

John Joyce was of course a raconteur *par excellence*, and in the wake of his son’s fame seems almost to flirt with the status of *litterateur* in his own right; see for

instance Jackson and Costello's *John Stanislaus Joyce* (St. Martin's Press 1997). Possessed of a retentive and eloquent memory, he was also an extrovert, a drunk and an Irishman. The resulting verbal torrent no doubt fell about Joyce's ears from infancy; but of the many stories we may surmise he took from his father two, it seems – partly on biographical evidence and partly on the evidence of the *Wake* itself – made a particular impression.

One of them made such an impression that it's nearly the first thing readers of Ellmann's biography learn about James Joyce himself, recounted as it is on the page describing his birth.

[A] hunchbacked Norwegian captain ... ordered a suit from a Dublin tailor, H. H. Kerse of 34 Upper Sackville Street. The finished suit did not fit him, and the captain berated the tailor for being unable to sew, whereupon the irate tailor denounced him for being impossible to fit. The subject was not promising, but it became, by the time John Joyce had retold it, wonderful farce, and it is one of the parables of native and outlander, humorous but full of acrid repartee, which found their way into *Finnegans Wake*. If that book ever reached his father in the afterworld, James Joyce once said, John Joyce's comment would be, 'Well, he can't tell that story as I used to and that's one sure five!'

[Ellman 23]

The other story was one with which Joyce seemed particularly preoccupied. Ellmann describes Joyce's retelling of it to Ottocaro Weiss as a "favorite war story."

He then told his father's story of Buckley and the Russian General,

which was to be mentioned in *Ulysses* and to wind in and out of *Finnegans Wake*. Buckley, he explained, was an Irish soldier in the Crimean War who drew a bead on a Russian general, but when he observed his splendid epaulettes and decorations, he could not bring himself to shoot. After a moment, alive to his duty, he raised his rifle again, but just then the general let down his pants to defecate. The sight of his enemy in so helpless and human a plight was too much for Buckley, who again lowered his gun. But when the general prepared to finish the operation with a piece of grassy turf, Buckley lost all respect for him and fired. ... Joyce told the story to other friends, convinced that it was in some way archetypal [Ellman 398].

The story does in fact “wind in and out of *Finnegans Wake*,” but for the most part only in brief, cryptic allusions. It is only in II.3 that Joyce chose to present fully his version of the story which he found “in some way archetypal.”

But archetypal of what? Apparently there was some sense of urgent import, but that this was not entirely clear even to Joyce himself is indicated by the footnote Ellman addends.

Joyce had some difficulty working the story into *Finnegans Wake*, and in Paris said to Samuel Beckett, ‘If somebody could tell me what to do, I would do it.’ He then narrated the story of Buckley; when he came to the piece of turf, Beckett remarked, ‘Another insult to Ireland.’ This was the hint Joyce needed; it enabled him to nationalize the story fully, and in *Finnegans Wake* (353) he uses Beckett’s words [Ellmann 398n.].

To these we will eventually come, as they occur in the chapter with which we are now concerned. We may already note, however, some resonance with one of the themes we've established. "As early as 1920," Ellmann concludes, "Joyce saw Buckley in his own role of the ordinary Irishman in combat with imperial authority." Joyce was never what one might call a jingoistic nationalist. We have seen, however, that Empire and its associations preoccupy the Wake at certain points, and the consequences of these preoccupations and their pertinence to Buckley will become clear.

That the words of his father were precisely central for Joyce has been recognized for some time. "His expressions," writes Ellmann "echo in James's books. He appeared in them more centrally, in fact, than anyone except their author" [Ellmann 22]. Louis Gillet situates John Joyce with the same term:

[T]he 'peculiar rapport' between *pere* and *fils* was 'the central factor in Joyce's life, the basis, the axis of his work.'⁵

A grasp of the larger structural situation of *Finnegans Wake* reveals that this rapport – at least insofar as it is based on the word – is in fact almost literally the axis (or more properly perhaps the two poles of an axis) at one center of this work in particular. These two stories – these two words of and perhaps for his father – apparently contained elements sufficiently salient to Joyce's imagination that they form, between them, the foci of each of the Wake's large architectonic gestures, the thunders and the dialogues.

⁵ Quoted on p. 305 Jackson, John Wyse and Costello, Peter. *John Stanislaus Joyce*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

It is, perhaps, needless to say that the originals sustain some ornament in transcription. Appropriately and no doubt deliberately, II.3 lets father HCE speak John's words. But the son does the writing, repeating "in his secondmouth language as many of the bigtimer's verbaten words which he could balbly call to memory" [37.14]. This "secondmouth language" (which, like Shem's, will eventually in its way undo the father from whose mouth first words were taken first) is simply the confounding and equivocating music of the Wake. And the equivocation which determines the transcription of the first anecdote's sailor and tailor consists of stuffing the word "suit" – naturally enough prominent in the original – with collateral content.

Whether or not some fuller version of the original anecdote than we know itself toyed with this word, or whether this tale appealed to Joyce's sense of the "archetypal" *via* his own paranomasia, in the Wake the pun implicit in "suit" means the Captain will be outfitted as a groom. This device expands the tale until it includes – indeed until its principal action becomes – the sailor's successful wooing and wedding of the tailor's daughter who, being the commodity in which the Captain is at last chiefly interested, tends to become conflated with the purchased suit as well. The marriage, however, especially when received with the structurally salient echoes which we will investigate, also becomes the most explicit and developed presentation of the sin of which HCE has long been supposed guilty. It is in fact the Wake's sin in the Garden, the occasion for the Fall which from the first the context of the thunder forwarded as one of its chief contents. (The Fall *qua* punishment comes in the second anecdote, where in some ways Joyce has less work to do; in his way Buckley already reminds that the wages of sin is death.)

These elements are condensed into one of the anecdote's synopses of itself, presented as a combination of the sort of essay the young Joyce would have composed for the Jesuits and a weather forecast.

Am. Dg.

Welter focussed. ...

As our revelant Columnfiller predicted in last mount's chattiry sermon, ... a bygger muster of veiryng precipitation ... umwalloped in an unusuable suite of clouds ... the outlook for tomarry (Streamstress Mandig) beamed brider, his ability good.

What hopends to they?

Giant crash in Aden. Birdflights confirm abbroaching nubtials.

Burial of Lifetenant-Groevener Hachett, R.I.D. Devine's Providence.

Ls. De [324.23]

This hermetic little exercise opens and closes with its version of the invocations – “*Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*” and “*Laus Deo Semper*” – that bracket student work in Jesuit schools. It's aptest self-designation however may be as a “Welter Focussed.” Not only does the exercise focus the welter of the anecdote, the anecdote, as we've seen, is one way to focus the welter of the Wake. HCE's “suite of clouds” is of course “unusuable” because, as in the original, they don't fit. But the suit is part of an “outlook tomarry” precisely the “Streamstress,” at once the river and at least the co-creator of the suit whose prospects “beamed brider” in anticipation of the wedding.

The anecdote as a whole plays variously with this conflation of the nuptial and the sartorial, but our more immediate concern is the curious imbrication of the Fall into the whole affair.

HCE shows up here first as a “bygger muster of veiryng precipitation.” Thus, as often, he's Ibsen's “Masterbuilder” or, in the original Norwegian, *Bygmester*. *Byge* is also Danish “shower” [McHugh]; but its “precipitation” is also precisely the

Masterbuilder's fall, from the recently completed tower of the Ibsen play. Thus the question "What happens to them?" in anticipating its own answer anticipates the end of hope for HCE. As "bygger muster" reminds, HCE may be, as a "man that means a mountain" a big master (as well as German *Muster*, "paragon" or "pattern;" McHugh). But he's doomed. Ibsen's fall or "precipitation" becomes, in a fusion of Vico and Genesis, the Fall of the primordial giant in the Garden or a "Giant crash in Aden."

The "Birdflights" which "confirm" HCE's "approaching nuptials" also confirm his death and the "Burial of Lieutenant-Groevener Hatchett, R.I.D.," whose faintly martial title and "suite of clouds" anticipate the General and his uniform of the second anecdote. Marriage might be the "height of his life," but HCE's life-tenancy is over. Of course as "Divine's Providence" this is the death that follows the Fall in "Aden;" but it does seem some unforgiving human agency may also wish to be "R.I.D." of HCE.

Making marriage the "Fall of Man" or even his formal execution fits with a certain roistering bar-room humour proper to the venue of the anecdote. But there are other reasons for the equation. These will begin to be apparent relatively soon, but as they eventually have something to do with another complication of the Wake's retelling of the anecdote as signaled by the "burial" of the "Hatchett," we might as well note the development of this last theme as well.

The woman to be wedded is in fact the daughter of the Captain's antagonist, the tailor. But in a faintly anthropological (and eventually, perhaps, Freudian) vein this is supposed to effect a reconciliation between sailor and tailor and thus one instance of the "Dawning of Peace, Pure, Perfect and Perpetual" which was to attend the nuptials forecast in II.1. Thus the betrothal itself is effected by a sort of mediator, perhaps not unlike the third brother McHugh has detected in Joyce's notes (comprised there of a fusion of the sigla for Shem and Shaun). This "beddest friend" of the tailor also

happens to be the “the ship’s husband,” partly because he’s the ship’s chandler and partly, of course, to suggest an identity with the husband-to-be.

In any case the theme is the assimilation of antagonists that Hart discerns as structurally crucial in the dialogues. It emerges most clearly when, at a crucial point in the courtship, the ship’s husband calls the feuding sailor and the tailor over and more or less enforces their reconciliation.

Comither ...elderman adaptive of Capel Ysnod ... till I’ve fined you a
falter-in-law, to become your son-to-be, gentlemen’s tealer,
generalman seelord ... jonjemsuns both ... let laid pacts be betving ye
... by my main makeshift ... one fisk and one flesk ... [325.13]

The abundant confluences that constitute his address seem to render his mediation supererogatory. “Jonjemsuns” both, the two find themselves named singly in one of the Wake’s many plays on the whiskey distillers John Jameson and Sons, which James Joyce, John’s son, could not resist. The nonce-word also conflates Shem and Shaun, but immediately precipitates them into some vertiginous father-son relationship of their own, as re-emphasized by the fact that the “falter-in-law” (the sins of this father seldom go unremarked) is, confusingly, himself the “son-to-be.” Their consubstantiality-in-kinship is in any case effected by the adumbrated peace or “pacts” between them, and they are “one fisk and one flesk,” the allusion to Genesis 2:24 duly citing that the amalgamation will be effected by some primordial marriage. Though the precise moment of legal union *per se* is obscure, we discern it for example in the following description of the bride’s arrival.

Her youngfree yoke stilling his wandercursus, jilt the spin of a curl and

jolt the breadth of a buoy. The Annexandrian captive conquest. ...
Him her first lap, her his fast pal, for ditcher for plower, till deltas
twoport. [318.09]

The letter delta, as we will see, is throughout the Wake identified with ALP, whose sigla in Joyce's notes is, like the Greek letter, simply an equilateral triangle. That there are here apparently two deltas, and that they are apparently doors, will eventually prove of interest. More useful for the moment though is that in "for ditcher for plower, till deltas twoport," we have some indication of the vows by which Anna as a "youngfree ... curl" puts her "yoke" on her "buoy," rendering him an "Annexandrian captive conquest." HCE has been "Cawcaught. Coocaged" [329.13]. (The raven/dove motif is occasioned in part by the Captain's sometime assimilation to Noah.)

Readers of Ellmann are likely to recognize some autobiographical gestures when they

[S]ee the Bolche your pictures motion and Kitzy Kleinsuessmein
eloping for that holm in Finn's Hotel Fiord, Nova Norening. [330.23]

In the junction of the parents, incidentally, we will in fact eventually "see ... your pictures motion." For the moment, though, we see James and Nora themselves. Their own union, of course, was not sanctioned by church or state for some years. But there's a reference to more than their elopement here. Nora worked, when they met, at Finn's Hotel in Dublin, a fact also celebrated by the transmutation of Norwegian *forening*, "union" [McHugh], to "Norening."

Despite the build-up, both from within and without the chapter, the presentation of

the wedding itself is rather muted. Whether this reflects Joyce's leeriness of church-state sanction or the audience's desire to get to the good stuff, as this climactic anecdote moves toward its own climax it stresses less the wedding than the activity and issue that ensue.

... [T]hey pulled down the kuddle and they made fray and if they don't look homey, well, that Dook can eye Mae.

He goat a berth. And she cot a manege [330.25].

If the young couple's *menage a deux* it won't be for long. For the though the marriage might tend toward HCE's death, it also produces a "berth."

Knock knock. War's where! Which war? The twwinns. ... The kilder massed, one then and unhindred ... [330.30]

Duly taking account of the means of production, the chapter tends to heat up as it approaches its conclusion in the second thunder, whose concluding gesture is anticipated on the page that precedes it.

But tellusit allasif wellasits end. And the lunger it takes the swooner they tumble two. He knows he's just thrilling and she's sure she'd squeam. The threelegged man and the tulippied dewydress. Ludd hillmythey, we're brimming to hear! The durst he did and the first she ever? Peganeen Bushe, this isn't the polkar, catch as you cancan when high land fling! And you Tim Tommy Melooney, I'll tettle your barents if you stick that pigpin upinto meh! [331.06]

As is by now perhaps sufficiently evident, we are in two senses approaching the “climax” of the entire anecdote itself. And this obliges us to construe the Wake’s structurally central seventh thunder in the light of this new context.

Snip snap snooty. Noo err historyend goody. Of a lil trip trap and a big treeskooner for he put off the ketyl and they made three (for fie!) and if hec don’t love alpy then lad you annoy me. For hanigen with hunigen still haunt ahunt to finnd their hinnigen where Pappappappar-rassannuaragheallachnatullaghmonganmacmacmacwhackfallther-debblenonthedubblandaddydoodled ... [332.01].

This is the end of “history” in various senses. Perhaps there’s some sense of the closure of a Vichian cycle between the chapter’s first and final thunders, though we can also detect the beginning of a “Noo” era that starts with the same old “err,” the Fall. Also, as we’ll see more clearly later, the Wake’s opposing temporal vectors seem at some level to meet in II.3 which is thus partly an ending in media res. As forecast in the “Welter focussed” the wedding will end or at least result in HCE’s death in the anecdote to follow, though it’s already signaled here in a way we’ll investigate shortly. Thus this is the end not just of “history” but, for HCE, of his story.

But insofar as this is the end of his story, it’s also simply the end of the first anecdote. And one of the first things this summary and concluding formula wishes to convey is that as a result of the wedding the couple have indeed “made three:” Shem, Shaun and Issy.

But the act through which the children are “made” is duly cited as well. We’ve already seen that this central thunder stages a return of “exiled” content to form, in

part by opening with the parodied Name of the Vichian Father. This thunder's first "terms," however, do not exhaust its claims to paternity. Symmetrically, these are echoed again in its last: "daddydoodled," in which we detect either a cock-like crow or, perhaps, simply an accusation or, more likely, both. In any case the narrator – with "if hec don't love alpy then lad you annoy me" – nearly dares us to ignore what the father has in fact done here.

Context re-emphasizes the theme. The ensuing paragraph remarks not simply the relevance of "testies" [332.12] but "all the weight of that mons on his little ribbeunuch" [332.19], in which we recognize once more the man that means a "mons" (though if the "mons" is likewise feminine anatomy its harder to determine who's on top of the mountain) and the woman that means a river (though as "ribbeunuch" she's also the part that was taken from the man in the Garden).

These hints, as well as the general thrust of the anecdote, help explain why Campbell and Robinson addend to this thunder one of their characteristically illuminating but utterly unexplained footnotes: "Thunderclap at the moment of intercourse" [SK 213]. Though their own exegesis of the text-proper in this vicinity does not stress the sexual motif particularly, their percipience may have been facilitated in part by the way in which II.3's pair of doubled thunders help each other toward legibility. And this brings us to the first of the chapter's thunders which interrupts the anecdote shortly after it's commenced.

The way in which this interruption fits into the narrative flow is hard to determine. Insofar as it's an interruption, perhaps it simply doesn't fit. Campbell and Robinson here detect the teller excusing himself for the commode; and this, as we will eventually see but may already suspect, makes some sense in a chapter that highlights the thunder. But both the content and the context of II.3's first thunder also indicate that one of its chief functions is to announce the culmination of the thunder theme and

its particular inflection in II.3. And in doing this it anticipates the second thunder in at least two respects.

First, it stages the Fall; a consequence, perhaps, of the inept masterbuilder of the outhouse having

removed the planks they were wanted, boob.

Bump!

Bothallchoractorschumminaroundgansumminarumdrumstrumina-
humptadumpwaultopoofooloodderamaunsturnup!

-- Did do a dive, aped one.

-- Propellopalombarouter, based two.

-- Rutsch is for rutterman ramping his roe, seed three. Where the
muddies scrimm ball. Bimbim bimbim. And the maidies scream all.
Himhim himhim.

And forthemore let legend go lore of it that mortar scene so cwympty
dwympty what a dustydust it razed arboriginally but, luck's leap to the
lad at the top of the ladder, so sartor's risorted why the sinner the
badder! Ho ho ho hoch! La la la lach! Hillary rillary gibbous grist to
our millery! A pushpull, qq: quiescence, pp: with extravent intervolve
coupling. [314.05]

The resulting crash is apparently audible to the customers, who predictably have something to say about it.

The missing planks, the "Bump!" and "dive," along with the humpty-dumpty theme that marks the thunder both in the word itself and its context, make the Fall evident enough. And once again it's Biblical; both the Tree and the mortal sin proper to the

Garden may be detected in “that mortar scene so cwympty dwympty what a dustydust it razed arboriginally.” Taken with the ensuing anecdote-proper, thus, II.3’s first thunder anticipates both in itself and its context the “Giant crash in Aden.”

But the context of II.3’s first thunder also sets up in advance the imbrication of this fall with marriage or more precisely the activity that results. Hearing this thunder, the customers recognize the “rutterman ramping his roe, seed three.” “Roe,” McHugh reminds, is slang for semen, which tends to explain not just the ensuing “seed” but what the “rutterman” is doing, in case “rut” isn’t helpful enough. It’s possible, of course, that HCE is merely taking advantage of his brief seclusion to gratify himself, but if so he’s already involved, apparently, in the “intervolve coupling” which will produce at last all of the characters of the book, telescoping parents and progeny into what this thunder’s opening calls “Bothallchoractors.”

That this thunder sounds, however, before the ensuing textual material has had a chance to make clear the wedding, bedding and breeding that ensues, tends to turn it into an adumbration of a situation realized, as Campbell and Robinson suggest, by the thunder which brings the anecdote to a close with its “climax.” But the best reason for construing the thunder as Campbell and Robinson do – though given their methods we will never know to what degree this influenced their thinking – is simply Joycean precedent. As Joyce’s previous writing suggests, they’re not over-reading at all.

Though this has not to my knowledge been observed, Joyce strikingly (and in retrospect, again, obviously) anticipates the Wakean thunder – in its conspicuous formal excess as well as in its association with coition and paternity – in *Ulysses*. It seems in fact that the production of some extraordinarily hyper-pituitary Word in a Vichian vein was already in Joyce’s mind when he wrote one of the most important scenes in what must remain one of his most powerful adumbrations of Wakean style: *Nighttown*.

Ulysses contains its own most explicit “climax” in what, given its authorial dubbing, might be called its own Book of the Dark, which is in some senses – think for example of the import and context of Stephen’s “*Nothung!*” or the chapter’s presentation of the long-deferred meeting of “father” and “son” – the climax of the book as a whole.

It’s certainly the climax of style. When Boylan and Molly cuckold Bloom in *Nighttown*, their passion is articulated, particularly by “Blazes,” in what is both in context and the word itself the strongest anticipation of a Vichian thunder anywhere in Joyce’s work.

BOYLAN’S VOICE

(sweetly, hoarsely, in the pit of his stomach) Ah! Godblazegrukbruk-
archkhrasht!

MARION’S VOICE

(hoarsely, sweetly, rising to her throat) O! Weeshwashtkissinapoo-
isthnapoohuck? [U 462]

As in *Vico* and the *Wake*, one thunder answers another. They are doubled, paired. Or as we might say here, coupled.

This coupling is the act for which the witnessing Bloom provides his chorus:

BLOOM

(his eyes wildly dilated, clasps himself) Show! Hide! Show! Plough
her! More! Shoot! [U 462]

Bloom's voyeurism and the terms – appropriately evocative of vision – in which he expresses it will become germane to our explication of *Finnegans Wake* in time. For our immediate purposes though his presence has other purport, as we'll see.

Though criticism has long linked Vico and the Wake, in recent years it has begun to discern his influence in *Ulysses* as well. Whether it conditions the author's intentions here is perhaps difficult to say; but if not, the coincidence is striking. For Boylan's "Godblazebrukbrukarchkrasht!", uttered precisely at the climax of (conspicuously promiscuous and lawless) intercourse, is, it seems, precisely what its first and last terms indicate: the "arch crash" of the "God blaze" of Vico's Father.

And again, just as in II.3's scenario and of course the Vichian original, a rather temporal paternity is involved. As *Nighttown's* dominatrix Bella Cohen (in her transmogrification to Bello) points out to a simpering and aroused Bloom, the union of blazes and Molly will result in issue.

BELLO

(sarcastically) I wouldn't hurt your feelings for the world but there's a man of brawn in possession there. The tables are turned, my gay young fellow! He is something like a fullgrown outdoor man. ... He shot his bolt, I can tell you! ... Wait for nine months, my lad! Holy ginger, it's kicking and coughing up and down in her guts already! ... *(he spits in contempt)* Spittoon! [U 441]

This strange prediction of Molly's third child enters into its own complex play of *alma pater* and comes to one sort of climax in Bloom's simultaneous vision of his dead son Rudy and his unconscious charge Stephen at chapter's end.

Though Molly's echo concerns us less, we might observe that "Weeshwashtkissina-

pooisthnapoohuck,” in addition to being obliquely evocative of the end of the Wake’s opening thunder (“-toohoohoordenenthurnuk”), evinces some odd mixture of the hygienic and the cloacally salacious in “wash” and “kissinapoo.” The former reminds that she has just stepped from the bath; the latter seems to anticipate her shrewd imagination of Bloom’s coprophagous desires at book’s end.

But Boylan’s “word” concerns us more for the moment. And before we leave it we must note another aspect of its performance. In the climax of his act of paternity, this father-to-be addends *his own name* with almost Luciferian hubris to the Name of the Father in an act which would merely be identification if the proximity of the unfortunate (or fortunate, depending on his obviously equivocal tastes) Bloom did not remind that it is also, pointedly, an act of usurpation. At best, the enjambment effected by the first terms of this “arch crash” renders the Father and the father precisely consubstantial. At devilish worst, though, God’s last name itself becomes Boylan’s first. For the opening “Godblaze” does not simply evoke the lightning proper to the the thunder of the “arch crash.” Like “Pa! Pa!” it signs the Name of the father twice. For Boylan’s first name, of course, is Blazes.

What a baroque little exercise. How closely do we have to read Joyce to read him well? We cannot circumvent the answer: very closely. If these sorts of preposterous stylistic crotchets and asides may be dismissed in the earlier writings as self-indulgent ornamentation (though I think a very great deal is lost if they are), by the time we get to the Wake they increasingly reveal themselves as of the essence, and at the level of content as well as style.

In fact we’ve adverted to *Nighttown* here not simply to adduce further support for Campell and Robinson’s construction, but because a great deal of what Joyce has to tell us will depend on our detection of the strange usurpation proper to the brief space of the Wake’s structurally crucial seventh thunder and in which, as Bello might put it,

“the tables are turned.” In fact this cuckoldry will prove in a sense a part of the Wake’s gradually emerging “trick” whose fuller explication must wait. But first, our gradual accumulation of understanding brings us now to I.1 where, as we would suspect, the Wake’s overture unmistakably – and as formal composition would demand – anticipates II.3’s crescendo.

* * *

Wedding Announcements

One of the principle purposes of the end of I.1 is to effect the transition from what is effectively the Wake’s “overture” to the beginning of the “story proper” in I.2. In so doing it effects the transition of the reader’s concern from Finnegan – that vaguer, more gigantic mythic prototype who despite his displacement tends in various ways to emerge in pentimento within the outlines of his successor – to HCE, his origins, and (chiefly) the origins of his name.

This transition is effected by Finnegan’s famous wake or more properly by its “watchers” – often construed as versions of Ireland’s Four Master Annalists – who stand around the corpse and, in a *precis* of developments since his departure, try to dissuade him from waking from the dead like the Finnegan of song to indignantly resume his pre-eminent position. But this he threatens to do in terms which from the first anticipate not just the central marriage theme but its link with mortality.

His irate questions form in fact our introduction to his wake *per se*, which begins immediately they are concluded.

Have you whines for my wedding, did you bring bride and bedding,
will you whoop for my deading is a? Wake? *Usqueadbaugham!*

Anam muck and dhoul! Did ye drink me doornail? [24.12]

Finnegan, as we see, asserts his paradoxical and not entirely welcome claims on life precisely by reaching – with what we now recognize is consummate aptness – for “the height of his life from a bride’s eye stamppunct.” Indeed according to these first terms of I.1’s wake vignette this is his chief concern, even unto the climactic “bedding” of the bride, which apparently becomes as crucial as the whiskey of the original ballad – the *uisce baugh* or “water of life” – in promising to convert Finnegan’s “deading” to living, his wake to (though there seems to be some question here) “a? Wake?”. (We note, too, a suspended sentence of the type whose “character” we’ve had to examine before; but we note it, for the moment, in passing.)

Immediately after these somewhat rhetorical questions the “watchers” placate the waking giant:

Now be aisy, good Mr Finnimore, sir. And take your laysure like a god
on pension and don’t be walking abroad [24.16]

They continue with a description of Dublin since his death and of the doings of all of the principals of the book: the twins, their sister Issy, the servants, the customers and various of the supporting cast.

But as though to emphasize the importance of the theme, they conclude in the very terms with which Finnegan began: his bride and her wedding. And there are reasons to suspect that the wedding will not come off as Finnegan might hope.

The sternwheel’s crawling strong. I seen your missus in the hall. Like
the queenoveire. ... Boald Tib does be yawning and smirking cat’s

hours on the Pollockses's woolly round tabouretcushion watching her sewing a dream together, the tailor's daughter, stitch to her last. ... She was flirtsome then and she's fluttersome yet. ... She's seeking her way, a chickle a chuckle, in and out of their serial story, *Les Loves of Selskar et Pervenche*, freely adapted to *The Novvergin's Viv* [27.36-28.27]

This description of Finnegans's widow contains so far as I can tell the Wake's most unequivocal reference to the tailor's daughter outside of II.3. That it is in fact she who, despite the goings and the comings of the men, is "sewing the dream together" is, of course, given the Wake's oneiric milieu, telling, though how telling we have yet to learn. In any case she certainly seems to be some narrative constant, "seeking her way ... in and out of their serial story, *Les Loves of Selskar et Pervenche*, freely adapted to *The Novvergin's Viv*." But it's the change implicit in this (in)constancy which might alarm the departed.

Not all of what's going on is clear. Selskar, as McHugh informs, was the name of the son of Michael Gunn, the manager of The Gaiety Theatre in Dublin. What his pertinence might be I don't know. Selskar may be a type of cuckoldry or bastardy; in any case Michael returns occasionally, notably as "Gun the farther." *Pervenche* is French for periwinkle [McHugh]. This is slightly more helpful in so far as these blue flowers are associated both by Bloom and his author with their respective brides.

But this much *is* clear. There might well be, in the transition of Finnegans's widow, "less" love between Selskar and his bride. She has, after all, all-too "freely adapted to *The Novvergin's Viv*." We do not, at this point, require McHugh's assistance to read "Norwegian" in "*Novvergin*." He does however rather close the case for us when he informs that *viv* is Danish "wife." The tailor's daughter, it seems, is a new bride – a new virgin, "maid" for HCE as she is in II.3. The fact that the Watchers introduce her

by remarking that “The sternwheel’s crawling strong” should of course have alerted our suspicions in the first place, but I.1’s conclusion leaves no doubt that the fleet’s in town. HCE, arriving as none other than II.3’s Norwegian Captain, undoes Finnegan’s hopes for reunion with riverine ALP, as “wivey” as she is “wavy.”

Her hair’s as brown as it ever was. And wivvy and wavy. Repose you now! Finn no more!

For, be that samesake sibsubstitute of a hooky salmon, there’s already a big rody ram lad at random on the premises ... litting flop a deadlop (aloose!) to lee but lifting a bennbranch a yardalong (ivoeh!) on the breezy side (for showm!) ... Humme the Cheapner, Esc, overseen as we thought him, yet a worthy of the naym, came ... one tide on another, with a bumrush in a hull of a wherry, the twin turbane dhow, *The Bey for Dybbling*, this archipelago’s first visiting schooner, ... our old offender was humile, commune and ensectuous from his nature, which you may gauge after the bynames was put under him, in lashons of languages, (honnein suit and praisers be!) and ... he is ee and no counter he who will be ultimendly respunchable for the hubbub caused in Edenborough [28.32-29.35]

Finnegan too may have been a sinning father, but his love and his life are gone: “Finn no more!” As the reference to the triumph of the sternwheel has anticipated, HCE sails in to Dublin Bay – coming in on the “tide” to “*The Bey*” of “*Dybbling*” – hoisting and dropping sails to the “lee” and “breezy side” in “this archipelago’s first visiting schooner.” The tailor’s daughter will be “*The Novverin’s Viv*,” the wife of the Norwegian, though the wedding’s “ensectuous ... nature” makes her again the

“sowterkin” implicit in II.3’s conflation of sailor and tailor, perhaps recalled again here in the adversion to HCE’s “bynames” which “suit” him.

Most crucially though, HCE’s own marriage is, already, an original sin against some prior Father, here a jealous god. In fact marriage is the sin for which HCE too will eventually take the Fall. He is, after all, in the chapter’s last words “ultimendly respunchable for the **hubbub** caused in **Edenborough**.”

The Wake’s first chapter thus introduces HCE almost entirely in a guise and situation which will simply not make any sense until we have read II.3. Or, taken from the other “stammunct:” II.3 stages the full development of the scene clearly anticipated in I.1’s crucial conclusion, which is also our transition from Finnegan to the character who will loom largest in the bulk of the Wake. But in precipitating these themes toward the book’s central climax the crucially transitional conclusion of this “overture” effects more.

We can already see the way in which it presents once more the Joycean preoccupation with cuckoldry that framed the scene of the strangely proleptic thunder of *Ulysses*. Of more interest, however, and of more moment in the Wake, is the fact that it once more identifies this usurpation precisely with the identity-confounding usurpation of the name. For in a play on the word “namesake,” HCE, apparently, is in fact Finnegan’s “samesake,” who by an insidious identification predicated on the name supplants an original mythic father in the act of wedding and eventually bedding the primordial bride.

This is already, perhaps, sufficient evidence of a recurring constellation of elements. But as our reading is designed not just to return us to II.3’s climax but to anticipate the ultimate climax of the Wake as a whole, we must doubly anticipate by noting the following complication. HCE is not just a “samesake” but a “samesake sibsubstitute.” He’s not just a substitute for Finnegan; he’s his brother. This suggests

the twins. When we read this with the “pacts” of II.3’s climactic wedding, in which the curiously already-identical “falter-in-law” and “son-to-be” are “jonjemsums both,” the predictable consequence is that the dramas of conflated and supplanted identities which characterize relations between divine and temporal fathers or between fathers and sons will also, for identical reasons and on identical terms, obtain between the brothers. Indeed, as we will eventually see, both their relationship and their dispute are precisely those of a father and his son.

In any case: now that we have taken stock both of some intra-textual and extra-textual anticipations of II.3’s climactic second thunder, there seem to converge on that utterance a theme of usurpation linked both with paternity and the name. The thunder announces itself, by now rather loudly, both as the deed and the word of the father. But does it – like Vico’s name in Boylan’s mouth – suffer any usurpation from within?

In highlighting, as it will, that the utterance of the Father’s name is always already his usurpation, the Wake exploits an ambiguity proper to Vico’s original text. This ambiguity is one of the fulcrums from which the Wake will leverage what will eventually reveal itself as its heresy.

In the Vichian scenario proper, the imagination, at least, of primordial man is that he is suddenly observed by the disapproving father who consequently voices his history-founding disapproval. Primordial man’s immediate echo, however – his appropriation of this word of the father – immediately, if perhaps unintentionally, suggests some conflation of identity. The question whether this process of identification may profitably be construed in psychoanalytic terms need not for the moment detain us. Suffice it to say that this opportunity for confusion, possibly negligible in itself, tends to be increased by the fact that in consequence of the reception of this word the stuttering, primordial giant becomes the first father of gentile history, and thus if only in a temporal sense himself the father *par excellence*.

And indeed his assumption of the mantle of patriarchy immediately ensues, as he begins to rule “with a cyclopean family sovereignty over . . . children and wives.”

Who says “Pa!” in Vico, the Father or the father? Both, of course. Maybe that’s one reason it becomes “Pa! Pa!”

When received into the matrix of the Wake the opportunities for conflation multiply, as the doubling of this doubling that opens II.3’s second thunder in its way suggests. For the moment we may rest with the observation that a similar ambiguity bedevils the name in its Wakean career. But the chief thing to note is what Joyce apparently noted. In uttering the name of the Father, first uttered by the Father himself, the father begins, almost by virtue of this identification with the place from which the signifier issues, to assume not just the name but the place of the Father.

Such a construction, in any case, would help us make more sense of Campbell and Robinson’s reception of the Wake’s seventh and central thunder. For by their reading this Name of the Father, so far from being uttered by some Father registering disapproval of intercourse, is uttered by some father at the *climax of the intercourse itself*.

Our detection of this “trick” in germ has itself been considerably facilitated by reading *Ulysses*, for instance, as though its author actually intended us to pay attention – even when the price seems exorbitant – to the text’s least excusable excesses. Whatever the initial impression of mere onomatopoeia, Boylan’s “thunder” at last evinces – though retrospect is helpful – content apposite to its situation. Heady with recent success, therefore, we will risk a further indulgence of method.

One of our chief exegetical strategies has been almost comically simple-minded. Hypothesizing the *de facto* salience of ends, beginnings and middles, when these can be determined, we’ve been inclined to focus the Wake’s welter in these zones to see if they evince consistent contents. We’ve met with some success; but the strategy could,

admittedly, be carried too far. How large a textual unit is required to render the strategy useful? Does it work, for instance, on sentences, as well as on Books and chapters? Perhaps. But on individual words? Perhaps not. Unless, perhaps, the individual words are very large.

We already discern, for example, that the first and last “terms” of “Pappapparrassannuaragheallachnatullaghmonganmacmacmacwhackfalltherdebbledonthe dubblandaddydoodled” seem to repay study and to announce what is, given the Wake’s Vichian antecedents, finally a rather predictable preoccupation with paternity.

The first thing we note when we press our method is not perhaps particularly surprising. When we observe the center of the word more closely we find not merely, as we’ve noted, the venerable content “fall” but its imbrication precisely with paternity. In other words when we reread

Pappapparrassannuaragheallachnatullaghmonganmacmacmac-
whackfalltherdebbledonthe dubblandaddydoodled,

we find that the “fall” is in fact the “fallther.”

Well of course the Wake’s father is a “fallther.” That’s what he does, essentially from the first page (and the fall of John Joyce’s fortunes has been adduced often enough as a prototype). The detection here though does at least let us see that the Wake’s central and genetically final thunder is at particular pains to get a particular point across. But if we press our method further we learn more, it seems, of the situation in which the “fallther” is involved.

The ensuing cavil may put rather too fine a point on the whole affair, but the results are intriguing. If we actually count the letters – and since they come to exactly one-

hundred not just once but nine times (and one-hundred-and-one in the tenth) they do seem to ask for *some* sort of counting – we find that the name of the “fallther” is not in fact quite in the *precise* middle of the word. When we have enumerated the fiftieth letter we find instead (and should we have been able to predict this?) the name of the son.

More precisely we find ourselves between two of its three immediately contiguous instances. The repetition suggests it’s rather important we discern it, just as “Pappappappapa” seems to want to keep it up until the name of the father can’t really be missed. The son is admittedly a little less insistent, though it’s perhaps in consequence of the fact that “they made three” that the Irish word for “Son of the Father” is repeated precisely three times: “macmacmac.” (The center of Boylan’s thunder – “Godblazebrukbrukarchkrasht!” – is even more easily detected, being all that’s left when the first and last terms we’ve already discussed are taken away. It too evinces a repetition, and one obscurely evocative of II.3’s, in “brukbruk;” but I must confess the import of this correspondence, if correspondence it is, escapes me.)

The consubstantiality of father and son is, of course, the kind of thing we’ve come to expect, based in part on our previous examinations of the career of the word *qua* Name. If it’s going to eventually commit itself to any internal content at all, a structurally central thunder just *should* fuse the names of father and the son (in any case a thunderword is certainly large enough to do this, and much more besides) and do so in some way that renders this synthesis precisely central in a formal as well as a semantic way.

But is a consubstantial identification all that the seventh thunder thus evokes? Or does its preposterously micromanaged structure hint as well that it’s a “samesake” of the sort encountered in I.1 or suggested by Boylan’s Luciferian signature? It seems that it does. For once we locate the name of the son at the mathematical center of the

seventh thunder, and then locate its displaced but adjacent “fallther,” we find that the brief stretch of text which conjoins them –

macmacmacwhackfallther

– renders them consubstantial by one word: “whack.”

A close investigation of the Wake’s etymologies often reveals the surprising antiquity of slangs we imagine to be of more recent provenance. I doubt “whack” had overtones of gangland assassination for Joyce, though it might have had some mortal taint; it’s hard to say. More likely though it simply evokes a blow. And taking context into account once more reveals that what seems at first no more than a “reading-into” is in fact the kind of explication most proper to the text.

As the reader may recall, the exchange of a blow in fact marks the fusion of the twins in II.3; Hart adverted to this briefly in his picture of the twins gradually returning from the apogees of their orbits to proximity in Book II: “Only in II.2 are they close enough to come to blows, while the really cataclysmic conflict does not arise until II.3” [SMFW 130]. This useful observation must be qualified in some respects: it’s never strictly the case that the twins comes to blows in a plural sense. Rather, one hits the other. And this doesn’t happen in II.2 alone in a way that would distinguish that chapter as some penultimate anticipation of “the really cataclysmic conflict” in II.3. Rather, one twin strikes the other in II.3 as well, and also, for that matter, in II.1. Finally, the “cataclysmic conflict” of II.3 – which is real enough – is *not*, as Hart knows, between the twins nearly so much as it is between the son and the father.

At its core thus, the Wake’s seventh and central thunder – which already conjoins the Name and the Fall in the “climax” proper to the wedding, *Nighttown* and certain

(notably Vichian) versions of the original sin – effects the segue to the following anecdote in which the sinning father collects his wages, ineluctably, from the son.

The situation is beginning to look familiar. Too familiar, perhaps. Readers who have already had occasion to deplore the inevitability of the Father’s Name – though they should remember that the Wake will give increasing evidence of a shared distaste – will not be comforted by the implications here of an even hoarier theoretical apparatus.

They may, however, be cheered by the Wake’s characteristically provocative appropriations of this apparatus. These appropriations are, as we will see, quite knowing and deliberate. But as these appropriations occur primarily in the other zone of the text that orients itself – and far more even than I.1’s “overture” – toward the “climax” of II.3’s wedding, we must turn first to this other zone.

* * *

Structurally, the most salient feature of II.3’s wedding anecdote is that it forms the focus for the convergent structure of the thunders, just as its partner, the anecdote based on Buckley and the Russian General, constitutes in itself the Wake’s large central dialogue. And the thunders, recall – unlike the “spatial” or “extratemporal” dialogues – mark the terms of the Wake’s “temporal” text: that is, the text exclusive of the “extratemporal” Book IV. Recall however that the “temporal” Wake in itself evinces this peculiarity: its last Book, Book III, is narrated *backwards*. This is a clever device, and is of course of a piece with the sense of convergence on some center. It presents however its own set of difficulties.

Although various events in Book III are in fact narrated in such a way that their sequence is susceptible to reversal, the style itself does not, on the sentence level,

correspond to this inversion. That is to say, all of Book III may also be read just as the rest of the Wake has been: starting with the upper left-hand corner of the page and proceeding from right to left and top to bottom. Ordinary English syntax retains its hegemony here as it does (conspicuous exceptions like the various “suspended sentences” notwithstanding) throughout the rest of the text. The consequence is inevitably the retention, at least in part, of conventional temporal flow.

And in fact the content of Book III takes ample account of this inevitability. Although various markers – such as, conspicuously, the placement of the Wake’s final pair of doubled-thunders in the “first” chapter, III.1 – do herald the reversal of time, III.4 is also made to be exactly what a conventional reading of a conventional temporality would suggest; its own kind of end and indeed – like the Ragnarok that inflects the “last word of perfect language” in III.1 – an end precisely of *time*, as we will see.

One peculiar consequence is that the Wake as a whole suffers from (or enjoys) a rather bad (or good) case of “split-ends.” It’s not just that there’s a “temporal” and an “extratemporal” end, proper to Books III and IV respectively; Book III itself splits again into two different (if, as we will see, deliberately related) “ends” of time. Although the Wake “starts” uniformly enough (the initial pair of thunders sharing chapter I.1, recall, with the first of the dialogues) and gets at least as far as the middle (where, again, the dialogues and thunders are tangent in II.3) with some integrity, it seems to yield after that to its characteristic penchant for double doubling, forming as a whole something rather like a “Y” with one doubled branch. (Or perhaps we might say that, like the “nothing, a mere breath” of the terminal article with which Joyce determined to end it, his work expires with a Ψ .)

The consequence in any case that is that Book III itself has two ends, and the question which apparently presented itself to the author was how to effect two

different concluding temporal gestures. One of these we've already examined to a degree. III.1, after all, is the site of what is in one sense the Wake's last word, it's final thunder.

This somewhat formal meditation on the Word comprising one "end," then, it's appropriate that the other end should be largely – in fact nearly entirely – taken up with a content which demonstrates that III.4, more clearly even than the "conclusion" of the Wake as a whole in the end of IV, points as it were backward in time to orient itself toward II.3's wedding. In fact it stages itself as a prolonged meditation on that wedding's "climax," or consummation.

As Bloom's perspective on the affair reminds, sin, like usurpation, requires at least two things: the act itself, and, framing it, a certain point of view.

II

The basic structure that organizes III.4 has long been recognized. Four points of view, or "positions," as the text calls them, are taken on a single act that forms the bulk of the chapter's content: the lovemaking of HCE and ALP, both (but particularly, for some reason, HCE) now well-stricken in years. This structural situation, and especially its circumstantial "view," has as we will see implications for the Wake as a whole, as does the content. But the first thing for us to recognize is that III.4's extended congress is deliberately staged as a recollection – indeed, as a version – of the marriage in II.3. This, again, is what we should expect from one "temporal end" of the text, which III.4 itself is again at pains to make clear it is. Indeed we may as well start with the Chapter's last words; for these, coming as they do at the end of a

backwards narration, are likewise in one sense the first words of the temporal text as a whole. They tend to emphasize, however, a rather traditional sense of finality, an end of time indeed. But this end is not of time or text alone, but of the erotic career of the character who from the first has identified himself as a species of time *per se* and the “height” of whose life was captured from II.3’s own point of view or “bride’s eye stammpunct.”

III.4’s last page reveals that the “Fourth position of solution” or “Tableau final” [590.22] is HCE’s sexual curtain call:

That’s his last tryon to march through the tryomphal arch. His
reignbolt’s shot. Never again! How do you that like, Mista
Chimepiece? [590.09]

What arch finally puts the *omphalos* in “tryomphal” we’ll eventually see. The full sense of the fact that HCE’s “reignbolt’s shot” will also reveal itself only gradually. In this last, however, we can already detect the condensation of some familiar elements. A “reignbolt” would be in part of course the sort of bolt loosed during the rain; *viz.*, the thunder, associated since the dawn of Vichian time with the “sovereignty” – Cyclopean or celestial – proper to the patriarchal “reign.”

In a completion of one of the Wake’s largest cycles, HCE, the one-time usurper, will yield once more to the Finnegan he displaced in the following Book IV. HCE’s “reign” is “shot.” But that it’s a “bolt” that’s “shot” as well effects a particularly dense polysemy. It’s context, as we’ll learn, relates it to II.3’s second anecdote. But it also reminds us in its way of the poetic justice of HCE’s “re-usurpation” by Finnegan. After all usurpation is the order of the day, coming and going; in fact the last time an analogous formula was used in a Joycean text was when the cuckolding Boylan “shot

his bolt, I can tell you” [U 441].

After “His reignbolt’s shot,” the ensuing “Never again! How do you like that, Mista Chimepiece?” gleefully puts the last nail in HCE’s temporal coffin, while seeming to mock his original assumption of the role of clock. Of course we know that the book is circular and that the “Wake” of its title indicates that it’s built, like the Roman Catholic church, on a pun. Within the temporal text proper, however, it seems that HCE’s “Chimepiece” has at last wound down, as structure would demand. But even this provisionally gloomy picture is somewhat qualified. In III.4, as we know, time has a way of reversing itself, as we see when we start reading backwards.

What’s going on has in fact already begun to reveal itself in the chapter’s terminal “fourth position.” If HCE’s “shot bolt” itself has both sexual and terminal implications, it reminds us that this is not the only place in the Wake that time has come to an end. HCE’s story, indeed his history, will also come to an end in II.3. The abundant implications of the mortality proper to the “mortal scene” already suggest this, of course, but the suggestion becomes quite pointed coincident precisely with the first anecdote’s climax. For the thunder, recall, is introduced, not just by the formula to end a story, but as the end of HCE’s story and history as well.

Snip, snap, snudy. Noo err historyend goody [332.01].

Further, as we now know, the “fallther” will get “whacked.”

As we would expect, then, the end of III.4 cycles back to effect a specifically temporal identity with the climactic II.3. But its gestures toward that chapter’s first anecdote, whether temporal or conjugal, are by no means exhausted.

In fact the couple’s last act of love doesn’t just recall their first, it almost becomes it, and in a way which unequivocally links it to the wedding. Of “our forced payrents”

[576.27] the “second position” asks, “Which route are they going? [578.29], and receives its answer:

They’re coming terug their diamond wedding tour ... our first day man
and your dresser and mine ... eskiping the clockback, crystal in
carbon, sweetheartedly. Hot and cold and electrickery ... Bolt the
grinden. Cave and can em. ... Renove that bible. ... No cods before
me. ... [578.32-579.10].

On the one hand, given that this is a diamond wedding anniversary, this is apparently sixty (!) years on; on the other, we’re apparently “eskiping the clockback,” turning time *terug* (Danish “back;” *Annotations*) to when “our first day man” and the tailor’s daughter, the seamstress (“your dresser and mine”) felt the first flush of love “sweetheartedly.” And since this is, after all, the “Renove” of the scene of a Vichian Genesis (a “renove” of the “bible” likewise in that its “Pa!” says “No cods before me,” though this is also an injunction against the tricks or “cods” of British slang), the “electrickery” of the “Bolt” drives “our forced payrents” (see Milton’s Fall) into the “Cave.” And though the time has not yet come to investigate this recurrent theme fully, we note that “Bolt” does in part the same double-duty as at chapter’s end. As McHugh notes, grinden is Danish “gate:” some door is once more being shut.

This *leitmotif* strategy is incidentally one of the Wake’s most helpful; were we over-reading to discern a closing door in a “shot bolt?” Apparently not; likewise, “shot bolt” suggests we’re not over-reading here. And the same intratextuality links the Fall once more with marriage, coition and issue.

Let earwigger’s wivable teach you the dance!

Now their laws assist them and ease their fall!

For they met and mated and bedded and buckled and got and gave
and reared and raised ...[579.25].

Thus as III.4 nostalgically superimposes itself on II.3 it brings us

From the fall of the fig to doom's last post every ephemeral anniversary
... [583.22]

In fact the text seems once more to take some stock of its own structural situation –
as it did from II.3's "bride's eye stammpunct" – when it finds

Humperfeldt and Anunska, wedded now evermore in annastomoses by
a ground plan of the placehunter ... [585.22].

As we've begun to suspect, there is in fact some ground plan that takes structural account of placement to facilitate the hunt for content, of which content the congress of the parents is proving a representative type. But this summary formulation near chapter's end is worth noting for another reason: the plausible construction of "placehunter" as "placenta," which is in fact how McHugh construes it. That the anastomosis (McHugh notes a particularly medical connotation of this word, often used to describe the juncture of previously separated veins or arteries, which will eventually prove suggestive) or wedding of Anna and Humphrey might produce a placenta should scarcely surprise us, if we've noted the rapid transition from wedding to bedding to breeding that characterize II.3's first anecdote, but its worth mentioning as a partial corrective of a common and perhaps too-rapid reception of III.4 that

presumes that its *coitus* remains permanently and exclusively *interruptus*. Interrupted it certainly is, as we will see; but as "annastomoses" and, even more strongly, "placehunter" imply, there is at last a conjugation in the conjugality of the sort which seems to answer the chapter's earlier prayer, "from loss of bearings deliver them" [576.35].

These citations do not exhaust the instances whereby III.4 reminds that its scenes recollect and perhaps re-enact the wedding of II.3, but they are perhaps sufficient to demonstrate the recollection. That the Wake in its beginnings and ends anticipates and recalls II.3's first anecdote has gone thus far unobserved, doubtless because the structural centrality of that anecdote has itself been unremarked. Hart, the Wake's most competent and thoroughgoing analyst of the architectonic, concerns himself exclusively with the second anecdote and its structural echoes. Once the resonance with II.3's wedding is taken into account, however, it inflects our reception of what has long been recognized as III.4's principal and most evident content, the detection of which requires only that we, like Bloom, "Watch!"

If Book III consists, as its author insisted, of "the four watches of Shaun," III.4 might be a sort of synechdochic pun on the Book that it in one sense closes out. At least that's the implication of Hart's reading:

... Joyce always spoke of III.4 as 'Shaun d' – a title for which more justification is needed than the trivial fact that Shaun appears in a few places in it as an infant in a cot. The explanation of the title seems, in fact, to lie in the identity of the narrator. ... In this case the narrator is almost certainly Shaun himself. Occasionally he converses with Shem, as on 560-61 and 587-8, where he repeatedly addresses him by his English name, 'Jimmy' [SMFW 88].

In fact Shaun speaks with his brother more than that, as when the latter reacts to the more salacious aspects of III.4's revelations. "Whervolk doest ttou begin to tremble by our moving pictures ...?" [565.06] he asks. "You are tremblotting, you retchad, like a very jerry!" [565.09]. This recalls that I.1's Watchers at the Wake, in their descriptions of Shem and Shaun to the undead Finnegan, name the twins "Jerry" and "Kevin" (for the saint) respectively.

Kevin's just a doat with his cherub cheek ..., playing postman's knock round the diggings ... but ... the devil does be in that knirps of a Jerry sometimes ... making encostive inkum out of the last of his lavings and writing a blue streak over his bourseday shirt [27.05].

On the first page of III.4 the twins appear under these names again, themselves in a sense being "watched" while "kinderwardens minded their twinsbed" [555.07]. The "kinderwardens" here are the four Master Annalists of Ireland, who appear at various stations in the Wake and may be versions of I.1's Watchers. On III.4's first page "therenow theystood, the sycomores, all four of them, in their quartan agues" looking on at "nicechild Kevin" [555.16] and "badbrat Jerry Godolphing" [555.20].

The Annalists tend to amalgamate in III.4 with the objects of their solicitude – their "wards." In III.4, as Hart suggests, Shaun seems to be the principle narrator. He is also, however, the "tour-guide" for his brother as both twins watch the increasingly blatant congress of their parents from III.4's four "positions" or points of view. As the second "position" puts it:

The two princes of the tower royal, daulphin and deevlin, to lie how

they are without to see. The dame dowager's duffgerent to present wappon, blade drawn to the full ... [566.20].

The equivocation implicit in "without to see" is exploited in the following lines in a way which need not detain us now but which is somewhat redolent of Bloom's alternating exclamations of "Hide!" and "Show!" during his cuckoldry (where, recall, the male, as here, exhibited in Bello's words his "weapon"). That somebody sees something, however, is fairly clear.

Herein see ye fail not! ... Gauze off heaven! Vision. Then, O pluxty suddly, the sight entrancing! Hummels! That crag! Those hullocks! ... How shagsome all and beastful! What do you show on? [566.25]

"Entrancing," as the attuned reader may have inferred, lends itself to *entendre*. Thanks to Austin Powers, "shagsome" now seems an anachronism; but as we will see its juxtaposition with "beastful" is definitively suggestive. In any case, as Shem's quadripartite apology near chapter's end – "I'm sorry! I saw. I'm sorry! I'm sorry to say I saw!" [581.24] – he, at least, sees indeed, and at least four times.

Each of III.4's four "positions" or "points of view" introduces itself with some mention of the Synoptic Gospeller with which it's associated. Additionally, the positions are camera angles, filming from successive angles the "moving pictures" that Shaun noted so disturbed his "tremblotting" brother (and which are anticipated, as we've suggested, in "your pictures motion" of II.3's "eloping" [330.23]). They are, in order:

[1]

A time.

Act: dumbshow.

Closeup. Leads.

Man with nightcap, in bed, fore. Woman, with curlpins, hind.

Discovered. Side point of view. First position of harmony. Say! Eh?

Ha! Check action. Matt. Male partly masking female. Man looking round, beastly expression ... [559.17].

[2]

Jeminy, what is the view which now takes up a second position of discordance, tell it please? Mark! You notice it in that rereway because the male entail partially eclipses the femecovert [564.01].

[3]

Or show pon him now, will you! ... Third position of concord!

Excellent view from front. Sidome Female imperfectly masking male.
... Woman's the prey! ...[582.28]

And, finally, as the chapter's last lines,

[4]

Fourth position of solution. How Johnny! Finest view from horizon.

Tableau final. Two me see. Male and female unmask we hem. ... The nape of his nameshielder's scalp. Halp! ... While the queenbee he staggerhorned blesses her bliss for to feel her funnyman's functions

Tag. Rumbling.

Tiers, tiers and tiers. Rounds [590.22].

As Beckett remarked in the *Exagmination*, “literary criticism is not bookkeeping.” Still, readers with an eye for the detail that the *Wake* exploits may have noticed that Luke, the third of the Synoptics, is missing from his “position.” Whether or not this is intentional is hard to say; one reading of II.1’s thunder suggests it might be. In any case the most recent edition of McHugh’s *Annotations* points out that a late manuscript version of the third position actually reads “Third position of concord! Luk! Excellent view from front!”

The truncated name here of course would double as an injunction compatible with the generally scopophilic theme, iterated, as the reader can see, in plain enough English in each of the four positions. The sense of epiphany is however accelerated by the consistent play of what Bloom, again, might call hide-and-show. “Male” and “female” consistently “mask” one another (the primary emphasis seems to be the “partial eclipse” of the female by the “male entail;” the reasons for this will become clear) until in the “Fourth position of solution” we “unmask” them both.

It’s obvious that the *Wake* is obscure. Equally obvious, however, is its exhibitionism. This “ghem of all jokes” [193.09] (as Shaun calls Shem in I.7) wants to make sure that it gets the credit, and we get the joke. We will, in fact, further gloss the contents of the “positions” somewhat, but the reader gets the most ostensible drift. If we’re still in any doubt about the “climactic” content of II.3, III.4 repeats the punch-line until we get it.

It’s not, however, as though III.4 emphasizes content to the utter exclusion of the Word; in fact as we’ll see this end of time is in one sense where the Word is born. The circumstances of its birth prove in fact eminently suited to the eventual growth of this

very word into the Name equivocally usurped *in flagrante*.

These circumstances, however, are themselves the result of a collision with what, outside of Vico and Joyce's own earlier writings, was in a genetic sense at least perhaps the Wake's most crucially determining source-text. Citations from this text do not saturate the Wake to quite the degree that do those from the *New Science*. But Joyce's encounter with it at a crucial point in the process of composition reconfigured his imagination of the Wake's principal themes in a way which inspired the structural device of the thunderwords themselves, conceived (the word will prove apt) in a moment which remains, as we will eventually learn, the Wake's most crucial expression.

In any case, given the sorts of themes we've detected recently and this chapter's own insistent inspiration of scopophilia, this source text has the author we should expect: Freud.

* * *

The Wolf Man

In part as a result of Joyce's own disparagement of psychoanalysis, documented by Ellmann *et al.*, criticism has tended by and large to err on the side of oblivion in its reception of Freud's salience for the Wake. That Joyce, like Freud, deals with a night-world featuring condensation and displacement as well as a certain preoccupation with desire and its vicissitudes is inescapable, and has occasioned useful meditations. But any sort of close reading of a Freudian text *per se*, let alone with an eye toward determining precisely which of the legion attitudes or theses of psychoanalysis are most crucially influential, has been largely neglected. The most important exception is Daniel Ferrer's 1987 article in the *James Joyce Quarterly*. Though the full

implications of its thesis have not yet been realized, “The Freudful Couchmare of Ad: Joyce’s Notes on Freud and Composition of Chapter XVI of *Finnegans Wake*” demonstrates unequivocally that Joyce larded III.4 with excerpts from the English translation of “Little Hans” and, more importantly, “The Wolf Man.”

(The title of Ferrer’s article, incidentally, follows the habit established in Joyce’s notebooks, manuscripts and correspondence of indicating the principals of the Wake through the use of the “sigla” characters so discussed by McHugh *et al.*, a practice which has become more common in scholarship since the time of *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake*. Shaun’s sigla – the apparent malapropism of the plural form to designate even singular instances has been rather generally adopted, partly in the wake of Joyce’s own usage and partly perhaps to distinguish this specifically Wakean sign from the more generic “siglum” – is this peculiar upside-down “V” or Roman “U” which, as the text of the Wake itself occasionally implies, is also the Greek Lamda.)

We cannot do better than to allow Ferrer to introduce us to the fundamental situation and some of its genetic implications.

One of Joyce’s holograph notebooks gives us at last some irrefutable evidence of a direct (and close) contact with Freud’s text in the English translation. We can now be absolutely certain that Joyce read attentively “Little Hans” and “the Wolf Man” ..., that he took notes from them and that he used them in *Finnegans Wake*. There is also indirect but conclusive evidence that “Dora,” “The Rat Man,” and “President Schreber” ... passed through his hands, although we do not yet know whether he actually read them.

Late in 1925, Joyce was using the notebook which is now catalogued under the number VI.B.19 to jot down his usual heterogeneous mixture

of references, wordplays, ideas for scenes and notes from the books he was reading. A few weeks later, he used this notebook extensively for the composition of chapter XVI of *Finnegans Wake* (chapter 4 of book III, or Ad). Among these notes ... we find a number of seemingly unrelated words and phrases which in fact come from the third volume of Freud's *Collected Papers*. This volume, which had just been published "by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at Hogarth Press, 52 Tavistock Square, London, W.C. and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, MCMXXV," contains Freud's five celebrated case studies ... [Ferrer 367-8].⁶

Joyce's incorporation of Freudian material from the Wolf Man (and, to an extent, Little Hans) at a particular juncture in his composition of III.4 had, however, decisive effects for the structure and content of the *Wake* as a whole. This complex situation receives the beginning of its exegesis in Ferrer's article, which recognizes that Joyce's reception of Freud effects immediately a crucial reconception of III.4. The chapter's content was originally conceived along much different lines.

At the end of August 1925, Joyce wrote to Miss Weaver:

I know that Ad ought to be about roads, all about dawn and roads,
and go along repeating that to myself all day as I stumble along the

⁶ pp. 367-8 Ferrer, Daniel (1985). "The Freudful Couchmare of Ad: Joyce's Notes on Freud and the Composition of Chapter XVI of *Finnegans Wake*." *JJQ* 22.4: 367-382.

roads hoping it will dawn on me how to show up them roads so as everybody'll know as how roads etc. (*Letter I*, 232).

In *Ad* as we have it now, dawn eventually breaks and there is something about roads, but if we were to describe the chapter, these would not be the first elements we would mention. We would perhaps say that it is mostly about a coitus between a father and a mother, and the nightmare of their children. This is already the central theme of the very first draft of the chapter, composed a few weeks after Joyce wrote to Miss Weaver. The drastic evolution that took place in so short a time can be explained by the contact with Freud. Joyce realized, or was confirmed in the idea, that voyeurism (an essential characteristic of HCE) derives from infantile sexual curiosity about the parents' genitals ... and about the true meaning of the "primal scene" Moreover, the inclusion of Freud's primal scene was an opportunity of adding one more item to the list of founding myths that constitutes *Finnegans Wake* [Ferrer 379-80].⁷

Indeed, as we've suggested, "The Wolf Man" imbricates itself with the *Wake*'s founding myth *par excellence*.

As Ferrer demonstrates, Joyce's notes often betray with great precision precisely which passages of the Freudian text provided material for precisely which *Wakean*

⁷ p. 379-80 Ferrer, Daniel (1985). "The Freudful Couchmare of *Ad*: Joyce's Notes on Freud and the Composition of Chapter XVI of *Finnegans Wake*." *JJQ* 22.4: 367-382. Henceforth cited as "Ferrer."

ones. The following passage from “The Wolf Man,” for example –

If in my patient’s case the wolf was merely a father surrogate, the question arises whether the hidden content in the fairy tales of the wolf that ate up little goats and of ‘Little Red Riding-Hood’ may not simply be infantile fear of the father.”⁸

– yields the Joycean culling of “vice father surrogate,” which genetic research (based partly on noting which words and phrases Joyce has crossed out as an index of their incorporation in the text-proper) finds without difficulty in III.3. This chapter, as we will eventually learn, performs a strangely symmetrical anticipation of III.4. It’s chief import is that it stages a subject/object reversal for Shaun, who, so far from being the “tour-guide” of III’s last chapter, finds himself relentlessly interrogated from the four points of view of the Annalists. This is the context of the passage in which the “vice-father” appears. The passage, as Ferrer remarks, is

full of references to psychoanalysis and swarming with multitudes of wolves. The words themselves appear in the sentence: “A child’s dread for a dragon vice-father” *FW* 480.25-26 [Ferrer 374].

“Swarming with a multitude of wolves” is just barely hyperbolic, as the exchanges

⁸ p. 502 Freud, Sigmund. “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis” in vol. III of *The Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud*. Alix and James Strachey, trans. 5 vols. London: Hogarth and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1924-1950. Henceforth cited as “CP.”

between Shaun and his inquisitors confirm.

-- Hey! Did you dream ... ?

-- I see now. We move in the beast circuls. ... You took the words out of my mouth. A child's dread for a dragon vicefather. **Hillecloud** encompass us! You mean you lived as milky at their lyceum, couard, while you learned, volp volp, to howl yourself wolfwise?

-- ... The cubs are after me, it zeebs, the whole totem pack ...

-- Scents and gouspils! The animal jangs again! ... Here howl me wisacre's hat till I die of the milkman's lupus!

-- What? Wolfgang? ...

-- A cataleptic mithyphallic! Was this *Totem Fulcrum Est* Ancestor ... ?

-- Dream. ...

-- ... We speak of Gun, the farther. And in the locative. Bap! Bap!

-- Ouer Tad, Hellig Babbau, whom certayn orbits assertant re humeplace of Chivitas Ei ... Well, I am advised he might in a sense be both nevertheless, every at man like myself, suffix it to say, Abrahamsk and Brookbear! By him it was done bapka, by me it was gone into, to whom it will beblive, Mushame, Mushame! ... That is a tiptip tim oldy faher now the man I go in fear of ... and he could be all your and my das, the brodar of the founder of the father of the finder of the pfander of the pfunder of the furst man ... [480.22-481.34].

The wolves here are often enough self-evident, though part of the “swarming” effect comes from those that aren't, such as Hebrew *zeebh*, “wolf” [McHugh], in “The

cubs are after me it zeebs,” or the fact that the Lyceum where “you learned, volp, volp to howl yourself wolfwise” was named for Apollo Lyceus; e.g., “Apollo the Wolflike” [McHugh]. (Latin *lupus* will later prove evocative of the Wolf Man in more intriguing ways.) Indeed many of the psychoanalytic references in general, including the references to *Totem and Taboo*, are perhaps too clear to require comment. It is however, salient that the text of “The Wolf Man” itself points out that the “totem ... was the first father surrogate, and God was a later one” [CP 597].

In fact, according to Ferrer, this passage occasions the last note Joyce takes; appropriately, given its coincidence with one of our emerging motifs. The elements of this motif are themselves elegantly condensed in the office of the surrogate “vice-father;” as we’ve begun to suspect a rather vicious substitute or stand-in. That the passage refers to the father almost as frequently as to the wolves is of course, as the genetics indicate, in large part a consequence of the Wolf Man’s own phobias and identifications. But the preoccupation of the original Freudian text with various father-surrogates becomes resonant with the analogous Wakean motif of conflation and displacement precisely through the “balbly” recalled borrowing Ferrer notes.

At least one of the father’s surrogates, recall, seems to be the son. And maybe even the other son. Thus “Ouer tad” is not just “oldy faher now the man I go in fear of.” Nor, although this “furst man” “could be all your and my das,” is he just the *ur* father of Vico or the founding myth of the father’s fall in *Totem and Taboo*, wonderfully digested here as the “cataleptic mithyphallic” of a “*Totem Fulcrum Est Ancestor*.” He is also “the brodar of the founder of the father.” In fact just as Shem’s riddle speaks both of himself and of “nother man wheile he is asame,” so Shaun, too, is “advised he might in a sense be both nevertheless, every at man like myself.” “At man” is of course the *atman* which achieves identification with *Brahman* – the individual human identity merged with God, presumably, again, the Father. But the identification here

may be predicated on something less sublime, especially when taken in its Freudian context. “By him it was done bakpa, by me it was gone into, to whom it will beblive, Mushame, Mushame!”

The deed the father’s done is by now no longer in doubt, neither in Freud nor in the Wake. But relentless identification and conflation cannot help but suggest one specifically psychoanalytic version, though this version will not exhaust the pertinence of Freud’s text. If the father did “it,” by the same terms it was by the son that “it” was “gone into.” And this much is in fact suggested by the text Joyce was reading, in a rather fraught series of passages in which Freud finds himself obliged to take account of alternatives to his interpretation, going so far as to provisionally but convincingly construe the evidence along these alternative lines at some length. The details of Freud’s rather anxious exhibition on this score need not detain us now. But the relevant text is one that, as Ferrer notes, Joyce drew on.

There is a wish to be back in a situation in which one was in the mother’s genitals; and in this connection the man is identifying himself with his own penis and is using it to represent himself [CP 582].

Joyce duly records, in his notebook, “A identifies se with own penis” [Ferrer 377]; “se,” presumably, is shorthand “self.” Though it is Shaun who is under inquisition here, Joyce’s use of Shem’s sigla indicates that among the riot of confluations is predictably once more that between the brothers. Shaun doesn’t just confess to this rather thanotic oedipality; he blames it on the brother with whom he conflates himself: “by me it was gone into, Mushame, Mushame!”

Oedipality, however, in its strictly Freudian forms at least, entails not just desire for the mother but of course a corresponding aggression toward the father. By now we

recognize that this is in fact consonant with paternal/filial relations elsewhere in the Wake. But if these elements are present here, they are once again wrapped up with an identification between father and son. The condensation is perhaps most economical here in “Ouer Tad.” The conventional denotation of “Tad” suggests the son, whereas its sound and context suggest the father. But whether or not the rhyme with “Cad” is accidental, its suggestion is supported by “Gun, the farther ... Bap! Bap!” This, however, like the “shot” of III.4’s “bolt,” will prove more pertinent to II.3’s second anecdote.

But perhaps the most instructive aspect of this passage from III.3 is its helpful anticipation of III.4’s own preoccupations with certain specifics of the Wolf Man theme. At first we’re inclined to read the Annalists’ observation in III.3 that in surrounding Shaun with their points of view they “move in the beast circuls” as no more than an anticipation of the swarm of wolves to follow, and such in part it no doubt is. But returning to III.4’s various “positions” we discern its other import, likewise derivative from “The Wolf Man.”

Recall that from the first point of view we find not just the “Male partly masking female” but “Man looking round, beastly expression ... [599.22]. Position three’s “How shagsome all and beastful!” [566.33] echoes the motif. It is however the second position which, despite its omission of the apparently all but *de rigueur* adversion to the beast, gives perhaps the clearest explanation for the persistence of the reference. It does so by explaining the “masking” itself as involved in some theriomorphosis. “You notice it in that rereway because the mail entail partially eclipses the femecover” [564.02].

Tails, as the psychoanalytically inclined reader may recall, with predictable suggestion inhabit the stories of both “Little Hans” and “The Wolf Man.” Joyce accordingly notes them twice, once for each text [Ferrer 369 and 375]. In each case

their import is of course phallic, though the theme acquires much more moment in the latter text. (We can probably presume in addition Joyce's familiarity with the Latin etymology of "penis" as "tail.") "Tail," however, also obviously evokes the posterior, and for Freud something about "that rereway" is in fact one of the most important aspects of his analysis of the Wolf Man, as he does not cease to stress. In fact the most important thing, as will become apparent, is that "You *notice* it in that rereway."

What sprang into activity that night out of the chaos of the dreamer's unconscious was the picture of copulation between his parents, copulation in circumstances which were not entirely unusual and were especially favourable for observation. ... When he woke up, he witnessed a coitus *a tergo* [from behind], three times repeated; he was able to see his mother's genitals as well as his father's organ; and he understood the process as well as its significance. Lastly he interrupted his parents' intercourse in a manner which will be discussed later [SE 36-7].⁹

Strictly speaking, the analysis does not require

⁹ p. 36-7 Freud, Sigmund. "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" in vol. XVII of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson. London: Hogarth Press [1953-1974]. Henceforth cited as "SE."

that the intercourse should have been performed from behind each time. A single time would have been enough to give the spectator an opportunity for making observations which would have been rendered difficult or impossible by any other attitude of the lovers [SE 38].

We must admire the enthusiasm of the couple, though the Wake's (and on their sixtieth anniversary!) go them one better. But whether or not anyone's counting, the most salient feature for the moment is the "attitude of the lovers" – *a tergo* – which Freud goes on to link with animality.

Indeed, copulation from behind – *more ferarum* [in the fashion of animals] – may, after all, be regarded phylogenetically as the older form [SE 41].

The well-known preference of animals generally for positions other than missionary requires Freud to take careful account of the young analysand's observations of sheep and dogs, which weave their ways in and out of the ensuing oneiric and analytical narratives. But in any case, the *more ferarum* so crucial to the analysis almost certainly occasions III.3's anticipation as well as III.4's relentless identification of its four points of view on the congress with "bestiality."

The *more ferarum*, like the wolf-motif, provides one easy way to trace Joyce's use of Freud, and also points up the relationship between textual zones. Beyond this, however, it is not substantially developed as an idea in its own right. At least two other ideas derived from the original Wolf Man text, however, are; and both of these seem to derive from Freud's own emphasis on the Wolfman's observation of and reaction to the scene.

First, III.4 duly emphasizes that this is precisely a primal *scene*, though character of this emphasis seems almost to derive in part from Freud's "picture of copulation" that "sprang into activity that night from the chaos of the dreamer's unconscious." In any case, III.4's framing points of view are in addition camera angles from which content's "moving pictures" are filmed, and which occasion for instance the "Closeup" on the "Leads" in the "action" of the first position's conspicuously visual "dumbshow" (though the movie, as we will see, is not altogether silent) on page 519. Various stage directions are appropriately sprinkled through the text until the fourth position's "tableau final."

As we will see, however, the conspicuous visibility of the scene at last involves itself in something more akin to specularity *per se*. This, too, is derived from the original Freud, which in its own analysis of the specularity intrinsic to the manifest content notes a consequent reversal of subject and object positions.

This analysis is commenced, strictly speaking, by the Wolf Man himself, who finds elements in his own dream which already predispose him toward some specular resolution of its enigmas.

I dreamt that it was night and that I was lying in my bed. (My bed stood with its foot towards the window) Suddenly the window opened of its own accord, and I was terrified to see that some white wolves were sitting on the big walnut tree in front of the window. ... The only piece of action in the dream was the opening of the window; for the wolves sat quite still and without making any movement on the branches of the tree, to the right and left of the trunk, and looked at me. It seemed as though they had riveted their whole attention upon me [SE 29].

It is in fact “the only piece of action in the dream” that, according to Freud, piqued the Wolf Man’s own epistemophilic fancy:

He thought that the part of the dream which said that ‘suddenly the window opened of its own accord ... must mean: “My eyes suddenly opened.” I was asleep, therefore, and suddenly woke up, and as I woke I saw something: the tree with wolves’ [SE 34].

Freud sees his opportunity:

No objection could be made to this, but the point could be developed further. He had woken up and had seen something. The attentive looking, which in the dream was ascribed to the wolves, should rather be shifted on to him. At a decisive point, therefore, a transposition had taken place; ... [SE 34].

The manifest content of the dream already variously highlights the sight itself; in the case of the window, this is literally a framing device. Analysis, however, reveals that precisely the point of view has been reversed, in such a way that what the Wolf Man looks at looks back at him (and insofar as “it” looks in the form of wolves, Freud’s own naming of the case tends to emphasize a mirror-relationship). The subject has moved into the erstwhile object-position.

Ferrer recognizes that something about this situation must be represented in III.4’s manifold emphasis on point of view, and cites Freud’s own assessment of some subject/object reversal.

The intricate narrative form of the chapter (the juxtaposition-superposition of several points of view on the coitus, presented in cinematographical terms) can be related to the same origin. The Wolf Man's central dream is characterized by a reversal of point of view:

The ... distortion would consist in an interchange of subject and object, of activity and passivity – CP p. 505.

The fascinating spectacle (the primal scene) is absent, replaced by the spectator, or rather by a multiplicity of spectators. The emphasis is shifted from what is being looked at to the fact of looking itself, materialized by the frame of the open window through which the wolves appear. In *Ad*, the spectacle is not absent in the same way, but this raises the question of the nature of representation in narrative – in any narrative, and in this one in particular. Can we claim that we are actually seeing what is going on in the Porter's bedroom (and in the *Wake* in general)? Faced with the copulation of Chapter XVI, aren't we much closer to Freud deciphering the hieroglyphics of dreams than to spectators looking in on a peepshow? We can consider that the four old men correspond to the six wolves and that the lens of the camera replaces the frame of the window. The multiplication of the points of view emphasizes the fascination, which is more important than its object, doomed to remain forever inaccessible [Ferrer 380].

Ferrer is alive to the specular nuances of both situations. The most important thing

about his concluding generalizations, however, which obviously rather go against the commendably assertoric character of his own analysis of content (which, despite his protestations, he is apparently able to discern) is how wrong they prove.

Ferrer's inevitable concluding gesture is repeated in countless critical treatments, and in differing idioms always asserts essentially that we can't tell what's going on in *Finnegans Wake* and that's the point of *Finnegans Wake*. One might suspect that Joyce did not labour for seventeen years, somewhat in the way Kazin describes, losing along the way much of the support and admiration which his previous work had gained him in order to effect this particular kind of opacity. And one would be correct. Shaun's own inversion of subject and object positions from III.3 to III.4 (or perhaps from III.4 to III.3) is one hint of what eventually develops in this respect. For as we will see, the *Wake* will present its most conspicuously specular zone precisely as III.4's "fifth position" or point of view. There, the object – both of III.4's inspection and of the *Wakean telos* as a whole – will, so far from being "doomed to remain forever inaccessible," constitute as much of a *ding an sich* as literature – or more precisely Joyce's rule-bending appropriation of it – allows, and on terms which take advantage of the very specular reversals Ferrer justly detects.

But this, again, must wait. For in order at last to understand its import we must now pick up yet another of the stitches with which the *Wake* (dis)closes its own semes.

This one lies close at hand, and in fact curiously reflects our own strategy of perpetual deferral. It involves an element of the analysand's response to the primal scene of sufficient moment that Freud feels himself obliged to allude to it briefly in his initial presentation of the situation but then defer its discussion for some forty pages so that its implications may be adequately taken into account.

As cited above the Wolfman "interrupted his parents' intercourse in a manner to be

described later.”

I have already hinted at an earlier point in my story [p. 38] that one portion of the content of the primal scene has been kept back. I am now in a position to produce this missing portion. The child finally interrupted his parents’ intercourse by passing a stool, which gave him an excuse for screaming [SE 80].

For Freud, the anal element is the salient aspect of the subject’s reaction to the scene. Given our knowledge of Joyce’s predilections we would not be surprised to learn that he, too, will make something of it in his version, and all that is necessary is to recall the substance of Joyce *pere*’s anecdote of Buckley to suspect that this theme, too, will come as it were to a head in II.3. Defecation also figures in III.4 in a way consonant with the Freudian prototype. But the chief feature of its treatment is its assimilation to the correlated cry.

As Ferrer has been able to demonstrate, Joyce was apparently struck by the way in which analysis was able to trace the Wolf Man’s intestinal difficulties to an hysterical affect generated by this primordial reaction to the primal scene. According to Freud, “his bowel began, like a hysterically affected organ, to ‘join in the conversation’” [CP 552]. Joyce duly indites: “rebuked for din once more din bowel sound in conversation” [Ferrer 375]. As Ferrer remarks:

See *FW* 563.14 in a context assimilating Jerry/Shem to the Wolf-Man disturbing his parents’ intercourse by crying and soiling his bed: “Are you not somewhat bulgar with your bowels?” [Ferrer 375]

When we turn to this passage in III.4 we discover that Jerry is indeed thus “rebuked for his din” by his brother. We also find, however, that III.4’s version of the interruption tends to stress even more the “din” itself. (This perpetual aversion to the signifier, which we’ve variously traced, is, it must be admitted, no doubt itself partly responsible for the popular misconception of the Wake as a referent-free zone.)

In fact Shem’s primal cry of indignation or alarm establishes itself as something of a motif which wends through the various points of view and the parents’ efforts to persist in their lovemaking despite his evident objections. No sooner, indeed, does the chapter introduce us to our first vision of the parents in bed than we find them, not for the first time, interrupted. Indeed it might well be said that we find the Earwickers

in their bed of trial ... his mace mortified ... Mr of our fathers, she, our
moddereen ru ... the hodypoker and blazier, they are, as sure as dinny
drops into the dyke ...

A cry off [558.26].

The frequent necessity of elision in economical citation of the Wake tends to blunt the effect in translation, but the ellipses after “dyke” appear in the original followed immediately by “A cry off,” just as they do in my citation, in order to clearly demarcate an interruption.

The narration recollects itself. But it returns on the following page. In fact no sooner does the “first position” call on the couple to “Act” than it finds that “action” again deferred by the

Callboy. Cry off. Tabler. Her move.

Footage [559.30].

The “footage” is of course film, but in this case also what’s being filmed: the footsteps of ALP (“Her move”) getting “out of bunk” [559.34] to go down the “Corridor” [560.03] (followed by her husband) to the nursery upstairs, where she comforts Shem.

You were dreamend, dear. The pawdrag? The fawthrig? Shoe! Hear are no phanthares in the room at all, avikkeen. No bad bold faathern, dear one. Opop opop capallo, muy malinchily malchick! ... Sonly all in your imagination, dim. Shoe to me now, dear! Shoom of me!
[565.18-29].

“Malchick” evokes Russian for boy but also in its prefix reminding us that this is “badbrat Jerry.”

A substantial portion of ALP’s calming address reassures the son that there is in fact no father. Indeed, this might allay the fears of a Wolf Man or a Little Hans. But we recall that this tendency toward (a possibly assisted) paternal absence is likewise a Wakean motif. And this in its way brings us back to some of our most persistent questions, which are now beginning to be answered in a way which involves most of the principal themes we’ve detected so far.

Ferrer’s own thesis depends of course on the fact that he can tell perfectly well what’s going on in III.4. Otherwise he wouldn’t be able to recognize the scope of its debt to “The Wolf Man.” III.4 is in fact at particular pains – partly through sheer repetition – to be clear on the point. That’s one reason that criticism, from its earliest efforts, has never been in doubt as to what’s going on. And neither are we. What’s going on is of course that the father is having sex with the mother and is being

watched by the son.

Further, the outlines of this scene were drawn in 1925, relatively early in the Wake's genetic history and long before Joyce had turned to the anecdotes which make up the bulk of II.3. When we recognize, thus, that a virtual archetype of oedipality did not so much contribute to as in itself constitute the content of III.4, and that Joyce's subsequent work on the text deliberately brought these themes to one architectural center of his book – as indicated by among other things III.4's obvious retrospection of II.3's climactic marriage – the detection of psychoanalytic themes in II.3's structurally central formulae is looks less like the theoretically canny exposure of an author's unconscious than the simple recognition of influence. But the Wolf Man's resonance with extant Joycean concerns goes, as the reader might have begun to suspect, much further than this.

It derives in fact from the implicit synthesis of the voyeuristic scene with Vico, and more precisely the susceptibility of Vichian terms to an inversion which the Wake has already implied. For in Vico, the sexual congress of the parents is observed by the Father, who interrupts it by giving voice to his disapproval. But in Freud, the congress of the parents is interrupted by the vocal disapproval of the observing son.

In both cases, further, the scene is quintessentially *ur*, and comprehensively determinate of subsequent development: in the one case of the history of the subject, in the other case of history *per se*. But the chief point is that Vico's implicit confusion between the Father and the junior version of himself has been rendered explicit by Freud. Indeed we might say that the Freudian son has usurped the place of the Vichian Father, and from the position newly gained by usurpation himself now denounces the father as the usurper.

This specular situation debouches (or debauches) into an abyssal hall-of-mirrors, whether implicitly in Vico and psychoanalytic identifications or in the Wake's

deliberately cycling conflation of the father with the son who will become through fusion with his brother his own “faulter-in-law,” repeating the cycle of Fallen time with each “Noo err.”

But further still: in Vico, “The Wolf Man” and the Wake (and, as it happens, the subsequent development of psychoanalysis) the entire confusion is bound up, of course, with some primal utterance. For Vico, as for the self-designated legatees of Freud’s patrimony, this is the Word of the Father. For the Wolf Man – and, it begins to appear, after we have pierced its most conspicuous Word of the Father to its heart, for the Wake as well – this is the Word of the Son.

Have we at last revealed the Wake’s final “trick?” No, only its adumbration. As the foregoing already indicates, the Wake does not just anticipate theory: it goes beyond theory in theory’s own terms. How far this develops we’ll eventually see. Theory will still recognize itself in these developments, though only at the point where its own antagonisms and self-divisions approach synthesis. But it will prove, as we will see, premature to conclude that the Wake has been designed to supplant the Name of the Father with the Name of the Son. Lacan’s *Seminaire XXIII* is a wonderfully percipient reading of the Wake, if stingier by far than even Campbell and Robinson with the textual sources of its enlightenment. It has not, however, read the Wake to its core.

For the moment though, we can return to our examination of III.4, prepared ourselves to recognize one crucial genesis of one kind of Wakean word. Though this genesis, too, will suffer a final retrospection, we can now begin to take stock of it. To a great degree it depends on the recognition that the time of the Wake does indeed flow backwards. For not just genetically, but in the story of the Wake itself as the Wake itself tells it, the thunder is born in III.4 precisely as Shem’s indignant cry, and grows until it reaches its familiar form at the “other end” of time.

* * *

A Question of Delivery

For some time, criticism has known, on the author's say-so, that Book III shows Shaun the Post living the night backwards as he travels upstream in a barrel to deliver the Wake's famous Letter. What precisely Shaun's version of the Letter is and how its nature effects its eventual delivery has been rather less clear; but can now be clarified. And clarification begins in the nursery.

In III.4 the sleeping twins – shortly to be comforted by the arriving ALP – are introduced in a way which lays the groundwork for a crucial equivocation. The import of this equivocation becomes clear as we gradually follow Shaun “backwards in the night” through the “preceding” chapters of Book III.

Although Shem or “Jerry” justly takes the rap for the interrupting cry, Shaun or “Kevin” from the start offers his version, here as it were a sublimation.

And since we are talking amnessly of brukasloop crazeldaze, who doez in sleeproom number twobis? ... They are to come of twinning age so soon as they may be born ... they seem to be so tightly tattached as two maggots to touch other ... Our bright bull babe Frank Kevin is on heartsleeveside ... like the blessed angel he looks so like and his mou is semiope as though he were blowdelling on a bugigle By gorgeous, that boy will blare some knight ... O, I adore the profeen music! ... He is too audorable, really eunique! I guess to have seen somekid like him in the story book, guess I met somewhere somelam to whom he will be becoming liker. But hush! ...

Hush! The other, twined on codliverside, has been crying in his sleep
... . What a teething wretch! How his book of craven images! ... And
he has pipettishly bespilled himself from his foundingpen as illspent
from inkinghorn. He is jem job joy pip poo pat (jot um for a sobrat!)
Jerry Jehu. You will know him by his name in the capers but you
cannot see whose heel he sheepfolds in his wrought hand because I
have not told it to you. O, foetal sleep! ... Are you not somewhat
bulgar with your bowels? [562.16-563.10]

The narration immediately acknowledges our peculiar temporal situation. If we've read the Wake conventionally, we already know the twins quite well by the time we get to III.4. Yet here we are being introduced to them as though we'd never met. And in a sense we *couldn't* have met. Here, after all, they're not just just infantile but perhaps prenatal, "to come of twinning age so soon as they may be born." As we're told a few lines on they are in fact "Jerkoff and Eatsup" [563.23] or Jacob and Esau already wrestling in the womb; hence Shem, as Jacob (and thus doubly James), already holds his brother by the "heel he sheepfolds in his wrought hand." To judge by the size and appearance of the twins their birth must be some way off: "they seem to be so tightly tattached as two maggots to touch other."

The point, of course, is the chronological duplicity proper to Book III. In fact the progress of the sons precisely complements the progress of the father. Despite the recollection of the central wedding, the clock of "Mista Chimepiece" sensibly runs down by the end of III.4, to strike "Never again!" Yet this is where the children's time begins. Thus their introduction in a future tense which looks "forward" to the pages "to come." The narrators have "met somewhere" in "the storybook" "somelam to whom" Shaun "will be becoming liker." As for Shem, "you will know him by his

name” (of course) “in the capers.”

Of greatest interest to us, however, is the character of the Word which, once more, is uttered at the dawn of time. For it proves, like Vico’s, immediately susceptible to equivocation, appropriation and, in a sense, usurpation.

Here the text makes clear – and with the concluding formula with which, as Ferrer notes, Joyce parodies Freud – that Shem’s defecation is, as in the original, either the occasion or excuse for his cry. Appropriately, thus, and again as in the original, the defecation itself is conflated with speech. But note the circumstance of utterance. Though it’s Shem who thus actually utters this interrupting cry, the vocalizations of Shaun are immediately juxtaposed. They – in contrast to the “bulgar” “crying” of the “teething wretch” – are conspicuously musical. And the strange harmony thus effected will prove as it were a counterpoint of departure for Shaun’s gradual appropriation of the cry as reading wends backwards (and time wends forward) though the “preceding” chapters of Book III.

This progress will variously confuse the question of the cry’s authority. But a more fundamental question already confuses its origin here. Is Shem’s cry a cry at all? On one level of course it is, as “A cry off” and various other formulae assert. But we should note another aspect of the Annalists’ analysis.

This is of a piece once more with an injunction to silence, which here also effects the segue from Shaun’s vocal performance to the Annalists’ observation of Shem.

Again:

He is too audorable, really eunique! ... But hush! ...

Hush! The other, twined on codliverside, has been crying in his sleep
... What a teething wretch! How his book of craven images! ... And
he has pipettishly bespilled himself from his foundingpen as illspent

from inking horn [562.33-563.06].

Despite and in addition to the fact of his cry, Shem's medium, as opposed to Shaun's aural one, is conspicuously visual: "craven images." It is in fact, sensibly enough given his status as the Penman, writing, as also stressed by Shem's "inkinghorn and" "foundingpen."

It's difficult to avoid the detection of the pen's onanistically phallic character here (compare the dig at the "eunique" Shaun), though it's rendered slightly risible by the suggestion of enuresis. But the narrators immediately emphasize the theme of writing *per se*, in part by an aversion to Blake who may be here, as elsewhere, adduced for his profession as printer and engraver.

With pale blake I write tintingface. O, you do? And with steelwhite
and blackmail I ha'scint for my sweet an anemone's letter ... [563.15].

The narrators here anticipate in themselves the dispute of authorship to ensue. And as they suggest, this will prove at last (or first) a dispute over who wrote the Letter.

One narrator (the principal speaker and thus, if we follow Hart, the one principally conflated with Shaun) asserts "I write." But we would do well to note his interlocutor's skeptical tone. That this is apparently an unsigned or "anemone's letter" necessarily leaves it open to precisely usurpation. But as the Annalists are still discussing Shem or "Jerry," note their prophecy:

Oh, I see and see. In the ink of his sweat he will find it yet [563.19].

This seer next delivers himself of an equivocal prognostication of undecidability:

You never may know in the preterite all perhaps that you would not believe that you ever even saw to be about to. Perhaps [563.21].

The final qualification is well advised. For in fact we will know – and despite the origin of the nameless Letter in the womb whose “crazedledaze” will be “amnessly” forgotten – precisely how foundational its “pipettishly bespilled ...foundingpen” will prove.

But the attempted usurpation of its authority also has its roots here in the simultaneous presentation of Shaun’s alternative medium. Hence “Jerkoff and Eatsup” (as the Wake makes clear Shaun likes to eat, and we already know Shem has “bespilled himself from his foundingpen”) wrestle almost from their conception for their legacy. It’s Shaun’s move first, as we see when we leave the original scene of this oedipal “primal cry” in III.4 and begin to trace its echoing iterations backward through Book III to the “other end of time.”

Although the narrators find Shaun’s utterances in III.4 “audorable” – in fact they “adore the profeen music” of “the blessed angel ... blowdelling on a bugigle” – by the time they begin their narration of III.3 their reception has become rather complicated, as that chapter’s first lines reveal.

Lowly, longly, a wail went forth. Pure Yawn lay low. ... His dream monologue was over, of cause, but his drama parapolylogic had yet to be, affact. Most distressfully (but, my dear, how successfully!) to wail he did Yawn in a semiswoon lay awailing and (hooh!) what helpings of honeyful swoothed (phew!), which earpiercing dulcitude! As were you suppose to go and push with your bluntblank pin in hand

up into his flesh as plush cushionettes of some chubby boybold love of an angel. Hwoah! [474.01]

As in III.4 Shaun is angelic, but the seeds of equivocation sown there here render him, not his brother, the author of the cry. On the one hand, this development is in Shaun's favor. Simultaneously, though, we note that efforts to euphemize his "wail" into music are apparently more taxing, as the faintly oxymoronic "earpiercing dulcitude" and the distressed ejaculations attest. In fact Shaun sounds like more like some "chubby boybold" baby being changed, stuck in his "flesh as plush cushionettes" with "your blunt blank pin" (also, perhaps, a pen both blunt and blank, which as we'll see is the only kind that Shaun can wield).

By now, at the beginning of the first chapter to "succeed" III.4's amniotic origin, Shaun, though infantile, has at least been born. This development inaugurates the motif of his subsequent growth, observed in each of III's ensuing chapters. This growth is hyperbolized, perhaps in part in order to call attention to the effect. If he's still "some chubby boybold love of an angel" as III.3 opens, by the beginning of III.2 the narrator must already observe that "at this rate of growing our cotted child of yestereve will soon fill space and burst in systems" [429.11] and by his introduction in III.1 he's larger than large, "immense, topping swell" [405.21]. At this, the apex of his powers, Shaun attempts his most decisive coup. Its reception, however, dooms it from the outset.

III.1 is, reading conventionally, the "first" chapter to introduce Shaun explicitly as the deliverer of the Wake's famous Letter, which it does as early as the second full paragraph.

And as I was jogging along in a dream ... methought broadtone was

heard and the creepers and the gliers and flivvers of the earth ... all
vociferated echoing: Shaun! Shaun! Post the post! [404.03]

And shortly we see

Shaun (holy messenger angles be uninterruptedly nudging him among
and along the winding ways of random ever!) Shaun in proper person
(now may all the blueblacksliding constellations continue to shape his
changeable timetable!) ... [405.03].

As the last lines aver the angelic darling of the “holy messenger angles” has indeed
been traveling backwards in time. But our chief concern at the moment remains his
mutating, musical cry.

Overture and beginners!

... through death's of darkness ... a voice, the voice of Shaun, voice of
the Irish, voice from afar (and cert no purer palestrine 'e'er chanted
panangelical ...) [407.10].

Again, so far so good. But Shaun's angelical voice – which after introducing itself
here will suffer throughout the rest of the chapter interruptions from the ostensibly
admiring but subtly derogatory audience – will become the voice of song perpetually
verging on something less sonorous. The downward trajectory is anticipated in
Shaun's first actual utterance.

-- Alo, alas, aladdin, amobus! Does she lag soft fall means rest

down? Shaun yawned, as his general address rehearsal ... addressing himself *ex alto* and complaining with vocal discontent ... [407.27].

Shaun's question is the Sol-Fa scale, sung as a warm-up in his "general address rehearsal;" but his angelic "*alto*" quickly falls into "complaining with vocal discontent." Oscillations of this type ensue throughout the interview. The narrator attempts to flatter Shaun while asking him in Latin again to blow his trumpet (his "bugle" of the "crazedldaze"). "How mielodorous is thy bel chant, O songbird ... ! *Buccinate in ... tuba ...* " [412.07]. But this only excites Shaun's loud indignation: "It is a confoundyous injective so to say, Shaun the fiery boy shouted ..." [412.13]. (And what "injection" it is that "counfounds" the "yous" of respective identities will eventually become plainer.)

The narrator persists, however, both in cajoling and musical evocation, until the interview approaches its climax and the chief point of the entire chapter: Shaun's enunciation of the thunderwords. Of course we've already treated these. Now, though, we note that they are presented entirely in the context of questions on the content and authorship of the Wake's famous Letter, here delivered of course by Shaun the Post..

From the first, Shaun's own discussion of his office adverts to the equivocal situation of III.4. Thus shortly after his first words in the III.1 he begins his protestations of modesty.

How all too unwordy am I, a mere mailman ... to be the bearer
extraordinary of these postoomany missive on his majesty's service
I, ... which bit his mirth too early or met his birth too late! It should
have been my other with his leickname I can seeze tomirror in

tosdays of yer . . . We shared the twin chamber and we winked on the
one wench and what Sim sobs todie I'll reeve tomorry . . . Ear! Ear!
Not ay! Eye! Eye! [408.10-409.03]

Shaun at once recalls and anticipates III.4's "the twobirds" in "sleeproom number twobis," here more economically the "shared . . . twin chamber." He elegantly syncretizes III's opposed temporal vectors when he "seeze tomirror in tosdays of yer," but also thus emphasizes his specular conflation with his "other" who, predictably, has a "leickname." His deference is meant to be *pro forma*; but throughout the chapter his audience and his own words will increasingly suggest otherwise. Here, his protestations that he is "unwordy" are, in context, all too true. Though he will go on at length, his vocal performance has nothing to do with – or rather is precisely opposed to – the kind of language proper to the moment. As the chapter goes on to stress, letters are *written*, no matter the musical Shaun's loud preference for the "Ear! Not . . . Eye!" The most telling prolepsis of the chapter's climax however is Shaun's introductory admission that what his brother "sobs todie I'll reeve tomorry." McHugh detects here "sow" and "reap;" and indeed all of Shaun's ostentatious verbal production is merely the late harvest of the seed Shem sowed in the "crazedldaze" of III.4's primal cry.

The fruit is the Letter. It's a curious thing, but much criticism seems to miss that III.1 is indeed where Shaun the Post delivers it. (A conspicuous exception is David Hayman's excellent *The Wake in Transit*.) This confusion is predicated in part perhaps on the fact that the *Wake* does, admittedly, contain several epistolary performances. The consensus is that the Letter arrives most definitively in IV, where ALP at last delivers herself of her *apologia pro HCE*, perhaps (though with inevitable equivocity) delivering him from sin or at least its attribution. As is generally recognized, though,

both the content and form of this version are disappointing; they bring the Wake to no new heights or depths, either in obscure compression or conventional clarity, and though IV's Letter sensibly adverts to past events it does not effect at all a thorough catalogue of what by anyone's reading are the important motifs. Detailed reading of it is in consequence generally neglected, and this time, perhaps, with justice.

I.5, on the other hand, is a festival of information. Famously, we learn virtually everything there is to learn about the Letter's form. We learn its many names in a three-page italicized catalogue. When its examination proper begins the first thing we learn is that "The proteiform graph itself is a polyhedron of scripture" which has "shown a sexmosaic of nymphosis" [107.08-13]. Its last words or gestures are apparently worth noting. It's sealed with a kiss, or "a cruciform postscript from which three *basia* or shorter and smaller *oscula* have been overcarefully scraped away" [122.20]; that is, it closes with an "X," or possibly one big and three small "*oscula*." These vague formal hints, and I.5's many others, will eventually prove not at all deceptive. As I.5 itself points out, however, it deliberately defers the revelation of content *per se* until some other last word:

The teatimestained terminal (say not the tag, mummer, or our
show's a failure!) ... [114.29].

As McHugh observes at this point, "It is considered unlucky for an actor to say the tag (last speech) at rehearsal" [*Annotations*]; and indeed I.5 is, it turns out, only a rehearsal. The chapter's promises of eventual revelation are commendably veridical: the real performance will prove proper to the Wake's most terminal (and original) zone. Criticism already well knows that the Letter is tea-stained. Precisely when tea-time comes, however, remains to be discovered, though it will prove surprisingly

obvious.

The Letters of IV and I.5, however, are not at all delivered by Shaun. Strictly speaking they are not even delivered; I.5's is dug up by the Wake's famous Hen (a form of ALP) and IV's, symmetrically, is produced by a strange, cyborganic Rube Goldberg device emblematic of the text itself which, in a co-optation of the Hen's reproductive office, will produce the Letter "as sure as herself puts hen to paper and there's scribings scrawled on eggs" [615.09].

But the failure to recognize that Shaun delivers his version, at least, of Letter in III.1 is no doubt also due once more to the fact that (and in actual reading this is easy to forget) Book III is substantially narrated backwards. In consequence, apparently, III.1's extremely conspicuous gestures toward the Letter and its delivery have been construed almost exclusively as proleptic, and its actual delivery imagined as one of the Wake's allegedly representative absences or undecidabilities. Tindall [Reader's Guide 232] construes, plausibly, the page-long list of addresses that constitute the Letter's often frustrated vicissitudes as the history of its undeliverability. Perhaps; but according to the catalogue that history, whatever it is, sensibly ends here: "Bung. Stop. Bung. Stop. Cumm Bumm. Stop. Came Baked to Auld Aireen. Stop" [421.13].

Shaun might well give voice here to a song from the Presley *oeuvre* that reminds us what the post-office writes on a letter delivered to "address unknown:" "return to sender" or, as the envelope's catalogue recommends near its conclusion, "ab, Sender" [421.10]. And in fact the Letter will inevitably be delivered not just *to* but *at* the site of its origin which, though in one sense we've already seen it, will in another sense itself prove "ab sent" from the ordinary space and time of the text. There, too, it will be delivered by Shaun, though all unwittingly.

But the list's last words also remind us that Shaun does in one obvious way deliver

the Letter right here. For as its repeatedly cited bung-stopper indicates, Shaun's barrel itself is the site from which Shaun at last delivers himself of his Letter, though ironies complicate the medium. More precisely, the Letter is *within* Shaun himself, who is of course within the barrel. For Shaun himself is the envelope, and the Letter is opened as soon as he opens his mouth. The content is simply Shaun's version of the Word, his rivalrous claim to his brother's fame, the parable of the "Ondt and the Gracehoper" framed by III.1's pair of doubled-thunders. All of this, including Shaun's strange status as human envelope, is made plain by the text.

Quoniam, I am as plain as portable enveloped, inhowmuch, you will now parably receive, care of on Moosyeare Gooness's registered andoutherthus barrels. Quick take um whiffat andrainit. Now!

– So vi et! we responded. Song! Shaun, song! Have mood! Hold forth!

– I apologuise, Shaun began, but I would rather spinooze you one from the grimm gests of Jacko and Esaup, fable one, feeble too. Let us here consider the casus, my dear little cousins (husstehasstencaffin-coffintussemtossemdamandamnacosaghcusaghhobixhatouxpeswch-bechoscashlcarcaract) of the Ondt and the Gracehoper [414.14]

In a sense Shaun himself is the message in a bottle; or more precisely in a barrel of Guinness, which, itself a species of "andoutherthus" envelope, is "registered," like mail. That the Letter is thus equated with a beverage, more specifically alcoholic, will eventually prove worth remembering, and only partly (but importantly) because Finnegans is revived by whiskey. In any case the recipient doesn't just read it (or in this case listen to it) but is advised to drink "andrainit" as well.

The audience knows that Shaun's real talents, such as they are, are musical. But he's determined to prove himself a man of letters, and the more literally as the chapter proceeds. Thus he disdains his *forte* and will instead tell us a story: a sort of Aesop's fable from a version of the brothers Grimm, "Jacko and Esaup." In other words Shaun's Word derives, again, from III.4's "crazedldaze" where we first became acquainted with the respective media of "Jerkoff and Eatsup." But here we also begin to understand what other fruit III.4's primal cry has born or become: not just Shaun's story, but that which introduces it and will close its discussion. The thunder; here, more precisely, the first of III.1's pair that frame Shaun's tale just as II.3's doubled thunders framed the retelling of the first word John Joyce delivered to *Finnegans Wake*.

We've already looked at some length at the second of III.4's thunders, though we'll have to look at its context again. The chapter's first thunder, however, is even emptier as a word-in-itself than was the tautological thunder that opened the *Wake* as a whole. That word at least meant something, namely thunder (over and over again). This thunder, though, consists over and over again of the word for "cough" (in fact McHugh once more notes precisely ten instances). In other words this isn't just speech as opposed to writing. Even as a vocable, it simply fails to *mean* even to the degree that music does; or rather it means the interminable preface of a self-conscious throat-clearing which threatens, in the absence of substance, to become the entire exercise.

As a word-in-context, though, this thunder simply means, like the parenthesized thunders on page three, what's directly on the other side of the parentheses in the immediate context: in this case, "the Ondt and the Gracehoper," or the fable itself. Once again, of course a thunder is a Word. A certain fearful (at least for Shaun) symmetry will make a related point in the case of the chapter's closing thunder.

In any case the fable of “the Ondt and the Gracehoper” ensues. It’s a predictably Shaunian diatribe against his brother, a penniless spendthrift to Shaun’s prudent bourgeoisie and James Joyce to Shaun’s excoriating Wyndham Lewis. The latter dialectic involves an examination of space (favored by the aesthetics of the biographical Lewis) and time, which Lewis accused Joyce and other modernists of fetishizing. (Joyce provisionally agreed; but asked, implying it wasn’t, “is it more than half the truth?”) There are fascinating implications, tangent, as those familiar with Stephen’s musings in *Proteus* would suspect, on the questions of “Ear!” versus “Eye!” raised so forcefully here. Time and space themselves, however, preclude our lengthy examination of the vignette, in any case one of the most worked-over passages of *Finnegans Wake*. Instead we are compelled to retain the terms of our strategy and concentrate primarily on its first and last words, or at least the words which introduce and close it: the thunders, whose contexts in any case render them both in different ways synecdochic of the fable they frame.

And in fact the audience seems inclined to dismiss the fable as well. At its conclusion they offer polite remarks, but these ultimately suggest not just that the tale is derivative but that the audience knows perfectly well what and who it’s derived from. Their questions in fact anticipate the chapter’s second thunder – shortly to be uttered – and the denouement that follows.

But the main point is that the audience recognizes that Shaun’s delivery of the Letter is a pale copy; they want the real thing.

– Now? How good you are in explosion! How farflung is your fokloire and how velktingeling your volupkabulary! ... O foibler, O flip, you’ve got that wandervogl wail withyin! It falls easily upon the earopen and goes down the friskly shortiest like treacling tumtim

But could you, of course, decent Lettrechaun we knew (to change your name of not your nation) while still in the barrel, read the strangewrote anaglyptics of those shemletters patent for His Christian's Em?

[419.12]

Shaun's fable as a whole -- the content of his delivered Letter -- is his version of the thunder: hence it's an "explosion." But a brief accomodation of his literary vanity cedes quickly to the suggestion that the whole affair springs from the "wail within." The implication will become clearer; but taken with Shaun's own earlier admission that he is here to reap the fruit of "what Sim sobs," it seems the nested versions of the Letter leave at least one more Russian Doll to open. The "registered" envelope of the barrel (whose liquid contents, poured into the porches of the listener's ear, are this time evoked as regrettably "treacling") contains the envelope of Shaun himself, which contains in turn his song-story which itself envelops, apparently, its own origin in Shem's strangely visible cry.

And this is what the audience has really been waiting for. Having perfunctorily cast aside the envelope of Shaun's superficial efforts they ask as it were for redelivery, but this time of something closer to the Letter *per se*. They ask Shaun, while "still in the barrel," to "read the strangewrote anaglyptics of those shemletters patent for His Christian's Em." These are none of Shaun, as the audience reminds when they explain the irony of "Lettrechaun," which will only "change your name of not your nation." Shaun's birthright remains the ear, not the eye; real letters are of course "shemletters."

But now an old motif returns to muddle the question of authority yet again, though given what we have already detected in the Wake's motif of the Word and the Name, it should by now indeed be "patent" ("letters patent (fig.) authority to do something;" McHugh) that these "anemone's" words which are nevertheless here signed and

copyrighted as “shemletters” by the son are also the words and the name of the father who signs them with “**H**is **C**hristian’s **E**m” – his christian name – acrostically. (Though note the simultaneous re-emergence of the writing proper to Shem, sometimes, as shortly, called “Sem,” in “Christian’s **E**m.” An “em,” as McHugh notes is a “printer’s measure.”)

We might allow the audience’s characterization of the “real” Letter here to remind us that though the chapter will increasingly develop the recrudescence of Shem’s authority, primal cry and writing, it will also reveal the content of the Letter, as various aspects of its “explosion” already suggest, *as the same thunder* which frames or as it were envelops the content of the “explosion” itself. And the thunder itself of course remains, both in its extra-textual origin and in the text’s most central parody so far, the Name of the Father. Despite, however, his apparent usurpation of “Jerkoff and Eatsup” alike, Isaac will not laugh last.

For now though we must return to the way that III.1 brings the themes developed since III.4 to closure. Indignantly, Shaun attempts to satisfy the audience and deliver the real Letter by reading it to them.

-- Greek! Hand it to me ! Shaun replied, plosively pointing to the cinnamon quistoquill behind his acoustrolobe. ... Look at that for a ridingpin! I am, thing Sing Larynx, letter potent to play the sem backwards ... ! [419.21]

But, of course, it’s “Greek!” to him. Although “Lettrechaun” once more attempts to usurp as it were the medium proper to his brother by “plosively pointing to the cinnamon quistoquill” (“plosively” even more pointedly recalling the plosives proper to the primordial thunder’s “Pa! Pa!”), the “quistoquill,” is located, ineluctably,

“behind his acoustrolobe.” Despite his proud injunction to “Look at that for a ridingpin,” Shaun’s just not a writing (or reading) kind of guy. Though he is in some sense (and certainly as the Post) “letter potent,” that he is also “thing Sing Larynx” means that he can really only negotiate the medium that is, as we’ve known since III.4, opposed to his brother’s. He can only “play the sem backwards.”

Shaun’s illiteracy essentially reduces him from reading to looking. “It is a pinch of scribble ... Overdrawn!” [419.32] by a “pixillated doodler” [421.33]. But he can certainly guess that the Letter’s contents are “Puffedly offal tosh! ... second-class matter. The fuellest filth ...” [419.33-36]; hence he’s moved to “pass my opinion, properly spewing” [421.26]. This last becomes the more disturbing as we approach III.1’s final thunder – and thus in three senses the end of Shaun’s own Letter – and learn that the Letter is not simply something to be drunk, as its conflation with treacle and Guinness has implied, but something to be eaten as well. Shaun winds up the Letter-as-diatribes that constituted his fable and ensuing remarks with this salutation (or “infirmation?”) for Shem:

Your puddin is cooked! You’re served, cram ye! Fatefully
yaourth ... Ex. Ex. Ex. Ex [424.12]

(Ellipses in the original.) No wonder the Letter eventually comes “baked to Auld Aireen.” (And being baked, the Letter will be, as we will see, a particular kind of pie.)

We also note two other conspicuous concluding gestures immediately pursuant to Shaun’s “sign-off.” First, we note the postscript in I.5: an “X,” here followed by its “three ... *oscula*” [122.21] in “Ex. Ex. Ex. Ex.” (which, in immediate context, is also Shaun’s final effort to cross Shem out, rendering him a has-been).

But the other postscript is of course the framing answer to the Letter’s introduction.

In response to Shaun's concluding threats the audience asks "for what, thrice truthful teller, Shaun of grace?" and gets, as we've seen, their answer:

– For his root language, if you ask me whys, Shaun replied, as he blessed himself devotionally like a crawsbomb, making act of oblivion, footinmouther! (what the thickuns else?) which he picksticked into his lettruce invrention. Ullhodturdenweirmudgaardgringnirurdrmolnirfenrirlukkilokkibaugimandodrrerinsurtkrinmgernrackinarockar! Thor's for yo! [424.17]

By now we can read more of context's content. Shaun's "crawsbomb" is of course an explosive plosive, but here conflated with the cross or "X" that closes letters. As for the content of the word itself, we already know it echoes the context of the Wake's first by being the Fall, in this case of the Gods. Now we can see it also conforms to Shaun's characterizations – and, more to the point, to III.4's conflation of the cry with defecation – in that it contains, or perhaps, is, a "turd."

But the most important revelation concerning the delivery of Shaun's famous Letter is that the *thunder itself is its content*. specifically, the content of the Letter. For now, re-reading this climax of III.1 – indeed of Book III – in context, we at last understand what Shem, as Shaun says here, has "picksticked into his lettruce invrention." *This*, the thunder itself: for as "lettruce" informs, Shem's latest "invrention" is of course the Letter (though insofar as he is James it is *Finnegans Wake* itself).

The Letter thus is ultimately more Shem's than Shaun's. Shaun can no longer deny it. Though immediate context renders the thunder equivocally an expletive and a citation, ensuing context is more decisive. The audience – revealed once more as the Annalists in "foresupposed" – construes this word entirely as Shem's, while giving

Shaun a final opportunity to vindicate himself. “But you could come near it, we do suppose, strong Shaun O’, we foresupposed. How? [424.24].

Shaun’s answer parodies the original Vichian plosives.

“Peax! Peax! Shaun replied in vealar penultimatum [424.26].

Note that the Wake’s “illiterative porthery” gives Shaun’s last effort a doubly-terminal “X” to echo those that followed (or constituted) his “sign-off.” But this particular parody will also prove even more of a “penultimatum” than the thunderword it follows. Indeed, it “comes near,” as the audience has requested, the Wake’s ultimate expression – nearer, perhaps, than any of the Wake’s other parodies of itself -- in which the ultimate and original thunder will be revealed as precisely the ultimate and original version of the Letter. Any sense of epiphany here, however, would be somewhat premature and in consequence remains somewhat muted.

In fact, Shaun thinks he’s just telling the audience to be quiet. This, we may recall, would be appropriate, for exactly the same injunction – “But hush! Hush!” – effected the transition of the Annalist’s attention from Shaun’s music to Shem’s strangely written cry in III.4. The death of the voice as it were is the birth of writing; this construction, further, is not at all the *recherche* retrospection of recent methods, as the text itself will make clear.

But Shaun is oblivious of these implications as well as of the proleptic character of this, his own most successful effort. And this is appropriate. For as its context asserts, Shaun’s previous utterance of the Wake’s final thunderword is itself an “act of oblivion.” This oblivion proceeds not just from Ragnarok’s apocalypse or Shaun’s would-be effacement of his brother’s name and fame. Shaun of course has no conscious recollection of the “amnessly” forgotten “crazedldaze” in which he first

heard the thunder in germ as the cry.

Shaun is at last overwhelmed by the tension between knowledge and amnesia. After an instructive page again linking eye and ear and time and space in an amusingly theoretical vituperation in which he comes close to acknowledging his brother's paradoxically written cry in "what that bogus boslhy of a shame, my soamheis brother, Gaoy Fecks, is conversant with in audible black and prink" [425.22] and makes his own final, futile claim to literacy ("Outragedy of poetscaids! Acomedy of letters! I have them all, tame, deep and harried, in my mine's I" [425.24]), Shaun's speech winds to a close. The chapter's last two or so pages are given over to the narration of his disappearance once more into the barrel and the stream. But just before this Shaun makes one final, futile gesture. Though he's already exhausted his attempts to appropriate the Letter, Shaun's last word is a last desperate claim to authority. Like his father's first word, it's an oath, though this time probably uttered more in anger than self-defense. And in accord with its prototype in I.2 and the Vichian original, it is itself once more the name of the speaker; even in a sense the name's apotheosis. This is an "oath by the awe of Shaun (and that's a howl of a name!)" ... [426.01].

Even here, thus, Shaun's aspirations doom themselves. The fact that this quasi-Vichian last word is not just a name but a "howl" makes its ultimate derivation all-too obvious. So it is that

with that ... threelungged squool ... he virtually broke down ... getting quite jerry ... overpowered by himself ... [426.05].

The (not very successfully) repressed Jerry – precisely the Shem of III.4's "crazedldaze" – has returned to claim his own authority, and precisely with the "howl," "squool," "wail withyin" or "sob" of the original cry. For it is Shem, not

Shaun, who issued III.4's primal cry, which has -- post-appropriation by the Post -- slowly evolved into Shaun's doomed persiflage. In a poetic turn, the would-be usurper is himself usurped from "withyin."

In his way, Hart has noted that what are by his terms the terms of the text and the middle – I.1, IV and II.3 – are marked by the dialogues which all to greater or lesser degrees stage the propinquity or fusion of the twins. But when we take further stock of Hart's own division of the text into "spatial" and "temporal" versions of itself, we find that the terms proper to the latter version enact this propinquity and fusion as well. Thus III.4 finds the twins sharing the nursery in which "they seem to be so tightly tattached as two maggots to touch other." And now III.1 – the other term of Book III's time – has accomplished in its way the same sort of thing. That's one reason the letter is a "lettruce" and "Came baked to Auld Aireen" – a conflation of Erin and the Goddess of Peace – or that "Peax! Peax!" recalls that in the Wake's center or "epicenter" too the sailor and the tailor were made "one fisk and one flesk" by the "pacts" between them.

Here though there's a stronger sense of a fissioned – even abjected – shadow-personality returning to reveal itself as the art within the artist (though it oddly reverses the semiotics of abjection, for instance, by giving the conscious, decent, bourgeois personality over to music). What returns from "oblivion" is certainly associated with the quintessential – or more precisely primal – scene of repression. Very strikingly, though, this (rather specular) scene of the unconscious emphatically links itself with writing in a way which makes that medium conspicuously distinct from – more, really, antagonistic to – voice. We see here a deliberate, highly crafted conflation of two of the preoccupations most central to post-structuralism. The staging of the Name of the Father as literally the center of the system begins to seem like the icing on the cake delivered "baked to Auld Aireen." Or, if you prefer, the canny Letter

arrives at the destination it's crafted in advance, though we have yet to take stock of how uncannily familiar the Letter will prove to readings it may have written to be receptive of its delivery. "He has read all of us – and plundered us, that one" [The Postcard 148].

Of more immediate importance however is what he have learned about the Wake's structure. If we remember that one stream of time flows backward, and pay careful attention to its sources in III.4, Shaun's delivery of his Letter emerges as the terminus of a journey which – just as the author said – spans Book III from "beginning" to "end." Though we will see this in more detail later, the timing of the genetic situation fits well with the text's own presentation of the cry that greets the primal scene – that curious inversion of Vico's scene of origin – as it evolves from its origin in III.4 to become at last the thunderword itself. A psychoanalytic reading – however anticipated by the author's life and works – of the structural center of the thunder-scheme itself becomes almost inevitable, while the apparently uncanny theoretical prescience that imbricates the Name of the Father in the entire affair is doubly explained, once by Vico and once by his Freudian echo (or reflection).

In any case this is the end of the principal action of III.1 and, if we follow its own temporal vector, of Book III as a whole. We have, accordingly, been brought back "upstream" to a point tangent to the Wake's central Book, which we shall shortly re-open.

* * *

One Version of the Thunder-Letter

Our reading of III.4 and to a degree of Book III has variously amplified our understanding of the components of the situation which will play itself out at last in

the Wake's center. Some of these aspects are more clearly pertinent to II.3's first anecdote, some to its second. All, however, culminate in what will eventually reveal itself as the Wake's most central expression.

The first thing we've learned is that III.4 is almost certainly the genetic origin of the climax of II.3's wedding. The wedding itself was already conceived as central, as indicated by Joyce's handful of preliminary sketches, all penned in 1923. II.4's presentation of the honeymoon of Tristan and Isolde – themselves originally conceived as central versions of the hero and heroine – remains as testimony to the antiquity of the idea. II.1, in turn presents the children's pantomime of the wedding, though in the final version II.3 becomes the site of the wedding *per se*. Joyce's 1925 encounter with Freud, however – still relatively early in the compositional process – seems to have conditioned his treatment of this “epicentral” scene as the site of a sexual as well as a structural climax.

One of the most powerful and salient aspects of the Freudian text, however, is its resonance with Vico. The very symmetry at first obscures the accord; for this accord – and Joyce must have found this irresistible – is predicated on the reversal of a *coincidentia oppositorum*. In Vico, the intercourse of the parents is interrupted by the voice of the Father; in Freud it is interrupted by the voice of the son. Further, the effective usurpation of the Vichian Father by the Freudian son is a consequence of the latter's occupation of the point of view erstwhile inhabited by the former, and the former's relegation to the scene viewed. The conspicuously visual frame surrounding the more extended treatment of the sexual climax in III.4 itself suggests that for Joyce, as for Freud, one of the most salient elements of the primal scene was that it was a scene. The full implications of this will not emerge for some time, though they will condition to a degree the presentation of II.3's second anecdote. They are also, however, already evident in some reversal of the subject and object positions and more

clearly in the pointed distinction between the eye of writing and the ear of speech which complicates from the start our reception of Shem's "primal cry."

This cry itself grows as it were with Shaun from the nursery-bed of III.4's "crazedledaze" to the "maturity," if that's what it is, of III.1's ironically feted artist-manque. Taking the entire temporal span of Book III into account, thus, we now recognize that the Word of Thunder itself begins, with the twins, in infancy (with, perhaps, the *de rigueur* etymological nuance of *infans* suggested by its origin in the cry) or more properly *in utero* and then grows along with the appropriating Shaun who "will fill space and burst in systems" to the preposterously hyperbolic monstrosity of the full-sized thunderword *per se*. This motion is in tandem with -- indeed essentially is -- Shaun's Book-length delivery of the Letter, revealed at last (in a prolepsis we have yet to fully understand) as itself the Thunder.

Clearly, Joyce is able to derive a great deal from the juxtaposition of his two sources. One might even say that in some ways Vico and Freud are the anode and the cathode of the text, though we can also trace perhaps "two millium two humbered and eighty thausig nine humbered and sixty radiolumin lines to the wustorts of a Finntown's generous poet's office" [265.25]. But if the resulting oscillations and reversals drive the narrative they also raise questions for at least some kinds of interpretation that trace some of their own lines to Freud and Joyce alike.

If, for instance, the normatively thundered Name of the Father in Vico effects by the renunciation of illicit desire the birth of language in a way strikingly congruent with the Lacanian model, what would be the effect of the inverse gesture, located as though by an ironic sensibility in the text purportedly more seminal for psychoanalysis itself? For in "The Wolf Man," "illicit" possession of the mother is interrupted by a word not yet a word, one not so much free of what Freud's heir's *soi disant* would call the "paternal metaphor" as dead-set against it, or at least against the father *per se*.

This, in fact, in the narrow tradition of the psychoanalytic text-proper, is the “poetic justice” of its patrimony: the near universal *de facto* objection of its *ur*-analysands to patrimony itself. Even in the more apposite Kristevan location of *ur*-speech in the pre-oedipal cry, which location is certainly susceptible to translocations to late versions of Lacan, the cry is by definition a protest against the mother’s absence, which absence the presence of the father will merely come to represent.

At one level theory finds no difficulty here. Like all protests this one is susceptible to co-optation. All that is necessary for the Name of whatever Father one chooses to prevail is to recognize that in one sense the backward progress of Book III merely traces the usurpation of pre-oedipal (even pre-natal) utterance (but how could there be utterance from the womb’s mute fusions) by some rival male who would inseminate it with his own authority. Of course this would demand that the name of Shaun be identical with the Name of the Father, and precisely to this task and for this reason the Wake will prove itself more than adequate.

We must note, however, that in the Wake at least what is lodged is not just a primordial but as it were a rather formal protest. There is no muting of the ironic juxtaposition with Vico’s more normative scheme, nor of a sense of the architectonic and almost magisterial control of a structural inevitability which in fact at last undoes, in III at least, this rival male’s designs on the primordial authority, as revealed in Shem’s ineluctable re-emergence. In III the Name of the Father himself remains to a degree intact. But this condition, as the Cad’s antics have from the start suggested and as the strange usurpations proper to II.3’s thunder remind, cannot endure.

What sort of language could we expect at last from a knowing cultivation of the Wolf Man’s filial (un)metaphor, from this canny angle on this uncanny scene? Despite the speculative tone, these are – and more because of than despite the fact we see the scene of writing in the cry – Real questions.

But ones which do not require an answer here. Instead, to related questions. Even Ferrer, for whom our speculations could only concern in any case some “object, doomed to remain forever inaccessible,” would admit that at least a sort of part-object may be discerned. And the Wake likewise notes, as the implication of speech in “bulgar with your bowels” suggests, that this curiously inverted Freudian word is both in origin and at the level of symptom disturbingly and/or amusingly coincident with fecal matter. Hence the frequent adversions to it in the thunderwords themselves and their immediate contexts, as in III.4’s final iteration of the “root” and “perfect language.” In fact we now understand why, in bellowing this thunder to the famous Prankquean, HCE

Clopped his rude hand to his eacy hitch and he ordurd and his thick
spch spck for her to shut up shop, dappy [23.03].

Here, indeed, is the institution of the patriarchal ordure.

But the paragraph following II.3’s first thunder is perhaps the clearest on this score when it advises

Nephew mind the narrator but give the devil his so long as those sohns
of a blitzh call the tuone tuone and thonder aloud makes the thurd
[314.27].

The Wakean scene in which Shem writes the letter on his body from a mixture of his own urine and feces is sufficiently striking that even many familiar with the text only by reputation are aware of it. In any case; whether it derives from the predilections of the author, as some of his letters suggest, or from Freud or from, most

likely, a resonance of the two, this theme, like others, will reach its apotheosis in the Wake's most central expression.

But before it gets there it makes a pretty good showing in II.3's second anecdote. This shouldn't surprise us if we remember why Buckley shot the Russian General in the first place. Or that in II.3's permutation of the original the former's name – though this effects as well a condensation of which we will shortly become sensible – is Butt. I hope the reader can forgive this rapid descent from high theory to the bathosroom; but the Bride comes before the Fall.

Chapter V

We've discovered a peculiar thing. III.4's primal scene – inspired by “The Wolf Man” and witnessed in and from four “positions” or points of view – is, narratively, one genesis of the Wakean thunder. Taking advantage of the peculiar symmetries that obtain between Freud's scenario and Vico's, Joyce stages the thunder's birth at precisely the “wrong” end of the Wake's temporal text – in other words in the very “last” chapter just before the text yields to its extra-temporal coda in IV – and then traces the growth of this primal cry backwards from III.4's nursery until it becomes the thunder-proper of III.1. III.1's thunder thus does double-duty. Though it marks the “end” of the thunder-scheme if we read conventionally, when we follow the hints of Book III and read backwards, it becomes the first instance of the thunder as it were at the age of majority. It also, recall, constitutes Shaun's actual delivery of the letter from his barrel following his long journey backward in the night.

When we take the thunder's youthful career in Book III into account along with the fully-developed thunderwords, we see that the thunder-scheme does indeed neatly span the entirety of the “temporal” text, from I.1 to III.4. It's appropriate, thus, that we discover that the wedding which marks the climax of the thunder scheme in II.3 is anticipated and recalled at the bounds of the temporal text itself. In a sense the wedding theme picks up either end of the temporal text and folds these into II.3's first anecdote and the “climactic,” thundered name of the Vichian father. The content which we discern at the bounds of the temporal text whose architecture is governed by the thunders thus substantially and deliberately points, as does the formal thunder-scheme itself, to a convergence in the first of II.3's structurally central concrescences,

the first anecdote.

We have yet, however, to take stock of the way in which the “spatial” text – that is, the Wake inclusive of IV – effects an identical convergence, this time of the dialogues, in II.3’s *second* anecdote.

Of course the conspicuous symmetry of the dialogic situation is what suggested II.3’s centrality to Hart in the first place, though for reasons which will become clearer no substantial reading of II.3 – let alone the Wake as a whole – in the light of this idea has been attempted, by Hart or anyone else. But once the idea is taken seriously the rudiments of a convergent dialogic symmetry become immediately obvious at the content level. We will deal with this situation more summarily than we did the triplex wedding scene, partly because our first chapter has already presented some of the rudiments of the dialogic motif and partly because the flanking dialogues present the salient elements more economically.

When we bear in mind that II.3’s second anecdote, the structural center or “epicenter” of the dialogic scheme, represents the Wakean version of John Joyce’s anecdote of Buckley shooting the Russian general, the relationship between the content of the Wake’s two small flanking dialogues in I.1 and IV to the content of the this central or “epicentral” dialogue becomes clear.

Recall the substance of the John Joyce’s original anecdote:

Buckley ... was an Irish soldier in the Crimean War who drew a bead on a Russian general, but when he observed his splendid epaulettes and decorations, he could not bring himself to shoot. After a moment, alive to his duty, he raised his rifle again, but just then the general let down his pants to defecate. The sight of his enemy in so helpless and human

a plight was too much for Buckley, who again lowered his gun. But when the general prepared to finish the operation with a piece of grassy turf, Buckley lost all respect for him and fired [Ellmann 398]

This is the story James was “convinced [was] in some way archetypal” [Ellmann 398], a sense confirmed, recall, by Beckett’s gloss that the meaning of the parable was “another insult to Ireland.”

The dialogues of I.1, II.3 and IV simply concern, respectively, the archeological discovery of the father’s burial, his actual murder (a consequence, as in John’s original, of the sin of defecation), and his eventual awakening and resurrection from the earth in which he’s buried. That is, they present the father’s death in the past, the present and the future tenses.

The flanking dialogues thus naturally advert substantially to the the central murder and its proximate cause. Let’s examine them in turn, beginning with the first dialogue, found in I.1.

* * *

The Flanking Dialogues

Joyce composed the Wake’s “overture” of I.1 in part “to order” for his patron Harriet Shaw Weaver, who suggested as inspiration her own recent visit to a “giant’s grave” in Scotland. Joyce found her suggestion happily convergent with his own themes. Thus I.1’s dialogue, at its close, finds Mutt in the capacity of tour-guide bringing us at last to the murdered father’s grave. The cause of the murder, however,

is revealed as a response to the defecatory sin with which II.3's large central dialogue is chiefly concerned.

Mutt. – ... Old grisly growlsy! He was poached on in that eggtentical spot. ...

Jute. – Simply because ... he dumptied the wholeborrow of rubbages on to soil here. ...

Mutt. – ... Pride, O pride, thy prize!

Jute. – 'Stench! ... 'Zmorde!

Mutt. – ... Here is viceking's graab.

Jute. – Hwaad !

Mutt. – Ore you astoneaged, jute you?

Jute. – Oye am thonthorstrok, thing mud. [16.10]

That the dispatched father was "poached" in that "eggtentical spot" of course recalls his identity as the fallen Humpty-Dumpty, as in I.2's ballad or in and around various of the thunders. In II.3 however we'll discover that HCE has "dumptied" more offensively than Humpty ever did. The defecation, recall, will insult the "old sod," the very turf of Ireland. Here, thus, the father's waste or "rubbages" is dumped to "soil." That the father dumped a "wholeborrow" of rubbages cites the Wake's famous rubbish mound, whose "litter" like the Wake itself, is composed of various borrowings. But here it's also clearly a defecation. Thus it's General Cambronne's famous "*Merde!*" (uttered at Waterloo) that McHugh detects in the "'Zmorde!" that produces the "Stench!" the twins remark.

The principle point of the tour however remains the presentation of the "viceking's

graab” (German “grave”), the ultimate “prize” of “Pride, O pride” for which, as we’ve seen, the surrogate, sinful “vicefather.” has to Fall, in accord with the Biblical scheme. Note that the Fall, as always, is associated with the thunder. In fact Jute’s final confession of being “thonthorstruck” at the sight of the site allies it doubly with the thunder, Thon being an old British version of Thor. When we return to II.3 we’ll want to recall this pointed imbrication of the thunder with the father’s death. But that the dialogue concludes with the thunder is also a reminder that the dialogue and thunder schemes are in a sense simply versions of each other. This in fact has already been stressed in its own way by the dialogue’s introduction, in which our tour-guide is introduced to us ...

In the name of Anem It is evident the michindaddy. ... (Cave!) ...

Let us swop hats and excheck a few strong verbs weak oach eather ...

[15.29].

As McHugh notes, “In the name of Anem” suggests at once “In the name of Adam” and *ainm*, Irish “name.” That “Anem” is itself simply a re-spelling of “name” – and that the “michindaddy” is thus invoked in the name of the Name – insists the theme yet a third time in this brief space. By now the motif of the primordial name – or, for that matter, a name that means “name”) – needs no introduction, nor, perhaps, its association with a “michindaddy.” Nor are we over-reading to detect a familiar conflation here; the speaker – one of the twins – can already discern himself in the Name of the Father through the insistence of German *mich*: “me.” in his father.

This invocation of the theme of the Name – predicated chiefly on the thunder theme derived from Vico – is one example of the coincidence-in-contraries the text so

often exploits. The Wake's opening dialogue is the first term of its most conspicuous architectonic feature, rivaled only by the thunders. Oddly, though, when it comes to any explicit presentation of the chief idea appropriated from the Vichian thunder scene – the primal Word or Name of the Father – the Wake's first thunder demurs. Instead the last and central thunders do more to effect some epiphany of the Name (though I.1's second thunder does ally itself with "the first peace of illiterative porthery"). But the structural scheme that complements the thunders – the scheme of the dialogues – is introduced with a relatively obvious aversion to the Name and its fate. In fact this reciprocal strategy rather cleverly anticipates the eventual convergence of the converging schemes themselves; that is, the convergence of the thunders with the dialogues. For already the dialogues remind that the thunder itself is dialectical at its root, a conversation between the Father and the son whose own echo doubly doubles the Father's Word.

The conflation developed by "michindaddy" shortly becomes however more explicit.

Jute. – Whoa? Whoat is the mutter with you?

Mutt. – I became a stun a stummer.

Jute. – What a hauhauhauhaudibble thing, to be cause! How, Mutt?

Mutt. – Aput the buttle, surd.

Jute. – Whose poddle? Wherein?

Mutt. – The Inns of Dungtarf where Used awe to be he. ... I trumple
from rath in mine mines when I rimimirim!

Apparently suffering from a sort of Vichian shell-shock, the primordial Mutt has

acquired his stutter in consequence of the “buttle” of “The Inns of Dungtarf where Used awe to be he.” Mutt here refers HCE’s inn or pub, where II.3’s second anecdote, like its first, is related. To accord with the memory of the General’s excremental sin, the Irish Battle of Clontarf has become the “buttle” of “Dungtarf.” “Dungtarf” neatly condenses the excrement with the insulted turf. The transmutation of “battle” to “buttle” is similarly motivated, though there’s another implication as well. In II.3, Mutt will become Butt, and in this capacity will shoot his father for the latter’s insult to Ireland.

Mutt hasn’t forgotten this – here, curiously ancient – insult. Even here, thus, he remarks of the offending father, “I trumple from rath in mine mines when I rimimirim!” But as McHugh notes, *mi rimiro* is Italian for “I look at myself.” Mutt himself, thus, is the General he remembers. After all, as he confesses, “Used awe to be he” or “used I to be he.” (McHugh detects “you ought to be he;” which would suggest the conflation of the other son as well.) As we’ll see, the identity of Butt and the Father he undoes occasions some of II.3’s subtlest play.

As the dialogue ends the text adds, as it often does, a salient detail in the frame. The first word of the resumed text is set aside by parentheses:

(Stoop) [18.17]

As will be precisely echoed in the central dialogue, the final occasion of the father’s fall is at first no more than a tendency to “stoop.” But as the full import of the framing gesture here also depends on the parallax provided by its echo in the structure’s other term, we may as well turn now to the dialogue of IV.

As I.1’s dialogue concerns the past, IV’s symmetrically anticipates (and in a sense

arrives at) the future and the father's resurrection. Hence its introduction looks forward to the hour ...

When the messenger of the risen sun ... shall give ... to each happening her houram. The while we, we are waiting, we are waiting for. Hymn [609.19].

When Finnegans wakes he wakes in part as the most famously resurrected Father of all: the Risen Son. But the Son is the Word, and the Word is the Wake, still known generally at the time of its publication as "Work in Progress."

Muta: ... An I could peecieve amonkst the gatherings who ever they wolk in process?

Juva: ... It is the Chrystanthemland ... moveyovering the cabattlefield of slaine.

Muta: Pongo da Banza! ...

Juva: Bulkily: and he is fundementially theosophagusted over the ... proceedings [609.30].

The site is still II.3's battle with the General/Father remembered in the first dialogue's "buttle" of "Dungtarf" and here as the "cabattlefield of slaine." The sense of a death is clear enough, but Slane, as McHugh remarks, is also where St. Patrick challenged the Druids. (The pertinence of the Dublin district of Cabra eludes me.) But as the Father triumphs over his death here he is even more pointedly conflated with the son. In fact he is "Bulkily;" that is, II.3's Buckley or Butt, but simultaneously

II.3's giant HCE, if we are able to recall the "bulkily hulkwight" [310.26] who mans the bar. But in case we miss this consubstantial gesture the dialogue immediately re-emphasizes it.

Muta: ... Who his dickhuns now rearrexes from underneath the memorialorum?

Juva: ... He has help his crewn on the burkely buy but he has holf his crown on the Eurasian Generalissimo. ...

In the first dialogue the "hats" were "swopped." Here, the crown is split. Thus IV "rearrexes" I.1's "viceking" with "help his crewn on the burkely buy but ... holf his crown on the Eurasian Generalissimo;" in other words half "burkely," or Buckley "buy" way of "but" or Butt, and "holf" the Russian General.

The site of the resurrection is still II.3's "buttle," occasioned by the General's defecation. So despite the pious overtones some mortal "Stench!" of this original sin remains. Muta thus remarks the "Pongo" or pong. In fact his disgust may go so far as nausea: as McHugh observes, *ponga da panza* is Italian "I put from the belly." Further, "Bulkily" himself remains "fundementially theosophagusted;" that is, fundamentally disgusted at God the Father's (and thus his own) fundament.

The substance of IV's dialogue seconds I.1's in pointing toward the central murder and its cause. But its frame also echoes the first dialogue's return of the text-proper. In I.1 this was "(Stoop)." Here, it's ...

Shoot.

Rhythm and Colour at Park Mooting. Peredos Last in the Grand

Natural. Velevision victor. [610.30]

IV's device is more obviously an aversion to the central murder. In context, however, "Shoot" also implies the triumph of a particular medium: film, as in III.4's primal scene. An odd technological prescience however suggests that it is more precisely "Velevision" which has proved the "victor," and the triumph of this particular kind of visuality will prove characteristic of II.3's second anecdote.

In any case, when we take the dialogic contents as a whole, it's clear that Hart's sense of convergence on some "central cataclysmic conflict" is justified. At first, admittedly, it seems odd that II.3 should feature a battle at all. Wasn't the wedding supposed to effect "pacts" between the consubstantial, warring trinity of father and sons?

Yes. But the cyclical nature of the Wake seems to demand that every time peace is achieved it's followed immediately by resumed hostilities. In fact this is suggested if we go back and reread II.1's prophecy of II.3's irenic marriage to its conclusion.

[T]he Radium Wedding of Neid and Moorning and the Dawn of Peace, Pure, Perfect and Perpetual, Waking the Weary of the World.

An argument follows [222.11].

To that argument or "battle," staged in II.3's second anecdote, we will now turn.

* * *

The Abnihilisation of the Etym

Slowly and with relentless patience. At this point we are at last prepared to read the dialogue which Hart, though treating of its content not at all, long ago suggested as the structural centerpiece of *Finnegans Wake*.

Something fairly enormous – some “cataclysmic conflict” as Hart puts it – does obviously occur in II.3, just as he suggests. It’s well-recognized by criticism and is in fact one species of the sort of thing that critics who enjoy architectonic meditations like to find happening at crucial points in novels. It’s precisely what happens in the mathematical center of, for instance, *The Brothers Karamazov*: the murder of the father.

Indeed this act is so obvious and so obviously central, if only in an architectonic way, that it should (but apparently doesn’t) offer itself as the readiest answer to the question of which an answer is so often despaired: What, at the naturalistic plot level, *happens* in *Finnegans Wake*? The standard response to this question used to be some permutation of events concerning the fortunes of a Chapelizod innkeeper and his family, but has over time (and only partly under the influence of post-structuralism) tended toward a dismissal or pedagogical correction of the question’s naivete. When the structure of the book as proposed by Hart is taken more fully into account, however, a good answer might be an analogue of the answer to the same question asked of *The Brothers Karamazov*: a father is killed, his sons – though there’s some confusion as to which – are implicated, and a variety of circumstances and meditations precipitate and devolve from these facts.

And, as in Dostoevsky, the parricide is a tale within a tale. We find ourselves once

more in HCE's public house, and his customers call for the second tale.

We want Bud. We want Bud Budderly. ... The man that shunned the
rucks on Gereland. The man thut won the bettllle of the bawll. ... We
call on Tancred Artaxerxes Flavin to compeer with Barnabas Ulick
Dunne. ... How Burghley shuck the rackushant Germanon. For Ehren,
boys, gobrawl! [337.32]

In this anecdote, more than the first, the father is supplanted in his telling by a version of the son, though this usurpation is not utter. The twins, here Butt and Taff, fuse when they "compeer" as "**Tancred Artaxerxes Flavin**" and "**Barnabas Ulick Dunne**" they actually constitute HCE as barkeep or "Milster Malster," who still has "the chair." But of the three consubstantial males it is "Bud" or Butt the customers chiefly demand, for it is he who will actually fire the shot.

Butt is primarily Shaun or, as the passage above reminds, the victor in "the bettllle of the bawll." Of course he will be the victor in the "bettllle" of this central dialogue, anticipated by the "bettllle" of the first and the "cabrattlefield" of the last dialogue. But the phrase also suggests that he won the belle of the ball because of Shaun's role in the elaborate dance-*cum*-children's game of II.1, where he wins Issy's hand by guessing, to Shem's discomfiture, the color of her undergarments and her secret word, the famous "heliotrope." Lastly, "bawll" suggests once more III.4's primal cry that would become the thunder and delivered Letter of III.1. As we've already seen, Shaun seems to usurp it authorship. His success is eventually equivocal; but in any case II.3's battle will also, it turns out, involve yet another version of this cry. For III.4's cry, recall, was, like the Wolfman's, conflated with defecation. In yet another reversal of father

and son roles, thus, HCE's defecation here will prove a version of III.4 own fecalized "bawll."

The reader may recall that III's battle for the authority of the cry was also a battle of contending media, Shaun's ear versus Shem's eye. This battle continues here, to an extent, and as previously seems at last to favor the eye, though this time both brothers find themselves on the side of sight against their father, who as we'll see has been situated in the aural register. The twins collaboration in the visual is established as soon as the introductory passage above, when they are asked to "compeer;" that is, to join forces as peers while they peer at the scene that will unfold. For as was the case in III.4, the frame of a conspicuously visual technology surrounds this anecdote; here not film, but television. (Joyce's "anticipation," as has been demonstrated, is not as striking as it first seems: he was up-to-date with innovations in media – at one time he determined to open Ireland's first cinema – and followed with interest the accounts of television's early development.)

In emphasizing sight II.3's second anecdote contrasts sharply with the chapter's first, whose medium is conspicuously aural: the radio which broadcasts among other things the "Welter focussed." Thus in telling the first anecdote HCE becomes a sort of radio himself. This effect has been examined at length, by John Bishop among others, and occupies much of the chapter's first two pages, in which the ears of HCE as the "harmonic condenser enginium" [310.01] become antennae that let the word "pinnatrate" [310.09] the "conch" [310.12] of the "tympan founder" [310.11], and the aptly named Earwicker rebroadcasts the word through his "vitaltone speaker."

The contrast in media that characterizes the anecdotes reflects the fact that they form the foci of the thunders and the dialogues respectively. Thunder, whose structural convergence is effected in the first dialogue, is of course an aural

phenomenon (as is, in consequence, Vico's origin of language). The dialogues, on the other hand, despite the fact that they are after all dialogues, uniformly involve precisely the presentation of some *scene* – in each case involving the dead father – by one twin to the other. In fact, this contrast in turn has produced, intentionally or not, a textual effect not perhaps without consequences for criticism. *Finnegans Wake*, like all books, is not at last an audible but instead a visual phenomenon, whatever subsequent translations to the audible imagination a reader may effect. And though the thunders are visually conspicuous when contrasted with the “ordinary” words that form their contexts, they are not highlighted by any other particularly visual device that would separate them from the bulk of the text. Thus they do not leap out at the eye to the degree that the dialogues – whose form, as we've discussed, makes them particularly recognizable at a glance – do. This visibility, combined with a simpler structural situation, has occasioned the intelligibility of the dialogues to the critic architectonically inclined, whereas the auditory thunders have remained paradoxically mute.

One more remark in this respect: as the foci of the thunders and dialogues respectively, II.3's first and second anecdotes likewise form the respective centers of what we have been calling, following the suggestions of Hart's analysis, the “temporal” and “spatial” (or sometimes “temporal” and “extratemporal”) texts. The thunders, recall, span I.1 through III.4, whereas the dialogues – congruent with the doubled-thunders in their placements in I.1 and II.3 – eschew III.4 for IV, which forms a sort of coda to the text proper and which Hart has justly characterized as an extratemporal *sandhi* or lull between successive Hindu ages. As in previous Joycean meditations – and in accord with the esthetic divisions of Lessing which inspired them – the ear becomes the organ of the temporal medium and the eye of the spatial, as in

Stephen's musings on the beach in *Proteus* or epiphany as visual stasis in the esthetic manifestoes of *Portrait*.

At the content level, II.3's respective anecdotes do not particularly stress a temporal/spatial or temporal/extratemporal division. In both, time seems to come to a sort of center (though in the second it also comes near eternity, as we'll see). Instead, the difference between time and space (or time and eternity) obtains much more sharply when we contrast II.3 with II.2, the latter also being far and away the Wake's most visual zone. In II.3, on the other hand, a certain kind of centripetal time is featured in both the first anecdote and the second; and so, thus, does the thunder, though in a very curious way: the thunder-scheme insinuates itself into the dialectical scheme.

The very first dialogue, recall, has taught us to anticipate something of the sort, when it introduces itself through the evocation of the Name and concludes with Jutta's exclamation that he is "thonthorstruck." And indeed: though no thunderword graces II.3's second anecdote at all, a series of allusions – many within the central dialogue itself – lead us to expect one. What we will find instead, however, is the strikingly determinate negation of the thunder *as its own absence*. This is a neat trick, and as we'll see has been anticipated from the very inception of the theme of the Name. We must however still defer its revelation for a space.

In any case despite all the foregoing we can at least say with assurance that whereas the content of II.3's first anecdote – the site of the central pair of doubled-thunders – privileges the ear, the content of the second – the site of the central dialogue – privileges the eye. In the first a story is told, in the second a story is seen. The first medium is radio, the second television. The final situation of the respective media is not, however, entirely symmetric. Instead, as the order of the anecdotes itself

would imply, the visible seems to get the last word.

The idea has not entirely gone out of fashion that *Finnegans Wake* is a primarily aural production. Joyce himself once suggested that reading the text aloud was helpful in its apprehension, and of course snatches of song, allusion by slant-rhyme and all the tricks of prosody are deployed now and again to help us “lift we our ears, eyes of the darkness, from the tome” [14.29]. But on the whole, the text seems more concerned to return attention to the material character of the tome itself. And this, by its very nature as writing, cannot help but be visual.

Joyce’s famously awful eyesight had deteriorated by the time of publication to near blindness. One would expect his revenge on the sense that had betrayed him; but it doesn’t come. Various readers have cited the author’s glaucoma as proof-before-the-fact of the *Wake*’s elevation of the ear, but at last the text will not bear such a reading out – in fact the notion has obscured the text’s central epiphany. Though this will be in its way a strangely audible vision as Shem’s was a strangely legible cry, its preference is at last unmistakably for the eye.

There are perhaps various reasons for this asymmetry. One of them, as we’ve suggested above, seems to be Joyce’s close attention to the specific material of his medium, which, *qua* writing, is visual. This consideration itself however seems to become involved in part with what we have begun to recognize as in part a deliberate usurpation or undoing of Vico, whose “root language” of the omnipotent Father is, after all, exclusively audible. As the first dialogue has already indicated, the thunder is, for some reason, on account of its very audibility faintly malign. For when Muta confesses to being, like Vico’s primordial man, a stutterer or stammerer (“a stun a stummer”), Jutta replies, “What a hauhauhaudibble thing to because!” On the one hand, he seems to be mocking the stuttering of this primordial audible word as the

word itself is prolonged into a kind of laughter. On the other he's condemning it outright as "a horrible thing."

In fact this animus, as we've suggested, is part of the reason the Father has to die. John Bishop has, with justice, devoted a great deal of useful exegesis to the theme of HCE's association with the ear. In a sense this bias is evident as soon as we consider his surname – Earwicker – whose suggestion Bishop duly notes. For Bishop this audibility is a consequence precisely of the fact that *Finnegans Wake* is, as Bishop's title suggests, a "Book of the Dark;" that is, it takes place at night, when the eyes are closed but the ears continue to subliminally record events.

This is a powerful insight, and a useful one. It is, however, incomplete, if it does not at last take some account of the fact that Finnegans, as the title suggests after all, wakes. The result is that though the bulk of Wakean time is spent in the register of the ear, it is through various hints constantly preparing for the triumph of the eye. Thus Shaun seems to hold forth with uninterrupted braggadocio through the bulk of III, only to find that his eventual delivery of the Letter cannot help but feature the return of the visual, written word which paradoxically characterized Shem's first cry in III.4. The question thus becomes: where, precisely, does Finnegans wake? Precisely where is the rebirth hinted in the title effected?

As the association of the ear with time would suggest, the awakening happens in those zones which the Wake itself has coded as extratemporal. Thus, as criticism already recognizes, the awakening is in part the province of the eternal *sandhi* of IV. As it develops though, IV is not the site of the awakening's most decisive presentation. Instead, as we have variously hinted, this occurs in II.2 which is also, of course, the Wake's most conspicuously visual chapter. In fact, this chapter seems to be precisely where the Father passes from death into life. The ear, in contrast, proves

the occasion of the Father's passage precisely into death. As the avatar of the audible thunder whose authority at last must be usurped, the aptly named Earwicker, himself condensed entirely into the audible register by his translation to a radio in the beginning of II.3, must be killed, and, as the last dialogue – stationed in “extratemporal” IV – asserts, “velevision” must prove “victor.”

At least one crucial characteristic of the ear, however, is retained in the triumphs of the eye that mark II.3 and (more decisively) II.2. This is the kinesis of time. Stephen's aesthetics in *Portrait*, recall, take this as anathema, the index of the desire or loathing which must be excised to leave the viewer enraptured by “the luminous silent stasis of esthetic pleasure” [P 231]. But III.4's scenes, being, after all, movies, are precisely “moving pictures;” we might even say we view them through a kinescope. II.3's televised action is likewise precisely that, and thus dynamic, and in a curious way the element of motion will be crucially constitutive – indeed indispensable – for the central revelation of II.2, the Wake's most visual chapter.

Nevertheless, HCE's ostensibly innocent identification with a radio in the first anecdote is, apparently, one of the reasons he's killed in the televisual dialogue of the second. “Television kills telephony in brothers' boil. Our eyes demand their turn” [52.18]; or, as we've seen the Wake's last dialogue more economically observe, “Velevision victor.” The dialogue that constitutes II.3's second anecdote thus leaves no doubt about its medium, situating itself in the visual register from its very first lines. As in all the dialogues, one twin makes the other privy to some scene.

TAFF (... *looking through the roof towards a relevation of the karmalife order ... byway of ... solation to the rhyttel in his hedde.*) All was flashing and krashning ... What see, buttywalch? Tell ever so

often?

BUTT (*mottledged youth, clerigical appealnce ...*) But da. But
dada. [338.5-13]

Throughout the dialogue Shaun, or Butt, will be eyewitness to and agent of the events related, telling Taff or Shem – the original framer of “the first and last rittlerattle of the anniverse” here still looking for the “*solation to the rhyttel in his hedd*” – what’s going on.

Taff however can at least see well enough to recognize that we are once more at the scene of the primordial thunder. “All was flashing and krashning.” But the chaos of the scene confuses him, so he asks for help: “What see, buttywalch? Tell ever so often?” Butt’s response – his first words in the dialogue – is that he sees “But da. But dada.” And by now we recognize the pattern whereby this economical despatch from the front lines is packed with implication.

First, of course, Butt sees his own father; that is, Butt’s father or “But da.” But his stuttering, itself evocative of the thunder, also produces the most common Irish vernacular name of the father – “Da” – whose iteration echoes Vico’s “Pa! Pa!.” So the first and possibly most important answer to Shem’s questions and our own locates us once more – and this time from the beginning with special clarity – at the site of the reception of the Word.

Various other effects attend Butt’s first enunciation. Some of these seem to strangely recall or anticipate the words of other fathers in the faintly numinous way the Wake sometimes pulls off. We can’t allow ourselves to be too distracted by the effect at the moment, but we can quickly note what follows from translation of this seme (whose decontextualized brevity is doubtless in part to blame for its ubiquitous

reference). As McHugh notes Shaun is also just saying “There! There!” in German, indicating the General (who despite his status as *da* will not so much emerge from a *fort* as eventually go into one). That “da” is repeated three times recalls the Buddhist riddle of the thunder that Eliot famously cites. We know Joyce was familiar with Eliot’s poem. Does he allude to it? Perhaps. The most amusing translation however is in any case the most likely: the Russian, occasioned by the presence of the General himself.

We’ve already seen that the Wake has built II.3 to be the place where the thundered Name of the Father comes to its most explicit and faithful citation of the original in the “Pappappappa” that closes the first anecdote. The second opens with a similar move, in some ways even more faithful in that the name is doubled in precisely the way Vico’s is. First the celestial “Pa!” and then the terrified stutter of the terrestrial “Pa! Pa!” Obviously II.3 is going to be very concerned with this origin of language. It will even seem to situate itself at the origin, end and center of time. If, however, we realize that the father here speaks Russian, we realize that the Word that begins all language and thus inhabits all succeeding utterance is not one word but two, answering each other from the beginning of time: “Yes ... yes.”

Well, that’s just silly. Derrida doesn’t even cite this passage (except perhaps in the first and last terms of his own name) in his catalogue of the quasi-primordial Joycean “yes.” So either he didn’t read it (but we’re pretty sure he did, however quickly) or he read it and forgot about it or he read it and half-forgot about it or he’s having a little bit of fun being coy or he *really is* on to something genuinely characteristic of the general Joycean text or the general Joycean text has situated itself with particular comfort in the long tradition of the traversing and interpellating Word or it’s just a coincidence. It’s hard to say (partly because I’m out of breath); but in any case this

isn't just *any* old Wakean citation of the Name of the Father. It inaugurates the central and most crucial instance of the Wake's most visually accessible structural gesture, the one that gave Hart his ideas in the first place. And as is perhaps by now needless to say, the entire dialogue will indeed boil down by its conclusion to a question of the fate of the Name with which it begins.

But whether or not Eliot or Freud or Derrida or the Buddha have addended themselves as signatories to this particular effect, someone else certainly has: the son. Somewhat like Blazes, or the "mac" of the Wake's seventh thunder, he's determined to graft himself into patrimony, which he does simply by saying his own name, like God's, twice (of course it's useful that his name is a common conjunction): "But da. But dada." Thus Taff's rejoinder immediately picks up the theme.

TAFF ... Butly bitly! Humme to our mounthings [338.15].

"Humme" is HCE: recall his introduction as "Humme the Cheapner, Esquire." Glossing "Humme to our mounthings" McHugh recalls the song "Home to Our Mountains." Thus HCE is again, as in the chapter's introduction, "a man that means a mountain," though here he's described as or juxtaposed with Buckley/Butt as "Butly bitly." But that "mountains" becomes "mounthings" is our first hint that time and the thunder are not the only elements from II.3's first anecdote to bleed over into its second. So does the marriage theme, which proved at last the theme of intercourse, and most clearly at the end of the entire temporal text in III.4's primal scene. Thus Taff goes on to remember that ...

that man d'airain was big top tom saw tip side bum boss pageantfiller.

Ajaculate! ... And may he too be an intrepidation of our dreams that we
foregot on wiking ... [338.26].

The Freudian gloss is also clear enough, perhaps even some citation of the Wolf
Man's *a tergo* in "saw ... bum." Remember though that HCE will be doubly a "bum
boss" here: the aggravating thing about this authority figure is precisely his
defecation. Context tends to embroil this too however in III.4's primal scene. For
when Taff recalls the tendency of the "bum boss" to "Ajaculate!" he effects precisely
the "intrepidation of our dreams that we forgot on wiking." II.3's becomes the
manifest to III.4's latent content. Like the Wolf Man under Freud's direction, Taff,
inspired by his brother's vision, finds himself trying to remember the original occasion.

TAFF (*a blackseer, he stroves to regulect all the straggles for wife in
the rut of the past ... whatwidth the psychophannies at the front ...
illcertain ... where he sees Bishop Ribboncake ... going forth on his
visitations of mirrage or Miss Horizon ... unsheathing a showlaced
limbaloft ...*). Divulge! Hyededye ... [340.13-25].

Thus during II.3's battle-scenes Taff is experiencing curiously condensed
"*psychophannies at the front*" or, appropriately, psychoanalytical epiphanies.
("Phannies at the front" also likely recalls the infantile idea of genitalia in the "front
bums" of Little Hans.)

Taff may still be "*illcertain*" what this visual replay of the first anecdote's
"*mirrage*" implies, but if we recognize the echoes of Bloom's excited "Show! Hide!"
in Taff's own "Divulge! Hyededye," we're not. And neither is Taff, really. Presented

with the scene he reacts precisely as he did in III.4 when Shaun pointed out he was “tremblotting, you retchad, like a verry jerry.” As he confesses here, “I trumble!” [341.09].

This trembling seems to be a characteristic reaction to the primal scene, this time staged as a faintly oedipal horse race. Readers may recall that Joyce is fond of the parallel. Just before Blazes and Molly utter their climactic “thunderwords” in *Nighttown* Lydia observes, “O, he’s carrying her around the room doing it. Ride a cockhorse” [U 462].

The climax here is the finish of the race. And as in *Nighttown* we hear a sound we’ve come to recognize as an early version of the thunder. That is, we hear III.4’s fecalized cry of dismay in reaction to the primal scene, here ...

a shote of excramation! Bumbchub! Emancipator, the Creman hunter (Major Herman C. Entwhistle) with dramatic effect reproducing the form of famous sires on the scene of the formers triumphs Sinkathinks to oppen here! To this virgin’s tuft ... ! I never sought of sinkathink. Our lorkmakor he is proformly annuysed. He is shinkly thinkly shaking ... This eeridreme has being effered you by Bett and Tipp. Tipp and Bett, our swapstick quackchancers, in From Topphole to Bottom of The Irish Race and World [342.19].

As with the Wolf Man, an “eeridreme” recalls the sight of the father in the act *a tergo*; hence the sight of his “*Bumchub!*”

Once again, it seems, congress will be in the service of reproduction; though that it is “*with dramatic effect reproducing the form of famous sires on the scene of the*

formers triumphs” also suggest the persistence of identification and usurpation.

Though “*Our lorkamkor*” may be a Lord Mayor or – in keeping with the General’s military caste – a Lord Major, he is also certainly Our Lord and Maker. But though his reaction to the witnessed act of paternity resemble that of Vico’s Father, it’s more clearly that of Freud’s son. Whether or not it’s “*Our lorkmakor*” who has uttered the “*shote of excramation*,” he is, like the Jerry who gave III.4’s primal, excremental shout, once more trembling – here “*shaking*” – at what he sees. But of course it’s what he says when he sees that is of more interest to us here.

The “*shote of excramation*” is particularly useful in effecting the condensation of Freud’s vignette with John Joyce’s, for it’s not just a shout but a shot. In some peculiar way the scene of the assassination itself will prove an instance of the Vichian thunder, precisely as was III.4’s primal cry.

Though the equation will become more explicit, the stuttering thunder already conditions Butt’s first account of the offending act itself.

“First he s s st steppes. Then he st stoo stoopt. Lookt” [339.30].

Here, incidentally, is the fateful “(Stoop)” foretold from the first dialogue, which will precipitate the “Shoot” remembered in the last. Once again it’s specifically a scene being “Lookt” at. In this case, specifically, it’s our first glimpse of the “Warful doon’s bothem” [340.09].

But at this point, as the General bends at last toward his business, another identity emerges: the Father of the Church and chiefly, at first, the Pope, as damned as he is in Dante.

This conflation of the Pope with the defecating General is suggested elsewhere.

Shem might well wonder, as he does in III.1, “Was he come to hevve with his engiles or gone to hull with the poop?” [416.31]. II.4’s equation is “General Bonaboche, (noo poopery!)” [388.21]. That is, like the Bonaparte who took the crown from the Pope’s hand to crown himself emperor, HCE has usurped the office of the Papal Father himself, in fecalized terms saying “no” to Popery while making himself the New Pope. In fact the Miltonic “mortal scene” Butt/Buckley witnesses in II.3 is precisely the Father’s “poopery.”

[H]e was ... lyoking for a stooleazy for to ... salubrate himself with an
 ultradungs heavenly mass at his base by a supprime pompship chorams
 the perished popes ... and when I heard his lewdbrogue reciping his
 cheap cheatery gospels to sintry and santry ... be the homely
 Churopodvas... I no sooner seen aghist of his frighteousness then I was
 bibbering with veer a few versets ... Of manifest ‘tis obedience and the.
 Flute! [343.26-36].

Like Napoleon, General HCE will “salubrate himself” with “supprime pompship.” Note too that HCE’s black “mass” is a “lewdbrogue;” not just a lewd or “root language” but loud speech – that is, the cry or “shote.”

But an eventually crucial variation on the “poopery” takes place in the first of the dialogue’s two fusions of the twins. After a final sight of the father “like a brandylogged rudeman cathargic ... expousing his old skinful self tailtottom by manurevring in open ordure [344.14]” (still a defecating Catholic but now sporting the wolf’s tail and the “tottom” or totem of the Freudian scene) HCE is less seen than “teilweisioned” [345.36] while the twins, alternating in a sort of vortical current,

become themselves the photoluminescent guns bombarding the screen with his image while bombarding the image itself. Though the assassination has not yet been effected, the father is curiously summoned as a sort of ghost in the Wake's most thorough – almost obsessive – description of the medium of television.

[In the heliotropical noughttime following a fade of transformed Tuff and, pending its viseversion, a metenergic reglow of beaming Batt, the bairdboard bombardment screen, if tastefully taut guranium satin, tends to teleframe and step up to the charge of a light barricade. Down the photoslope in syncopanc pulses, with the bitts bugtwug their teffs, the missledhropes, glitteraglatteglutt, borne by their carnier walve. Spraygun rakes and splits them from a double focus ... and the scanning firespot of the sgunners traverses the rutilanced illustred sunksundered lines. ... Amid a fluorescence of spectracular mephiticism there caoculates through the inconoscope stealdily a still, the figure of a fellowchap in the wohly ghast, Popey O'Donoshough, the jesuneral of the russuates. The idolon exhibisces the seals of his orders ... for the castomercies mudwake surveice [H]e confesses to all his tellavicious nieces.] [349.07].

At this point the father in fact goes on to tell his vices in a “tellavicious” confession that is too long and iterative to reproduce; suffice it to say that he “confesses” again and again.

But also note that the Russian General has become “the jesuneral of the russuates;” that is, the General of the Jesuits. His title of General would be enough perhaps to

recommend him as part of the Father's identity in this anecdote.. But given Joyce's Jesuit education we might suspect some additional import, and this will in fact emerge. In any case the Pope and the General of the Jesuits are assimilated via "a fellowchap in the wohly ghastr." "Popey O'Donoshough" becomes the lay-name of the General of the Jesuits, who conducts the "mass" of this "the castomercies mudwake surveice."

It is in this office that the Father meets his fatal hour, when Butt exultantly informs us at last that ...

I shuttm, missus, like a wide sleever! Hump to dump! Tumbleheaver!

[352.14]

Humpty-Dumpty was pushed, and it is his son who as the "Tumbleheaver!" has precipitated the Fall.

The offending "dump" and the resulting murder immediately ensue:

BUTT ... For when meseemim, and tolfoklokken rolland allover ourloud's lande, beheaving up that sob of tunf for to claimhis, for to wollpimsollf ... and untuoning his culothone in an exituous erseroyal *Deo Jupto*. At that instullt to Igorladns ... I ups with my crozzier. Mirrdo! With my how on armer and hits leg an arrow ... Sparro!

[353.15].

Butt has witnessed the act which finally caused the original Buckley to shoot, when HCE, having defecated, is now seen "beheaving up that sob of tunf for to claimhis, for

to wollpimselfff'; that is, preparing to clean his – well, to wipe himself with a sod of turf. Butt interprets the act as Beckett did – as “that instullt to Igorladns!” In a parody of “Who Shot Cock Robin” Butt exclaims in Italian “Sparro!” – “I shoot!” and brings on the apocalypse toward which the entire dialogue and to a great extent the entirety of the Wake itself has been moving:

*[The abnihilization of the etym by the grisning of the grosning of
the grinder of the grunder of the first lord of Hurtreford
expolodotonates through Parsuralia with an
ivanmorinthorrorumble fragorombassity amidwhiches general
uttermosts confussion are perceivable moletons skaping with
mulicules while coventry pumpkins fairlygosmotherthemselves
Similar scenatas are projectilized from Hullulullu, Bawlawayo,
empyrean Raum and mordern Atems. They were precisely the
twelves of clocks, noon minutes, none seconds. ...] [353.22]*

At this point the twins promptly fuse in II.3's most unequivocal representation of their synthesis. They have become neither Butt nor Taff but ...

*BUTT and TAFF (... now one and the same person ... umbraged by
the shadow of Old Erssia's magisquamythical mulatomilitiaman ... as
... he falls ...) [354.07]*

By Hart's lights, we have reached the center of *Finnegans Wake*. What, precisely, is this most decisive and structurally central of all of the Wakean falls? How

precisely is the Father killed?

By “*The abnihilization of the etym.*” This is the gesture toward which the entire structural and semantic apparatus of the Wake has been constrained: the obliteration of the Word of the Father, or more precisely – when we follow the very “etym” of etymology – the obliteration of his Name.

Structure’s poise here is extraordinary. Note the symmetry. The thunder scheme converges in the first of II.3’s vignettes, whose climactic and genetically terminal second thunder constitutes the Wake’s most obvious and faithful gesture towards the original Vichian Name of the Father. This Name is uttered at the climax of the sin for which the father must take the Fall. Then the answering dialogic scheme – that scheme which first suggested to Hart the chief centripetal features of the Wake’s structure – stages the Name’s destruction. And as is now obvious, this destruction has been long anticipated; not just by the smaller flanking dialogues, but from our very first introduction to HCE as the bearer of a “naym” whose self-negation anticipates the crucial act at this crucial point of convergence. The Wake’s “temporal” and “spatial” architectonics alike have been constrained into a single gesture whose epitome implicates the doubled-structure of the entire text into the doubled-structure of II.3, which here performs the synthesis forecast from the chapter’s first full paragraph. The thunder’s ultimate expression comes at the climax of the “height of his life from a bride’s eye stammpunct,” at which point the resulting Fall – the “pride ... that begs the glory of a wake” -- precipitates us not just into death but into the utter undoing of that ultimate expression.

When we review the degree to which the Wake’s content commits itself to the theme of the Name – its birth, its death, its saying, its unsaying, the identities it conflates and usurps by the dissolution of psychological into alphabetical character –

we begin to understand the extent of this undoing. Not simply the large, governing structural devices but a great deal of the interstitial text is devoted to an idea that seems at last to destroy itself.

The broad import of the gesture is clear enough. This is the largest *non serviam* the artist of the Word could make: the very destruction of language. The ultimate, the most comprehensive irony, perhaps: the unsaying of saying *per se*.

But if this is all, the best *we* can say is that the whole affair resembles the faintly Nietzschean madness of a literary Alexander with no worlds left to conquer and resolved to usurp even *himself*, his last and worthiest foe. The *worst* we can say has already been said many times, but best, perhaps, by Joyce's brother Stanislaus.

Gorman's book on you practically proclaims your work as the last word in modern literature. It may be the last word in another sense, the witless wandering of literature before its final extinction [Ellmann 577].

In light of our reading our only amendment to the diagnosis would be that at a crucial moment the patient apparently recovers the wit to self-administer a final, merciful bullet to the head.

But seventeen years of composition, to say nothing of the time required to decipher. Is this linguistic suicide really all there is?

The chief problem with a structural assessment of *Finnegans Wake* which would stop at II.3 (aside from the fact that it doesn't fully understand the Wake's structure) is that it stops at the gesture of negation. The nihilism of an "*abnihilation*" is of course eminently recuperable by contemporary readers, academic and otherwise. But this is simply an enormous misconstruction of what the Wake at last effects. Nor, despite

countless pronouncements of the kind tendered even by its apologists, does it deploy its enormous resources – and the labor whose costs Ellmann tallies – to produce a series of trivial jokes. The jokes abound, of course, and are delightful – at least to some – as are the trivia of all kinds.

But a thorough understanding of the Wake's structure reveals a revolution in language as profound as the development of writing itself, and in principle, at least – though the principle may never be so thoroughly exploited again – as influential.

This gesture, at once the supreme synthesis of the Wake's structural devices and its definitive content, is of course effected in II.2, the highly visual chapter toward which our investigations have tended from the first. But before moving at last to the Wake's ultimate epiphany we must take further stock of its gesture of destruction. For in it we discern already an enormous synthesis of various themes; not just from the Wake, but from all of Joyce's fiction. And without appraising these we cannot understand the Wake's final revolution.

First, this gesture of destruction remains in a sense the Name which it destroys. For the very "abnihilation of the etym" is itself an instance of the thunder. Thus its "*confussion*" "*expolodotonates ... with an ivanmorinthorrorumble fragorombassity.*" Joyce's jujitsu has conscripted the thunder against itself to effect a part of the usurpation already suggested by the Freudian inversion of the Vichian scene. This Freudian scene has been by now thoroughly imbricated with the Father's assassination in II.3. But this does not simply situate the Father's murder as an oedipal revolt. Just as important – perhaps more so – is the way in which the exposure of the thunder's roots in III.4 is *itself* a revolutionary gesture, one which arrogates the word *not* to the Father but the son. And as Shem's original cry persistently emerges in penitence through Shaun's attempted usurpations in Book III, so the General's sin in II.3,

already linked to III.4's primal scene by the happy (if that's the word) coincidence of defecation in both scenarios, becomes itself a version of the primal cry. As II.3's thunder has warned from the first, "thonder alout makes the thurd." Aspects of the Wake's thunder "terms" have likewise pointed toward this conflation since our first reading. If the "last word of perfect language" starts out "Ullhodenturd," it's also true that in sounding I.1's second thunder HCE "ordurd and his thick spch spck for her to shut up shop, dappy. "And that was the first peace of illiterative porthery in all the flamend floody flatuous world."

II.3's own most unequivocal conflation of the Father's act with the primal cry that will become the thunder comes in the climactic scene that is the proximate cause of the murder. The central act of John Joyce's original anecdote coincides with its Wakean appropriation when Butt actually sees the General's "insoullt" to "the Old Sod" of Ireland. As Butt puts it,

meseemim ... beheaving up that sob of tunf for to claimhis, for to wollpimsollf
... and untuoning his culothone in an exituous erseroyal *Deo Jupto.*" [353.15]

McHugh is able to detect an unusual density of polyglottal condensations in this area. The tuoni of "untuoning" for example yields both Italian "thunders" and a Finnish figure of death. That "turf" becomes "tunf" probably acknowledges the thunder again, which showed up as Old Romanian "tun" in the Wake's first thunder; though since McHugh detects Irish *ton* or "arse" in "culothone" (which detection is perhaps assisted by the ensuing "erseroyal" or "Royal Irish Ass" familiar to fans of *Ulysses*) the "tunf" also probably bears this signature of its fated end. The Vichian thunder-god is obviously enough adduced in "*Deo Jupto.*"

But the most loaded condensation is the “sob.” The “sod of turf” from the original has thus become not just a strangely fecalized thunder but of course the “sob of tunf” or primal cry, itself from the first a “shote of excramation” and in the strange backwards logic of Wakean time the thunder in original germ. This association with III.4’s cry also occasions Taff’s construction of the sod as the “sad of tearfs” [346.22].) And of course the passage above provides a final clue as to the Freudian provenance. For the father, the wolf of the Wolf Man’s phobias, here picks up the “sob of tunf” precisely to “wollpimsollf.”

Through yet another of the Wake’s exploitations of *coincidentia oppositorum*, the death of the thunder in II.3 thus recalls the birth of the thunder in III.4. Just as in the first anecdote, “historyend” coincides with the birth of a “noo err.” But even more clearly than was the case with the chapter’s first climax, this “abnihilisation of the etym” occurs precisely at the center of Wakean time.

The dialogue as a whole ends with the bracketed observation that as a consequence of the Fall:

[... All the presents are determining as regards for the future the howabouts of their past absences] [355.01]

Past and future collude in a “determining” present, just as the temporal disposition of the dialogues into past, present and future would suggest. Here, the present hour is uncharacteristically easy to determine. By his own testimony Butt shot the General when he heard “tofklokken rolland allover ourloud’s lande.” The destruction of the Name thus occurs at “*precisely the twelves of clocks, noon minutes, none seconds.*”

This, recall, is precisely the hour when HCE first met the threatening Cad in I.2.

Though there's some equivocation when HCE adopts the posture of a clock pointing to 11:32, or when he hears the chimes of the "ten ton tonant thunderous tenor toller" [35.31] appropriately conflating the Vichian marker of historical time with its ten Wakean instantiations, what HCE actually *says* (or, more precisely, gives as an instance of his Word) in response to the Cad's question is that it's "twelve of em sidereal" [35.33].

The meeting of HCE and the Cad – presented in what was for a long time the Wake's first chapter and which contains the first substantial presentation of the protagonist (and his name) in the "story proper" – is now revealed as an anticipation of the climax of II.3's second anecdote. Hence the curious conflation of the Cad's ostensibly innocent request for the time in I.2 with the implication of assault with a deadly weapon, and that "The Earwicker of that spurring instant" was "unwishful ... of being hurled into eternity right then, plugged by a soft-nosed bullet from the sap" [35.21]. In one sense of course Earwicker isn't so hurled "right then;" several chapters must elapse before II.3's apocalypse. On the other hand the time's the same: the time when the hand of time itself reaches for the infinitesimal brevity of the zenith that closes one cycle and prepares the inevitable fall into the next. This is the time when time comes closest to transcending or extinguishing itself in, as II.3 puts it, "noon minutes none seconds" and, standing all but still on this unstable apex, stands tantalizingly close to eternity.

Now we recall that the Wake's riddles themselves are, like the Cad's question, precisely questions of the time. When is a man not a man? At precisely 12:00, when you kill him. When is a name not a name? When, at the same hour and in the same act, the Name too is destroyed. It is, however, precisely into eternity, as we will see, that the Father will be "hurled" from this epicentral witching-hour of transformation

where, in an appropriate *auto da fe*, “*pumpkins fairly gosmother themselves.*”

This last, however, returns us to the most peculiar aspect of the “*abnihilation of the etym;*” its apparent suicide. Part of Joyce’s “trick” is that the paternal thunder has undone itself. And this self-annihilating self-reference turns out, in retrospect, to be one of the most obvious governing motifs of II.3 as a whole.

For the father whose sin *a tergo* was first glimpsed in III.4 “in that rereaway” and who’s “erseroyal” has just now offended in the way most proper to that organ is, of course, shot by a son named “Butt.”

Outside of John Gordon’s recognition that Butt and Taff together constitute in part the top and bottom halves of their father, criticism doesn’t seem to have dwelt much on the implications. But they’re obvious, and Taff does not fail to note them. No sooner has Butt proclaimed “I shuttm” than Taff responds to his “volkar boastsung” [352.17] above with:

bullyclaver of ye, bragadore-gunneral! ... Ah, you were shutter
reshottus and sieger besieged [352.22].

In a sense the ultimate guilt is laid once more at the only door Joyce’s pitiless theodicy would ever admit: that of God the Father himself, who is by the proxy of his Son a suicide. Of course various plays with the Name have tended to anticipate the conflation, as does Mutt’s assertion – in I.1’s “I trumple ... when I rimirim” – that he literally sees himself in II.3’s General. The situation is clear enough to the customers who subsequently discuss HCE’s death: “(1) he hade to die it, the beetle, 2) he didhithim self” [358.36]. In any case the identity of Butt and the Father is inescapable.

One of the consequences of noticing this is that the dialogue's loud repetition of the capitalized name "BUTT" simply becomes funnier. After all it's always followed by one version or another of Butt's "volkar boatsung," now vulgar in a rather overdetermined way. By definition everything Butt says becomes – simply because it comes out of a Butt – a version of the primordial Word as excrement, and thus rude or "root language" indeed.

But the chapter's highly visual repetition of the name "BUTT" facilitates another recognition when we return to II.3's true introduction, its very first line.

We've already analyzed, recall, II.3's first "full" paragraph, whose "bride's eye stamm-punct" and other expressions helped us locate the ensuing chapter structurally and thematically. But we deferred examination of the one sentence paragraph that precedes this and with which the chapter truly starts, partly because this "paragraph" was so short and partly because its import was not really intelligible until now. It constitutes recall, one of the Wake's curious "suspended sentences."

It may not or maybe a no concern of the Guinnesses but [309.01].

If II.3's second paragraph adumbrates the chapter's themes, this one by its priority should announce itself as even more synoptic; but what kind of information could this awkward and laconic truncation contain? The entire chapter, presumably, constitutes the whispered confidence we expect from the conjunction, but this leaves us wondering as to the reasons for the bad form.

McHugh has part of the answer. He doesn't say whether he got his answer from someone else or whether it just occurred to him (he seldom does say, but with a project of his nature such a scrupulous citation of sources would really be too much

to ask). But our reading of the chapter and the Wake as a whole makes the answer more than plausible. The syntactical awkwardness of II.3's opening "sentence" is occasioned in part by the necessity that its first words conform to a code, specifically an acrostic. At first this seems to be one of the Wake's rare acrostics (another is II.1's "heliotrope," though that too will prove deceptive) that doesn't spell a name. But then we see that of course it *does* spell a name, and the name of he who is above all the protagonist of II.3. As McHugh notes, the initials of "It may not or maybe a no" spell out "I'm noman."

It's perhaps as well that this particular effect was detected for the first time in some study other than the present one. We have rather tended to organize our material around a few *idees fixes*. But even, really, without what we've recently learned of the Wake, the reading is not on reflection outrageously *recherche*. As readers of *Ulysses* -- or anyone who's looked at its title -- may recall, this would not be the first time Joyce has made the anonymous into the eponymous. Indeed the first purpose of the acrostic is probably to prepare us for the frightened Cyclops who, as we've seen, indeed ensues, but prodded it turns out by none other than crafty, dissembling Odysseus who finds he can do quite well - better, in fact - without a name at all. Bloom himself, as we've known since Gilbert's early study, is in his story's occasional coincidence-of-contraries precisely Noman to his own Everyman - in part, as we've noted, in consequence of that other famous Joycean truncation "I. AM. A." - and nowhere more so than in the chapter titled *Cyclops*. This will prove one of the chief virtues of Ulysses, and one of the things to chiefly recommend him to a Joycean sympathy: he is *a Father who has no name*.

But more than this. Our reading of the Wake reveals that among the aspects of the Name that variously converge in this epicentral chapter perhaps the chief - chieffer

even than the faithful evocation of the Vichian original on whose evocation it in turn depends – is that *the Name doesn't exist*, at least not at the end of the day. As variously hinted throughout the multifarious embroideries of the motif, both the Father and his Name prove at last, to paraphrase Mathers, glyphs of non-existence. Thus II.3's first line gives our most definitive answer yet to the "first and last rittlerattle of the anniverse." When is a man not a man, or a name not a name? When that man says, with what eventually proves both existential and nominal justice, "I'm noman." Thus II.3's eventual "*abhnilisation of the etym*" is forecast from the chapter's own first line. But, since this is the Wake, even this does not constitute the entire decoding of that first line's signature-effect.

Recall that the Wake exploits even in its briefer spaces at once the coincidence and the contradiction of its first and last terms. It does so again here. If God the Father of creation, as foretold in *Portrait*, has at last refined himself out of existence in this culmination of Joyce's art (and then, note, gone so far as to paradoxically sign the master-stroke he aims at himself), then just as in the earlier work some Lynchian *basso* rumbles from the all-too-immanent depths to countersign; in this case with the Father's *other* (and appropriately terminal) name, which of course is also the name of the son. Of course it's the truly insistent – even vulgar – repetition of this name throughout the chapter that ensues which facilitates its retrospective recognition as the last term of the chapter's first sentence, whose truncation now makes eminent sense in signing itself – in letters too small to be noticed at first – precisely "but." In II.3's first line, the Father has signed his own death-warrant twice, once as non-existence, and once as he who brings this non-existence to pass.

How closely do we have to read Joyce to read him well? Very closely. The effect would be easier to dismiss if it hadn't been half-detected independent of our own

constructions of II.3, and if the chapter's own repetitively insistent format weren't joined, and precisely at the "abnihilation of the etym," by Taff's clear implication that that "etym" is as consubstantial with the name of Butt as Butt himself is with the Father whose "etym" he's just destroyed.

This joke is played immediately the dialogue begins, when Butt first sees his father and describes him as "But da! But da, da!", to which Taff responds by seeming to call this same "humme to our mounthings" none other than "Butly," at once Buckley and Butt. As Butt is about to shoot Taff reminds him he's the "bragadore gunneral" himself, and thus "shotter reshottus and besieger besieged." Thus even without the tortuous decoding required by the first line, this chapter on the fate of the Name of the Father seems to want to tell us something about the Father besides the non-existence of his Name. This second something, clearly, is that his name is Butt.

Of course we suspect various reasons for this by now. He's the butt of the joke, which since the Freudian provenance at least has revealed the "archetypal" character of John Joyce's original anecdote to be fated for some triply-loaded punchline about the *more ferarum*, intestinal difficulties and the dangers and opportunities of defecation. But Taff's reminders of identity, the text's loudly repeated appellation of the antagonist, the obvious concern with the Father's posterior and now the chapter's first line all insist a certain juxtaposition. On the one hand, we have the Father; on the other, the fact that his name is Butt. Father, Butt. Father, Butt.

Oh.

Joyce has gone to a great deal of trouble to sign this structurally central chapter – and its lessons on how to *undo* things with words, or undo words with themselves – with the name of the very first Father of his fictions. It is to this figure, thus, that we

must have recourse if we are to understand the reasons for Joyce's destruction of the Word and the strategies with which he will make it again.

* * *

Father Butt

Father Butt, "an elderly greyhound of a man," is the professor of English – "reputed the most able man in the college" [SH 25] – whom we meet almost immediately the extant pages of *Stephen Hero* commence. By the third page there begins Stephen's increasingly impatient exchange with this Dean of Studies, who, identified only by that title (but still recognizable by his "leanness and greyness" [P 199]) returns in *Portrait*.

Father Butt is apparently modeled to a degree on one of Joyce's professors at University College.

Joyce studied English for a time also with Father Joseph Darlington, the dean of studies, who like Arnold was a convert and English. ... Darlington was in Joyce's eyes a little sinister, but was generally thought to be harmless and rather pitiable; he seems to have suspected Joyce's religious defection but was too pliant to try to take a firm line with him. His mildly disapproving eye followed Joyce for four years, and Joyce's mildly disapproving eye has followed Darlington, the dean of studies in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait*, into eternity. [Ellman 58].

This lightly emended paragraph is the extent of Father Darlington in Ellman's biography, with the exception of a brief anecdote in the footnotes testifying to his agreeable nature. We seem to be at a loss, from a biographical point of view, to explain what we now recognize as Joyce's rather tenacious concentration on this *bete noire*, other than the unexplained observation that he apparently felt Darlington to be "a little sinister." Best perhaps to leave speculation aside and turn to the texts, where we have a hope of understanding Stephen's – and possibly Joyce's – difficulties with the Dean.

Father Butt, it turns out, is but one outward and visible emanation of a Father who remains within or behind or above or beyond his handiwork, invisible, as we are told on the very first page of the extant *Stephen Hero* – indeed in the first complete paragraph of the manuscript.

The president of the college was a sequestered person who took the chair at reunions and inaugural meetings of societies. His visible lieutenants were a dean and a bursar.¹

The dean, of course, is Father Butt. But to meet him we must go through the other person of the college trinity mentioned here. As we approach the steps of the university with Stephen we are greeted by its first great gate-keeper; the man of business and accounts, the bursar. Understandably, this business-man has a particular preoccupation.

The bursar... performed his duties with great unction and was often to be

¹ p.23 Joyce, James. *Stephen Hero*. New York: New Directions, 1963. Henceforth cited as "SH."

seen looming in the hall watching the comings and goings of the students. He insisted on punctuality: a minute or so late once or twice – he would not mind that so much; he would clap his hands and make some cheery reproof. But what made him severe was a few minutes lost every day: it disturbed the proper working of the classes. Stephen was nearly always more than a quarter of an hour late [SH 23-4].

A confrontation is inevitable. One morning Stephen comes in behind another student, who immediately suffers the predictable rebuke.

The bursar was standing in the hall with his arms folded across his chest and when he caught sight of the fat young man he looked significantly at the clock. It was eight minutes past eleven.

-- Now then, Moloney, you know this won't do. Eight minutes late! Disturbing your class like that – we can't have that, you know. Must be in sharp for lecture every morning in future.

The jam overspread the bread in Moloney's face as he stumbled over some excuses about a clock being wrong and then scurried upstairs to his class. Stephen delayed a little time hanging up his overcoat while the large priest eyed him solemnly. Then he turned his head quietly towards the bursar and said

-- Fine morning, sir.

The bursar at once clapped his hands and rubbed them together and clapped them together again. The beauty of the morning and the appositeness of the remark both struck him at the same time and he

answered cheerily:

-- Beautiful! Fine bracing morning now! And he fell to rubbing his hands again [SH 24].

This is our Hero's first encounter with the oppressor, and he emerges triumphant. Joyce carefully builds his scene so that we may compare Stephen and Moloney to the former's advantage, the latter shuffling, the former flashing his antlers. For whatever reason the bursar will not engage this most truculent flaunting of the clock, and instead decays into a brittle bonhomie that teeters on the edge of ingratiating. The immediately ensuing paragraph, incidentally, though it describes a different day, prepares the transition to the encounter with Butt by observing that Stephen "was leaning over the banisters, waiting for the twelve o'clock bell to ring" [SH 24].

This is the last we see of the bursar, though certain elements will persist in the later novels. Chiefly, the scene sets the stage for *Hero's* crucial showdown between Stephen and Father Butt, which almost immediately ensues.

What do Stephen and Father Butt discuss? Unsurprisingly – given that Stephen is a budding writer and Father Butt a professor of English – they discuss words. Words are important to Stephen, and we discern in his analysis of language the sort of vigilance and animus that will convert the innocuous Darlington into something approaching a nemesis.

[Stephen] read Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary* by the hour and his mind, which had from the first been only too submissive to the infant sense of wonder, was often hypnotised by the most commonplace conversation. People seemed to him strangely ignorant of the value of

the words they used so glibly. And pace by pace as this indignity of life forced itself upon him he became enamoured of an idealising, a more veritably human tradition. The phenomenon seemed to him a grave one and he began to see that people had leagued themselves together in a conspiracy of ignobility and that Destiny had scornfully reduced her prices for them. He desired no such reduction for himself and preferred to serve her on the ancient terms. [SH 26]

Clearly Stephen is well-named “Hero.” He is not merely bemused by the contrast between the constrictions of banal denotation and his own exquisitely sensitive apprehension of resonance and connotation; he is assailed. Ordinary language-use is not merely trite; rather, “this indignity of life forced itself upon him.” (This incidentally is precisely the sort of thing which will cause him so much trouble in *Portrait*, when the emergence of the phrase “ellipsoidal ball” during the composition of his villanelle will, in recalling an off-color joke made some pages earlier, render his congress with the muse so distasteful as to dash inspiration utterly.) So despite misgivings or amusement at this possibly morbid sensitivity, we can perhaps forgive Stephen for the air of persecution that creeps into his aesthetic mission when he begins to see “that people had leagued themselves together in a conspiracy of ignobility.”

Stephen has perhaps unwisely committed his aesthetic meditations to paper in essay form, and their febrile and possibly unorthodox nature have occasioned an interview with Father Butt, determined to “sound” the young man on his principles. Stephen in consequence has an opportunity to hold forth:

Words, he said, have a certain value in the literary tradition and a certain value in the market-place – a debased value. Words are simply receptacles for human thought: in the literary tradition they receive more valuable thoughts than they receive in the market-place. Father Butt listened to all this, rubbing his chalky hand often over his chin and nodding his head and said that Stephen evidently understood the importance of tradition. Stephen quoted a phrase from Newman to illustrate his theory.

– In that sentence of Newman’s, he said, the word is used according to the literary tradition: it has there its full value. In ordinary use, that is, in the market-place, it has a different value altogether, a debased value. “I hope I’m not detaining you.”

– Not at all! not at all!

– No, no ...

– Yes, yes, Mr Daedalus, I see ... I quite see your point ... detain ...

[SH 27]

Poor Butt. He has of course fallen immediately into the trap laid for him in the preceding paragraph. Given an opportunity to distinguish between the sublime and banal denotations of “detain” this nominal ward of high tradition obviously chooses the market-place, simultaneously and perhaps most unforgivably robbing Newman’s and more to the point Stephen’s own words of their value. Since the value of the word is the thought it “contains,” Butt is guilty of a violation more intimate than a sensibility less acute than Stephen’s might detect or resent: like the “ellipsoidal ball” of the villanelle he has debased the inner being of Stephen’s imagination. In

accommodating herself to philistines the “Destiny” of language-tradition “scornfully reduced her prices for them.” Stephen “desired no such reduction for himself,” but in Butt’s bumbling misconstruction “this indignity of life forced itself upon him.” The judgment may seem severe, but it is the judgment implied by the slightly overheated invective of the prefatory paragraph: Father Butt has revealed himself as part of the “conspiracy of ignobility;” and – partly because a conspiracy is implicitly more willed than oblivious – his violation of Stephen’s imagination is perhaps more than “a little sinister.”

Of course this “sinister conspiracy” finds its match and in a way its reflection in Stephen’s own determination to rebuff and dismantle Butt’s all-too-conventional theories of language. On the previous page, we read that Stephen “found Father Butt’s reading of verse and a schoolgirls’s accurate reading of verse intolerable” [SH 25]. Naturally enough, thus, Stephen supplants these with his own theory of reading.

Soon Stephen began to explore the language for himself and to choose, and thereby rescue once for all, the words and phrases most amenable to his theory. He became a poet with malice aforethought.
[SH 26]

If Stephen is Hero then the Damsel in Distress is the Word. But the “malice aforethought” which characterizes the usurpation makes the rescue at least “a little sinister” in its own right. Likewise, when Stephen delights in subtly drawing attention to Butt’s inadequacies as a critic of Shakespeare, we learn that “[t]he monster in Stephen had lately taken to misbehaving himself and on the least provocation was ready for bloodshed.” The incident, as always, is trivial. The affect

is not.

It's sometimes easy to miss the vehemence of the text with respect to Butt. Taken by itself the dialogue of the "detain" incident for instance seems designed merely to reveal the priest as fatuous. Yet it is not only the prefatory paragraph which, in defining as it does the stakes of the ensuing dialogue in rather apocalyptic and embattled terms, obliges us to recognize the pitch of Stephen's animus. Father Butt is henceforward the advocate and incarnation of the quotidian, debased imagination (and more to the point of the impoverished Word of ordinary language) which Stephen fears as much as he abhors. Hence Stephen's construction of the incident of the fire (from which the Father in part derives his increasingly over-determined name) as a rejoinder in the War of and for the Word whose terms have been set forth above.

The very morning after this Father Butt returned Stephen's monologue in kind. ... Stephen ... strolled into the Physics Theatre [and] discovered Father Butt kneeling on the hearthstone engaged in lighting a small fire in the huge grate. ... All the while he kept up a little patter explaining his operations and at a crisis he produced from the most remote pockets of his chalkey soutane three dirty candle-butts. These he thrust in different openings and then looked up at Stephen with an air of triumph. ...

– There is an art, Mr Daedalus, in lighting a fire.

– So I see, sir. A very useful art.

– That's it: a useful art. We have the useful arts and we have the liberal arts.

Father Butt after this statement got up from the hearthstone and went away about some other business leaving Stephen to watch the kindling fire and Stephen brooded upon the fast melting candle-butts and on the reproach of the priest's manner till it was time for the Physics lecture to begin. [SH 28]

Something about this scene makes it the magnet around which all of the confrontations with Father Butt that are scattered the length of *Hero* will congeal in *Portrait's* elegant condensation of the theme. As we'll see, Joyce has more than mastered the tricks of a certain ironic light that falls as often as not on the unflattered features of the priesthood. The Father here imagines (or Stephen imagines he imagines) himself a Prometheus of the practical. The metaphor extends into *Portrait's* hearthside scene where it becomes fatally confounded with the discussion of the lamp which ensues. Here, Butt himself becomes confounded with his pyrotechnics; we are introduced to him kneeling on the hearthstone on which he remains throughout the operation and from which he departs after his last word. And of course we realize the occasion of his name: the three "dirty candle-butts" he produces at the ironically under-cut "crisis" which is prelude to the "triumph" of his "reproach."

Once the metonymy suggests the name, other associations crowd in and these, apparently, made the appellation irresistible to a youthful Joyce, already possessed perhaps of the scatological bent which would increasingly characterize his prose. These candles aren't just butts; they're dirty butts. Oh well. Saddling one's antagonists with the nickname "Butt" is not, perhaps, the subtlest nor most literary recourse. If the device is to play to more than the groundlings it must be wrapped

in enough misdirection to allow the recipient so inclined (and perhaps only that recipient) to gradually unveil the epiphany, almost in private. Thus Shakespeare's risky business with the Faerie Queene and Bottom. Whatever the provenance of the name "Butt" in the ironized light of the industrial arts, its gleeful overdetermination made it too heavy-handed. Still, apparently, Joyce never found a name he liked better. The Dean of Studies in *Portrait* is simply "the dean of studies." "Father Butt" had to wait until the lush overgrowth of the Wakean word allowed the appropriately muted glory of his return in II.3.

In any case, thus Father rebuts Stephen. His "air of triumph," real or imagined, is occasioned by his recovery from yesterday's *mal mot*. The value of the market-place – the value of the banal, the quotidian and the practical – is vindicated. For Stephen, rather aptly described as brooding, the value of the literary is symmetrically condemned.

Nor is his nemesis content. When Stephen finally presents his much-scrutinized essay on aesthetics, which has so alarmed the priests for insisting the independence of art from moral and particularly religious pedagogy, Butt has the last word again (Stephen rather characteristically disdaining rebuttal), publically and *ex cathedra* denouncing Stephen's literary theories as, precisely, impractical.

Father Butt excused himself among cries of "No, no" for detaining his audience at such an advanced hour As for the theory itself Father Butt confessed that it was a new sensation for him to hear Thomas Aquinas quoted as an authority on esthetic philosophy. Esthetic philosophy was a modern branch and if it was anything at all, it was practical. Aquinas had treated slightly of the beautiful but always

from a theoretic standpoint. To interpret his statements practically one needed a fuller knowledge than Mr Daedalus could have of his entire theology. ... Mr Daedalus had chosen to consider beauty intrinsically But beauty also has its practical side. Mr Daedalus was a passionate admirer of the artistic and such people are not always the most practical people in the world. Father Butt then reminded his audience of the story of King Alfred and the old woman who was cooking cakes – of the theorist, that is, and of the practical person and concluded by expressing the hope that the essayist would emulate King Alfred and not be too severe on the practical persons who had criticised him. [SH 103]

By this point we have moved beyond the possibility of a really convincing reading of Stephen's pique as ironically presented paranoia. Was Stephen misconstruing, overreacting, when he read Butt's business with the fire as subtle admonition and rejoinder? No; on this point the text lends the authority of its neutral voice. In twitting Stephen for his heresy Butt adverts to the "practical" – the term of choice in his earlier and, as it develops, correctly-construed admonition – no less than six times, and makes it the point of his conclusion. And lest the reader miss the root of Stephen's persecution in the original quibble over the literary versus market-place value of the word, Joyce has his persecutor echo – with ironic oblivion or smug insistence – the original term in question. Butt's first speech act here is his second use of "detain" in the despicable quotidian sense which so outraged the aesthete in the first place. (The sycophantic students, in a reprise whose ironic complications are perhaps indefinitely abyssal, echo *en masse* Stephen's response to the Father's

fatefully inadequate Word: not “*da, da,*” but “No, no.”)

When the conversation between the old man and the new moves from private to public, we perhaps get a sense of more than Stephen’s pride at stake. Butt must be, not least for his ridiculous name, the butt of ridicule not because he is innocuous but because he is the reverse. His antics are not the harmless byplay of a rude mechanical; on the contrary his congenial and ineffectual air masks his real power. As priest and professor of English he is doubly the Father of the Word, and his legion sycophantic sons are all-too-willing to follow him to market. If Joyce’s word is to triumph in usurpation it must laugh its predecessor off the premises. *Ris dit cul.*

The strategy of looking at first and last things is perhaps particularly questionable when applied to *Stephen Hero*. What we have is likely less than half of the original. The extant manuscript takes up at a rather late stage of Stephen’s boyhood career and seems to stop somewhere short of *Portrait*’s final departure. Nevertheless, whether through chance or cryptic motivation, the extant manuscript begins substantially with our introduction to Father Butt, whose *grise eminence* thenceforth looms intermittently, returning at last to cast its familiar market-place pall over the concluding pages, precipitating the final *non serviam* of *Hero* as we have it.

Mrs Daedalus called one day to see Father Butt. She did not report her interview fully but Stephen understood that Father Butt had at first prescribed a clerkship in Guinness’s as a solution of the young man’s difficult case and, when Mrs Daedalus had shaken her head incredulously, he had asked to see Stephen. He had thrown out hints about some new arrangement of the college which would necessitate new appointments. These hints were fed upon by Stephen’s parents. The next

day Stephen called to the college to see Father Butt [SH 226].

Mrs. Daedalus may be shaking her head “incredulously” for a variety of reasons. No doubt we’re to construe the offer as Stephen does, as a patent insult to the family’s pretensions to “quality.” But the ostensibly innocent idea is simply to allow the young man to continue his education, which is about to terminate for lack of funds. Butt thus proposes another option, a clerical post at the school itself. This is presented as an all-but sinecure. It is, nevertheless, a job.

Stephen said nothing. Father Butt rubbed his hands together and said:

-- Otherwise there would be a danger of your perishing ... by inanition

...

[SH 227].

Stephen’s father, apprised of the tone if not the details of the proposal, is enthusiastic. But the son isn’t.

Keep in touch with those chaps, I tell you, those Jesuits; they can get you on fast enough. I am a few years older than you. ...

-- I don’t want their help, said Stephen bitterly [SH 228].

Despite the contingencies of its truncation, thus, the extant text of *Hero* winds toward the culmination of the battle whose first shots were fired when what we have of the manuscript begins, and thus toward the heroic rejection of the market-place.

Stephen gave details of his interview to Maurice:

-- Don't you think they are trying to buy me? He asked.

-- Yes, that's evident. ... You might as well apply to a policeman. ...

And what will you do?

-- Refuse it, of course [SH 229].

Butt sends Stephen a letter formally offering the position, and Stephen returns one declining it. Thus Stephen refutes Butt. The concluding pages rehearse the theme with Lynch stepping into the office of mercenary.

-- Look at the nights you could have had!

-- You are a distressingly low-minded person, answered Stephen.

After all I have dinned into that mercantile head of yours you are sure to come out on me with some atrocity [SH 232].

Stephen goes on to distinguish himself from the school, his classmates and the church in a peroration that confounds them.

-- I found a day-school full of terrorised boys, banded together in a complicity of diffidence. They have eyes only for their future jobs: to secure their future jobs they will write themselves in and out of convictions, toil and labour to insinuate themselves into the good graces of the Jesuits. ... I will not submit to them, either outwardly or inwardly [SH 232-3].

Stephen is the hero who will rescue the word from business as usual. The Fathers have betrayed the Eternal Imagination from the start by their reduction of the office of priest and professor to bursar. And no one is more insidious in this regard than Father Butt, who with an effortless venality and stupidity makes temporal every word he utters.

We might briefly note two other consequences of *Hero's* doubled introduction of the theme. First, it seems Joyce's young men are from their inception fated for some confrontation with the Wolf Man's milieu. We're sure Joyce has not read Freud at this point, but the effective telescoping of the bursar into the dean who immediately replaces him (a consubstantiality re-emphasized by the situation of the figures in a trinity whose third term remains, *pro forma*, transcendent) gives the dean's comical name greater and greater and more and more unlikely depths of resonance; for concerns with time and money are perhaps the two most well-known hallmarks of the anal character.

But more to the point: the equivocation of guilt and guilt, and not least as it obtains for the priesthood, is a Joycean trope of long standing. *Dubliners* opens with the death of Father Flynn, whose memory conjures for the young narrator the cryptic signifiers "*paralysis ... gnomon ... simony*" [D 9]. The first two have been, with justice, relentlessly interrogated by criticism; but the third clearly deserves its canonical niche. Though hints of mental or sexual aberration cluster obscurely about the name of the deceased, the text will with conviction convict him only of the sin of the market-place, when the boy finds himself "smiling feebly as if to absolve the simoniac of his sin" [D 11]. As originally conceived *Dubliners* was to end with *Grace*, a rather more pointed, sustained and amusing examination of a faith and priesthood that have – and in the relentlessly mercantile language of "business" and

“accounts” – given themselves over utterly to parishes of shop-keepers, “setting before them as exemplars of the religious life those very worshippers of Mammon” [D 174]. Even in *The Dead*, Gabriel would absolve himself by forcing upon Lily – who has epitomized the self-conscious *litterateur’s* guilt concerning his wife with the terse prolepsis that “The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you” – a coin, though the sharpest reduction of sexual relations by this device is perhaps the symmetrical conclusion of *Two Gallants*, whose rather more literal epiphany also reinsists the element of religious perfidy.

Corley halted at the first lamp and stared grimly before him. Then with a grave gesture he extended a hand toward the light and, smiling, opened it slowly to the gaze of his disciple. A small gold coin shone in the palm [D 60].²

Father Robert Boyle, S.J. has through his own example rescued his vocation from the charge of obtuseness, at least, by his shrewd detection of the way in which the moonlight of *Two Gallants* becomes at last the ironized light of the coin.³ This particular kind of ironic light deserves brief investigation.

Readers of *Ulysses* are familiar with an instance of this effect in *Nestor*. Stephen gets meager pay and ample and patronizing advice from the egregious Deasy, the Anglo-Irish Ulsterman full of pieties about Empire’s manifest destiny. Once again, when the talk turns to the literary, Deasy trips on his own mercantile

² p. 60 Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. New York: Penguin Books, 1983. Henceforth cited as “D.”

³ Boyle, Robert, S.J. “‘Two Gallants’ and ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’” in *20th Century Interpretations of Dubliners*; ed. Garrett, Peter. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

misconstructions, like Butt before him.

Money is power. When you have lived as long as I have. I know, I know. *If youth but knew.* But what does Shakespeare say? *Put but money in thy purse.*

-- Iago, Stephen murmured [U 25].

It might be worth pausing here to observe a provisional rule of thumb, trivial, certainly, but partly in the numerical sense of Joyce's own puns on that word. Though I'm not quite prepared to canonize the observation, my own readings of Joyce have gradually convinced me that when a word is repeated three times in rapid succession it signals as often as not some mildly extraordinary denotation nevertheless resonant with context. The generation of the effect seems to depend in part on a sort of textual static electricity, repetition as it were rubbing sense from sound or sight to produce an ionic signifier awaiting some new charge. In any case it may be a coincidence here, but if so it's an amusing one: Deasy's rapid repetitions – “*but knew*”; “But what” – set up his concluding “*but money.*” Does *Nestor*, like II.3, thus convert the conjunction to the name to wittingly or otherwise recall *Hero's* prototypical mercenary once more? Perhaps and perhaps not; but *Ulysses* is not above such trivial methods, as we've already learned.

Intended or not, the irony of the effect is increased by context. Or rather precisely the lack of context. Oblivious that he verbigerates the words of a villain, Deasy joins the rabblement and Father Butt – both “strangely ignorant of the value of the words they used so glibly” – with faintly brutal force reversing the vilification of lucre into its endorsement. Likewise, thus, he compels the abused Stephen to deliver to the

press a grotesque perversion of letters; a pompous, ostentatiously allusive dilation on the hazards of foot-and-mouth disease and a provincial economic policy.

Once more, though, Joyce co-opts the light of a certain sentimental religiosity to illuminate the figure of Mammon that lurks in its shadows. As Deasy piously inveighs against the Jews, senseless that his slanders are the mirror of his mercantile soul, we find his ...

eyes coming to blue life as they passed a broad sunbeam. ... His eyes open wide in vision stared sternly across the sunbeam in which he halted.

-- A merchant, Stephen said, is one who buys cheap and sells dear, jew or gentile, is he not?

-- They sinned against the light, Mr Deasy said gravely. And you can see the darkness in their eyes [U28].

The light Deasy invokes that he might posture in it reveals the darkness in his own.

Stephen extricates himself with relief and his small remuneration only to be chased down once more by his employer ("Running after me. No more letters, I hope" [U 30]), who feels obliged to deliver himself of the well-known anti-semitic punchline to his long-winded misconstruction of literature and history. As he retires, an ironic light falls on this ironic Nestor:

On his wise shoulders through the checkerwork of leaves the sun flung spangles, dancing coins [U 30].

Joyce rings changes on the trope throughout his work. The one which most concerns us at the moment, however, is on the very last page of *Hero's* contiguous manuscript. Stephen closes *Hero's* long meditation on the sins of the Fathers with a curious visual metaphor, whose terms we'll eventually wish to recall. They limn an epiphany of sorts, one in which the sort of sentimental lighting suited to the image of a fatherly old gentleman becomes itself the revelation of an irony.

-- Did I tell you I met Father Healy this evening? Asked Stephen.

-- No, where?

-- I was walking along the Canal with my Danish grammar (because I am going to study it properly now. I'll tell you why later on) and whom should I meet but this little man. He was walking right into the golden sunset: all his creases and wrinkles were scattered with gold. He looked at my book and said it was very interesting: he thought it must be so interesting to know and compare the different languages. Then he looked far away into the golden sun and all of a sudden – imagine! – his mouth opened and he gave a slow, noiseless yawn ... Do you know you get a kind of shock when a man does a thing like that unexpectedly? [SH 233]

As the figure of the bursar ushers in the crass archetype of Father Butt, so Father Healy ushers him out. Again, the Father couldn't really give a damn about the Word's broader context and connotation. The triply iterated "gold" that seems to suffuse the very being of the priest when his very "creases and wrinkles" are "scattered with gold" condenses into a single ironic signifier once more the betrayal

of the literate by the mercantile, the Word by Mammon. The effect is subtle here, but as we'll see a key and retrospective phrase from the Wake is constructed so as to catch the last rays of Father Healy's sunset.

In any case; taking the once more trivial method of this terminal gesture as our cue, we might briefly review what we've learned of the Father in Hero. It's not simply his disposition into the president, the bursar and the dean which renders him trinitarian; his tropes are tripartite, too. His cardinal sins are time, money and the Word, but the chief of these is the Word. From his first formulations Father Butt is a whitened sepulchre of the worst stripe because he is a money-changer not simply in his own temple but, far worse, in Stephen's. Stephen is the true Priest of the Eternal Imagination, and his house is the house of the Word. Not content to tempt the priest from the one true faith, Butt's perfidy would set up in the House of the Word precisely the idols of the market-place. Deservedly or not (and really, it seems, not, though the question of desserts is at last irrelevant for the power of the texts) Darlington's image, magnetized partly by the preposterous name "Butt" which seals the character's Wakean fate, begins to attract a powerful affect, already faintly parricidal – possibly faintly oedipal – that converts it into one of the many necessary foils against which the artist will set off his own image and the image of a Word rescued from the vulgar street and rehabilitated.

And the Word needs this rescuing because it is so susceptible to money's corruption. Not simply – though certainly – because young poets are always counseled not to give up their day-jobs, but because money is language's dark twin. A coin is the signifier reduced to its most material and fundamental contingency, a preposterous fiction sustained above the void on which it's founded only by the figure of the Law – usually paternal – with which it's stamped. Circulating

everywhere, binding and distinguishing nations and relations, the stuff of a patrimony whose legal destination is guaranteed only by the name of the father and saturated with affects of anxiety and desire, money is in some ways more linguistic than language itself, the Word made flesh in the most temporal material.

We might allow the consideration of the temporal, however, to prompt our return to the question of Butt's progress in the Joycean text since *Hero*.

The mercenary theme is variously imbricated with others throughout *Portrait* (the reader may already have already recalled Stephen's peculiar imagination of "his soul in devotion pressing like fingers the keyboard of a great cash register ... to see the amount of his purchase start forth immediately in heaven,"⁴ which image seals the fate of his faith almost from his conversion) but it does not dominate to the extent it does in the earlier novel. Certainly, though, it is present in *Portrait's* elegant condensation of *Hero's* book-length rivalry into the fuller development of the hearthside scene.

But so is time. On the way to his interview with the dean, Stephen discovers that, just as in *Hero*, he's late.

It must be eleven, he thought, and peered into a dairy to see the time. The clock in the dairy told him that it was five minutes to five but, as he turned away, he heard a clock somewhere near him, but unseen, beating eleven strokes in swift precision. He laughed as he heard it Eleven! Then he was late for that lecture too. What day of the week was it? He stopped at a newsagent's to read the headline of a placard. Thursday. Ten to eleven, English; eleven to twelve, French; twelve to

⁴ p. 160 Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993. Henceforth cited as "P."

one, physics [P 191].

Stephen's despite of the temporal has endured. He doesn't know what time it is and barely cares. Arriving at last at school he discovers that English – which starts at ten – is out of the question and he's too late for French as well. In consequence, "He crossed the hall and took the corridor to the left which led to the physics theatre" [P 199].

At this point, however, another element, not anticipated in any substantial way by *Hero's* treatment, enters into play. In the beginning the insinuations are all but undetectable, but a subtle paranoia looks forward to the nationalist tone whose import will not be clear until the interview is nearly over.

He crossed the hall and took the corridor to the left which led to the physics theatre. The corridor was dark and silent but not unwatchful. Why did he feel that it was not unwatchful? Was it because he had heard that in Buck Whaley's time there was a secret staircase there? Or was the Jesuit house extraterritorial and was he walking among aliens? The Ireland of Tone and of Parnell seemed to have receded in space [P 199].

These meditations debouch immediately onto the figure of the Dean of Studies, once more busy with his candlebutts.

He opened the door of the theatre A figure was crouching before the large grate and by its leanness and greyness he knew that it

was the dean of studies lighting the fire. Stephen closed the door quietly and approached the fireplace.

– Good morning, sir! Can I help you?

The priest looked up quickly and said:

– One moment now, Mr Dedalus, and you will see. There is an art in lighting a fire. We have the liberal arts and we have the useful arts. This is one of the useful arts. ...

He produced four candlebutts from the sidepockets of his soutane

...

[P 199].

That this useful art is also a metaphor for the liberal one that most concerns Stephen is however this time much more explicit.

The dean rested back on his hunkers and watched the sticks catch.

Stephen, to fill the silence, said:

-- I am sure I could not light a fire.

-- You are an artist, are you not Mr Dedalus? Said the dean, glancing up and blinking his pale eyes. The object of the artist is the creation of the beautiful. ... This fire before us ... will be pleasing to the eye. Will it therefore be beautiful? ... When may we expect to have something from you on the esthetic question? ... These questions are very profound, Mr Dedalus It is like looking down from the cliffs of Moher into the depths. Many go down into the depths and never come up. Only the trained diver can go down into those depths

and explore them and come to the surface again [P 202].

How will Stephen light his own aesthetic fire? This is the question which more than any other preoccupies the young man who would be an artist. But it's when he tends his answering – and perhaps competing – version of the pyrotechnic metaphor that things begin to go astray.

For my purpose I can work on at present by the light of one or two ideas of Aristotle and Aquinas. ... I need them only for my own use and guidance until I have done something for myself by their light. If the lamp smokes or smells I shall try to trim it. If it does not give light enough I shall sell it and buy another. [P 202]

The priest immediately conscripts the terms for his own purpose:

– Epictetus also had a lamp, said the dean, which was sold for a fancy price after his death. It was the lamp he wrote his philosophical dissertations by. You know Epictetus?

– And old gentleman, said Stephen coarsely, who said that the soul is very like a bucketful of water.

– He tells us in his homely way, the dean went on, that he put an iron lamp before a statue of one of the gods and that a thief stole the lamp. What did the philosopher do? He reflected that it was in the character of a thief to steal and determined to buy an earthen lamp next day instead of the iron lamp. [P 202]

This is a complicated response. Our first impulse is to take it in the light of Stephen's metaphor just preceding. The priest's language does not clearly announce itself as metaphorical, but insofar as it presents, as did Stephen's speech, some contrast of lamps, we assume it's some canny jesuitical jujitsu designed to convert the momentum of Stephen's imagery into an antithesis. In any case the Father offers, surely, not simply a history of Epictetus and his vicissitudes in the market-place but a parable. By now we should have ears to hear it: this unholy Father, like his prototype, is part of the "conspiracy of ignobility" against the "value of the words," one for whom "Destiny had scornfully reduced her prices." The lamp is the Word? Very well; the Father recommends the more modest, the more down-to-earth, but above all the cheaper lamp.

A smell of molten tallow came up from the dean's candlebutts and fused itself in Stephen's consciousness with the jingle of the words, bucket and lamp and lamp and bucket. The priest's voice too had a hard jingling tone. Stephen's mind halted by instinct, checked by the strange tone and the imagery and by the priest's face which seemed like an unlit lamp or a reflector hung in a false focus. What lay behind it or within it? A dull torpor of the soul or the dullness of the thundercloud, charged with intellection and capable of the gloom of God? [P 203]

One way or another, Stephen, who still desires "no such reduction for himself," isn't buying. We can almost hear his detection of the priest's crass reduction to the

terms of the marketplace in the “jingle of the words,” or in that the “priest’s voice too had a hard jingling tone.”

But simultaneous with this detection a question occurs. Does the priest know what he’s doing? Does he merely propose the reduction of sense, or does he obviously act it out, losing as it were his soul in the instant it invokes the damning formula? If his formula is a parable, its paradox is that it must either consciously deploy the sort of high-flown metaphor against which its celebration of the “homely” style would inveigh, or, in the very surrender which it recommends, render itself and its speaker senseless. Is the priest “charged with intellection?” Or does he, on the other hand, suffer from “A dull torpor of the soul”?

– I meant a different kind of lamp, sir, said Stephen.

– Undoubtedly, said the dean.

– One difficulty, said Stephen, in esthetic discussion is to know whether words are being used according to the literary tradition or according to the tradition of the marketplace. I remember a sentence of Newman’s in which he says of the Blessed Virgin that she was detained in the full company of the saints. The use of the word in the marketplace is quite different. I hope I am not detaining you.

–Not in the least, said the dean politely.

–No, no, said Stephen, smiling, I mean ...

–Yes, yes: I see, said the dean quickly, I quite catch the point: detain [P 203].

The verbatim return of Butt’s comically literal-minded misconstruction gives us

our answer. The priest's lamp isn't just out of focus; it's not even lit. Not for the first time, the Prometheus of the market-place himself bears the light that illuminates only that he's unilluminated. To be fair, part of the priest's problem here is that he construes the word merely as a polite gesture (which would, incidentally, be consonant with what we know of Darlington). But even this, as we'll see, will eventually be held against him.

Realizing his mistake in any case, the dean "thrust forward his under jaw and uttered a dry short cough."

-- To return to the lamp, he said, the feeding of it is also a nice problem. You must choose the pure oil and you must be careful when you pour it in not to overflow it, not to pour in more than the funnel can hold [P 203].

As though in an embarrassed attempt to recover the territory he has let slip, the Dean struggles back into the metaphorical register. The oil, surely, is study and the lamp this time the student, and some prudent admonition of precocity would ensue, did not Stephen's own imagination – strikingly, at this point, though not for the first nor last time – itself drop out of metaphor and into the words themselves. This time the fluid exchange of ideas is interrupted on the son's account. For just as the priest is about to pour the substance of his tuition into the vessel, the vessel interrupts the operation by questioning as it were the very terms of transmission.

-- What funnel? asked Stephen.

-- The funnel through which you pour your oil into the lamp.

-- That? said Stephen. Is that called a funnel? Is it not a tundish?

-- What is a tundish?

-- That. The ... the funnel.

-- Is that called a tundish in Ireland? asked the dean. I never heard the word in my life.

-- It is called a tundish in Lower Drumcondra, said Stephen laughing, where they speak the best English.

-- A tundish, said the dean reflectively. That is a most interesting word. I must look that word up. Upon my word I must.

His courtesy of manner rang a little false, and Stephen looked at the English convert with the same eyes as the elder brother in the parable may have turned on the prodigal [P 203].

The Dean and Stephen perpetually take the vehicles of each other's tropes and drive them into the ground. It becomes hard to determine whether the motor force is distracted oblivion or half-willful misconstruction. Perhaps the latter; for in the background of the exchange is precisely the struggle for the Word. This struggle moves finally beyond the question of who shall govern denotation and becomes instead the question of which authority determines which utterance will qualify as a signifier at all in the first place.

The Dean's final, iterative mutterings drive home what's at stake. In fact this Father unintentionally makes it clear for us with a familiar trivial method: "That is a most interesting word. I must look that word up. Upon my word I must."

At issue is not simply the Word but the word of this particular Father, a word which would absurdly if inevitably attempt to found its authority on itself. The Dean

will play the dictionary-game and render judgment: "Upon my word I must." Probably the dean doesn't *mean* any of this, at least consciously, but Stephen's subsequent musings will explicate what is for him the hubris implicit in the scene. In any case, once again the butt of the joke is oblivious to the joke he helps to perpetrate, as the triply echoing signifier of the signifier etiolates in fatuous recursion into a cliched and mild oath. But we – and Stephen – take the point: despite the priest's relentless reductions, the word is no trivial matter.

Here, of course, it's the repetition of a particular word which, in echoing the repetition of the word "word," assumes the valence of that charged signifier.

The dean repeated the word yet again.

-- Tundish! Well now, that is interesting [P 204].

"Yet again." We can hear Stephen's pique. And indeed ...

The little word seemed to have turned a rapier point of his sensitiveness against this courteous and vigilant foe. He felt with a smart of dejection that the man to whom he was speaking was a countryman of Ben Jonson. He thought:

-- The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine.

How different are the words home, Christ, ale, master, on his lips and on mine! His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language [P 205].

But while Stephen frets, the priest has a final, galling, inevitable point to make.

-- In pursuing these speculations, said the dean conclusively, there is however the danger of perishing of inanition. First you must take your degree. Set that before you as your first aim. Then little by little, you will see your way [P 205].

After an unfortunate adversion to the mercenary sycophant (or worse) Moonan as a model of industry, the Dean brings the interview to a close. “He left the hearth quickly and went towards the landing to oversee the arrival of the first arts’ class” [P 206]. Stephen takes his seat in the physics theater as the professor enters. It’s twelve o’clock.

* * *

The Wake's Filthy Lucre

The little phrase “perishing of inanition” – deployed of course by Father Butt in his final effort to secure Stephen a job – is one of the ways *Portrait's* dialogue condenses the first and last terms of *Hero*. The Father is still the Father of Time and Money, and thus – though the meditation on the pyrotechnic muse or Word has become much subtler – is still sensibly Butt. *Portrait's* version, however, also makes clear that – like Deasy and of course the original Darlington – this “alien,” “extraterritorial” and “convert” Father is above all the Father of the Imperial English Word; the Word

spoken by a nation of shop-keepers. In other words, he is HCE.

Usurprisingly, thus, it's not simply II.3's gleefully micromanaged play with the consubstantial conjunction/name of father and son, martyr and assassin at a structural climax that emphasizes the Wakean Father's filiation with Butt or the Dean of Studies. This identity has been suggested from the beginning of the Wake, in a way that we can now more clearly assess. That HCE is a Father who means Time, Money and an alien, imperial English Word that must be usurped or destroyed has been clear from the beginning of our reading.

In fact, HCE is precisely an Anglican shop-keeper. This has been long-recognized, though the implications have not. Campbell and Robinson list some of HCE's principal provenances in their introduction to *A Skeleton Key*, but conclude "Most specifically, he is our Anglican tavernkeeper, HCE, in the Dublin suburb, Chapelizod."⁵ Does this association make him, like previous mercenary Fathers, "a little sinister?"

Of course. Re-reading makes it clear that from our very first introduction to HCE – preceding even the discussions of his origins and fealties in I.2 – he is, as much as he is a cuckolding rival, a sinister figure of the mercenary. As Campbell and Robinson note he opens shop in Chapelizod. But no sooner does he appear than that suburb conforms to his nature.

For, be that samesake sibsubstitute of a hooky salmon, there's already a big rody ram lad at random on the premises of his haunt of the hungred bordles, as it is told me. Shop Illicit [28.35].

⁵ p. 6 Campbell, Joseph and Robinson, Henry Morton. *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake*. New York: Viking Press, 1944.

Under his administration, Chapelizod becomes “Shop Illicit.” And of course the very first “naym” we get for HCE is “Humme the Cheapner, Esc” [29.18].

But even more to the point: when we turn to I.2 – the first chapter devoted entirely to HCE and after I.1’s transitional coda our chief introduction to his ancestry, name, word and deed – we discover that from the first lines the his ancestry is, indeed, explicitly English. Strictly speaking this genealogy is one of the slurs from which the obfuscating narration that ensues would rescue him; but the slur removes remarkably adhesive. In fact, it’s the source of HCE’s very surname.

I.1’s narrator, opening the chapter with a dilation on “the presurnames period” [30.03] thinks we should be ...

Discarding once for all those theories from older sources which would link him back with such pivotal ancestors as the Glues, the Gravys, the Northeasts, the Ankers and the Earwickers of Sidlesham in the Hundred of Manhood [30.05]

It doesn’t seem like it at first; but for some reason (possibly because the original material is so whimsical) the text here is in fact an utterly undistorted transcription of the English names of a particular region. As McHugh informs, there are “tombstones commemorating the names Glue, Gravy, Northeast, Anker and Earwicker in [a] churchyard at Sidlesham in the Hundred of Manhood, W. Sussex.” Most surprising and to the point: “Earwicker” turns out to be a) a real name and b) pointedly English.

And this is of a piece with what we’ve already learned. For as the chapter immediately goes on to demonstrate, virtually the entire point of HCE’s opening “word” – his protestations of innocence certified by “Noah Webster” [36.11] (where

we may hope the Dean at last found the definitively English provenance of “tundish”) and his oath sworn on Phoenix Park’s monument of Wellington – is that HCE is indeed an Anglican and, further, a particular partisan of the English language.

I am woowoo willing to take my stand, sir, upon the monument, that sign of our ruru redemption ...and in the presence of the Deity Itself andwell of Bishop and Mr s Michan of High Church of England as of all such ... which useth of my British to my backbone tongue ... [36.23].

But it’s the audience for this unseemly burst of anglophily which perhaps most firmly anchors HCE in the Joycean tradition of Fathers. For of course HCE’s interlocutor is the Cad, his son, the young man who will with his own word undo him. And rereading the encounter now, it emerges unmistakably as above all another replay of the ancient battle that marks Joyce’s first foray into the novel. Whether or not Stephen has forgotten his grudge we cannot say. But James, apparently, has a very long memory.

As we recall, HCE’s encounter with the Cad is already implicitly his murder. “Earwicker ... realising ... the supreme importance ... of physical life ... and unwishful as he felt of being hurled into eternity right then, plugged by a softnosed bullet from the sap” [35.21], forestalls for the moment the inevitable by wisely acceding to the demand of his assailant. This, of course, is no more than an innocent inquiry after the time, which HCE gives, along with the more crucial “greater support of his word” [36.07].

As recalled above, the precise time is a little vague: HCE mimes the Wake’s

ubiquitous, puzzling 11:32, and “ten” seems to insist itself in the “ten ton tonant thunderous tenor toller” [35.31] that strikes with supererogatory simultaneity. But the time HCE actually *tells* the Cad – as the supererogatory bursar tells the time in *Hero* – is “twelve of em sidereal.” And this, of course, will be the time of the father’s eventual murder – chosen not just for the liminal hour of transformation but as the moment when cycles of time meet, both in ordinary chronological sequence and in the Wakean convergence of temporal vectors – in the climax of II.3’s dialogue.

Twelve o’clock, twelve o’clock, twelve o clock. Each encounter with the successive incarnations of Father Butt occurs just before or just after the fatal hour. This may be coincidence, or the traumatic repetition of the time of some “mortal scene” *a la* the Wolf Man’s peculiar insisting “V.” Given, however, what we now recognize as the remarkable perdurability of Joyce’s interest in this exchange (which is not, apparently, entirely fictional), it begins to seem as though he has stamped it from the beginning with a temporal index of transformation, the death of the old and the birth of the new, as though anticipating the acceleration of the scene into the sort of apocalyptic farce onto which the Wake’s opposing temporal vectors converge.

But of more importance is that in addition to the time, the Cad gets of course the Word. We already know that the Cad will twist the Father’s Word into a noose of many strands by chapter’s end, evincing a parricidal streak whose full import, we now recognize, is not evident until II.3. But it’s precisely II.3’s adversions to the ancient Butt imbroglio which now allow us to take fuller stock of the Word’s character, import and origins as they are revealed in I.2.

Recall that the Cad, taking leave of HCE,

... thanked um for guilders received and time of day (not a little token

abock all the same that that was owl the God's clock it was) and, upon
humble duty to greet his Tyskminister and ... gildthegap ... his a
mouldy voids, went about his business ... verbigracious ... and ...
repeated in his secondmouth language as many of the bigtimer's
verbaten words which he could balbly call to memory ... while ... he
spat in careful convertedness a musaic dispensation about his
hearthstone, if you please (Irish saliva, *mawshe dho hole*, but would a
respectable prominently connected fellow of Iro-European ascendances
with welldressed ideas who knew the correct thing ... expectorate after
such a callous fashion ...) musefed ... [37.05].

The fortunate Cad. The interview has provided precisely the kind of instruction
any young penman might wish; in fact the son has been “musefed” the “musaic
dispensation” of the Father. Now, however, we recognize that it's precisely the
ultimate provenance of this dispensation which will fatally ironize its reception. For
it's the provenance we learn when the Cad goes, note, precisely “about his business
... while ... he spat in careful convertedness a musaic dispensation about his
hearthstone, if you please.” In retrospect there are legion pointed clues strewn about
the scene. But the touchstone – italicized for our illumination – is of course the
metonymous “*hearthstone*.” The crass “business” of the “musaic dispensation” is
thus none other than the market-place Word of the original Father Butt.

Recall that “Stephen ... strolled into the Physics Theatre [and] discovered Father
Butt kneeling on the hearthstone engaged in lighting a small fire,” and that, his
implicit “fire-sermon” on the Word being concluded, “Father Butt ... got up from the
hearthstone and went away about some other business.” The hearthstone is where

Butt is discovered, where he remains during his pointed ledgerdemean and whence he departs at its close, leaving a disgruntled Stephen to rue the politesse that gave his enemy the last word. Of course the campaign for redress begins immediately, and persists unto *Finnegans Wake*, where the Dean's "musaic dispensation" is collapsed into the metonymous hearthstone

What follows I.2's "*hearthstone*" thus follows precisely as *Portrait's* Dean follows *Hero's* Butt. Indeed the Cad's reaction is almost a dendrological cross-section, revealing the succeeding growths of the encounter through its revisions. For suddenly, with the vulgar Irish answer to the English word, we have precisely the antagonisms and anxieties that characterized the transmission of the Word in *Portrait's* own hearthside scene that ends in the "tundish" quibble. Thus has the Cad ...

spat in careful convertedness a musaic dispensation about his *hearthstone*, if you please (Irish saliva, *mawshe dho hole*, but would a respectable prominently connected fellow of Iro-European ascendances with welldressed ideas who knew the correct thing ... expectorate after such a callous fashion, no thank you! ...) [37.23].

In some ways the *Wake* condenses *Portrait* even more economically than *Portrait* condenses *Hero*, though detection obviously depends on an acquaintance with Joyce's earlier works. We might even say that *Portrait's* whole paternal "musaic dispensation" is compressed into "*hearthstone*" itself, which itself becomes the hated English Word condescending to the Irish. Note the specificity of the congruence. As "funnel" was followed by "tundish," so "hearthstone" is followed by a quaint

translation into the provincial.

Which this time is much more explicitly *declassé*. We can almost detect Stephen, still smarting, in the elaborately sarcastic presentation of the smug and anxious disapproval of a lace-curtain *parvenu* or “respectable prominently connected fellow of Iro-European ascendances with welldressed ideas who knew the correct thing.” Which correct thing is *not*, of course, to speak Irish, at least in the presence of the “Tyskminister.” We should abjure that “callous fashion,” and truck instead only with the “careful convertedness” to the English word.

“Careful convertedness” mocks the prudence of *Portrait*’s “English convert,” a prudence that is at last perhaps a little shrewd, wary less of heresy than of perishing of inanition. As Stephen reflects in *Portrait* the Dean has made a life of “waiting upon worldlings” with “the shifts and lore and cunning of the world” [P 202-3], the priest of “the lax and the lukewarm and the prudent” [P 206]. As Simon Dedalus remarks, not without approval, “O, a jesuit for your life, for diplomacy!” [P76]. But of course the Cad, for the moment at least, is an example of “careful convertedness” too, taking “verbigracious” tuition from the worldling Father of English as readily as all of Stephen’s mercenary classmates, the meek rabblement who, with “eyes only for their future jobs ... will write themselves in and out of convictions, toil and labour to insinuate themselves into the good graces of the Jesuits” [SH 232]. Thus, again, we find the Cad going precisely “about his business,” bent “upon humble duty to ... his Tyskminister.” The Cad is, for the ironic moment, just what the Father would have him be; a little, verbigerating, echoing version of the Father himself, and suitably “verbigracious” about it.

But since the father and son mirror each other here, “verbigracious” also recalls another “sinister” thing about the Dean: his politeness, which to Stephen may be less

politeness than precisely politesse, the sort of Jesuit diplomacy Simon winkingly endorses. This is hinted at in *Portrait's* language, though a fuller indignation at a possibly craven duplicity – and to a degree an outright fatuousness – does not really emerge until the contexts of the *Wake*.

In *Portrait* Stephen speaks of his “courteous and vigilant foe” [P 205]; and indeed, the dean is unfailingly polite throughout, though after his protestations that “tundish” is “interesting” Stephen finds “his courtesy of manner [rings] a little false” [P 204]. But the most crucial indictment of manners is present in germ precisely in that old bugaboo of equivocation, “detain.”

I hope I am not detaining you.

-- Not in the least, said the dean politely [P203].

It's not just that the dean maintains his courtesy even and especially when he's at his most inept, producing a comic juxtaposition of dimness and decorum, nor that the text itself emphasizes this juxtaposition with the word “politely.” Rather, the dean's misconception is based precisely on his preoccupation with good manners. He's reduced the lofty theological connotations of “detain” to etiquette, heaven to the drawing-room. Politeness, thus, itself becomes another instance of the “debased value” [SH 27] that the “conspiracy of ignobility” has foisted on the Word.

In *Portrait* the consequent agitation remains, I think – and despite the recurrent and increasingly sceptical adversions to courtesy – too subtle to detect. It requires the *Wake*, curiously, to illuminate the pique in retrospection. For in the *Wake* the arrogance and crass reductionism of the English word is made a matter of good manners.

This begins to be evident no sooner than the “musaic dispensation” is “spat;” for in fact it’s “a musaic dispensation about his *hearthstone*, if you please.” The polite phrase that immediately follows “*hearthstone*” is answered in the rejection of the parenthetical Irish that ensues: “no thank yous!” But it’s in the very Irish translation of the Word that the theme emerges most clearly, at least in I.2. For “*Mawshe dho hole*,” it turns out, is a Wakean version, *not* of the Irish for “*hearthstone*” at all, but for the “if you please” that follows it. Nor is this the Wake’s only play of this type.

HCE’s Word, “balbly received,” is of course a version of Vico’s. And Vico’s is itself an injunction, recall, against *flagrante delicto*: in other words the learning of good manners. Hence III.4’s description of the thundering Father as the

promethean paratonnerwetter which first (Pray go! Pray go!) taught
love’s lightning the way (pity shown) to, well, conduct itself (mercy,
good shot! only please don’t mention it!) [585.11].

Here, the rehearsal of various phrases – among them *prego*, *bitte schoen*, *merci* – suitable for utterance in polite company reduces the sublimation that effects language to a child learning to say “please” and “thank-you,” just as in I.2.

Of course this makes some sense. Polite language itself marks the child’s modification of impulse into socially appropriate restraint. Often enough of course this is – and by some lights at root remains – a shrewd ingratiation. But these are also the sorts of phrases so often aptly described as empty. For Stephen, thus, they are at best instances of duplicitous diplomacy. At worst they’re realizations of his chiefest fear: the glib reduction of the value that the vessel of the Word contains. Thus as the Cad goes “about his business” he repeats not words but “voids;” and “mouldy voids”

at that.

HCE's encounter with the Cad in I.2 at the dawn of his career has long been recognized by criticism as crucially determinate and proleptic of the ensuing narrative, such as it can be discerned. Now, however, we can recognize not just that this encounter looks forward to the climax of the murder in II.3, but that both anticipation and climax are substantially developed from the agon limned in the dawn of Joyce's writing.

At first it seems strange that *Hero's* exchange (and its descendant in *Portrait*) should merit such an extensive reprise. But it isn't strange at all. Stephen's clash with Butt isn't just a characteristically Dedalian *non serviam* or another jibe at the priesthood that betrayed Parnell (who's adjuration to his treacherous countrymen – "When you sell me, get my price" – echoes variously throughout the *Wake*). The clash between the artist and the dark, trinitarian Father of Time, Money and the imperial English Word is from the start a war for the thing that mattered most to Joyce and mattered most in *Finnegans Wake*: language. As the "tundish" exchange in *Portrait* makes particularly clear, it is perhaps above all the smug, oblivious, condescending Englishness of the Word that offends. Despite Joyce's equivocal (and, I think, esthetically opportunistic) relationship with nationalism, it is this which at last contextualizes the insult of the Father's butt to the "sob of tunfs" in II.3 as precisely an "insoullt to Igorladns," the insult to Ireland (and, more to the point, to the artist as a young man) which Joyce's own perpetual revisions of the ancient encounter has reframed as precisely archetypal, at least in terms of his own work.

But of course our investigations of Joyce's earlier writings suggest that something else is going on as well. Money – "but money" or not – is never a textual end in itself. From its first associations with Father Butt, money has been the dark version of the

Word.

When we reread, thus, the smaller flanking dialogues that point toward II.3's murderous climax, we likewise find the stamp of Butt's galling mercantilism and its taint of the linguistic. We now understand more clearly why it is that from their first exchange – I.1's dialogue – the quarreling twins “exchange a few strong verbs weak each other.” Words are checks – blank checks, *Hero's* Stepen would remind – whose value is written by sensibilities high or low. (The form of the verb here also suggests the exchequer and this won't be the Wake's last pun on that office.) But now we understand better the implication of the argument. The twins are going to argue about language; in fact they'll exchange strong words about it.

At first we don't see the argument in the ensuing dialogue. But that's only because Jute is as politic and subtle as any Jesuit. Note the offer he makes to Mutt.

Jute. – One eyegonblack. Bisons is bisons. Let me fore all your
hasitancy cross your qualm with trink gilt. Here have sylvan coyne, a
piece of oak. Ghinees hies good for you [16.29].

Jute attempts to gloss over whatever dispute there is by magnanimously declaring “Bisons is bisons.” As McHugh notes, this almost certainly translates “Bygones are bygones.” But Jute's offer of clemency is cleverer than it seems. As McHugh also notes, “Bison” is one-time American slang for a nickel. Of course Jute would never try to bribe his brother; after all they're both men of the world who recognize that (especially given the number of the verb) “Bisons is bisons” – business is business. To which Jute promptly gets down by offering Mutt the appropriately homophonic gilt.

Very well; there's some argument over the value of words and the implicit bribe of the mercantile offer. But does this money really have anything to do with Father Butt's business sense? Yes. For Jute's closing advice is precisely Butt's closing advice in *Hero*: "Ghinees hies good for you" – Guinness is good for you. Because of course, so are guineas: money.

The Wake will variously recall Butt's condescension on this score, and as often as not through an evocation, as here, of the Guinness name. In any case Mutt recognizes the coin for what it is; precisely the token of the hated father. In fact it bears the father's image.

Mutt. – Louee, louee! How wooden I not know it, the intellible greycloak of Cedric Silkyshag! Cead mealy faulty rices for one dabblin bar. Old grisly growly! He was poached on in that eggtentical spot. ... There where the misers moony ... [16.29].

Thus we note the persistence of the mercenary theme. "Louee, louee" cites at once Italian "him, him" and the French currency. Of course the father is himself the (legal?) tender of II.3's "dabblin bar," also the Russian Bear or "grisly growly." But as McHugh notes "bar" is also slang for one pound sterling. It seems increasingly appropriate thus that HCE meets his death at the site of "misers moony."

When we turn to IV's dialogue the same themes emerge.

Muta: Why soly smiles the supremest with such for a leary on his rugular lips?

Juva: Bitchorbotchum! Eebrydime! He has help his crewn on the

burkeley buy but he has holf his crown on the Eurasian Generalissimo.

Muta: Skulkasloot! The twyly velleid is thus then paridicynical? ...

Haven money on stablecert?

Juva: Tempt to wom Outsider!

Muta: Suc? He quoffs. Wutt?

Juva: Sec! Wartar wartar! Wett.

Muta: Ad piabelle et Purabelle?

Juva: At Winne, Woerman og Sengs. ...

Muta: May I borrow that hordwanderbafle from you, old rubberskin?

Juva: Here it is and I hope it's your wormingpen, Erinmonker!

Shoot. [610.09]

This time we've included the dialogue's last lines, for it is there that the theme of nationalist contest for the Word emerges. It's hard to say what, besides a hot-waterbottle, a "hordwanderbaffle" is. Perhaps it obscurely evokes some kind of Beowulfian "word-horde" that wanders and baffles. In any case, it involves language of some kind, Wakean or not, because when Muta asks for it Juva – whose politeness once again conceals a sinister motive – provides it with the hope it proves a "wormingpen, Erinmonker." Immediately the text-proper returns with "Shoot." Given what we know of the climax of the dialogues, this certainly facilitates our apprehension that Juva does not wish Muta well. I'll confess I've neither the time nor talent to extract all the dizzying implications of the offer when its taken in the context of the death of the Word in II.3; but at least we can see that here, as in *Portrait*, the polite offer of language might be fatal to the Irish.

Once again, thus, this fatal word is imbricated with the fiscal theme, this time

somewhat easier to detect. We recognize the familiar consubstantiality of victim and assailant. But now we also see that the terms of identity – evocative, it turns out, of the central dialogue’s horse race – are precisely economic. This strange father/son hybrid can’t lose. It’s not just that he’s divided his kingship to happier effect than Lear; now we can read that he’s also *betting* half a crown on “the burkeley buy” and half a crown on the Russian General. With “money on stablecert,” he’ll win “Eebrydime,” even on the dark horse of a “Tempt to wom Outsider.” “Tempt to wom,” however, suggests that in IV’s dialogue, too, the ghost of Stephen Hero is avenged.

As any patron of a “dabblin bar” is likely to know, “Guinness is good for you” was one slogan of John Gilroy’s famously successful advertising campaign of the 1930s. The durable metal placard which bore the legend survives in many establishments. But as well-known at the time was another of Gilroy’s ads in which an anthropomorphic clock, the hands of its handle-bar moustache indicating 12:50, announces “Ten to one it’s Guinness time.” And indeed; no sooner is it “Tempt to wom” than the rising father/son, feeling a bit “Sec!”, requires something to “Wett” his whistle. “Suc? He quoffs ... Ad Winne, Woermann og Sengs.”

Note the economy of the condensation. “Ten to one” is of course the parlance of the tout who would make a nice bit change on the race. But the same opportunity proceeds simultaneously from the direction of the Guinness company, which attempts to “Tempt” its victim with the same “gilt” as did Jute’s sly bribery.

Given his sedulous advertisement it seems the young artist might as well have taken the job in the first place, except that through characteristic usurpation Guinness ends up working for Joyce instead of the other way around. And that work is by no means done here. The dialogues, after all, point toward “epicentral” II.3.

That chapter's minutely proleptic opening line is of course how we got here in the first place. Its signature effect, after all, suggested that the father's last name was "but." This precipitated our drop into the diachronous depths of Joycean anticipation. But if we take what we've gathered from those depths and return to the trap-door that opened onto them, the dark force that tempts the hero not just in *Hero* but in the flanking dialogues demands we read II.3's terse opening "paragraph" once more. II.3's opening words, recall, are: "It may not or maybe a no concern of the Guinnesses but."

In part this is no doubt a reference to Shaun's barrel, a butt, after all, of Guinness. But if so that imagery itself is embroiled in the ancient vendetta. For we now recognize that from Joyce's earliest writings the Father is precisely branded. He is Guinness's Butt; and the son's progress should be none of his growing concern.

And indeed: we can now recognize that this elegantly overdetermined opening line looks forward not merely to the triumph of the anonymous, obliterated Name in "no man" – nor alone to the conflation of father and son, victim and assailant in Father Butt – but to the mercenary theme with which that Father has from the beginning sullied the artist's imagination. For the sin of the Father's butt, foretold by John Joyce's anecdote, is precisely the sin of Father Butt.

That is, money. From the first, the offending defecation turns out to be mercantile. We've already noted our introduction to the sin, in which Butt's narration lets us know the General's doing something. "First he s s st steppes. Then he st stoo stoopt. Lookt" [339.30]. But we're not sure what it is until we read Taff's first words in response: "Scutterer of guld" [340.01]. As McHugh reminds, to "scutter" is to pass diarrhoea. But apparently the Father's also passing coins. As McHugh again remarks he's not just a "stutterer of guilt" but (somewhat more

clearly) a “scatterer of gold.” And now we recall that the closest analog of the phrase in Joyce’s work comes shortly after Father Butt’s final unwelcome offer in *Hero*. Recall that Stephen shows his disdain for the temptation of the Guinness job and the alternative offer of a clerkship with the Fathers through the final image of Father Healy, the last of *Hero*’s mercenary stooges, walking into the ironically golden sunset, “all his creases and wrinkles ... scattered with gold” [SH 233].

Thus when we read further, we discover that much of II.3’s parricidal impulse turns out to be a reaction to HCE’s fiscal policies. Butt complains that his father’s an “aged monad making a venture out of the murder of investment” [341.12] and, shortly before the shooting, exults “The buckbeshottered! He’ll umbozzle no more” [352.30]. Taff’s description of Butt himself as the “bragadore-gunneral” or “shutter reshottus and besieger besieged” adds the mercantile touch when it immediately goes on to characterize the conflict as one “of fiercemarchands counterination oho of shorpshoopers” [352.26]. In this dizzying equation, the English “nation of shopkeepers” of Napoleon’s derogatory phrase are themselves attacked by the the equally mercenary “fiercemarchands” (French *marchand* “shopkeeper”) and are in any case themselves versions of the sharpshooter who despatches HCE.

This confusion, coming shortly before the actual murder, anticipates the fusion that is the murder’s chief structural result. This, recall, is one of the Wake’s most conspicuous gestures of symmetry and convergence, as well as the gesture Hart found not epicentral but central. The question arises, thus, as to why Hart includes no discussion whatsoever of its content. The answer, now, seems likely enough. The fusion of the twins at the conclusion of II.3 large central dialogue, which fusion constitutes by Hart’s lights the crowning structural gesture of *Finnegans Wake*, is given almost entirely to a theme which simply makes no sense at all unless we have

occasioned, consciously or otherwise, Hart's omission of any discussion of the content of this passage, which his own theories of convergence and fusion rendered obviously and singularly central.

The omission is understandable. These matters somehow just don't fit the tone of a work that seems in its way otherworldly; if not precisely divine or transcendental, certainly fey in its presentation of a sort of modern or post-modern *Tir na Nog*. But there – not just across the length and breadth of one of the Wake's major architectonic props but in an expression constructed to be at once unusually central and unusually conspicuous – it is. And of course we should have expected it from our first introduction to HCE as "Humme the Cheapner" running his "Shop Illicit."

Does this suggest that the Marxist might make more critical capital out of the Wake than has been suspected? The answer is almost certainly yes; an astute reader could deploy such apparatus with considerable profit, though the situation is complicated. It's an inevitability of Wakean, history, at least, that the beards of the revolutionaries grow longer overnight. If the "*desprot slave wager and foeman feudal unshekkled*" unite as "*one and the same person*" to unseat the mercenary overlord who has been "*living by owning over the surfers of the glebe,*" by the end of the stage-directions this insurrectionary "*one and the same person*" has become, in his amalgamation, the original "hugest commercial emporialist" HCE himself, introduced in I.2's own conflation of HCE and "Iron Duke" Wellington as the eminently entitled and aristocratic "Dook Umphrey for the hungerlean spalpeens of Lucalized" [32.15]. Here, thus, he confronts, again, himself, "*dook to dook.*"

In fact it seems all of the spleen against the mercenary Father has been for naught. No sooner do the twins constitute themselves as HCE's successor than – to paraphrase one great apostle of Empire – there they go again. Whatever "it" is, the

revolutionary New Man of the “*commonturn*” (Comintern: Third Communist International) promptly “*palms it off like commodity tokens.*” What a revolting development.

The implications are clear. Even in the Wake, the time of history moves in cycles of eternal, futile recurrence. Money and power change hands, but money and power themselves retain their sway, careless of their handlers. Father Butt can never really die.

Or can he?

Baudrillard, presumably, would not find himself at a loss here. For it’s precisely the recollection of the original Father Butt scenario and its descendants that rescues the puzzling climax of the dialogic structure at once from the textual incongruity of its economic emphasis and, it eventually turns out, from what is at last the merely apparent cyclical futility of its gesture. For to recall Father Butt and the market-place is to recall that from the first the war with the Father is – *and especially when its terms are fiscal* – a war over the value and authority of *language*. At first we’re puzzled because we do not detect this theme in II.3’s final, climactic fusion of the twins. But when we look again, we discover that this fusion transpires precisely in the long shadow cast by Father Butt, the Dean of Studies who is above all the Father of the mercantile, Imperial word.

Recall Stephen’s agonized considerations immediately following the “tundish” debacle.

The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words home, Christ, ale, master, on his lips and on mine!
His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an

acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language [P 205].

We've had occasion to remark the audacity – even the ridiculousness – of this discontent. First, of course, Stephen doesn't really speak Irish, and doesn't want to. Despite "tundish" and regional accents, his indignation here is at least in part a posture, though one whose value must be judged by what it at last effects. But second and more to the point: again, *none* of us *make* words, at least not deliberately *en masse*; we accept them, and this unthinking humility is itself the indispensable basis of culture and history. But leave these considerations aside for the moment and consider the image with which this fledgling *non serviam* concludes.

"My soul frets in the shadow of his language." Thus it is that Butt and Taff, "*desprot slave wager and foeman feodal unshekkled*," are precisely "*umbraged by the shadow*" of HCE. Overshadowed, they take, like Stephen, umbrage at the insult.

The chapter's elaborate signatures and conflation have of course already suggested that the murdered father is Father Butt, in some incarnation or other. Thus the General's increasing conflation with Fathers of the Church, and particularly the General of the Jesuits. But recall, further, that as this identity obtrudes, the "mass" celebrated by the Father becomes precisely "his lewdbrogue reciping his cheap cheatery gospeds be the homely Churopodvas." Once more the Father of the Church has reduced the value of the Word, and with the same terms the Dean of Study uses when he recommends the "homely" Epictetus.

Thus just before the Butt of II.3 boasts "I shuttm," he explains that his grudge against the General stems from "how he took the ward from us" [352.07]. Of course this also recalls the twins' contest for authorship of the Letter which plays throughout

the Wake and especially through the backwards night of III. But the conflict between the brothers emerges here as elsewhere as one between father and son as well, and precisely over the Word, as has been forecast not just from the beginning of the Wake but more to the point now from the beginning of Joyce's fiction. And from the first the terms are economic. Thus Taff too, in his first speech in response to Butt's first sight of "But da," puts precisely the "wage" in "language" when he complains of the General's "paramilitary langdwage," or that the General is "coining a speak a spake."

But perhaps II.3's most helpful indication that the second and more decisive of its climactic moments in fact involves the double theme of money and the Word is tendered in its first explicit presentation of the mercantile father.

The theme is established as soon as we find HCE manning II.3's "baar."

[T]he pilsener had the baar ... still passing the change-a-pennies,
pengeypigses, a several sort of coyne A few pigses and hare you are
and no chickingMeanly in his lewdbrogue take your tyon coppels
token, with this good sixtric from mine runbag of jewels. ... In the
frameshape of hard mettles. ... It is minely well mint [313.14].

McHugh documents those allusions to coinage which are not immediately obvious. *Penge* is Norwegian "monies." Pigs are found on Irish halfpennies, hares on threepenny bits and chicks on the penny. Sitric the Viking – here "sixtric" – minted the first Danish penny in Ireland. As so often when it wishes to establish a theme, the Wake compensates for its obscurity by a saturating repetition. Hence the additional mints, jewels, coppers and hard metals.

This scene, however, is introduced with the prediction of HCE's final downfall in the chapter. For as the last line of the previous paragraph explains

following pnomoneya, he is consistently blown to Adams. So help me
boyg who keeps the book! [313.12]

The Father meets his end this time by contracting (probably in two senses) pneumonia. All we have to do, however is to suppress the first and final letters of "pnomoneya" to discover that it is actually a fatal case of "no money" [McHugh], a construction amply supported by the mercenary theme which immediately ensues. Following this condition HCE is apparently "consistently blown to Adams." But in addition to its evocation of the primordial man, the makes a complicated, bifid structural assertion.

As "consistently" implies, there's recursion here, and precisely of the Wake's cyclicity. So determinative, in fact, is the characterization of HCE in fiscal terms that the last we see of HCE at the close of the "temporal" text in III.4 is precisely a relentless examination of his bankruptcy. Though we've looked chiefly at III.4's close as the sexual and temporal finale of "Mista Chimepiece," rereading we recognize that HCE's death is framed first and perhaps most emphatically in fiscal terms, when we find HCE ...

making party capital out of landed self-interest, light on a slavey but
weighty on the bourse, our hugest commercial emprialist How did
he bank it up, swank it up, the whaler in the punt, a guinea by a groat,
his index on the balance and such wealth into the bargain ... ? Humbly

to fall and cheaply to rise, exposition of failures. Ofter the fall. ...
 [A] main chanced to burst and misflooded his fortunes [U]p started
 four hurrigan gales to smithereen ... the slate for accounts his keeper
 was cooking. Then came three boy buglehorners who counterbezzled
 and crossbugled him. Later on in the same evening two hussites
 absconded through a breach in his bylaws and left him, the infidels, to
 pay himself off in kind remembrances. Till, ultimatehim, fell the
 crowning barleystraw, when an explosium of his distilleries
 deafadumped all his dry goods ... and dropped him, what remains of a
 heptark, leareyed and letterish, weeping worrybound on his bankrump.
 Pepep. Pay bearer On never again ... swore on him Lloyd's
 His reignbolt's shot. Never again! How you do that like, Mista
 Chimepiece? [588.08]

Strictly speaking, this is the end of HCE. IV, which follows, features the
 resurgence of Finnegan (though of course there's some consubstantiality). But of
 course *Finnegans Wake* never really ends. Since it's a cycle, sailor HCE, more or
 less in his capacity as the Norwegian Captain, is "consistently blown to Adams" in
 the sense that the winds of cyclical time bring him consistently back to the beginning
 of the book, where we "rivverrun, past Eve and Adams ... " [3.01].

But recall that *Finnegans Wake* is strangely built. Its time doesn't just travel in a
 circle, but converges, as we've seen, in II.3, where past and future meet in the present
 fatal hour of twelve that stops and starts the cycles of time themselves (while
 commemorating, we now suspect, the hour of Stephen's quarrels and humiliations).
 Thus we find our "historyend" – the end of time and of the story of Himself – twice in

II.3; once in the thunder that closes the first anecdote, and once in the shot that closes the second. Thus the shot itself is fired at twelve. But if the cycles of Wakean time close not just on page three but in this fatal climax of the dialogue's action, do we find that there, too, HCE is "consistently blown to Adams?"

Of course. For recall that no sooner does Butt exclaim "Sparro!" – "I shoot!" than we witness

[The abnihilization of the etym by the grisning of the grosning of the grinder of the grunder of the first lord of Hurtreford expolodotonates through Parsuralia with an ivanmorinthorrorumble fragorombassity amidwhiches general uttermosts confussion are perceivable moletons skaping with mulicules while coventry pumpkins fairlygosmother-themselves Similar scenatas are projectilized from Hullulullu, Bawlawayo, empyreal Raum and mordern Atems. They were precisely the twelves of clocks, noon minutes, none seconds. ...] [353.22]

As McHugh notes, "*the first lord of Hurtreford*" is none other than Lord Rutherford, who effects the annihilation of the atom in 1919. HCE hasn't just been shot, he's been split, and in consequence "*expolodotonates ... with an inavmorinthorrumble ... amidwhiches are perceivable moletons skaping with mulicules.*" It's true the physics takes on a sort of Wakean reversal in which "mulicules" seem to become subatomic particles, but quibbles aside the general sense is sure enough. HCE has been blown to atoms.

This, more precisely, is Stephen's revenge of "detain," "tundish" and the rest of

galling, mercenary, jesuitical, imperial devaluations of the Word which are no more, after all, than the perpetual *de facto* hegemony of the market-place value of the ordinary English word. As we've seen, there's a tragic futility in the triumph. The son succeeds by becoming the father he hates, and language, once again, becomes money. The rich and the poor you will always have with you. You'll also always have the flat-footed infelicities of ordinary language.

But. There, in this extremely brief elapse between the Word's atomic obliteration and its all-but immediate reconstitution in business-as-usual, Joyce finds his opportunity, and a way out.

What do you get when you blow a word to bits, when you split the atom of the word into its "subetymic" particles?

(Stoop) if you are abcedminded, to this claybook, what curios of signs
(please stoop) in this allaphbed! When a part so ptee does duty for
the holos we soon grow to use of an allforabit. Here (please to stoop)
are selveran cued peteet peas of quite a penuniar interest inaslittle as
they are the pellets that make the tomtummy's pay roll [18.17-19.08].

One reason that the Wakean Word cycles helplessly back into its base, temporal, fiscal condition immediately the mercantile Father and his Name are destroyed is simply that language cannot escape its material condition. For better or worse, this is particularly evident in the case of written language. In the case of speech, we may briefly deceive ourselves with metaphors of the living breath that is immediately tangent on the spirit, as our weightless, evanescent utterances vanish into the thin air in which they never seem entirely to materialize.

But Joyce, at last, chose not to sing. Strictly speaking, he's not even a speaker. He's a writer. And on every page, with an all-too local habitation and a name, there looms, for the writer – and whether or not he likes or even notices – the visibly evident trace of the Word's material condition. The paradox is that this material – and in conventional terms *extremely* meaning-poor material it is – is rendered more, not less evident, when the word is blasted into its “subtymic” particles.

But in his subtlest usurpation yet, Joyce will traduce this “subtymic” material itself into the unprecedented richness of a “language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree” which has been his desideratum from his first encounters with the Father. And it is once again in these first encounters that we find – realized in much more detail than has been generally recognized – the strategies which will culminate in Joyce's last Word; in fact in his ultimate usurpation and renewal of the Name.

Chapter VI

So far as we understand the Wake at this point, its most important structural and semantic climax is the destruction of the “etym.” We’ve been able to discern several important aspects of this event.

First, of course, we’ve discovered its structural centrality. It’s not as though the “abnihilation of the etym” has gone thus far utterly unremarked by criticism. But it’s been remarked little, and little has been done with the idea, chiefly because the way in which it forms one chief climax of the action which the entire structural apparatus of the Wake forwards as crucial has not been discerned.

But second, we’ve made sense of its context. This is in some ways the more important advance; for if the formal placement of the scene that stages the destruction of the “etym” has gone largely unremarked, its contents have gone entirely unnoticed. This, as we’ve suggested, is probably due to the apparent incongruity of the theme that dominates the actual presentation of the structurally crucial fusion of II.3’s twins: money. Economic matters have never been a critical by-word in Wakean studies. But when, consulting Joyce’s earlier works, we recognize the importance of money as metaphor for the debased and ordinary language the artist must reject, the fiscal context of II.3’s vanquished “etym” suddenly makes sense.

Perhaps most usefully, though, the very detection of the theme of the “market-place” word in *Hero* and *Portrait* has allowed us to correctly construe II.3’s gleefully and repeatedly micromanaged play with the amalgamating identities of its victim and assailant. Father Butt, Hero’s *bete noire* who continues his malefaction in *Portrait* as the Dean of Studies, has returned in II.3. Precisely because he is the champion of debased, ordinary, mercantile and imperial English he is made to undo himself in what constitutes as it were Stephen’s long-delayed revenge, as Butt kills his Father while

Taff – with the assistance of various textual hints such as that effected by the chapter's one-line opening paragraph – winkingly insists their identity.

But to leave matters here is to leave the *Wake* still unread. This negation, this apocalypse, is not all, but is of course merely prelude; a clearing of the old in anticipation of the new. As the conspicuous novelty of the *Wake*'s style itself suggests, the destruction of ordinary language is but the first and at last less important step in an artistic program which terminates not in the destruction but in the reconstruction of language in the fulfillment of the promise implicit in Stephen's objection that he has not "made or accepted" the words of ordinary language.

The story of *Finnegans Wake* is at last the story of a sort of artistic self-recognition. Its artist must recognize himself in his writing. We might say in fact that his travails are versions of similar travails undergone by Rousseau, at least by the lights of certain well-known interpretations of the *Confessions*. The writing of the *Wake* is indeed a species of dangerous supplement that at once delays and effects presence, both of the self and the Other. But as it does so it answers questions of identity and agency which, like the *Wakean* suicide of Father Butt, have their roots in the earlier fictions.

Confusions of identity are a *Wakean* stock in trade. Whether our acquaintance with the text is deep or casual, we expect that the identities of, for instance, Shem, Shaun and their father will blur and amalgamate as it were in a parodic trinity. But with what is retrospectively a very striking anticipation, the earlier fictions stage precisely these confusions as well. Moreover, these confusions involve precisely the themes which have come to dominate our reading. For in them nothing is more at stake than the question of language and its relationship to self-present agency; that is, the authority of the author, or the artist.

One curious result is that the murder of the father which the *Wake* stages so emphatically and which takes on in retrospect the character of a climax not simply to

the Wake but to Joyce's work as a whole has in fact already been staged, not once but several times, in the earlier texts. More curiously still, and more importantly, these murders uniformly involve precisely the destruction of ordinary language. Once we have read and understood II.3, the consistency of the effect in the earlier works is remarkable and inescapable. II.3 might even strike us as in some sense supererogatory in this regard, were it not distinguished from its antecedents precisely with respect to questions of agency, self-presence, consciousness and deliberation.

But what II.3 has in fact accomplished is a knowing, masterful recollection and in a sense rehabilitation of its anticipations. For it's II.3 itself which, with its broad winks and knowing gestures, announces that it understands precisely what's going on in this murder which is also a suicide. True, a certain oblivion remains. Butt himself does not seem entirely conscious of the ultimate import of his actions. But on the other hand we do have, off to the side, his knowing brother Taff, explicitly informing Butt of his identity and drawing the connection for him: "bullyclaver of ye, bragadore-gunneral ... you were shotter reshottus and besieger besieged."

Nighttown neatly anticipates the kind of self-recognition this gesture will demand. Tapping his brow, Stephen says "But in here it is I must kill the priest and the king." This gesture of self-reference is a bridge between the *non serviam* the Stephen of *Portrait* will tender toward ordinary language and the Wake's self-conscious murder-suicide of the Vichian-Freudian father of the "etym." The tapping of the brow also indicates what would in one sense be the only locus beside the page where the sort of parricide Stephen demands would have any chance of producing the desired effect. Lunging at a series of projections is all very well; but what Stephen has to do at last is simply change his mind.

But in the confrontations of the earlier fictions Butt's oblivion will remain the order of the day. All of the elements which enter into self-conscious (for some tastes too

self-conscious) play in II.3 will be found in its anticipations, but without the sense that the agon is at last internal; precisely without, that is, self-consciousness. Reading backwards, the gesture of identity between the antagonists – who will remain in large and telling part precisely fathers, sons and brothers – become obvious. But no figure of the author obtrudes with a certifying gloss. Instead, a fatal rivalry winds in each instance toward the fatality the Wake has revealed as inevitable, while the rivals themselves remain oblivious at once of their identity, the consequences of the rivalry for ordinary language, and often enough of the rivalry itself.

And a post-Wakean retrospection reveals another element in the scenario. The rivalry, as the Wake's temporal beginning, middle and especially its end – that end taken up by III.4's presentation of the primal scene – would suggest, is indeed oedipal. For better or worse, the father's murder seems to have inescapably Freudian motivations: for beneath and at last confused with the rivalry for the word is the rivalry for the woman.

It's this motivation, of course, which according to psychoanalytic tradition remains precisely unconscious. Perhaps this accounts in part for its oblivion. Perhaps it's even the case that it's Joyce's eventual 1925 acquaintance with *The Wolf Man et al.* which decisively recast for him not only his own long-standing fascination with the Vico myth of origins but his own earlier writings, precipitating a sort of psychoanalytic insight, a self-presence or recognition long deferred.

Yet whatever the reasons for a certain unconsciousness with respect to fathers, language and identity in the scenes from the earlier texts, these prove at last to have their roots in what remains – even taking the Wake itself into account – the clearest presentation of the *new kind of linguistic agency* the Joycean artist will at last demand. As we'll see, Stephen has the key to the whole conundrum in his hand immediately the extant pages of *Hero* begin. It's just that he immediately loses it, or perhaps hides it

from himself. And it *remains* lost throughout the pages of all of the work that will follow through the years, to emerge again only in the ultimate climax of *Finnegans Wake*.

For us, though, various clues weave through the labyrinth of the texts which let us follow the progress of this missing key, from its provenance in Joyce's earliest formulations to "The keys to. Given!" which close the *Wake* as a whole. One of these clues has proved, as we've seen, the market-place. It can still serve us. In one sense, oddly, all we have to do is listen to Deep Throat and follow the money. Apparently motivated by the sorts of associations we've noted, the market-place proves once again the scene for some of Stephen's most crucial, if unconscious, murders of the father and, in consequence, of ordinary language. Routinely, and as though in deliberate anticipation of II.3, these scenes also involve a confusion of identity with one sort or another of fraternal peer himself conflated with a father. Finally, they involve the gradual transmutation of the market-place word – the occasion, as we've seen, of the founding rivalry with the father – into the woman for whom the antagonists contend but whose final favor remains the transmission of language.

* * *

Killing the Priest and the King In Here

The tremendous advantage of securing a Jesuit education from a series of aggravating pomposities who have the gall to call themselves "Father" is that they're not, in theory anyway, anybody's real father at all, and at least not your own, no more than are the priest and the king. Hence, parricidal impulses and posturings may emerge with relative ease. But if Joyce's writings have any pertinence for psychoanalytic speculations, they suggest that the Law of the Father retains its

purchase in the face of facile revolutionary rhetoric precisely because it is anchored in the anger, anxiety and affection which swirl around and to a degree constitute the imago of some more proximate and intimate figure. And for Joyce this central figure – as Ellmann, Gillet and others have suggested – was his biographical father. It's appropriate thus that the *Wake* seems to stage the destruction of the Name and the Word of the Father precisely in the matrix of John Joyce's words. Stephen's identification of his own mind as the site of contest at least represents and may in fact constitute a true and useful insight; and even if the identification of the subject-son with the monarch-father were not true and useful, it might be necessary as a purgative for guilt. If the son and the father are the same, parricide is no sooner effected than atoned for.

The juggling of these equations may or may not have exegetical value. What is undeniable, however, is that *Portrait's* most apposite dilations on the signifier/signified relationship – on the fate of the Word, and the question of who or what controls or can come to control its form and content – begin not with the kind of recondite farce that characterizes II.3, nor even as the sort of fraught but smiling banter of Stephen's jousts with Father Butt. Instead what should be merely academic or esthetic questions are presented as the products of a mind in an agony so profound that it trembles on the edge of dissolution. And often enough the questions arise in tandem with the thought of – sometimes, it seems, almost with the wish for – the death of some male beloved of Stephen. In the most powerful instances this is his father, Simon Dedalus. These instances are instructive, and we may turn to one now. It's contextualized in imagery which will find its greatest resonance in aspects of the *Wake* we've yet to treat, but which is already clearly tangent on our concerns.

Stephen and Simon go to Cork, the latter determined to acquaint the former with the haunts and companions of his youth. Simon begins to dilate on his own father,

but in terms which conflate their relationship with that of Simon and Stephen.

I'm talking to you as a friend, Stephen. I don't believe in playing the stern father. I don't believe a son should be afraid of his father. I treat you as your grandfather treated me when I was a young chap. We were more like brothers than father and son. I'll never forget the first day he caught me smoking. ... If you want a good smoke, he said, try one of these cigars. An American captain made me a present of them last night in Queenstown.

Stephen heard his father's voice break into a laugh which was almost a sob.

-- He was the handsomest man in Cork at that time, by God he was! The women used to stand to look after him in the street.

He heard the sob passing loudly down his father's throat and opened his eyes with a nervous impulse. [P 97-8]

Simon's point is the patrimony of clemency, even winking comradery, and falls in line with the conflation of the relationship between father and son with that between brothers which characterizes much of Joyce's fiction including, of course, the Wake. The emergence of the theme here will have consequences, but Stephen's immediate reaction may proceed from another equation. "I treat you as your grandfather treated me when I was a young chap." Stephen is to Simon as Simon was to his own father.

In the context of Simon's further reflections, the analogy becomes distressingly poignant. Juxtaposing his recollection of his father in the bloom of life with the reality of his death and absence, Simon's laugh is half a sob and at last becomes a sob outright as it passes "loudly down his ... throat." Stephen's reaction is immediate and

striking.

His very brain was sick and powerless. He could scarcely interpret the letters of the signboards of the shops. ... He could scarcely recognize as his his own thoughts, and repeated slowly to himself:

-- I am Stephen Dedalus. I am walking beside my father whose name is Simon Dedalus. We are in Cork, in Ireland. Cork is a city. Our room is in the Victoria Hotel. Victoria and Stephen and Simon. Simon and Stephen and Victoria. Names.

The memory of his childhood suddenly grew dim. He tried to call forth some of its vivid moments but could not. He recalled only names: Dante, Parnell, Clane, Clongowes. ... In the college he had ... dreamed of being dead, of mass being said But he had not died then. Parnell had died. [P 98-9]

An abyss has opened beneath the boy. He is falling.

Given the terms of Simon's reminiscence, the powerful affect of his father's death is recognized readily enough by his sensitive and *simpatico* son. Identifying with his father's own loss of a father – and at the same time perhaps imagining his own father's death – Stephen enters into a powerful identification that culminates in a bizarre conflation of *his* own death with that of Parnell, the “dead king” Simon wept for in the Christmas-scene. The reader may recall – as does the text here – that this equivocation has its roots in the younger Stephen's hypnopompic fantasies while recovering in the infirmary, in which a somewhat romantic imagination of the reaction to his own possible death from illness segues insensibly into a dream-tableau of the masses bewailing Parnell upon his catafalque.

Following the strange scene of Stephen's receptive aphasia Stephen and his father enter a pub filled with his father's cronies, who immediately tell Stephen that he has "a great look of his grandfather" [P 99]. Simon agrees that his son is an "ugly likeness." At this point Johnny Cashman, "a brisk old man," disconcerts Stephen by asking him "which were prettier, the Dublin girls or the Cork girls" [P 100].

-- He's not that way built, said Mr Dedalus. Leave him alone. He's a levelheaded thinking boy who doesn't bother his head about that kind of nonsense.

-- Then he's not his father's son, said the little old man.

-- I don't know, I'm sure, said Mr Dedalus, smiling complacently.

-- Your father, said the little old man to Stephen, was the boldest flirt in the city of Cork in his day. Do you know that?

Stephen looked down and studied the tiled floor of the bar into which they had drifted. [P 100]

The conversation moves to the great age of the old man, who, after comparing himself to Stephen's grandfather, tenders his memories of the great-grandfather as well. When a fellow drinker observes the speaker must be nearly one hundred, he facetiously claims to be twenty-seven, which occasions the hearty endorsement of Simon.

-- We're as old as we feel, Johnny, said Mr Dedalus. And just finish what you have there, and we'll have another. ... By God, I don't feel more than eighteen myself. There's that son of mine there not half my age and I'm a better man than he is any day of the week.

-- Draw it mild now, Dedalus. I think it's time for you to take a back seat, said the gentleman who had spoken before.

-- No by God! asserted Mr Dedalus. I'll sing a tenor song against him or I'll vault a fivebarred gate against him or I'll run with him after the hounds across the country as I did thirty years ago along with the Kerry Boy and the best man for it.

-- But he'll beat you here, said the little old man, tapping his forehead
... . [P 101]

At this point we may assess some salient aspects of the scene.

That Simon frames his relationship with Stephen – like the relationship between himself and his own father – as fraternal rather than paternal is meant of course to emphasize their collegiality and his own tractability. The evaporation of hierarchical strata would, by identifying father and son as peers, tend to mitigate or dispel the mutual apprehension and antagonism that attend relations between superior and subordinate.

But with a couple of drinks in him Simon's protestations of fraternal identity with his son take on a different hue, tinged, perhaps, by his own reflections on advancing mortality. Rewinding the clock with the speed of Johnny Cashman, Simon lays claim to perpetual youth; but only, note, in terms – this time quite explicit – of rivalry with the son he imagines consistently vanquished in their contests. Indeed, we might wish that Simon would “draw it mild,” and especially because the conversation has been framed by muted but uncomfortable – at least Stephen finds them so – comparisons of sexual prowess, apparently to Stephen's disadvantage. Simon prefers to remain oblivious (or to tip the scales decisively in advance) by imagining his son above (or beneath) such things, though no reader of *Portrait* can read the imputation that

Stephen is “not that way built” without a smile.

Whether or not Stephen feels any answering impulse of rivalry or aggression – if only out of baffled, wounded pride or galvanic retaliation – we do not learn; he has nothing to say. Instead, Johnny Cashman speaks for him, tersely and decisively, ending Simon’s graceless display. “But he’ll beat you here, said the little old man, tapping his forehead” It will take some years for Stephen to say as much; but when he does, he’ll use the same words and the same gesture to similar if more drastic effect. He’ll also indicate the same arena: for it is precisely “in here,” says the Stephen of *Nighttown*, tapping his brow, “that I must kill the priest and the king.”

In *Ulysses* it’s Stephen who has the age, insight and liquor to say what he means. In *Portrait* the words come from another. But our suspicions that they are ventriloquized are strengthened when we take stock of the baroque series of equations that end up identifying Stephen with Johnny Cashman in other ways.

In a peculiar way Cashman would seem presciently to deny any connotations of the two brows -- his and Stephen’s -- or their contents. In fact when Simon seeks to forestall Cashman’s insinuation of the father’s sexual motivations into the son – “Now don’t be putting ideas into his head, said Mr Dedalus. Leave him to his Maker” [P 100] – Cashman protests his innocence on precisely this score, but in terms which tend eventually to assert the very identity they would deny.

-- Yerra, sure I wouldn’t put any ideas into his head. I’m old enough to be his grandfather. And I am a grandfather . . . And I remember seeing your grandfather in his red coat riding out to hounds [P 100]

Cashman has aged beyond the sexual nonsense of youth and so, he asserts, must

be innocent of implication. In context, however, the very terms of his age can't help but second his anticipation of Stephen's parricidal gesture in *Nighttown* by evoking precisely an identity with Stephen. For if Cashman could be Stephen's grandfather so, curiously, could Stephen himself; or such, based on the likeness, was the first thing asserted of him upon his entry to the bar.

The equation is subtly drawn perhaps, but is more likely to inflect reading, consciously or otherwise, precisely on account of the similar equation already drawn by Simon. The solving of the equation requires one more step of substitution, but one which a reader of the *Wake*, at least, should be prepared to expect in Joyce. As we've already seen, Simon wishes his relations with Stephen to be as his were with his own father: that of friends, brothers, equals. But a second equality cannot help but ensue. If Stephen and Simon are equals as were Simon and his own father, then inevitably Stephen and his own grandfather have been conflated as well.

In some ways this sort of thing smacks more of algebra than literature. But of course it's not only the *Wake* that has taught us to recognize precisely these kinds of antics in the Joycean text. Buck Mulligan himself recognizes them in Stephen's literary (psycho)analyses in *Scylla and Charybdis*:

He proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father [U 15].

And even in the relevant passage in *Portrait* of course the algebra is not allowed to remain entirely implicit: again, it's the first thing Simon's cronies note on Stephen's entrance.

The implications are too dizzying and multiple to catalogue, let alone theorize, in their entirety. We might note in passing however that they do involve a certain kind

of usurpation of the father by the son, in fact a reversal of position of the sort entailed in the Wolf Man's inversion of the Vichian scenario, where the father and son trade places. For if Stephen really is his own grandfather, he is now by definition not Simon's son but his father. A neat trick, and in some ways perhaps a comforting one. Essentially, it's the one Stephen uses when he takes umbrage at Father Butt's reaction to "tundish" a hundred or so pages on:

His courtesy of manner rang a little false, and Stephen looked at the English convert with the same eyes as the elder brother in the parable may have turned on the prodigal [P 204].

The trick reverses age, priority and hence authority; and here, not uncharacteristically, through a mediating fraternal term.

And back in Cork, on his walk with Simon, the strange algebra of substitution and identity native to this particular version of the grandfather-paradox helps us make sense of another striking conflation: precisely Stephen's conflation with Parnell. Stephen's strange ruminations in the infirmary and now, for some reason, his walk with his father in Cork perpetually threaten to identify Stephen with this, the only patriarchal law to which Simon would ever accede. In Parnell, more than any where else in *Portrait*, we find a Grand Father indeed, to which Simon stands in the same relation of filial loyalty that would obtain in Stephen's case with respect to Simon, if the latter weren't perpetually relinquishing then attempting to recapture the patriarchal name. But this brings us to the point which, more than any other, interests us here: the status of ordinary language. For it is this above all that seems to be at stake in the relationship with these Grand Fathers, and above all when it is noted that they are *dead*.

Recall what it is that precipitates the strange, aphasic syncope into which Stephen lapses, rendering "His very brain ... sick and powerless" so that "He could scarcely interpret the letters of the signboards of the shops." It is the *sob* that chokes his father's voice when his father recalls his own father, now dead and gone, like the Parnell for whom he wept in the Christmas scene. The affect is transferred to Stephen immediately, where it immediately interrupts what is literally his self-possession.

He could scarcely recognise as his own his own thoughts, and repeated slowly to himself:

-- I am Stephen Dedalus. I am walking beside my father whose name is Simon Dedalus. We are in Cork, in Ireland. Cork is a city. Our room is in the Victoria Hotel. Victoria and Stephen and Simon. Simon and Stephen and Victoria. Names. [P 98]

Well might Stephen fail to "recognise as his own his own thoughts." We've already seen that they seem to be insinuated into him from elsewhere; or else perhaps he insinuates his thoughts into another. In any case, the grandfatherly Johnny Cashman who introduces by negation the vexed question of the identity of father and son with respect to sexual desire has also evinced his strange prescience of Stephen's more self-possessed (and presumably theoretical) parricidal impulses in *Nighttown*, tapping a brow at once the grandfather's and the son's. The crucial difference here seems to be that Stephen *recognizes* he doesn't recognize his own thoughts. And this recognition comes precisely when Stephen's identity is attacked in a place he didn't even know identity was kept: his strangely mediated, mediating identity with a Grand Father. The grandfather dies, and Stephen suddenly discovers that he is not

feeling himself. In fact it's as though the very foundation of his own identity has been removed. But it's his efforts to reclaim that threatened identity which remind us of what else is at stake in the death of Parnell, the Grand Father, which, given the festival of conflation, cannot help but through the same algebra which rendered Stephen identical to his grandfather summon the imagination of Simon's death as well. Stephen struggles, thus, to rebuild precisely what has been lost: an identity, a subject status, founded on identification. Imagining the death of the grandfather or the Grand Father, Stephen wonders whether it's himself who's died. Thus the self-administered corrective to this psychic death and self-alienation is precisely the reaffirmation of identification based on the Name of the Father: "I am Stephen Dedalus. I am walking beside my father whose name is Simon Dedalus. ... Names."

It's as though some paternal metaphor really *did* govern signifier-signified relations and, succumbing to its own metaphorical death here, precipitates in that death predictable effects. Names are stripped of their referents and stand forth as themselves alone, powerless to evoke the images and associations to which they were erstwhile fixed. Stephen struggles to re-impose law on the chaos that results, to reconnect the terms of a sundered identification whose binding term is the name of the father and the father before him. The Lacanian picture of the normalized subject may or may not obtain as a general rule. But for whatever reasons – reasons which may or may not be related to Joyce's preoccupation with Vico or his consciousness of his colonized status *vis a vis* English – it seems to obtain here.

And in consequence there's another predictable effect. One of the things Lacan's own metaphor of metaphor allows us to discern here is the real psychic peril implicit in the *non serviam* Stephen issues to ordinary language. For the paternal metaphor does not, of course, merely support language; it supports the subject himself. Once more we may question the global application of the theory, but once more its global

application does not concern us; Joyce's writings do. Here, the alienation and aphasia of Stephen's "sick and powerless" brain, recognizing in its misrecognition of itself its own death in the death of Parnell, half-recognizes what II.3 will make conscious, explicit and deliberate: when it comes to the Name of the Father, parricide is suicide. Shrewd, grandfatherly Johnny Cashman is perfectly correct when he says to the Father that the son will "beat you here;" but the mind that plots the murder murders itself.

Before we move on, we might remark another filiation between this curious murder/suicide and II.3's: in each case, the scene of the crime is the marketplace. We've already learned that the strikingly economic context of the "abnihilation of the etym" has its likeliest provenance in the fiscal metaphors that govern the fate of the Word in Stephen's first (and to a large degree in his ensuing) encounters with Father Butt. Here we have only to note the persistence of the association, and its aptness. It is of course the Father of ordinary language who is to be dispatched, so that his oppressive stock in trade, ordinary language, may go with him. And ordinary language, as we know by know, is the language of the marketplace. Conscious or not, thus, Stephen is still shrewd enough to hit this language where it lives. When signs decay, it's the shop signs that are the first to go. Stephen's problem with language introduces itself to us when we learn that "He could scarcely interpret the letters of the signboards of the shops." One could scarcely ask for a better syncretism of language and commerce. And we might be more inclined to dismiss the recurrence of the association here did it not recur again in the next instance of Stephen's linguistic syncope, which itself once again seems to involve precisely the death of the Father.

* * *

Father, Brother, Artist, Other

Once more, as was the case with Simon, a Father seems to wish to introduce himself as a species of brother, ostensibly more of a peer than a patriarch, though without, as we will see, entirely relinquishing either a certain patriarchal power or the threat of rivalry. And in the background, fainter than in Cork's scene but present still, lurks some confusion of identity.

Stephen is on his way to his fateful interview with *Portrait's* Dean of Studies and notes, as we've already seen, the time. Too late for his English class, he imagines its anyway and sees

the heads of his classmates meekly bent as they wrote in their notebooks the points they were bidden to note His own head was unbent Another head than his, right before him in the first benches, was poised squarely above its bending fellows like the head of a priest why was it that when he thought of Cranly he could never raise before his mind the entire image of his body but only the image of the head and face? [P 192]

Indeed, it is Cranly, Stephen's closest friend in *Portrait*; someone "who would be more than a friend, more even than the noblest and truest friend a man ever had" [P 269]. He appears often as a priest, in part perhaps because he represents for Stephen a sort of road not taken, one who would lead back to Ireland, faith, and filial piety toward and on behalf of mothers.

There are other reasons for his priestly office as well, as we will see. Some of these may be tangent on Stephen's lingering tendency to represent *himself* as a sort of

priest, almost as though he were still half-entangled in the net of that proffered identity. Here the theme of that confusion is not particularly pronounced. It is, however, perhaps discernible in the strange series of *heads* that constitutes Stephen's imagination of the English class.

This incidentally is the class which in *Hero* was taught by Father Butt, as it was taught by Father Darlington, Butt's biographical prototype, in real life. Accordingly we may assume it's taught by *Portrait's* Dean of Studies. Indeed in the "real time" of the novel the entire "tundish" debacle is only a few moments (but due to the density of Stephen's ruminations still at least six pages) away, and this proximity may condition the series of associations which will ensue as much as the subject; for the Dean, as we've learned, is the last person on earth from whom Stephen would wish to accept tuition in English. In Stephen's imagination of the actual class however the only Father in view seems to be Cranly. And as we've noted the aspect of him that's chiefly in view seems to be his head.

Of course we only get to this head through a series of others. First Stephen sees "the heads of his classmates meekly bent as they wrote in their notebooks the points they were bidden to note." From these, the heads of the sycophantic rabblement all-too tractable to Butt's tuition, Stephen's head must of course be distinguished: "His own head was unbent." But his is not the only unbent head. "Another head than his, right before him in the first benches, was poised squarely above its bending fellows like the head of a priest."

The entire tableau is somewhat evocative of the sort of thing Neil Hertz has analyzed so shrewdly in *The End of the Line*. A view contains an image of the viewer himself; but when we follow the line of sight deeper into the abyssal picture we see that the represented viewer views in turn some sight itself revealed (if only under analysis sufficiently shrewd) as yet another metaphor for the subject, though

this time a sort of a subject on trial. In fact, says Hertz, the final image presents the subject with a question, a crisis of identity which must be resolved, often enough, in some violent act which will sunder the self from the other with which it is in danger of being confused.

For whatever reasons the situation here seems to contain many of these elements, though somewhat like the Hertz scenario its perhaps too complex to admit of any final resolution. One thing that will become clear, however, is that the image of Cranly, at least, is in for a hard time.

“Why was it that when he thought of Cranly he could never raise before his mind the entire image of his body but only the image of the head and face?” In fact Stephen knows one answer to this question, as the journal entries with which *Portrait* concludes attest. Cranly reminds him of John the Baptist – predictably to Stephen’s Christ. The Cranly of Stephen’s imagination is thus perpetually meeting John’s end; his appearance is “always a stern served head or deathmask” [P 270]. It is this fatal image in fact which to a great degree conditions Stephen’s imagination of his friend’s head in English class, which we learn as the passage proceeds.

Even now against the grey curtain of the morning he saw it before him like the phantom of a dream, the face of a severed head or deathmask It was a priestlike face, priestlike in its pallor . . . , priestlike in the lips . . . and Stephen, remembering swiftly how he had told Cranly of all the tumults and unrest and longings in his soul, day after day and night by night . . . the face of a guilty priest who heard confessions of those whom he had not the power to absolve but that he felt again in memory the gaze of its dark womanish eyes.

Through this image he had a glimpse of a strange dark cavern of

speculation but at once turned away from it, feeling that it was not yet the hour to enter it. [P 192]

These last meditations concern the peculiar office which Cranly has been induced to fulfill for Stephen, whose description of his friend as a priest seems less and less accidental. In fact Cranly is made to serve as Stephen's father-confessor. This function is not of course identical to that served by the priest to whom Stephen desperately confesses his traffic with prostitutes following *Portrait's* famous hell-sermon, but neither is it entirely distinct; for the "tumults and unrest and longings in his soul" concern precisely Stephen's feelings for EC which, as we learn during Stephen's composition of the villanelle, are not entirely free of carnality (*Hero* makes this even clearer).

But Stephen is troubled by the reactions of this father-confessor, and precisely during confession, when he discerns something in Cranly's affect, or apparent lack of same. Poor Cranly, it's revealed, isn't really at all adequate to the office for which he's been conscripted, simply because he's interested in the same girl.

She passed out from the porch of the library and bowed across Stephen in reply to Cranly's greeting. He also? Was there not a slight flush on Cranly's cheek? ... Did that explain his friend's listless silence, his harsh comments, the sudden intrusion of rude speech with which he had shattered so often Stephen's ardent wayward confessions? [P252].

Worse yet, by the end of *Portrait* Cranly seems to be the one who *gets* the girl:

2 April: Saw her drinking tea Rather, lynxeyed Lynch saw her

as we passed. He tells me Cranly was invited there by brother. ... Is he the shining light now? Well, I discovered him. I protest I did [P 272]

Eventually, in other words, Stephen will understand explicitly and consciously what troubles him about the image of Cranly he's summoned on the way to English class. As the passage from 252 makes clear, Cranly's "listless silence" during Stephen's "ardent wayward confessions" is a consequence of his own secret admiration for Emma. Indeed, Cranly's face is "the face of a guilty priest who heard confessions of those whom he had not the power to absolve;" and it is this that at least in substantial part occasions the "strange dark cavern of speculation" into which Stephen would rather not – at least not in full consciousness – for the moment enter.

More specifically, however, it's Cranly's guilty and eventually revealed "listless silence" during confession that seems in part to trigger the most pronounced and peculiar consequence of Stephen's imagination of his friend's severed head.

But the nightshade of his friend's listlessness seemed to be diffusing in the air around him a tenuous and deadly exhalation and he found himself glancing from one casual word to another on his right or left in stolid wonder that they had been so silently emptied of instantaneous sense until every mean shop legend bound his mind like the words of a spell and his soul shrivelled up, sighing with age as he walked on in a lane among heaps of dead language [P 192].

What's wrong with this young man? It seems he can't step into the market-place without some parricidal image provoking the apocalypse of the sign; the shop sign,

to be precise.

And this is, by the terms we've established, a parricidal image, though it is also the imagination of the death of a dear contemporary. For this brotherly figure is yet another of the Fathers, as his office of confessor, his identification with John (in this case also the Baptist) and the text's interminable iteration of "priestlike" would suggest. The most insistent metaphor for Cranly is a priest. So now we're less puzzled. Of course Cranly's decapitation produces the de-semanticization of the shop-signs. As we've already learned, it's not just that the priest is the Father of the Word; he's the Father of the Word precisely of the *market-place*. In a sense he's yet another version of the priest, the Father, who dogs Stephen's imagination from the first, and whose "*etym*" must be at last destroyed.

But further, and even more explicitly than is the case with Simon in Cork, this fraternal father is a sexual rival. It's this very condition which makes his (perhaps somewhat coerced) effort to assume the role of Father confessor particularly ludicrous and doomed. Like the priest who hears Stephen's post-Hell-Sermon confessions, he should be a Father of the Law, a superego conscious and judgmental of desire, effecting through judgment desire's abrogation or sublimation. But even more than the standard father whose *de facto* possession of the desired woman troubles the standard oedipal affair, he's a guilty priest, without the power to absolve.

Thus for one reason or another – or for more than one reason – this father is sentenced to death, guilty on counts involving both the woman and the Word. Perhaps most striking about the entire affair here however is the way it reflects at last the same confusion between Stephen's head and the Father's that governs the episode in Cork. For although Stephen's imagery condemns his friend to death, that death will not stay put, but seeps into Stephen himself, "in here," in the head not of a projected rival or father but of the subject himself. In a sense it does Stephen no

good to protest that Cranly's head, "unbent" as his own, is "another head than his." It doesn't even do any good to cut it off. For in that moment "the nightshade of his friend's listlessness seemed to be diffusing in the air around him a tenuous and deadly exhalation" and the death of the Father precipitates the deaths of language and the subject. Stephen's "soul shrivelled up" and "every mean shop legend" becomes "dead language."

When this happened in Cork, the death of language became – as theory would expect from the "death" of the paternal metaphor – the sundering of signified from signifier, leaving the latter bereft but by virtue of that very isolation emphasized, thrown into relief. Stephen is left with mere "Names." The effect is the same here. This time, though, the emphasis on the senselessness of the signifier takes a slightly different turn, one which brings us, oddly, closer to poetry. Of course poetry itself is still, in *Portrait*, a long way off; what happens here may not even qualify as doggerel. But a sort of proto-poetry it clearly is.

When Stephen finds that "his own consciousness of language [is] ebbing from his brain and trickling into the very words themselves" he finds that these senseless signifiers

set to band and disband themselves in wayward rhythms.

The ivy whines upon the wall

And whines and twines upon the wall

The ivy whines upon the wall

The yellow ivy on the wall

Ivy, ivy up the wall. [P 193]

Of course Stephen himself isn't "composing" this "poetry;" he's too discomposed to do so. Although it comes to him inevitably from "in here," his own linguistic agency has been conspicuously usurped by the independent agency of the letter. If we look more closely, though, we find that more strictly Stephen's *own* agency has betrayed him: "his own consciousness of language" has left his brain and entered "the very words themselves." The words derive their agency at least in part from this self-alienation. We might well say, however, that this self-alienation, produced by the "death" of the Name of the Father, frees words somewhat from sense by granting them precisely their autonomy.

The first effect of this autonomy consequent on collapse of metaphor is that the production of language proceeds not by sense but by sight or sound; not by intelligible metaphor but by material metonymy. We can't say that sense has entirely evaporated, but sound is given priority; indeed its priority is literal if we consider word-order. It makes sense, after all, that ivy "twines;" but the poem insists first that ivy "whines" instead. The word that does make sense sounds (or looks) like one that doesn't; and the one that doesn't shows up first.

It's this that occasions Stephen's indignant reaction to the language that has been thrust on him, apparently from some alien source. "Did any one ever hear such drivel? Lord Almighty! Who ever heard of ivy whining on a wall?" This is none of me, says Stephen. Of course the description of the mental state that introduces the doggerel suggests Stephen's right and wrong at once: he doesn't *seem* to be the author of the text, but in part this is simply because his authority has changed its locus.

Stephen attempts to regain agency's self-possession (or at least to identify it once more with himself) through a conscious, deliberate criticism of the language that would discriminate between its sensible and senseless elements. Striking here,

though, is the persistent autonomy of the word. Stephen's effort at mastery blends immediately and all-but insensibly once more into the delirium which infects sensible associations with the lateral metonymies of the merely material signifier.

Yellow ivy; that was all right. Yellow ivory also. And what about ivory ivy?

The word now shone in his brain, clearer and brighter than any ivory sawn from the mottled tusks of elephants. *Ivory, ivoire, avorio, ebur.*

[P 193]

In one way the triumph of the barely material signifier is even more thoroughgoing here than it was in Cork. There, Stephen was reduced to bare "Names" without referents, but gamely struggled through, attempting to regain his mastery of himself even amidst the confusion of his death with the Father's precisely by repeatedly affixing the name of the father at once to the father and son, Simon and himself.

Here, however, the affect and thus the effect is slightly different. It's almost as though, having endured this sort of syncope once before, Stephen is less inclined to panic. When the signified evaporates this time, Stephen's more willing to go along for the ride. Thus it's in more than one sense that consciousness "trickles" into the word itself. For now consciousness allows itself to be entirely absorbed, arrested, transfixed and fascinated by the signifier, which looms as an apprehension of *quidditas*, the final stage of the epiphany in Stephen's esthetic manifesto. Note the peculiar autonomy -- the self-reference -- proper to that sphere. Of the adequately perceived esthetic object it might be said that "You see that it is that thing which it is and no other thing" in

The instant wherein that supreme quality of beauty, the clear radiance of the esthetic image, is apprehended luminously by the mind which has been arrested by its wholeness and fascinated by its harmony

[P 231]

The harmony, the relation of wholes to parts, is in the manifesto of course a crucial component of the final ecstasy (which ecstasy is rendered in one sense literal here insofar as Stephen “consciousness of language” seems to stand outside itself). At first we might be inclined to object that there is no such relation in the doggerel instance here, and that the effect of the syncope has been to leave at last the word “ivory” -- arrived at through a metonymic departure from “ivy” -- “shining in the brain,” splendidly alone as a word without a referent, and thus, *qua* word, precisely “that thing which it is and no other thing,” its triumphant autonomy leaving the word all too lonely in its splendor. But at this point we should take stock of two effects, each of which testifies to the difficulty likely to be encountered in any effort to arrive at a “pure” signifier.

The first is that in this peculiar epiphany the signifier level has begun to absorb aspects of the signified *into the signifier itself*, constructing a cratylytic effect in which language at once embodies and discloses the very presence of the thing to which it erstwhile merely referred. Indeed, in an apotheosis of signified *quidditas*, language has become better at disclosing the presence of the thing itself than the thing itself. For in a bizarre elaboration of the sort of synesthesia Rimbaud claimed for his vowels, the word “ivory” itself shines “clearer and brighter than any ivory sawn from the mottled tusks of elephants.”

This is the same wedding of form and content, sound (or sight) and sense, toward

which Stephen's meditations on his doggerel tend when he at last hits on "ivory ivy." The initial effect of the syncope consequent on the collapse of the paternal metaphor (and self-present agency) does not seem at first blush particularly fortunate. But in reflecting on its most promising tendencies Stephen essentially begins an inchoate poem in which (perhaps through appropriate repetitions and conjunctions) each of the terms "ivory" and "ivy" immediately summon the other. The sensuous material character of the plant is bodied forth in its name alone, while the modifier would also name what it modifies. This is the device that coordinates music and meaning whenever a series of related sounds suggests a series of related signifieds; and Stephen's eventual villanelle, in which "the rhythmic movement" of the "roselike glow sent forth its rays of rhyme; ways, days, blaze, praise, raise" [P 236] is, whatever its success, an effort of this sort.

This mutual saturation of form and content is the anticipation of the condition Beckett observes in *Finnegans Wake*: "Here form is content, content is form. ... [Joyce's] writing is not about something; it is that something itself."¹ But the *particular* method most deployed by the *Wake* to achieve this effect is more precisely anticipated here in yet *another* way, once more in the sudden epiphany of the signifier "ivory." Indeed this second effect is the more conspicuous feature of the passage, and among other things suggests that, however we judge the merits of the villanelle, Joyce will not ultimately make his mark primarily as a Swinburnian rhapsode.

In this second sense the epiphany of *quidditas* in "ivory" is, once more as

¹ p. 14 Beckett, Samuel. "Dante ... Bruno. Vico ... Joyce," *Our Exagmination Round His Factification For Incamination Of Work In Progress*, Samuel Beckett et al, New York: New Directions, 1939

Stephen's esthetics would demand, the harmony of parts. This time, though, the harmony is decidedly polyphonic. Recall the description of the word in question: "The word now shone in his brain, clearer and brighter than any ivory sawn from the mottled tusks of elephants. *Ivory, ivoire, avorio, ebur.*" In a small but important way – the grammar of number – the description is inconsistent with the example it describes; this is not one word, but four.

As we've implied, Stephen's encounter with the word "ivory" involves some of the things he's associated with the epiphany: the arrest or rapture of attention, the relation of parts in wholes, even a certain luminous quality. It does not, however – at least not at first glance – quite seem to be, as the esthetics would demand, a "luminous silent stasis." Luminous, yes, and perhaps on account of that same visibility silent; but static, no. Instead it's as though there were a sort of conservation of psychic energy which demanded that the affect withdrawn from the signified would immediately agitate the signifier in a galvanization which at one level makes the words "band and disband themselves in wayward rhythms" and at another – the level which concerns us here – produces a rapid, lateral concatenation of metonymies, synchronic and at last diachronic variants of the form of the signifier "ivory." Arrested Stephen's mind may be; but in another way it seems to be keeping quite busy, leaping rapidly from the word to its cousins to their common ancestor. The *description*, however, blithely continues to insist on the unity and in fact the visual, synoptic simultaneity of this multiplicity.

This reading may seem like a quibble. All right, Stephen uses the word "word" to describe what are in fact four words instead of one: so what? Surely we're to infer that in fact his consciousness is arrested by the relatively punctiform imagination of the signifier "ivory" (by now duly impregnated with its synesthetic content) and then moves in a succession sufficiently rapid that it seems effectively simultaneous to

ensuing associations. Quite possibly. But we might reflect before entirely ratifying this plausible assumption.

The first thing with which we have to contend is simply the construction of the sentence. If we read what's actually written instead of quickly editing it into easy intelligibility, its *de facto* confusion is either an error or a deliberate effect. If the former, fair enough. But if the latter, the nominal error seems rather to be a sort of striving with the limits of linear construction to produce something as close as possible to a linguistic equivalent of the simultaneous relation of parts which is so crucial a component of the final form of the epiphany in Stephen's manifesto.

One of the problems with the presentation of the epiphanic moment in Stephen's manifesto is that, almost as though taking account of the etymology of "epiphany," it tends overwhelmingly to be presented in visual terms. Part of the difficulty here is that by Stephen's own criteria (borrowed substantially from Lessing, as *Proteus* will make more clear) visuality is the province of a spatial rather than a temporal apprehension. In some ways this is all to the good for Stephen's program, which, insofar as it associates kinesis with the desire or loathing which distract from the strictly esthetic, tends to favor stasis. Language, however, whether spoken or written, involves in large part a linear, temporal sequence of apprehension. "Lessing should not have taken a group of statues to write of," says Stephen during his discussions with Lynch. Perhaps not, at least if his theories were to found a specifically literary criticism. But neither, perhaps, should Stephen himself have chosen, as he does in the manifesto, a basket. For the relations of parts to wholes in a basket may be apprehended at last in the instant – the relatively punctiform moment in time – which is so crucial to the epiphany.

When you have apprehended that basket as one thing and have then

analysed it according to its form ... you make the only synthesis which is logically and esthetically permissible. You see that it is that thing which it is and no other thing. The radiance ... is the scholastic *quidditas*, the whatness of a thing. ... The mind in that mysterious instant Shelley likened beautifully to a fading coal. The instant wherein that supreme quality of beauty, the clear radiance of the esthetic image, is apprehended luminously by the mind which has been arrested by its wholeness and fascinated by its harmony is the luminous silent stasis of esthetic pleasure. ...

What I have said ... refers to beauty in the wider sense of the word, in the sense which the word has in the literary tradition. In the marketplace it has another sense. [P 231]

The epiphanic moment, as we can see, would take its place in the same literary tradition which has consistently been valorized as the source and defense of high language. Naturally; for insofar as he is or wishes to be a writer, language is Stephen's chief concern. Nevertheless during this crucial theorization he chooses a *basket* as an exemplar. This may not be entirely accidental; a basket is after all a container, and in his initial discussions with Butt we learn that for Stephen that's essentially what a word is. "Words are simply receptacles for human thought: in the literary tradition they receive more valuable thoughts than they do in the marketplace" [SH 27]. In fact as the concatenated associations triggered by "ivory" unwind we'll see that such a metaphor is not far from Stephen's thoughts in the present instance either.

Still, we might feel Stephen is cheating a little by choosing a basket. Indeed, the mutual relation of a basket's parts can, we tend to imagine, be apprehended more or

less in an instant. But even the reduction of the necessarily linear, temporal flow of ordinary language, spoken or written, to the relatively punctiform apprehension of a single signifier would leave us with the question: in what esthetically meaningful way might a single signifier be said to consist of instantly inter-related parts? Of course one might respond that the relation of the signifier to its signified is susceptible to this construction, and so it is.

Recall, though, that Stephen has been encountering the signifier *per se*, and note the form the relation of parts takes in the nominally unitary “*Ivory, ivoire, avorio, ebur.*” If the oddly constructed sentence which presents this “word” is not entirely without import, some of that import seems to be that a single word *does* indeed consist of parts susceptible to apprehension in harmonic relation. That is, the signifier “ivory” consists of itself and of the related signifiers brought to mind for a sufficiently erudite and fascinated victim of syncope.

And the word “victim” remains apt. This sort of multiplex ideation is precisely *not* the sort of thing which characterizes ordinary language use; quite the reverse, according to theoretical models. In explanations of the Saussurean notion of the diacritical constitution of the sign, for instance, *bat* retains its intelligibility precisely because it distinguishes itself from *cat, mat, hat* etc. Of course such examples are by their nature *always in addition* implicit reminders of the opposed notion; given the obvious phonetic and visual similarities of the words, it’s self-evident that the alternatives have been chosen less because they’re *not* the first word than because they’re quite a bit *like* it; in other words when we cast about for words that *aren’t* another word, the first words we come up with are in the immediate vicinity determined not by negation but by association. Similarity, in consequence, infects examples whose purport would be contradistinction.

Still, the fact remains that in most instances when we use the word *bat* we’re not

supposed – either in theory or general practice – to immediately think of *cat, mat, hat* etc., at least not consciously. If we did, we'd never make it to the end of the sentence. The admission of all of these collateral, associated signifiers – let alone their signifieds – would overwhelm sense.

That associations of this type *are* nevertheless determinative of actual practice has been long-recognized; and in recent years – in part, perhaps, in the wake of psychoanalysis – it's become harder for a certain kind of reader or listener to miss. Often enough, however, and precisely because the simultaneous access of the polysemantic is in many instances merely overwhelming, the reception or production of this effect still tends to remain for the most part at the fringes of consciousness if not relegated to unconsciousness outright.

For conducting the ordinary business of the world this is perhaps as it should be. This is one of the most useful things about Father Butt; he reminds us that in the Symbolic, as in the superego, a great deal of the Father's importance concerns precisely *repression*. In other words the Name of the Father has *a dual purpose*. First, surely, it substitutes the word for the thing. But just as crucially, it keeps the legions of *other names and things* at bay and thus prevents the geometric expansion of association to the point of epilepsy. Father Butt's banausic constructions have of course this proscriptive virtue in abundance; whereas Stephen, as we've seen, deliberately cultivates, partly through the sedulous ingestion of Skeat's etymology, a sensitivity to the way in which every word is an implicit riot of incest with its predecessors and kin.

As the function of the Father fades following Cranly's decapitation, this second, seditious condition of the word is gradually revealed. The failure of ordinary consciousness – its “ebbing from the brain” – is followed by aspects of language repressed during the conduct of business-as-usual. In the sudden autonomy of

rhythm Kristeva might recognize an eruption or unveiling of the semiotic; more germane to our present concerns however is the fund of association predicated on the material condition of the signifier, consciousness of which is ordinarily repressed so that the business of ordinary linear denotation may go forward. For at this moment the word is indeed revealed as richly compound of related parts, just as an epiphany should be. And given Stephen's avowedly extraordinary mental state at this time, we might be allowed to wonder whether the strangely constructed sentence that introduces us to the multiplex character of "ivory" is in fact hinting that Stephen really is bearing in mind "ivory" *and* all of the listed associations *at the same time*.

It is perhaps needless to say that such a state of mind *would* be genuinely extraordinary. Language may, indeed, as the reader may have already reflected, be made to effect something very close – perhaps identical – to a simultaneous presentation of related parts; that's what a pun is. Likewise, one may finish *Mrs. Dalloway* and then in an instant of retrospection experience an affect whose complexity is the consequence of having absorbed the various incidents and descriptions.

In all such cases however the effect depends on the simultaneous presentation to memory of one or more *signifieds*. Whereas Stephen would be experiencing – or, more precisely, Joyce would be trying to describe – the simultaneous apprehension of four *signifiers*.

It's the manifest difficulty of imagining such a condition which, I think, predisposes the reader to read the sentence, regardless of its construction or implications, as presenting rather a rapid succession of distinct words; for he we encounter a rather emphatic limit to the imagination. If two or more signifiers are presented to me as external, audible phenomena, I may, at least in retrospect, be able to distinguish and recognize them. But the mental process of language construction

seems to be such that I cannot, even in imagination, either read or speak two or more signifiers simultaneously. I can imagine the visual images of the words *cat* and *mat* simultaneously on a page before me, but to “read” them simultaneously – partly perhaps because reading ordinarily involves sub-vocalization – is as out of the question as is for me to “speak” them simultaneously. For signifiers, at any rate with respect to an actual, fully conscious *simultaneity*, the symbolic Father Butt’s injunctions against plurality seem not only advisable but in-principle insuperable.

Perhaps I am alone in this limitation. The reader’s own *gedanken* experiments in this line may produce different results. Too, it might be objected that the “word-salad” sometimes described in schizophrenia is precisely a sort of simultaneity of signifieds, and this objection would not be without pertinence. But despite these qualifications when we return to the question of the strangely multiform “ivory” of *Portrait* we encounter a further limitation still. Whether or not Stephen is “really” experiencing the simultaneity of four signifieds, given the necessarily linear character of reading there is simply *no way* for the artist, no matter how committed to the idea of the epiphany, to actually present four *signifiers* so that the reader apprehends them in literally the same instant. No wonder Stephen chose a basket over language as his instance. In *actual* language practice, rather than its theorization in metaphor, *Portrait’s* strangely constructed sentence with its “error” of number looks at this point like the best any artist could hope for.

Further, since the effective simultaneity of signifieds, as opposed to signifiers, *is* achievable – as no one knows better than the famously punning Joyce – why would it even be necessary or desirable to attempt the apparently impossible epiphany of the multiform signified? What would be gained?

A recollection of Stephen’s Luciferian pride and stubbornness, however, brings to mind the more important and more likely question: if Stephen *were* determined to

press on toward this fatuous desideratum, what, practically, would he have to *do*?

The reader surely already guessed; indeed, we've already seen the beginning of the solution. But before we get too far ahead of ourselves we should take account of another aspect of Stephen's esthetic agenda that the rapid succession of "*Ivory, ivoire, avorio, ebur,*" whether or not it achieves the relatively punctiform character of the ideal epiphany, is able to forward. And this of course is the reception of the word *not* in the context of the market-place but rather and here quite evidently in the context of the *literary tradition* which has been Stephen's criterion ever since the first clashes with Butt.

From the first Stephen's pursuit of this ideal, too, has concerned the level of the signifier. The Stephen of *Hero* reads his favorite authors "as one would read a thesaurus and made a garner of words" [SH 26]. Thus in a similar vein he

read Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary* by the hour and his mind, which had from the first been only too submissive to the infant sense of wonder, was often hypnotised by the most commonplace conversation. People seemed to him strangely ignorant of the value of the words they used so glibly. ... Destiny had scornfully reduced her prices for them. He desired no such reduction for himself and preferred to serve her on the ancient terms. [SH 26]

Of course in order to achieve its full value – let alone continue in any way to approximate a wedding of form and content – the word will have to do more than ramify in endless metonymies on the level of the bare signifier; it will have to descend at some point to some sort of denotation and connotation. And this, in the "ivory" passage, it does soon enough. The termination of material metonymy in "*ebur*" proves to have been as fore-ordained; for it immediately reminds Stephen of

precisely *literary tradition*, both personal and historical. In doing so it reminds him, not incidentally, of the material character of his Latin text and the way in which its tradition, almost its patrimony, of ownership lent a character at once anthropomorphic and material – in the latter case precisely as proved the case with “ivory” itself – to the verses it contained. “The pages of his timeworn Horace never felt cold to the touch ... they were human pages: ... the dusky verses were as fragrant as though they had lain all those years in myrtle and lavender and vervain” [P 194].

Curiously, the specific passages Stephen remembers seem to play out the actual reinvestment of content into form and – somewhat surprisingly, though perhaps by now we shouldn’t be surprised – in economic terms. “*Ebur*” proves to have derived from the “*India mittit ebur*” of his Latin text. The reference to trade already suggests the theme; but for what ever reason these words begin a concatenated recollection of verse whose final instance is eminently economic. Stephen “tried to peer into the social life of the city of cities through the words *implere ollam denariorum* which the rector had rendered sonorously as the filling of a pot with denaries” [P 194].

One of the curious things about the passage thus is that its efforts to fill the word “ivory” with the value of the literary tradition terminate in an image, drawn in one of that tradition’s most august tongues, of a container being filled with things of value. We might even think of Stephen’s basket of the epiphany, made, for better or worse, to occupy the place of the word. Certainly we think of Stephen’s edict in the first contretemps with Butt: “Words are simply receptacles for human thought: in the literary tradition they receive more valuable thoughts than they do in the market-place” [SH 27]. But the trope reveals yet another peculiar condition. The word of the hated Father of market-place language is, with the imagined death of that Father, rendered senseless, all form and no content, *only to be re-filled at last with the*

content of the market-place again, as surely and as sonorously as denaries fill pots.

Strange the situation may be; but it is also, recall, familiar. In fact it's precisely the situation that obtains in II.3's "*abnihilization of the etym*" when the hated, mercenary Father and his "*etym*" were destroyed only to promptly re-emerge in even fuller fiscal glory when the post-assassination twins amalgamate. The Wake's infamous circularity seemed to lend in this case a certain air of futility to the murder which form and content alike indicated as at least provisionally central.

In *Portrait's* shop-sign scenarios, too, the mercantile Father just won't stay dead. Cranly's decapitation facilitates the apocalypse of the shop-sign word, the emptying of the signifier. But when the signifier is cut loose from its moorings in ordinary denotations, the currents of "free" association bring it inexorably back to where it began. When sense is at last restored in the reunion of signifier and signified, form and content, we seem to be back to business as usual.

On the other hand if we read the passage carefully we have to admit that the signifier *does* seem to have picked up some extra freight on its brief voyage out: precisely the freight of literary tradition. There is, after all, at least *some* added diachronous depth when shop-signs of the quotidian streets of Dublin are converted to denaries through which Stephen would "peer at the social life of the city of cities." And if the words themselves thus shine in Stephen's brain with something of the equivocal guilt ironized in Healy's sunset or the coin in *Two Gallants*, at least the death of Stephen's Father, like Ferdinand's, has changed what fades into something rich *and* strange, words made ivory and redolent of lavender and myrtle.

These complementary interpretations remind us that when we take account of the murdered word's strangely circular itinerary, we're left undecided whether it charts at last the triumph of the mercantile Father or the artist-son. When, however, we read this situation from the retrospective vantage of the Wake, we begin to suspect that

this duplicitous undecidability is precisely what we should expect, and perhaps even welcome. II.3 in fact suggests that our dilemma stems from a false dichotomy. For when that crucial Wakean chapter gathers the metaphorical elements of the earlier fictions into its nexus, it reminds us of what *Portrait's* shadowy confusions have been suggesting in any case and what will of course prove essential to some eventual recovery of self-possession and agency: *the Father and the son are precisely the same person*. And this, as it turns out, is also suggested – indeed, rendered inescapable – by the very first presentation of the relevant elements in Joyce's fiction.

* * *

The Doubleviewed Seeds:

1. The Germ of Death

When we return to the early pages of *Hero* and to Stephen's words for Butt during the hearthside scene, we discover that though Stephen would set up high tradition in the temple from which he has driven the money-changers, *tradition itself* is of course described in precisely economic terms. "People seemed to him strangely ignorant of the value of the words they used so glibly. ... Destiny had scornfully reduced her prices for them. ... Words ... have a certain value in the literary tradition and a certain value in the market-place – a debased value. Words are simply receptacles for human thought: in the literary tradition they receive more valuable thoughts than they do in the market-place" [SH 26-27]

Now our purpose here is avowedly to discern a certain species of self-recognition or self-possession founded, like II.3's agon, on the *de facto* unity of that which is ostensibly duplicitous. Our detection of the uniform metaphorical economy (that term of art has never been more apt) governing Stephen's respectively valorized and

reviled languages suggests some kind of cryptic unity in any case. But if we read on, the same pages that first define the terms of battle provide, when taken with *Portrait's* vignettes, even clearer evidence that the murdered Father and the son that does him in are originally one and the same person, this person being, of course, Stephen himself. This has consequences for the notion of agency.

This begins to be particularly evident on the page following the first exchange with Butt and the implicit rebuke at the hearth which has left Stephen so disgruntled. If any parricidal affect is the result, it makes itself felt right away. Stephen takes to baiting Butt in English class and the text remarks that “The monster in Stephen ... on the least provocation was ready for bloodshed.” But what we are likely to find remarkable is what precisely Stephen decides to *do* with, to and about language, and *where* he decides to do it.

We find Stephen on his morning walk to school (precisely where he will imagine Cranly's decapitation in *Portrait*).

This morning walk was pleasant for him and there was no face that passed him on its way to its commercial prison but he strove to pierce to the motive centre of its ugliness. ... As he walked thus through the ways of the city he had his ears and eyes ever prompt to receive impressions. It was not only in Skeat that he found words for his treasure-house, he found them also at haphazard in the shops, on advertisements, in the mouths of the plodding public. He kept repeating them to himself till they lost all instantaneous meaning for him and became wonderful vocables [SH 30].

Once more the scene is the market-place. *As per* the recently completed interview

with Father Butt, the market-place is vile, its subjects consigned to the commercial prison that warps and withers their souls. By now, however, we're not surprised to discover that the same metaphorical economy governs the valorized language that the esthete offers as alternative to ugliness. Stephen will go about the city and through a particular method rescue words from "shops" and "advertisements" by converting them to "wonderful vocables" which he will add to the same "treasure-house" which Skeats has enriched with high tradition.

The program, thus, is substantially what it will be in *Portrait's* shop-sign episodes: the hated word of the market-place is drained of sense, but the remaining signifier, though already on its way to being something rich and strange as a "wonderful vocable," is also already predisposed toward some eventual reunion with a *somewhat* economic connotation, at least. As in *Portrait* some hostility toward a Father-figure obliquely conditions the scene, although in this case the hostility involves less some implicit sexual rivalry than the grievance which caught our attention in the first place: the fate of the Word. But the consequence is the same: the market-place signifier is drained of referent. This time, though, there's something much more remarkable than the proximity of the original grievance to be taken into account, and it's this which points up the question of agency.

In *Portrait's* shop-sign episodes, Stephen is the passive *victim* of the consequences attendant on the death of the Father of paternal metaphor. He is precisely "sick and powerless" as he finds his "consciousness of language ebbing from his brain." He can "scarcely recognize as his his own thoughts" as he finds that words have been "emptied of instantaneous sense." But here, in the very first instance of the kenosis of the "shop-sign" word in Joyce's writing, Stephen is emptying words of "all instantaneous meaning" *on purpose*.

When we take *Hero* and *Portrait* together, thus, it's almost as though Stephen has

traveled through time to attack himself. (Or, if you prefer, as though the unconscious consisted not so much of some intrinsically alien if paradoxically inner condition as it consisted of things which were once conscious but have been, for whatever reasons, simply forgotten.) The strange syncope that trouble Stephen in Cork or in the image of a decapitated Cranly are what we should expect from the "death" of the paternal metaphor. The subject himself, having already identified with the Father through a "normal" resolution of the Oedipus, with the fall of the Father falls victim to aphasia as the psychic underpinnings of the signifier/signified relation are removed.

Thus when the Stephen of the early pages of *Hero* sets off to deliberately drain the shop-sign words of sense, no matter that the original object of his animus is Father Butt. The ultimate victim cannot help but be himself. Symmetrically: *Portrait's* swooning Stephen can no longer convince us of his innocence. It's true that the images of dead Fathers seem to come to him unbidden, whether from the words of his own biological father or, in the case of Cranly, simply because of his meditations on English class. But if we trace this particular "literary tradition" to its roots in Joyce's earliest writings, there we find Stephen himself, fresh imbued with animus from his recent encounter with Butt and in consequence diligently rubbing the sense from the shop-signs through the perfectly *deliberate* device of repetition.

As II.3's customer's might say of the death of HCE, "1) he hade to die it, the beetle, 2) he didhithim self" [358.36]. In one sense the Stephen of *Hero* and *Portrait* already knows what the Stephen of *Nighttown* does: "But in here it is I must kill the priest and the king" [U 481]. Stephen could put his situation to himself more succinctly still: Butt in here.

But of course the Stephen of the early fictions still doesn't *know* he knows this in the way that we know he knows it. Though *Hero's* scene shows Stephen's deliberate kenosis of the Word, there's no sense that this kenosis is recognized as implicitly

parricidal. Stephen still can't do what we've done to discover that Stephen himself is the assassin of the symbolic: he can't reach across texts to recognize that in Cork or in his imagination of the English class the Father Stephen kills is himself. Though formulae like Stephen's identification with Parnell or the identification of his own head with Cranly's obviously imply the conflation of the murderer and the victim, there's no succinct, explicit equation of the type we see in *Ulysses* or, to a far greater degree, in II.3, when Joyce himself reaches across his entire work to reveal that he is, at least now, perfectly sensible of what was going on all the time. Textually, at least, full, self-conscious, self-possession of an agency already in evidence must wait for the later fictions, and especially the *Wake*. Clearly, though, Stephen's careful, deliberate stripping of sense from the signifier in *Portrait's* early pages makes an eventual self-recognition all but inevitable.

One of the interesting things about this deliberate strategy is its almost mechanical precision, suggestive at last of the scrutiny which Joyce famously brought to bear on the material minutiae of his compositional processes. There's no vague waving of a magic wand. Instead we're told explicitly and precisely how to destroy signifier/signified relationships; so explicitly and precisely that if we wished we could do it ourselves. And indeed the device is one that virtually every child has exploited at some point. It's also one we've already seen Joyce use, for example in his tendency, treated in the previous chapter, to repeat a signifier – often exactly three times – in order to destabilize its referent and make it susceptible to wider connotation. Most conspicuously, perhaps, it's what Stephen (or, according to the passage, “the words themselves”) do to “ivy” following Cranly's decapitation.

The ivy whines upon the wall

And whines and twines upon the wall

The ivy whines upon the wall

The yellow ivy on the wall

Ivy, ivy up the wall. [P 193]

In fact it's this relentless and conspicuously senseless repetition that prepares the transmutation of the putatively empty signifier "ivy" to the "ivory" which will become, after its own material metonymies, so "filled" with "value."

In other words when it comes to the *negative* aspect of Stephen's agenda – the deliberate inanition of the signifier of ordinary language – we now have a fairly sound grasp of the specific and more to the point deliberately employed *techne* with which the artist can bend the stuff of language to his will.

When it comes, however, to the *positive* aspect of Stephen's rehabilitation of the word, recall that we have encountered some difficulty, and precisely with textual mechanics. Stephen wishes to augment the value of the word; that is, to supersaturate it with "the thought" – or more properly, apparently, *thoughts* – it contains." He wishes, that is, to supersaturate the signifier with the signified, with connotation and denotation; with, in a word, content. But recall that in attempting thus to fill the word with value Stephen – perhaps even Joyce – seems to fudge the accounts. "Ivory" would become an impossibly compound signifier, whose impossibility is the more emphasized by the *merely notional* presentation of a single word where the reading eye detects an obvious four.

Nevertheless, we still wish to answer the question left unanswered above, and come to know precisely what it is that Stephen *would* have to do *were* he to succeed in this impossible agenda. We wish to know, in other words, what we *do* now know of the first, negative movement, the moment of the signifier's inanition: how, *mechanically and by an act of deliberate artistic will*, the desired supersaturation of a

single signifier may in fact be accomplished. And no sooner, as it happens, have the early pages of *Hero* informed us of the means toward the first move than they show us the means toward the second. All we have to do is turn the page.

* * *

The Doubleviewed Seeds

2. The Germ of Life

The first move, the inaction of the signifier through repetition, has been presented to us in the closing pages of *Hero*'s first extant chapter – Chapter XV – which ends with an apt image of the artist deliberately engineering his materials – now drained of “instantaneous sense” and thus in a way *merely* materials – at a minute level. Stephen returns from his tour of the “commercial prison” with its “shops” and “advertisements,” “with a deliberate, unflagging step piecing together meaningless words and phrases with deliberate, unflagging seriousness” [SH 31]. And it's apt that the chapter should conclude with this technical gesture; for the next chapter opens precisely with the technical gesture necessary for the next, positive, step.

Note first, however, that the chapter's very first lines will couch the operation in a complex but ultimately familiar metaphor.

Their Eminences of the Holy College are hardly more scrupulous solitaries during the ballot for Christ's vicar than was Stephen at this time. He wrote a great deal of verse and, in default of any better contrivance, his verse allowed him to combine the offices of penitent and confessor. [SH 32]

The episode just preceding, we know, followed fast on the heels of the interview with Butt which left “the monster” in Stephen “ready for bloodshed.” This theme of parricidal impulse is of course one we’ve followed through to II.3 where a version of Butt is undone in guises that recall or rather apotheosize his priestly office: in II.3 he has become a Father of the Church *par excellence*, either the Pope himself or the General of the Jesuits.

And despite the decorous style with which Chapter XVI of *Hero* opens, a strikingly similar situation obtains. But note the implicit power. Stephen is a cardinal, choosing *through an act of volition* the kind of Father who will replace the old; for the Pope has died. And who is the new Father of the Church, chosen in part through Stephen’s agency, to be?

Inevitably, note, none other than Stephen himself, even while he simultaneously fills the filial role. “He wrote a great deal of verse and, in default of any other contrivance, his verse allowed him to combine the offices of penitent and confessor.” Recall *Portrait’s* strange play of identification with Cranly, whose priestly office included the role of Stephen’s Father-confessor. Though it still doesn’t seem quite as though Stephen is fully aware of the relationship between the impulse toward parricide and his own radical stylistic agendas, we do see here, following the death and rebirth of the Father, the Father and the Son made one in the most explicit equation we will see until we reach *Ulysses* and the Wake. Further, the artist that results is no victim, but an agent, once again descending to some peculiar micro-management of the Word.

Something, it seems, about the writing that “combines the offices of penitent and confessor” begins to effect Stephen’s self-possession; and the next lines provide at last the technical secret the artist requires to complete his impossible mission.

He sought in his verses to fix the most elusive of moods and he put his lines together not word by word but letter by letter. He read Blake and Rimbaud on the values of letters and even permuted and combined the five vowels to construct cries for primitive emotions. To none of his former fervours had he given himself with such a whole heart as to this fervour [SH 32]

Letter by letter.

How bold. How novel. How impossible.

Surely Stephen is joking. One simply *does not* construct verse letter by letter; one constructs it word by word. The literary tradition as much as the market-place concedes this limitation. Of course poets are traditionally sensible of sound and thus, implicitly, of letters to a degree; non-phonetic strategies like acrostic may obtrude as well. But sensitive to letters though all of these devices are, they choose from the common fund of an extant vocabulary. And this does not seem to be at all the sort of thing Stephen has in mind when, for instance, he “permute[s] and combine[s] the five vowels to construct cries for primitive emotions.”

This last in itself brings up an interesting point, and one which will become more interesting as we proceed. In reducing language in space Stephen has apparently to a degree reduced it to its imagined origins in time, thereby arriving at something which has not occupied us for some little while: the primal utterance or cry. Of course this sort of thing is the pillar of Vico’s thought and thus of many of our first ruminations. It’s also, as the reader may recall, the conspicuous feature of the Wake’s last temporal chapter – III.4 – where, amalgamated with the Freudian situation and Shem’s writing, it becomes the cry that evolves backwards in Book III into the Wake’s famous Letter.

Thus it seems appropriate that once the “cries for primitive emotions” have been

constructed from their letters, a reverie of temporal origins ensues. Stephen

doubled backwards into the past of humanity and caught glimpses of emergent art as one might have a vision of the plesiosauros emerging from his ocean of slime. He seemed almost to hear the simple cries of fear and joy and wonder which are antecedent to all song, the savage rhythms of men pulling at the oar, to see the rude scrawls and the portable gods of men whose legacy Leonardo and Michelangelo inherit. And over all this chaos of history and legend, he strove to draw out a line of order, to reduce the abysses of the past to order by a diagram.

[SH 33]

We'll eventually come to this diagram, which would separate order from chaos at some scene of origins in a gesture again faintly redolent of Hertz's *The End of the Line*. In one sense the effect will be precisely the opposite of the one Hertz detects, but this must wait. For the moment the thing to note is the way in which the reduction of writing to its non-signifying material components becomes immediately tangent on the non-signifying, original element of voice which inhabits various imaginings of the origin of language, including Vico's.

And this *is* the reduction of writing to non-signifying material, as surely as is rubbing the sense from signification through repetition. Note, in fact, that the one fact follows immediately on the other. No sooner is sense drained from the marketplace words so that they're reduced to "wonderful vocables" than Stephen, as though at last encountering the word in the sort of materiality his project seems to require, breaks the materials into its components, precisely as Rutherford would split the atom. Taking place, as it does, in the vicinity of parricidal affect and metaphor, this

operation becomes quite intelligible to a retrospective reader of the Wake. This is simply the earliest instance on Joycean record (and it's quite early) of the "*abnihilisation of the etym*" attendant on the death of the Father. It leaves us with one sort of the kind of thing we should expect from the failure of the paternal metaphor: the bare, non-signifying material of the signifier. And this shows up, at last, as the letter. But note the dynamic character of the moment.

No sooner has the artist-chemist arrived at his primordial materials than he begins their permutation into a new word order: that is, words of an entirely different kind. Destruction, in any case, was merely the beginning. Once it has been achieved, creation – and by certain lights for the first time – begins, and begins immediately. We already see the seeds of the fulfillment of the promise Stephen implicitly made himself when he rejected all words he had not "made or accepted." Now, seizing the primordial non-semantic material of the blasted word he begins, *though an act of deliberate agency*, to put his lines together precisely "letter by letter."

Stephen has accomplished a remarkable thing. Whether he knows it or not he has, as in II.3, killed Father Butt – the symbolic Father of the ordinary language of the market-place – and seized the opportunity of this destabilization to simultaneously usurp and identify with Fatherhood in order to *found a new language*. To do so he has necessarily introduced the process of choice – of deliberation, of agency – to a level at which agency is *simply not supposed to operate*. He has destroyed the symbolic order of the given word and made possible the construction of a language radically his own by moving agency and selection to the level of the letter.

This is a dramatic moment, the full import of whose drama we should not miss. On the one hand, the strategy seems silly, an example precisely of the sort of "trivial method" of which Joyce was accused. On the other hand we already know, if only from our examinations of "ivy" and "ivory" in *Portrait*, that the method is, potentially

at least, no trivial thing. Whether it reveals itself at last as method or madness turns to a great degree, of course, precisely on the questions of agency and self-possession, on the question the degree to which we encounter a schizophrenic subject to the delirious revolts of the signifying chain and the degree to which our subject is an artist the subject of self-possession.

Of course the funny thing is that once we've explicitly exposed the particular strategy for effecting this Luciferian revolution it doesn't *seem* to involve anything the least perilous. In fact we might say not only that a child could do it but that a child *does* it, phonetically, at least. At the level of voice the random combination of phonemes whose ordered contiguities will later constitute words simply *is* infantile babble. But it's of course there, according to theory, that peril lurks. For the *adult* subject, the return to this zone involves, at least in principle and by definition, the possibility of madness. The death of the paternal metaphor, famously, is not merely the death of the symbolic: it threatens with the same stroke the subject of identification.

Still: if we grant any pertinence to the notion that Joyce swam the waters in which Lucia drowned, the force of Jung's metaphor remains precisely that although risking lunacy Joyce retained control. Nowadays we don't think Joyce was *really* mad, even if some of his contemporaries did. Theory, after all, is theory, and facts are facts. So if we're inclined to dismiss theory's apocalyptic rumbling about the dangers of the collapse of the paternal metaphor as a tad febrile, perhaps biography justifies our scepticism.

For what it's worth, though, *Portrait* seems rather to justify theory. For there what we get in tandem with the collapse of the signifying relation following the imagined death of the father is *precisely* the imperiling of subjectivity itself, presented as death and at least a brush with madness. Stephen is left – “his very brain ... sick and

powerless” – wondering whether it’s he or the Father who’s truly dead. And so far from the *acceleration* of the subject’s agency with respect to language, we witness instead first the death of language itself and then its radical autonomy as the subject loses what control he had. Whether or not it limns biography in these sections is difficult to say; but in any case *Portrait* suggests that wittingly or otherwise Stephen, and specifically in consequence of the hubris of his *linguistic* agenda, risks the fate of Icarus.

He does not, however, at last meet it, no more than does Joyce, who coupling his notorious micro-management of the word with comprehensive structural schemata, is in control of his text to a degree perhaps unmatched by any other author. This scrupulous control is no doubt in part a reaction to an ever-present threat, though I think at last there’s more joy in the freedom the control allows than fear of the chaos it constrains.

But the actualization of this control seems to involve the question of when and whether two contrasting sides of the mind are reconciled in a relative self-possession. Throughout the early works there seem to be at least two versions of “*the abnihilation of the etym;*” one which *happens* to the artist, and one which the artist *does*. When Stephen suffers his synopes in *Portrait*, he is suffering an attack. But when the market-place word is stripped of its sense in *Hero*, Stephen is the deliberate agent. And immediately ensuing this exercise of volition, note, we are treated to metaphors that suggest the beginning of the recognition that the part of the mind that *attacks* – the son – and the part of the mind that *suffers* – the Father – are parts (what else could they be?) of the *same mind*. Thus Stephen himself becomes a church Father capable of bringing a new Fatherhood into being, and discovers, in the very verse he’s composing – allegedly letter by letter – that he’s able to “combine the offices of penitent and confessor.”

This self-possession is not as explicit – nor, it seems, as fully self-possessed – as it will become in the later fictions. Nevertheless it is a beginning, and the beginning precisely of the construction of a position of agency and deliberation that will deliver the artist from words that he has neither made nor accepted. Partly because agency does not seem yet to be in full possession of itself we don't necessarily get very *far* with this new language. But we do, as we've seen, get its beginnings. The very collapse of paternal metaphor that a normative psychology would judge a dangerous failure becomes, accompanied by some self-recognition, the artist's opportunity. Thus the deaths of both language and the subject potentially coincide with the rebirth of each in the same sort of "seim anew" that characterizes a certain view of Vichian history or, perhaps, the cycles of the Wake. And this – probably more than the apparent contingency of twelve o'clock that dogs Stephen's meetings with the Dean – is the reason that the Wake so deliberately stages the "*abnihilisation of the etym*" at that hour, the end and the beginning of time.

Likewise, this conscious return to unconscious origins, this undoing or re-winding of language-use into some liminally infantile state approximating the original conditions of acquisition, is part of the reason that here Stephen begins from scratch and constructs not first a word but a cry. Still, even if some construction has begun, the zone for the moment still seems, by vice or virtue of its inchoate character, to substantially thwart the semantic. If neologism is going to remain at the level of primitive cries, Stephen was better off with ivy whining on a wall. And though Stephen *says* he's composing his verse letter by letter, he doesn't give any actual *examples*. Nor does the text provide any further theoretical or technical ruminations which suggest any way in which this eccentric method could prove semantically useful in any comprehensive or sustained way. The device remains, in *Hero*, merely notional. But one way in which the method *could* pay off, if properly handled, has

already begun to surface in our readings.

Recall the peculiar construction of the sentence which presented “ivory” as a sort of epiphanic signifier, itself produced in part through association with the senseless repetitions of “ivy.” The literary tradition in all its glory promptly saturated the semantic field with the succession *ivoire, avoiro, ebur*. Most intriguingly, though, the sentence that contained this succession strained to suggest that all these permutations were themselves contained in the *single word*.

Now if this synthesis *could* in fact be effected, the word would have been transmuted into a vessel containing precisely added “value.” The ensuing metaphors suggested that this – which would effectively be a species of language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree and full precisely of the “instantaneous sense” which marks the static, punctiform epiphany – was a desideratum. But despite the wishful construction of the sentence the collateral signifiers remained stubbornly distinct, not simultaneous at all, and nothing could be done about it.

But *now* something can be. For in this earliest scene of the reduction of the word to non-semantic material Stephen has of course already hit on the necessary device. If you *really* wanted to make “*Ivory, ivoire, avorio, ebur*” into all one word, you’d have to make *your own new word*, one that was the result of squeezing the old words together. And to do that, you’d have to *decompose* it and then *recompose* it. you’d have to compose not sentences but words.

But how could you do that? As a writer, there would only be one way: letter by letter.

How would you do it? “Eboiry?” “Evoiry?” It doesn’t matter. We recognize the technique. And now we recognize the textual place of its genesis.

At this point however we should remember that, still, no actual *example* of the technique ensue what remains its mere *discussion* in *Hero*. If it did, the

chronological ordering and development of Joyce's style would be quite other than – perhaps precisely the inverse of – what it is. Of course it might have seemed foolhardy, even to an Icarus, to foist a book of unrelenting neologism on an unsuspecting public as one's professional debut. And the accumulated erudition in matters large and small which Joyce's retentive memory gave his age certainly helps to justify the device; it's no good being desperately polysemantic if you don't have that much to say.

It's also possible, however, that the idea simply *did not occur* to Joyce in its full-fledged form at this time. Nothing from the enormous fund of Joyce's notebooks indicates any early experiments in this direction. There is, it's true, a page of notes in Joyce's hand found with the *Hero* manuscript (and reproduced to face the first page in New Directions edition) with observations on the Tenebrae mass which contain, intriguingly, "The acrostic of Jeremiah: Aleph, Beth, Ghimel, Daleth." And there's another gesture, slight but because of its placement quite suggestive, in the text itself to which we will eventually advert. But the bulk of the evidence – or the lack of it – suggests a situation in its way like the one which governs the orbits of Bloom and Stephen in *Ulysses*, when they proleptically but obliviously cross one another's paths in anticipation of their meeting and, indeed, their fusion. Though most of the puzzle-pieces – the self as Father, the self as son, the inanition and saturation of the material signifier – are on the table (and indeed very close to their final positions) as soon as Joyce's fiction opens, they will not, it seems, entirely fit together until the close of his career.

There may be many reasons for this. It's often only retrospection which makes plain the prophetic outlines of incipient ideas. But one reason may be that another piece of the puzzle – perhaps the most important – is not yet present in this crucial early scene which seems in other respects to be in possession of so much including,

most crucially, deliberate agency. This is the *sexual rivalry* implicated faintly in the circumstances of the Cork syncope and more explicitly in the situation with Cranly.

Despite the relative clarity and concision of some themes in *Hero's* first pages – not least the confounding of son-penitent and father-confessor in the single figure of the artist who consciously if notionally employs the strategies central to Joyce's final style – there's no evidence that the rivalry with the Father, whether Butt or the Pope of metaphor, is in the least sexual. Rather, it involves the word. Even here there's some doubt, despite the propinquity of the scenes, whether Stephen or even his author is fully sensible of the connection between the animus toward Butt and the almost immediately ensuing destruction of the market-place signified.

The fullest self-consciousness in this regard will not emerge until the Wake, where legion jokes and asides almost beg for our recognition that if the artist has played a joke on himself at least he's in on it now. But in *Portrait's* last and most important examination of Stephen's mutating relationship with the Word that would be Art, we are already presented with a subject beginning, at least, to be conscious that his own animus towards a rival with whom he duly confuses himself *is predicated on a rivalry that is explicitly sexual*. Though this rival is a peer, he is called, inevitably, Father. And though Stephen himself may not be entirely sensible of the connection, we're able to recognize one of the most important things about this latest Father: most importantly, he's a master of language.

* * *

Portrait's Oedipal Epiphany

The scene is Stephen's composition of the villanelle, if composition it may be called. In *Hero*, during the scene we've just been examining, Stephen is in a

particularly workman-like frame of mind “The poem is made not born,” he says, and heaps contempt on “[t]he burgher notion of the poet Byron in undress pouring out verses just as a city fountain pours out water” [SH 33]. But nothing could be further from this contempt than the language which frames the piece-meal presentation of the villanelle, deriving as it does from a faintly Coleridgean access of the sort which birthed “Kubla Kahn” (avowedly, as it happens, Joyce’s favorite poem). Indeed the poem seems at first to be more born than made, and precisely while the waters copiously flow.

Toward dawn he awoke. O what sweet music! His soul was all dewy wet. Over his limbs in sleep pale cool waves of light had passed. He lay still, as if his soul lay amid cool waters A spirit filled him, pure as the purest water, sweet as dew [P 235]

In fact the abundance of aqueous imagery is part of what inspired Hugh Kenner to famously dub this Stephen’s “wet dream.” The designation will seem increasingly apt, and even from the first there are intimations that the poem is conceived not just in sleep but almost in an act of consummation.

In a dream or vision he had known the ecstasy of seraphic life. Was it an instant of enchantment only or long hours and days and years and ages?

The instant of inspiration seemed not to be reflected from all sides at once from a multitude of cloudy circumstances of what had happened or of what might have happened. The instant flashed forth like a point of light and now from cloud on cloud of vague circumstance confused

form was veiling softly its afterglow. O! In the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh. Gabriel the seraph had come to the virgin's chamber. [P 235]

The moment is twice an epiphany, perhaps. Once more we see the instantaneous character of the esthetic revelation, but also the manifestation – perhaps better the incarnation – of a god. The instant even seems to brush eternity, both in the colloquial sense of a very long elapse of time and in the suggestion of the extra-temporal in the very hesitation between the instant and duration. *Pro forma* this epiphany is not just punctiform but luminous – “a point of light” – and the “cloud on cloud of vague circumstance veiling softly” the “afterglow” of this “instant of enchantment” evokes the epiphany Stephen has described a few pages earlier as “the instant Shelley likened beautifully to a fading coal” or “an enchantment of the heart.”

But the esthetic object is also, importantly, no longer a statue or a basket but a *word*; and somewhat like the dense, luminous, would-be simultaneity of the “ivory” which becomes itself imbued with the sensual properties of actual ivory following the swooning reduction of the word to the merely material signifier, precisely a word made *flesh*. Thus, like “ivory,” it too concatenates materially as the “roselike glow” sends “forth its rays of rhyme; ways, days, blaze, praise, raise.” Yet like the myth of Christ it would deny the very flesh that it embodies. In coming to “the virgin's chamber” “Gabriel the seraph” comes of course to a “womb of the imagination” that remains emphatically chaste.

Stephen – or his virgin imagination – is not, at this point, a unified mind, but a mind trying to have it both ways. The inspiration is precisely as passionate as the designation “wet dream” would suggest, but the imagery – derived in part from the revelations of the Virgin as the Rose of the *Paradiso* – is in every sense a sublimation

of “the rose and ardent light” which was the “strange wilful heart” of Stephen’s “beloved” whose appearance coincides with the termination of his esthetic manifesto two pages earlier and who becomes the muse of the villanelle, the poem whose “rays burned up the world, consumed the hearts of men and angels: the rays from the rose that was her wilful heart.”

The tension between an all-too incarnate character and the “glorified body” of an epiphany – constrained by the terms of the manifesto to be beyond the kinesis of desire and loathing – cannot be sustained. For as the poem flows forth as though from the “Byron in undress pouring out verses” of the “burgher imagination,” its “rhythmic movement” and “rays of rhyme” bring Stephen’s putatively *virgin* imagination whither it would not go. The consequent “de-flowering” is almost as fatal to the Rose as is Blake’s worm. How, in the passage, does this fall occur, and what does it mean?

The poem proceeds, Stephen still a Coleridgean amanuensis fresh from dream. By the time of the third verse however we see the inevitable interruption: not a person from Porlock but a “free” if unwelcome association.

The verse itself seems innocent enough.

Above the flame the smoke of praise

Goes up from ocean rim to rim.

Tell no more of enchanted days. [P 236]

But Stephen’s ruminations bring ruin in their wake.

Smoke went up from the whole earth, from the vapoury oceans,
smoke of her praise. The earth was like a swinging smoking swaying

censer, a ball of incense, an ellipsoidal ball. The rhythm died out at once; the cry of his heart was broken. His lips began to murmur the first verses over and over; then went on stumbling through half verses, stammering and baffled; then stopped. The heart's cry was broken. [P 236]

The text's transition from the imagery of the sublime to the utter collapse of inspiration is as rapid as Stephen's unbidden thought, and partly on that account is at first difficult to detect, let alone assess. Why precisely is the heart's cry broken? Apparently this has to do with what comes before. But why should "an ellipsoidal ball" prove so fatal?

Here we must allow our mental processes to mirror those of Stephen and his author. Both are creatures of a facile and mercurial memory and, as we've seen, possessed of (and eager to cultivate) a rarified – sometimes almost morbid – sensitivity to nuance and association. In their best moments these predilections tend, consciously or otherwise, to suddenly imbue ostensibly inconsequential signifiers with the rich collateral freight of a literary tradition. But though something of the sort has happened here, the tradition is not very high.

In fact what Stephen is recalling is the rude joke of his classmate several pages earlier in physics lecture. The professor enlivens an exposition on the ellipse with a recollection of the "billiard sharp" from Gilbert and Sullivan "who is condemned to play *On a cloth untrue/With a twisted cue/And elliptical billiard balls.*" At which point Moynihan whispers: "What price ellipsoidal balls! Chase me ladies, I'm in the cavalry!" [P 206-7].

In an instant all pretensions to virginity are gone. Stephen has imagined that his Luciferian despite of faith – memorably culminating in the *felix culpa* of the "bird-

girl” scene that closes the previous chapter – has freed him from the coils of an esthetically sterile chastity. But as his dialogue with Lynch has just made clear this “priest of the eternal imagination” is still the priest of an imagination that would conspicuously and deliberately purge itself of the kinesis of desire. “Let us take woman” as an esthetic example, says Stephen in a didactic tone. “Let us take her!” says Lynch in a somewhat more enthusiastic one; but Stephen rapidly sublimates this crass misconception into the transcendent stasis of the true epiphany.

No sooner is woman purged of fleshly dross than she appears as the “beloved” and the rhapsody of the villanelle commences. But lurking beneath the ethereal paeans the rejected counterpart of a Lynchian “esthetic” remains, not just insinuating itself into but to a great extent inspiring the villanelle. In fact this affect is not very far beneath the surface at all; and with “ellipsoidal ball” it erupts into consciousness, dashing Icarus once more to earth. Language stops. This is a crisis. What is Stephen to do?

As it happens the very first thing he does is *write*. In a sense this isn’t surprising; after all he’s writing a poem. But strictly speaking he hasn’t so far been actually *writing* it; rather the verses have come to him in a sort of inner voice almost as of their own accord – almost as though in the fluidity of the “wet dream,” “his consciousness of language” was once more “ebbing into the very words themselves which set to band and disband themselves in wayward rhythms.” But one of the things this moment of crisis precipitates is a turn away from the Byronic “fountain” the early pages of *Hero* despised and toward, instead, the banausic material practice of the very *techne* those same pages emphasized. Stephen is dashed, but determined to persist. Thus:

Fearing to lose all, he raised himself suddenly on his elbow to look for

paper and pencil. There was neither on the table; He stretched his arm wearily towards the foot of the bed, groping with his hand in the pockets of the coat that hung there. His fingers found a pencil and then a cigarette packet. He lay back and, tearing open the packet, placed the last cigarette on the windowledge and began to write out the stanzas on the villanelle in small neat letters on the rough cardboard surface. [P 237]

How different is this labor from the ecstatic fluency of the voice that has just come from dream and sleep. In fact we see the artist contending at last with the real matter of his art; not “matter” as thesis or content but in its most obdurate, banal, recalcitrant sense as the physics of writing at last “small neat letters on the rough cardboard surface.”

Despite the terms in which writing is described, this isn't, admittedly, composing letter-by-letter in quite the same way imagined (if not yet practiced) by *Hero's* early scene. Still, it's an obvious engagement with writing as a kinetic, material practice necessarily engaged with moving about the all-too-physical materiality of the signifier. We can sense the effort, almost as though of a construction site. If it's a coincidence, thus, it's an apt one that Stephen's next thoughts reveal that the actual *practice* of his art will demand a conscious engagement with the visceral desire and loathing which its theory sought to transcend. Stephen turns to the “matter” of his poem in its first sense as subject matter, or muse. But this time his meditations on what one might call the materialism of the “beloved” are particularly instructive.

Stephen recalls a “night at the carnival ball” and a dance. “At the pause in the chain of hands her hand had lain in his an instant, a soft merchandise” [P 238]. By now of course the metaphor of the market-place is abundantly familiar too us. But

why is it here suddenly attached to the woman, instead of the word? The immediately ensuing lines suggest the answer.

Emma and Stephen banter lightly until, characteristically, a word summons one of Stephen's involved reveries. Though still in the midst of the scene of the villanelle's composition, we have now dropped not once but twice into nested insets as the train of thought inspired by "ball" proves to contain another, deeper and still not entirely voluntary digression triggered, characteristically, by the signifier. As always with Joyce these moments, whether suffered or enacted, are not at last digressions but amplifications and explications of tropes that at first seem merely puzzles.

-- You are a great stranger now.

-- Yes. I was born to be a monk. ...

A monk! His own image started forth ... spinning .. a lithe web of sophistry and whispering in her ear.

No, it was not his image. It was like the image of the young priest in whose company he had seen her last, looking at him out of dove's eyes, toying with the pages of her Irish phrasebook.

-- Yes, yes, the ladies are coming round to us. I can see it every day. The ladies are with us. The best helpers the language has.

-- And the church, Father Moran? ...

Bah! ... He had done well to leave her to flirt with her priest His anger at her found vent in course railing at her paramour, whose name and voice and features offended his baffled pride: a priested peasant To him she would unveil her soul's shy nakedness, to one who was but schooled in the discharging of a formal rite rather than to him, a priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of

experience into the radiant body of everliving life. [P 23-40]

Here, in the middle of Stephen's most crucial experience of language to date and as part of an interruption that marks the transition from ecstasy to labor, from theory to practice, from the materiality of language as something suffered to something materially done, we find the most succinct and explicit synthesis so far of the elements that have shaped the battles, syncopes and epiphanies of the Word.

Stephen struggles to distinguish himself from a "Father" who is more clearly than ever before at once a romantic rival and a projection as well as a "Father" of a language Stephen rejects, this time Irish. At first this Father does not seem to be in possession of any "market-place" word, the word which traffics with the material as opposed to the esthetic concerns that figure in the virginal and almost celestial language of transcendence. But indeed this Father is, or has been, in possession of some token of the market-place.

For Emma herself has become in every sense the *matter* of the word: not just the content of the poem, but the obdurately, problematically incarnate desire that inspires it. She's what all the fuss is about; precisely what's the *matter*. It is thus in this material condition that Stephen finds her in his hand almost as Lenehan finds the coin in the hand of Corley (whom, likewise, we had imagined to be in pursuit of another matter altogether): as the same economic token whose metaphorical economy has governed at once the extant regime and the projected revolution of the Word as material condition. This time Emma herself has become, flesh to flesh, "a soft merchandise."

At the same time, she almost seems to metonymically act out her assimilation to language – in this case written – when we see her flirtatiously "toying with the pages of the Irish phrasebook," virtually the merchandise in her own hand. As though to

emphasize the conflation Father Moran puts his two cents in: for the “ladies” are “the best helpers the language has.” Indeed, vexingly, they are “coming round ... every day” to this master, this Father, of a language other than Stephen’s own.

Particularly, of course, *Emma* is coming around. Someone else might find her presence innocent. But to Stephen her acceptance of Father Moran’s words is nothing less than abandon to a rival. “To him she would unveil her soul’s shy nakedness.” True, the nakedness is still the soul’s. But the general tone – the same tone that makes Emma “flirt with her priest” who is also “her paramour” – anticipates the imagination of a nakedness more corporeal.

Now at this point we might remember that Byron seems to be undressing too. The first effect of this train of thought, however, is not at all Stephen’s possession of his beloved, either in body or spirit, verse or imagination, but the simultaneous destruction of imagination and verse. “Rude brutal anger routed the last lingering instant of ecstasy from his soul. It broke up violently her fair image and flung the fragments on all sides” [P 239]. The crisis of language deepens and repeats itself. The same carnality that dashed inspiration with the unlooked-for emergence of the term “ball” has now, in this second and even more deeply nested reverie revealed perhaps the even deeper, baser roots of the grievance. It’s not just that Stephen and Emma have bodies; it’s that they have bodies and *he can’t have her*. But once again, and just as he did when first undone by “ball,” Stephen, sometime Hero, persists.

After the disastrous fall from grace precipitated by the carnal (even perhaps carnival) associations of the “ellipsoidal ball,” the only way back to his subject matter Stephen can find is precisely *through* matter rather than over or around it. He’s been forcibly and all-but-disastrously reminded of his own body and its desire. He is precisely as fallen as he wished to be in the preceding chapter, but the consequences of this change in altitude are becoming clearer. He cannot from this vantage consort

any more alone with a rarified ideal. If he is to press on with art the matter of his muse must be almost literally embraced; and for this an ethereal Emma will not do. His ideal must fall as Stephen himself has fallen. Thus in the midst of his anger he suddenly changes tack.

He began to feel that he had wronged her. A sense of her innocence moved him almost to pity her, an innocence he had never understood till he had come to the knowledge of it through sin, an innocence which she too had not understood while she was innocent or before the strange humiliation of her nature had first come upon her. Then first her soul had begun to live as his soul had when he had first sinned: and a tender compassion filled his heart as he remembered her frail pallor and her eyes, humbled and saddened by the dark shame of womanhood.
[P 242]

“Let us take woman,” Stephen has *said*, a few pages earlier. But now, in the closing moments of the passage, he can, at least in imagination.

A glow of desire kindled again his soul and fired and fulfilled all his body. Conscious of his desire she was waking from odourous sleep, the temptress of his villanelle. Her eyes, dark and with a look of languor, were opening to his eyes. Her nakedness yielded to him, radiant, warm, odorous and lavishlimbed, enfolded him like a shining cloud, enfolded him like water with a liquid life: and like a cloud of vapour or like waters circumfluent in space the liquid letters of speech, symbols of the element of mystery, flowed forth over his brain. [P 242]

At this point, the final necessity to composition effected, the text immediately sets the villanelle before us as a whole, a *fait accompli*, its completion – opening “*And still you hold our longing gaze/With languorous look and lavish limb*” – made possible by the imagined possession above. The nakedness that had been given to one priest is now given to the other, and it is with the embrace of an eminently material Emma as the object of an eminently corporeal desire that Stephen produces, *for the first time in Joyce’s fiction*, actual rather than theoretical art.

A great deal of the point however remains the transition – given the locus of the “soft merchandise” one might almost say the handing off – of Emma from “the priested peasant” who is the master of the language of the peasantry to the “priest of the eternal imagination” who in his own language transmutes “the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life.” But this brings us to the question of why all these priests in the first place.

Joyce’s fascination with the purported peccadilloes of priests might strike us as a little odd. Of course nowadays we’re all too likely to think of priests in terms of sexual transgression, but this doesn’t seem to be quite the sort of thing Joyce has in mind. Instead, they are figures at once of identification and loathing, and some of this ambiguity seems to revolve around the fact that they increasingly become sexual rivals for Stephen’s *enamorata*. And if there’s something faintly implausible about Stephen’s agitation *in re* Father Moran, his anxiety seems better-founded in the case of Cranly, whose priestlike mien and office of confessor mask what will seem by *Portrait’s* end to be not just the desire for but the likely possession of the “beloved.”

As is obvious by now, some of this is mixed up with the question of rivalry for authority in language. In Joyce’s pages as in his life the priests aren’t just the Fathers of the church, but of language acquisition and instruction itself, to the point of

determining what qualifies as language and what doesn't. The conflation of these betrayals also figures in the *Wake* where we learn – both in the presentation of the actual text of the famous Letter in IV and in its discussion in I.5 – that the Letter is addressed by ALP herself to “Father Michael.” Joyce’s concern with the word inflects his concern with the woman; though it begins to appear as though a jealousy of priests is a metaphor for more concerns at once more rarified and more primal.

In fact when we recall Stephen and his own father in Cork, the overtone of rivalry – not excluding the oblique suggestion of a sexual rivalry – that characterizes their relationship might lead us to wonder whether, overall, we detect a resonance with the familiar psychoanalytic situation. Is the situation with Simon at all related to that which obtains with “Father” Moran or “Father Cranly” or maybe even “Father” Butt?

The traditional offices of even innocent priests reveals that they are in any case called “Father” precisely because they take that role. They are authorities and benefactors – sometimes, as is the case with the young Stephen and the young Joyce, even materially – while at the same time serving as *de facto* super-egos, restraining and retraining the subject’s desire. But if we consider the mechanics of the Joycean imagination, we need not even adduce these obvious and hoary equivalences to evidence the amalgamation of ideas. For the mind of Stephen, like that of his creator, is immediately translated from one situation to a universe of correspondence on the basis of the signifier alone. Whisper “ball” or “monk” in Stephen’s ear and immediately a host of demons and angels begin to dance on the head of the pun. No less, we may presume, would be predicated of the Name of the Father. In other words, the simple fact that priests are *called* “Father” would be, for this type of mind, sufficient to effect some assimilation of fathers, biological and spiritual, material and mental.

Of course there’s the question of when, if ever, we may risk the possibly facile

suggestion that if in some sense Moran, Butt, Simon and Cranly are rivalrous Fathers to Stephen's son, Emma may in some sense be a mother. If anyone seems to be a mother in the villanelle passage, at first it seems to be Stephen, whose very "imagination" is a "womb." But Stephen's imagination also seems to be the womb he himself is *in*; at least we note that his "soul" is "all dewy wet" and lies "amid cool waters" while "pale cool waves" pass "[o]ver his limbs in sleep."

Even this may be too rapid. But if, given the tangent amniotic metaphors of the Virgin, we detect anything remotely feminine in these waters, at least we're not surprised when we turn from these first words of the villanelle passage to the last. For there, the aqueous vessel that contains Stephen has changed to a woman outright, although the effect of ecstasy still depends in part on a certain conflation, on the undecidability of who contains whom. In any case: if it's true, as it is, that Emma's "nakedness yielded to him, radiant, warm, odorous and lavishlimbed," we immediately find likewise that this same nakedness "enfolded him like a shining cloud, enfolded him like water with a liquid life."

In fact the terms of the beginning of the passage are almost identical to the terms at the end: radiance, clouds, water, limbs, woman. But whoever owns the womb, the signal change is the elapse of its virginity. The fall from grace precipitated by the "ellipsoidal ball" has exposed the carnal character of the congress with the muse. The "cloud on cloud of vague circumstance" that shrouded the "instant of inspiration" in mystery has been pierced in the epiphany of desire.

The "instant" simply *is* possession of the woman; nor is it by Gabriel, in this case, that the word made is made flesh. The possession remains, as Stephen is enfolded by the cloudy waters, an incarnate god's possession of the mother's body from inside. But at this point it becomes increasingly difficult to avoid the uncomfortable recognition. If the metaphorical system has presented the desired female body as

maternal or womb-like from the first, by the end of the passage it's not just that Stephen has possessed himself of Emma's "yielding nakedness." The same confusion of subject and object, container and contained which characterizes the passage throughout confuses the twin metaphors of intercourse and the intra-uterine. The fusion of metaphors at last fuses sexual fusion with Emma -- orgasm, not to put to fine a point on it -- with fusion with a maternal body. And when we remember that this entire situation is framed as the implicit dispossession of a rival called "Father" the adduction of psychoanalysis begins to seem considerably less rapid and facile than it otherwise might.

Psychoanalysis in one sense is of course merely the reduction of minds to bodies. What common physical fact transcends our individual histories and cultures? Our origins in a maternal body. Very well then. The strength of this generalization is often its weakness. But if our interest in the material remains primarily our interest in the material conditions of Stephen's art, then we find in the amniotic and possibly incestuous alembic that frames the villanelle something of great and specific interest to our investigations. The last ecstasy of fluid exchange speaks less of *thanatos* or *eros* than of *logos*; or, rather *logos* in a state of material reduction that is becoming more familiar to us. In fact, Emma is not, strictly speaking, associated with the word proper at all. (For her own good, she'd better not be; ordinary words do not fare well in Joycean hands.) Instead in the ecstatic mutual possession that closes the passage, the last lines tell us that "like a cloud of vapour or like waters circumfluent in space the liquid letters of speech, symbols of the element of mystery, flowed forth over his brain."

Emma, in fact, has become associated less with the word than with the *material substrate* that supports it and survives its destruction: again -- and once again according not to outrageous theory but according to the text at hand -- the letter.

Though language still flows like a Byronic fountain, and may to an extent still be the inner voice of a pregnant imagination, that voice has been appropriated to a kind of writing – indeed, the *material basis* of writing – in “the liquid letters of speech,” almost as though bearing the mark of the strategic engagement with his materials through which Stephen first rescued his verses from oblivion. On the one hand we might note that this very transition to the actual tools and materials of Stephen’s trade – the market-place connotations of that word apparently included – has been simultaneous with the recognition and consummation of bodily desire. But that desire itself has been revealed as so primordial – indeed in a sense the very desire for the primordial condition itself – that we might hazard another observation. When the subject, here, is faced with what remains by theory’s definition the most overwhelming challenge to language and consciousness, at that point language and consciousness – memory – are saved from oblivion – unconsciousness – by *writing* and more specifically, though this will become clearer still, the letter.

* * *

Mesconnaissance

When we compare, thus, the story of the villanelle’s composition to the strategies outlined in the early pages of *Hero*, we find ourselves able to generalize. Stephen’s jealous imagination of a rival Father of language – whether Butt or Moran – precipitates the destruction of language itself, whether willed or apparently accidental. This destruction however is revealed almost immediately as a return to origins. In *Hero* we see that Stephen has “doubled backwards into the past” to find the “emergent art” of “the savage rhythms of men pulling at the oar” to be a “pleisiosauros emerging from his ocean of slime.” This last image becomes almost comically proleptic when

we compare the waters of the villanelle, where the terms are more personal and seem to involve the inextricable confusions of the origin of the subject himself in the body of the (oceanic?) (m)other.

In each case the positive answer to the moment of negation is the encounter with the letter. In the first case, this is also quite clearly the moment of *agency*. Somehow – and in *Hero's* first pages we only get hints of the psychic and probably unconscious odyssey this entails – Stephen has hit upon the idea of deliberately reducing words to their material conditions and then deliberately analyzing that material into components which may be deliberately recombined. In the case of the villanelle, when an implicit oedipal situation becomes more explicit and particularly in figuring desire as maternal, agency seems less in evidence; though we still get, crucially, a very resolved Stephen saving the situation when he “began to write ... in small neat letters on the rough cardboard surface.”

Looking back over Stephen's career, we can indeed say that the villanelle is the moment when – at least in any concrete artistic way – he “began to write.” His success is in part the consequence of the partial completion of his two-part project, though its terms and ambitions are dimly realized as yet. But the very fluidity of the letter and its circumstances reminds us of what has been achieved, if still to a degree notionally and incompletely, in terms of the destruction and recovery of the signifier. Following Cranly's “beheading” (or the attempted removal by Stephen of “another head than his”), Stephen felt his “own consciousness of language was ebbing from his brain and trickling into the very words themselves” to set up shop as it were in bare material. Now, though, that material – the “liquid letters of speech” – has “flowed forth over his brain;” that is, *back into* his (this time quite embodied) “consciousness.” Having ebbed, language has flowed; and only in this double motion does its work approach completion. Its journey has taken it into unconsciousness and back into the

relative self-possession already beginning to be found “in here,” inside the subject’s head.

Still, in terms of the ultimate *telos* the situations and examples here remain only an approach. We have been twice introduced to letters, in solid and in liquid form. We might even say that insofar as the villanelle is a lyric and the lyric, according to Stephen, “is in fact the simplest verbal vesture of an instant of emotion, a rhythmical cry such as ages ago cheered on the man who pulled at the oar” [P 232] (compare “the savage rhythms of men pulling at the oar” in *Hero’s* account of linguistic origin), Stephen has once more used letters “to construct cries for primitive emotions” [SH 32]. But he has not solved the problem of *simultaneity* posed by “*Ivory, avorio, ivoire, ebur.*” He has not written the Wake.

“He who utters” the lyric, says Stephen, “is more conscious of the instant of emotion than of himself as feeling emotion” [P 232]. This does not seem in the event to be entirely true. As we’ve seen, some emotional self-recognition seems to be one of the conditions of the completion of the villanelle. On the other hand, there remains something of an air of finesse, of a game perhaps too finely played and anxious to elide certain connections.

Some of this is subtle, and may perhaps seem niggling. But when the final paragraph announces that “A glow of desire kindled again his soul and fired and fulfilled all his body,” this language that would join the first and last moments of the piece with the word “again” in one sense moves too rapidly. Now, certainly, looking back, we can see that the original motivation of the poem – indeed the very instant of the cloud-obscured “wet dream” from which Stephen awoke, was desire indeed. But only our unpacking of intervening material has made this obvious. Nothing in the original opening itself would seem to justify the word “again.” Despite the other word-for-word repetitions that join the first and last paragraphs of the scene, the word

“desire” itself is *conspicuously absent from the first instance*. Indeed, matters are quite the reverse. As “the spirit filled him” it remained “pure as the purest water ... how faintly it was inbreathed, how passionlessly” [P 235]. This “passionless” quality is of course in perfect consonance with the epiphany Stephen *thinks* he wants in his conversations with Lynch; but it bears no resemblance to the consummation of his art as described here. And in this connection we might note another and complementary absence. Again, despite the legion repetitions and the clear evocation in the final lines of the watery embrace of and by some woman, the actual word “womb,” though present in the first, is absent from the last paragraph.

Of course one doesn’t want to task an author with demands for heavy-handed, connect-the-dots explicitness. Often enough one wants the reverse: nuance, suggestion and restraint. Nevertheless the question lingers here of whether Stephen – or even Joyce – knows precisely what he’s feeling. After all of the explication we might be inclined to say *we* know; but then we should ask ourselves if even we suspected the full import of the passage before we trained the lenses of a “too-paned whittlewit” on it.

In fairness it must also be said that questions on this score arise in part because of the contrast between this passage and corresponding moments in the *Wake*, where a variety of obviously deliberate distortions of ordinary language-practice make the author’s explicit recognition of the implications of an analogous scene inescapable. But while we’re on the subject of finesse we might note another moment whose appearance our previous readings and indeed our reading here would lead us to expect, but which never quite comes: the death of the “Father.”

In all of the previous and analogous encounters with the reduction of the word to its material condition this event has been imagined one way or the other: as the death of the Pope, as the death of Parnell or Stephen’s grandfather, as the death of Cranly.

There are however at least two signal differences in the presentation of the relationship with Father Moran. The “Father” is still, and more explicitly than in any of the previous scenes, a figure of identification, from whom Stephen has a palpable difficulty in distinguishing himself. This time though, he is *explicitly* a sexual rival.

And the moment the “Father” achieves this status most explicitly is the moment in which *his death never comes*. Instead, he mysteriously fades away as Stephen – mysteriously too, though to the degree that his own desire is more clearly recognized as less another’s than his own felicitously – usurps his place. If there is a death, it is as veiled in the cloudy circumstance of what might have happened as was the original congress with a maternal figure less Virgin than she might be.

In a sense this is the opposite of what we should expect. If the oedipal situation bound up with Joyce’s recasting of the materials of his art at a fundamental level has to this point in his fiction never been presented so explicitly as here, then we might imagine that the death of the paternal rival should be more rather than less in evidence.

In another sense, though – and precisely by the terms of psychoanalysis – this is *exactly* what we should expect. For that we *desire* the death of the father at all is *precisely what is supposed to remain unconscious*. And when we remember this, another aspect of the variously staged encounters with the destruction and incipient reworking of linguistic material is suddenly thrown into relief.

The *only instance* in which the destruction of the signified and the subsequent engagement with the material constitution of the signifier is undertaken as the deliberate act of a fully-self present consciousness or agency is the *only instance* in which the woman is nowhere to be found. On the one hand, it’s extremely striking that the very first thing accomplished by the earliest example that we have of Joyce’s fiction is the presentation of the two-fold strategy that will wait until the Wake for its deployment. On the other hand we’re beginning to understand one reason for the wait.

In every other instance we've examined the destruction of the signified is accompanied, as it is in the first instance, by imagery suggestive of paternal death. But in each of these succeeding instances the scenario also introduces, with various degrees of obliquity, the theme of sexual rivalry. At the same time, we notice that in these instances the destruction of the signified is not something Stephen does; *it is something done to him*. What is present is the question of the woman. And when she is present what is absent, without fail, is consciousness and deliberation: agency.

We might qualify this slightly. In the last instance of the early fiction – the instance of the villanelle – we might say that some agency begins to emerge on the positive side of the program. It's not quite what we see in *Hero* when Stephen deliberately engages letters as the units of composition; but we do see Stephen writing and letters do, at the end of the passage, "flow forth over his brain." These dim anticipations of a finally conscious strategy may be allied, as we've suggested, to the fact that Stephen *has* become conscious of his own desire for Emma. Never, though, is there the suggestion that these flowing letters are anything but metaphors for ordinary language, in this case coming forth once more of its own accord. And as though through some principle of the conservation of oblivion, the conscious assumption of desire is paid for with the finessing of the relatively explicit death of the "Father" that accompanies the other scenes.

So the qualification is slight indeed. The overall situation obtains as described above. When the element of sexual rivalry with the "Father" is present, it's as though Stephen refuses to take the rap for the murder. The murder happens anyway, and the relentless confusions between himself and the victimized "Fathers" suggest that at some level Stephen is the one committing it. But in a motivated self-oblivion subject and object, action and passion change places. Likewise, Stephen never takes conscious possession of the *material* which the murder suddenly renders available,

which material seems to change quickly enough from the suddenly inane word to the letter and thus as it were from corpse of the Father to the living body of a woman capable of enfolding the artist “like water with a liquid life.”

This is the phenomenology, and on this level we must to some extent remain. Anything else, strictly speaking, is speculation. But if only as a sort of a conceptual prop to help in the navigation of what’s to come, we might note that the situation seems to leave itself open to the following interpretation, or something like it. The insertion of the woman and sexuality into the entire scenario begins to invest it with the suggestion of oedipality and especially, of course, to the degree that this sexualized woman promises a union with the mother’s body. This emergent condition itself exposes or recasts the animus toward the father in an oedipal light and suggests (to Stephen?) one deep and particular root for the animus toward the “Father,” an animus which has become imbricated with and may even be foundational in the more ostensible grievances with respect to language. At this point, for whatever reasons – guilt, fear, love – what we recognize as the standard oedipal repressions kick in. All aspects of the scene simply cannot be realized at once: hence the necessary disruptions of self-possession and the conscious agency associated with it.

Of course when we explore the oedipal metaphor in terms of meditations more recent than Freud's, we're reminded of the other impossibility that frames Stephen's dilemma. In one sense, all he has to do to go forward is to know what he wants. But it increasingly appears that what this subject really wants is to return to the place where the subject *cannot* “exist,” that is to say, “stand out” in any contradistinction from the very object that should, in paradoxical turn, itself submit to the Archimedean inspections and manipulations of agency. Absurdly, Stephen's encounter with the very letter he would manipulate seems to situate him in the womb, in the imagination of a primordial fusion that is not just the beginning but by definition the end of him.

This isn't just the view of psychoanalysis. Vico himself derives the human subject – and most precisely human agency – from the paternal proscription which rechannels desire from the promiscuity that ends in the maternal incest that reign before the advent of the thunder. Recall that ...

... between the [newly effected] powerful restraints of frightful superstition and the goading stimuli of bestial lust ... [primitive men] had to hold in [check] the impetus of the bodily motion of lust. Thus they began to use human liberty, which consists in holding in check the motions of concupiscence and giving them another direction; for since this liberty does not come from the body, whence comes the concupiscence, it must come from the mind and is therefore properly human. [NS 1098]

Likewise that ...

... [t]his control ... is certainly an effect of the freedom of human choice, and thus of free will, which is the home and seat of all the virtues [NS 340]

Freud (and his successors) and Vico alike reveal the peril of Stephen's hubris and desire. In reaching back before the time of the Father Stephen would undo the very agency he needs to "put his lines together." Knowing what you want is all very well; but *getting* what you want may undo your power to know – or do – at all. And again, whether we dismiss Vico as old-fashioned or theory as new-fangled makes at last no difference: Joyce's texts themselves show Stephen swooning when what Vico and

theory alike construe as the foundation of subjectivity fails.

The question then becomes whether what Stephen wants is not merely *verboten* but by its very nature impossible. The answer seems to be that it *is* possible, at least if handled right: the Wake, after all, exists. It's appropriate, thus, that the culminating moment of the Wake itself deliberately stages the conditions of this possibility precisely where self-recognition should be impossible. And this staging – unsurprisingly, given Joyce's deliberate imbrication of the "Wolf Man" with the thunder and the Letter it engenders in III.4 – will involve the conscious and deliberate wedding of the Vichian with the Freudian situations.

We've already seen that the death sentence of "Father Butt" in II.3 – imposed not just for defecation but for the "mortal scene" of legally sanctioned intercourse that forms II.3's first "climax" and thundered Name of the Father – is also the destruction of his Word. We've also seen, however, that insofar as Butt and the Father he dispatches are at last one and the same, the execution is a suicide. This in itself is extremely important, for it gives some evidence of the Wake's *extremely* explicit recognition – a recognition made to extend backward over the situations of the previous texts – that the two parts of the mind, the part that deliberately destroys the word and the part that suffers or enjoys that destruction, are one. Now, though, we'll see how the rest of the puzzle pieces fit, coming together through motifs old and new in a scene of explicit possession and self-possession to effect the final revolution of the word. This crucial nexus of motifs and themes – also Joyce's answer to Vico's sexualized scene of the origin of language – forms, as we've long suggested, the center that complements II.3's epicenter, and takes place in chapter II.2.

Chapter VII

The teatimestained terminal (say not the tag, mummer, or our show's a failure!) is a cosy little brown study all to oneself and, whether it be thumbprint, mademark or just a poor trait of the artless, its importance in establishing the identities in the writer complexus (for if the hand was one, the minds, of active and agitated were more than so) will be best appreciated by never forgetting that both before and after the battle of the Boyne it was a habit not to sign letters always. Tip [114.29].

This passage from I.5 – the “Letter” chapter that details the characteristics and enigmas proper to the document unearthed by the Hen and often taken as a type of the Wake itself – describes the “tea stain” with which the Letter closes. The stain, as the passage makes clear, is a signature, something involved in establishing the identity or strangely doubled “identities” of the “writer complexus,” composed of active and passive, “active and agitated” parts. Having investigated the strange divisions of the self in the earlier fictions – having in fact learned that this divided self writes its incipient revolution of the word sometimes, as in the beginning of *Hero*, as deliberate action and sometimes, as in *Portrait's* syncopes, as suffered passion – we aren't surprised to learn the signature is yet another portrait of the artist.

But here, of course, the signature is also a “poor trait of the artless.” After all, it's a stain, as much accident as afterthought. This putative negligibility makes it the more remarkable that this signature tea-stain is the motif – appropriately the “teatimestained terminal” – with which Clive Hart chooses to close *Structure and Motif in Finnegans*

Wake.

Though there's a slight preponderance of the former, Hart does indeed discuss both structure *and* motif in *Finnegans Wake*. We've mined him chiefly for his architectonic insights; but in the last third of the book he turns to content, and ends his work with a chapter titled "Two Major Motifs." The first involves Joyce's permutations of a sentence on Vico from Quinet which likens cyclical history to the perpetual return of flora to former battlefields. It need not detain us. The second motif is simply the motif of the Letter, long recognized as among the *Wake*'s most signal. And Hart's discussion concludes with "the tea-stain on the Letter – the 'tache of tch' (111.20) [SMFW 208].

Indeed, the Letter chapter itself says that this "tache of tch" is in fact "[t]he stain, and that a teastain (... signing the page away)" [111.20]. That it's a stain is already signaled by French *tache*; but Joyce wishes to conflate *tache* with *tea* in "tch," which McHugh glosses simply "tea." McHugh's recognition here depends not simply on context but on the *Wake*'s habit of representing tea through its Chinese or Indian names, commonly transliterated *tcha*, *cha*, *chai*, etc. Thus Margaret Solomon likewise notes that "the Cantonese word for tea ('ch'a') is united with the 'T' in 'tch'" [Solomon 77].

For Hart, the tea-stain is a stain in another sense. It's very nearly a stain on the Joycean writing *per se* and one which, since it can't be rubbed out, must be excused. For as Hart explains at length in his concluding discussion, tea is part of one of the *Wake*'s sustained scatological – in this case urological – motifs. Hart traces this motif to the confluences of tea and urine that characterize Boylan's discussion of "Mother Grogan" and her pot in *Telemachos*, and notes that Shaun makes "an unusual act of

communion with his sister, who plays the part of the [Blessed Virgin Mary]" in III.2, this act being essentially "an act of communion with the mystically transubstantiated urine of the goddess, Anna." In general, "[t]he goddess and her pot form an important image-group which returns in a number of witty mutations." The concluding paragraph of Hart's work in part deplores the strategy but defends its imbrication in "mythological contexts" [all references SMFW 207].

As Hart remarks in a discussion of the motif a few pages earlier:

There can be no denying that Joyce found everything associated with evacuation unusually pleasurable But ... [a] curious and unaccustomed beauty radiates from the imagery contained in descriptions of the genital and anal regions of the primal Mother and Father figures Perhaps the most unpleasant piece of coprophilic imagery in *Finnegans Wake* is the conclusion to Kate's monologue on pages 141-2 ["*Shite!* Will you have a plateful? Tak! (142.05)], but even this is saved from becoming altogether repellent ... [SMFW 202-3].

All of these aspects of the "tache of tch" will eventually concern us. But for the moment, recalling our own structural agenda, the thing that might particularly interest us about a "teatimestained terminal" is to determine precisely where or when in Wakean time this terminal is. The passage suggests that one thing we might hope to find in such a signature effect or event would be some resolution of the "identities" proper to the "active and agitated" aspects of the "writer complexus" we've lately

been diagnosing, as well, of course, as another thing we've been looking for: something precisely *terminal*, some punchline to the whole affair. And this too I.5's passage promises us: "say not the tag, mummer, or our show's a failure."

Tag is of course German "day," so the "mummer" (in some versions of his or perhaps in this case her profession enjoined to silence in any case) is presumably cautioned not to indicate the day or the hour – the time – of the terminus in question. But as McHugh reminds, "It is considered unlucky for an actor to say the tag (last speech) at rehearsal" [*Annotations*].

We have thus the sense of some impending final speech or word, but also, clearly enough, the sense that the present moment is not the time for its articulation, for the present moment is but a rehearsal. And though it might be too much to say that without the proper timing of the punchline the whole "show's a failure," it is indeed crucial to the effect Joyce wishes to produce that this final speech or word not be given until the entirety of the Wake has been absorbed.

Hence our own exegetical strategy which, if it has done a disservice to the reader and possibly the writer, has tried to serve the material. Of course a thorough absorption of the Wake would in principle defer the revelation indefinitely; but we have tried to give a sense of the major motifs which in their various ways raise questions and expectations designed to be resolved in the punctiform ecstasy of a central epiphany. The time of that epiphany is precisely what I.5's passage says it is: tea-time. Our first task thus is to determine when tea-time is, and that – as first revealed when we follow for a final time our strategy of attention to first and last things – is clearly II.2.

II.2's clearest gesture toward tea-time comes on the chapter's very last page, one we've already treated somewhat in our own first chapter. Right away Hart's suggestion that the motif in some way involves the ingestion of the mother receives support. "Gobble Anne: tea's set," informs 308.01." But that this is specifically *tea-time* is suggested by the play with time that immediately ensues in the last line of the chapter's text-proper: "Mox soonly will be in a split second per the chancellory of his exticker" [308.02]. By now we might suspect that "chancellory of his exticker" anticipates the death of the market-place Father detailed in the immediately ensuing chapter; and though prophecy will prove a complex thing in II.2, this is substantially correct. For the moment though we note that if "exticker" stops HCE's heart, it also stops his watch, as "split second" likewise suggests.

Given the hint of some concern with temporality in the context McHugh thus aptly glosses the ten vertical monosyllables which immediately ensue on page 308 as the "chimes of 10:00 p.m." [*Annotations*]. The marginalium that glosses this decade however reminds us once more of what the time *means*: "MAWMAW, LUK, YOUR BEEFTAY'S FIZZIN OVER!" The final chime sounds – "Geg" – and the text informs us that "Their feed begins" [308.15]. Campbell and Robinson thus plausibly remark that "'Geg' indeed actually suggests the eggs to be served." "Geg" also receives the chapter's final footnote: "And gags for skool and crossbuns and whopes he'll enjoymimsolff over our drawings on the line!" [308.F2]. "Gags" of course suggests eggs again, this time served with crossbuns, though in addition – and perhaps as we'll see due to some of the associations which caused Hart concern – it suggests a rather equivocal reception of the meal. But further, and as we've had occasion to observe before, "gags" refers to one of the "drawings over the line" to the immediate

left: of the letter X [*Annotations*] or “Ten” which labels the chapter (II.2 is the tenth) while echoing the time. As I.5 -- the Letter chapter -- informs us, “X” is the *other version of the signature to the Letter*: the kiss with which it closes. The close of II.2 thus evokes the “teatimestained terminal” at least twice.

The gestures toward tea – especially, perhaps, the insistent capital letters of the left marginalium – are sufficiently obvious that criticism has never been in doubt that this is where tea is being served, though no connection to the freighted “teatimestained terminal” – or observation that this is specifically *tea-time* – has been made, perhaps because criticism reasonably expects something terminal to be at the *end* of a book.

The problem of course is that *Finnegans Wake* doesn’t end. A text as famously circular as this one suggests that one kind of “end” – even a climax – will be found elsewhere; perhaps, plausibly, associated with some sort of central hub or axis about which the cyclical text might be said to revolve. This suggestion of course gains considerable strength from the *Wake*'s variously converging architectonics. Our understanding of these has already paid dividends in a reading of II.3. But ever since our recognition that the dialogues, after converging in II.3, demonstrably converge even more decisively in II.2, we have anticipated that the thunder-scheme too will evince some more central expression in this chapter; and that, as we will see, it clearly does.

Insofar however as the thunders, being the markers of Vico's history, are structural features of the *Wake*'s "temporal" text, we're reminded that a search for the thunder's quintessential instance is the search for one or another margin of time. This returns us to the question of some "teatimestained terminal." And II.2 itself thinks enough of the importance of its own time – which as we'll see is precisely the time of the split-

second – as the time of tea that it makes sure that the chapter’s first words as well as its last signal the motif.

II.2’s first words, comprising its first paragraph, are:

As we there are where are we are we there from tomtittot to
teetootomtotalitarian. Tea tea too oo [260.01].

In a whirl of confusion a disoriented narrator/asks where we are and receives an answer, twice. We’re at tea.

The opening lines also suggest that we have been funneled from someplace else to here, our heads still spinning as we try to get our bearings. In a sense we’ve been orbiting in a labyrinth, the circumference of our peregrinations shrinking, our centripetal momentum reaching its zenith as we debouch, dizzy and uncertain, into some central zone, still asking “are we there” yet. The circling repetitions of “we there are where are we are there” give way to the “teetootomtotalitarian,” in part, as the *Annotations*, note, a “teetotum” or “4-sided disk spun in [a] game of chance.”

McHugh’s study of Joyce’s sigla suggests to him that “the spinning teetotum” is “itself a figure of [*Finnegans Wake*]” [*Sigla* 97]. This spinning, four-sided figure does seem an apt epitome of the cyclical *Wake* with its four Books mirroring the four ages of Vichian time. The same notion seems to inform Joyce’s jubilant confession to Harriet Shaw Weaver: “I am making an engine with only one wheel ... The wheel is a perfect square ... it’s a wheel, I tell the world. *And it’s all square*” [*Letters* 251]. As a matter of fact Hart himself, despite his assertions of II.3’s centrality, finds this situation epitomized by II.2’s central diagram.

[Joyce] conceived of the form of the book as a square and a circle in mystical combination – showing the characteristics now of one shape, now of the other as the kaleidoscopic effects changed. There is a lot of talk in *Finnegans Wake* of ‘squaring the circle’ and, conversely, of ‘circling the square.’ ... A little strabismus, to which the reader of *Finnegans Wake* continually finds himself subject, makes all these square equivalent to the central rhombus of the diagram (2930 ... [SMFW 143]).

The common critical notion here tallies with what we’re coming to expect. That is, a chapter deliberately constructed as structurally central adverts right away to the structural situation of the entire text, situating itself as a sort of central epitome roughly as does “epicentral” II.3 when it situates itself on the arc of HCE’s career at the “height of a man’s life” from a “bride’s eye stamppunct.” Here, though, the point of view would not be from any of the four sides but from some zone central to and vertically extended above and perhaps beneath the horizontal rondelay, precisely as would be the axis around which the teetotum spins. And indeed, we find that we are at some axis special with respect to the historical thunder-scheme. We’re at “Old Vico Roundpoint” [260.14].

What we want to know however is what this centrality *means*. That is, we want to know what we’re going to *find* at this center. We already know what we’ve found at the “epicenter” of II.3: precisely what a great deal of *Finnegans Wake* itself – along with, we know now, a great deal of Joyce’s preceding fiction would lead us to expect

at a crucial zone – the Word or Name, which has been uttered as the ultimate expression of the thundered Name of the Father and then – for reasons which our examinations of previous texts render increasingly clear – destroyed in the “*abnihilisation of the etym.*”

By a certain kind of common sense II.3 should thus be both the culmination and the termination of the motif. What more could we expect, after all, from a Name once it has been destroyed? But II.2’s opening sentence anticipates the chapter’s central concern as clearly as did II.3’s opening sentence with its reference the Name of Father Butt. For the structurally suggestive teetotum is not the only suggestion with which II.2’s first sentence ends. The whirling questions as to place debouch first on to “tomtittot.” And “Tom Tit Tot,” as McHugh [*Annotations* 260] reminds us, is a “folk tale in which [a] demon’s safety depends on [the] secrecy of his name.” And this is why we’re here. To learn the secret Name of *Finnegans Wake*.

Obviously enough, this Name would have to do -- as our arrival at the central axis of some "Old Vico Roundpoint" would remind us (though by now the reminder is surely needless) with Vico's "Pa!". But despite its obvious filiations with this prototype, II.2’s name remains thus far the best kept secret in *Finnegans Wake*. Its secrecy, part of the chapter’s “exquisite concinnity” and “mystery,” is in part deliberate, but not out of mere coyness. As surely as we wish Rapunzel to guess Rumpelstilskin’s name, Joyce wishes us to get his punchline. But the “tag” requires precisely an apprehension not just of nearly all the Wake but of much of Joyce’s previous work. So in this central chapter of epiphany, commonly called, following Joyce’s own designations, “Nightlessons” or “Night-studies,” Joyce wishes to make sure that we, like the twins, have done our homework; for only then will the joke pay

off. And just as “Tom Tit Tot” suggests (and just as was the case with the risible cognomen “Butt”) the punchline of the joke -- its “tag” -- will be the Name.

Now the fact that the name has been destroyed in II.3 would not, in the course of an ordinary reading, necessarily concern a reader sedulous to detect it in II.2. II.2, after all, comes *before* II.3. The Name, presumably, would thus still be intact. But as it happens the opening of II.2 also suggests that the relation of sequence is in some way out of alignment. Perhaps this has something to do with the strange, vortical effect of a whirling and convergent time whose effects we detected first in II.3 and which seems still to be in operation here. For though the “height” of HCE’s life – his marriage – and the nadir of his career as his fall or death – which also of course constitutes the “abnihilation of the etym” or destruction of the Name – both occur in II.3, the opening of II.2 unquestionably suggests that *both of these events have already happened*.

At one level this should simply not be the case. True, time in the Wake runs backwards as well as forwards. But as we’ve already seen, these vectors collide in II.3 with the General’s death and “*noon minutes none seconds*.” In II.2, time should still be going forward. Nevertheless: II.2 is unique among the Wake’s chapters in situating itself as *prior to the chapter that ensues*.

* * *

II.2: The Split Second

As II.2 proceeds, it becomes clearer that the reason for the strange asynchrony noted above is that time itself has now gone off in an entirely new direction. Having

gone forward in Book I and Backward in Book III to meet in Book II, time, its bifid vectors having met and mingled in II.3, will funnel with the action precisely *up*. On an ordinary time line, time has disappeared in “*noon minutes none seconds*.” But in the break of II.2’s splitting of the second that seconds II.3’s splitting of the “etym,” we find that time’s disappearance from the *horizontal* is its departure into the *vertical*; into what ordinary time finds to be outside itself, the extratemporal or, philosophically, theologically and etymologically, precisely *eternity*. This too will become clearer as the chapter proceeds, though we get glimpses of it right away. First, though, we must understand that II.2 does indeed announce itself as paradoxically succeeding II.3.

We’ve already treated II.2’s brief opening paragraph. The second is of similar length, and concludes with the confession: “Am shot, says the bigguard” [260.06]. Is this big guard, this large figure –possibly faintly military, possibly of the law – at all related to the “bum boss,” II.3’s Russian General? It seems so. At least he seems to be the father. For the adjacent marginalium glosses him “*With his broad and hairy face, to Ireland a disgrace;*” and as McHugh notes *Portrait* opens with the recollection that “His father ... had a hairy face.” But even without these hints it becomes clear as we read on that this is indeed HCE, and in fact the HCE who is the protagonist of the *ensuing* chapter.

Since “Am shot” has already suggested the murder, we’re less surprised when we learn that the mountainous structural climax of II.3’s marriage is *also* part of II.2’s past: “The marriage of Montan wetting his moll we know” [260.16]. But the most obvious indication that the action of II.3 has in fact already transpired is the place to which we are now led.

In a sense, we’re brought to the place where HCE *lives*. We’re led there by the

same waters that have funneled to this central chapter, waters which circulate like ocean currents driven by the wind and which at the book's perimeters bring us from ALP's deliquescence into the sea on 628 to the "bend of bay" on the Wake's first page. But the cyclical return that marks the bounds of the text apparently also converges on this central and original locus as we hear

the whirr of the whins humming us howe. His hume. Hencetaking
tides we haply return . . . to befind ourself when old is said in one and
maker mates with made (O my!) . . . before a mosoleum. Length
Withought Breath, of **him**, a **chump** of the evums . . . [261.04]

Once more there's the sense of a comprehensive, summary gesture which, taking account of the entirety of our progress, announces the same circular closure which we have learned to associate with the "riverrun" moment of the first page. Indeed, "old is said in one:" all is said and done. When we read the Wake the way it wishes to be read – with its lines of time converging centrally – one of the "last" things to be said and done is indeed the marriage in which "maker mates with made." In II.3 this of course proved immediately tangent on the death of the protagonist. And thus it is that II.2, bearing this peculiar but consistent narrative sequence in mind, is concerned above all in its opening pages to bring us to the place of this already-dead father. Thus we do not arrive at his home but "[h]is hume," the soil in which he's buried. We're "before a mosoleum" where HCE is stretched out "Length Without Breath," signing himself "**him**, a **chump** of the **evums**."

If HCE lives he lives in death; for his "hume" is a "mosoleum." The death of its

principal does not at first seem to be a particularly promising development the beginning of a chapter. But of course this is Finnegans's *wake*. The dead HCE has only begun to live, "entirely as he continues highly fictional, tumulous under his chthonic exterior ... in his antiscipiences as in his recognisances" [261.17].

The Irish have a saying, or rather a question: "Who's he when he's at home?" Sometimes this simply asks after identity in an ordinary sense. But originally it asked of the essence of the man, who he is to his wife or to Chesterfield's valet. As we'll see, the essence of HCE will be revealed in this chapter; that is, in his death. We'll learn who he is when he's at "hume." Having read the story of his life we'll learn the story of his *afterlife*. And that -- as the ballad from which Joyce's book of the dark derives its title suggests -- is where the action of *Finnegans Wake* really is.

Although II.2 is, precisely as Joyce himself said, "a schoolboy's (and schoolgirl's) old classbook" [*Annotations* 260] in which the children, in the nursery upstairs, complete their "nightlessons" or homework, it is also an investigation into HCE's posthumous career. He is apotheosized as "Ainsoph, this upright one, with that noughty besighed him zeroine" [261.23]. As McHugh notes he has thus acquired "the Kabbalistic name of the unmanifest Deity, from which were produced 10 emanations." As first pointed out by Campbell and Robinson, these emanations correspond to the ten chimes sounded at chapter's end. As always with the time of HCE, however, there is some ambiguity.

Just as in I.2 (when the Cad first asks him the hour), the chapter will increasingly prove the ambiguity between ten and twelve. Already, although HCE is now an "upright one, with that noughty besighed him zeroine" and thus in his very (married) person a figure of ten, as a clock he is "Terror of the noonstruck" [261.26]. This

conflation is appropriate; for though the clock strikes ten as II.2 closes, in I.2 the clock which became HCE himself struck “twelve of em sidereal” 35.33] even as it remained a “ten ton tonuant thunderous tenor toller” [35.21]. Ten of course is the total number of the thunders, and thus signals a completion or summary of Vichian time. The perpetual insistence of twelve, however – as in II.3’s “*noon minutes none seconds*” will shortly reveal one of II.2’s most interesting complications of the entire text.

In any case HCE, now dead, is appropriately the “unmanifest Deity” and thus occasions the questions characteristic of a Kabbalistic negative theology. “Who is he? Whose is he? Why is he? Howmuch is he? Which is he? When is he? Where is he? How is he?” or, “to speak broken heaventalk, is he? [260.27-31]. In negative theology these questions must remain unanswered. In II.2 however our curiosity will be satisfied to some extent. And our curiosity is shared. Of Ainsoph himself it is said here that “To see in his horrorscup he is mehrkurios than saltz of sulphur” [261.24]. HCE's not just a curious sight, he’s curious to see *himself*. And so he shall, as the lines above have predicted, in “his antiscipiences as in his recognisances.” He will be in fact the subject of a certain self-recognition facilitated by the meeting of split or doubled selves in time, precisely as our readings of the earlier fictions have led us to anticipate.

Of course a fusion of this kind has already been effected by II.3’s fusion of father and son in its suicidal version of Father Butt. But II.2 doesn’t just feature the apotheosis and transfiguration of a dead HCE. Set as it is in the nursery it’s as it were the “upstairs” of the entire book, but *especially of II.3*, all of whose events undergo as it were their apotheosis and transfiguration here. The nursery is as it happens directly above the bar. Thus one of the indications that II.2 takes place in the sort of vertical

time proper to the eternal and thus the afterlife is that despite the death of HCE he *continues to tend bar below* even as the children do their homework. The roar of the pub “assoars us from the murk of the mythelated in the barrabelowther,” wafting up “to the clarience of the childlight in the studiorum upsturts” [266.09].

In fact the relation between the two “stories,” the upper and the lower, is precisely that which is traditionally imagined to obtain between this life and the next. Though II.2’s “studiorum upsturts” is, precisely as I.5’s description of the “teatimestained terminal” suggested, a “cosy little brown study all to oneself” [111.30], it is also the supernal to the bar’s mundane, the celestial to the terrestrial, the eternal to the temporal. But the relationship of this higher plane to the lower is precisely that between the world of ideas or archetypes and the world of matter in neo-Platonic philosophy. II.1, the chapter preceding, in introducing II.2 with a parody of the Egyptian Book of the Dead in its own closing lines, thus calls the homework-chapter the place where “thy children may read in the book of the opening of the mind to light ... in ... the afterthought of thy no matter” [258.21]. And in its own parody of Hermes Trismegistus II.2 says of itself that “The tasks above are as the flasks below, saith the emerald canticle of Hermes ... under one ... original sun. ... O felicitous culpability, sweet bad cess to you far an archetypt!” [263.21].

II.2’s version is the site of the (Neo)Platonic “original sun,” the world of the Platonic “archetypt” (and Timaeian architect). The children’s tasks are thus the archetypes of the “flasks” or bar-room scene in the “barrabelowther.” The twins will restage precisely the Father’s sins of II.3, particularly his marriage and the ensuing intercourse. The twins antics will however be in a sense the “Real” version of the shadow-play below. If the Wake is a “show,” as I.5’s advice to its “mummer”

suggested, then II.2 is, as the last footnote on its first page explains, “Real life behind the floodlights as shown by the best exponents of a royal divorce” [260.E3].

All of this, however, will involve – just as did the intercourse and defecation in II.3 – the old theme which as we’ve learned guides the entirety of the Wake. The Name, and precisely as uttered in the thunder.

* * *

Twelve Thunders

This is the condition which disrupts an understanding of the architectural situation of the thunders that would proceed from the notion that there are only ten of them. We’ve already conducted a census of the thunders, and assigned each to its location. In so doing we have dispelled some of the mystery that surrounds them. II.2, however, was *not* among the chapters that contained a thunderword. If it did, we imagine we would know it; for a thunder, after all, is one-hundred letters long.

Yet II.2 hints from its beginnings that our investigations of the afterlife will lead inexorably to yet another thunderword. This first begins to be clear when we follow the Kabbalistic questioners, investigating the nature of the dead and apotheosized HCE, actually *into* the latter’s “hume” or “mosoleum.” Strangely – but also, given the chapter’s theme of transcendence, appropriately – we must go *up* to get into it. And here, HCE’s “hume” is his “castle.”

And what the decans is there about him anyway, the decent man?

Easy, calm your haste! Approach to lead our passage!

This bridge is upper.

Cross.

Knock.

A password, thanks.

Yes, please.

O really

Hoo cavedin earthwight

At furscht kracht of thunder.

When shoo, his flutterby

Was netted and named.

Erdnacrusa, requiestress, wake em!

And let luck's puresplutterall lucy at ease! [261.31-262.17]

These curiosities obviously evince some of II.2's "exquisite concinnity;" not all of them reveals themselves right away. We may, however, as we enter, detect the recrudescence of the theme the "tomtittot" of the chapter's first sentence advised us to expect: the Name or word, here, as in "Tom Tit Tot" itself, a kind of "password." Once more, it's clearly associated with the original Vichian scene, with the primordial cyclops crouching in his cave "At furscht kracht of thunder."

"At furscht kracht of thunder." Indeed, as the text will go on to render even more clearly, II.2 will be the site of the Wakean thunder's very first crack. Note, though, that according to the citation above this will also be the moment "When shoo, his flutterby, Was netted and named." Some central Name will of course appear at the moment of the central thunder.

“Shoo” is puzzling, and no extant criticism helps us. The likeliest provenance is the god Shu from the oft-tapped Wakean source *The Book of the Dead*. Shu is the god of dry air; one common translation of his name is “He who rises up.” This at least is commensurate with the “up” theme of the our access to the “castle” and with the general transcendence of the chapter that will prove to be the first place Finnegans wakes. The adjacent “flutterby” suggests the psyche of the Greeks, like air or spirit an aspect of the self which ascends to the empyrean after death. HCE is dead, of course, and with him his “*etym.*” But it seems now that our quest is for his name in the afterlife; that is, for the same of his soul, spirit or psyche. As yet this is obscure but as the chapter wends on we’ll see that HCE’s recognition of himself – of his “antiscipiences and recognisances” in his “horrorscup” – will involve precisely the site of the Wake’s Name *par excellence*. Named thus, however, HCE’s spirit will reveal itself as in a curious sense not just the archetype but the *inverse* of his temporal identity.

And of course this Name will prove to be associated with the thunder, despite II.2’s ostensible lack of any thunderword. II.2’s thunder itself, however, will undergo a change or apotheosis commensurate with II.2’s status as “the book of opening of the mind to light” or the site of the “original sun.” It will cease, in other words, to be what it has been throughout the bulk of the book and what indeed it was in the original Vico: a phenomenon of sound and the ear. Instead, now the creature of the eye, the thunder will be transformed to its own visual analog: the lightning.

This transformation of the thunder into its own even *more* primordial occasion -- lightning or electricity -- explains the appearance of “Erdnacrusa,” apparently the “requiestress” who will “wake” HCE. Ardnacrusa, as McHugh notes, is a famous

hydroelectric plant in Limerick. It will prove particularly appropriate that this lightning is thus generated by the river. But for the moment we might simply note that somewhat as was the case with Frankenstein's monster, electricity will prove in part the agent for bringing the dead new life. Thus as we press on we learn that we are in search of the place "Where flash becomes word and silents selfloud" [267.16]. That is, the thunder will be lightning, a visible rather than an audible event.

Recall the twins' battle between ear and eye that characterizes Book III and culminates in the "velevision victor" [610.35] of the final dialogue, or the death of HCE through the instrumentality of television, whose electron guns become the guns that assassinate him, in II.3. Indeed, in the Wake, ultimately "television kills telephony" [52.18] and the audible thunder that echoed throughout the bulk of the text to away at last as the annihilated "*etym*" is *resurrected*, as it were in a glorified body of light(ning) on II.2's transcendent plane.

The motif of this peculiar thunder's visibility, electricity and silence however now becomes imbricated with another ambiguous tension: this time not so much between immanence and transcendence as between ten and twelve, though the two tensions will prove to be related. This of course is a tension we've learned to expect since I.2's presentation of the time. We've seen it return here to condition HCE's apotheosis as Ainsoph. Now, however, the tensions situates itself squarely in the situation of the thunders.

The association of ten with the thunders – established at least since "the ten ton tonuant thunderous tenor toller" in I.2, makes sense. There are after all ten thunders. But why does twelve so often seem to insinuate itself into the same nexus of reference? We might posit that as ten thunders complete the Wake's Vichian,

temporal cycles so twelve, as we've seen, completes a temporal cycle of another sort. But why then bother with a scheme involving ten thunders at all, when twelve seems more apposite (one thinks not just of hours but of months) as an index of temporal closure?

This has been a puzzle, though an implicit one. Now, though, II.2 begins one of its more curious assertions. If we pay attention to the very text that develops the theme of the electrical, visible, silent thunder, it begins to seem as though there have really been twelve thunders all along. We still don't know where they are; we have no direct evidence of them. But the text begins to insist that they are there.

This insistence emerges, as it happens, when we begin to examine the actual homework the children are doing. The twins, as we know, must prove Euclid's first proposition; it's the solution to this problem that will at last produce the chapter's famous diagram. But to warm up for this feat they must first tackle their algebra, and they're given the following exercise involving, we're told, "The family umbrogia" [284.04]:

A Tullagrove pole ... has a septain inclinasion and the graphplot for all the functions in Lower County Monachan ... may be involted into the zeroic couplet, palls pell inhis heventh glike noughty times [infinity sign], find ... how minney combinaisies and permutandies can be played on the international surd! pthwndxrclzp! hids cubid rute being extracted, taking anan illitterettes, ififif at a tom.... Imagine the twelve deaferended dumbbawls of the howl abovebeugled to be the contonuation through regeneration of the urutteration of the word in

pregross [284.05].

And the solution, we are told, will be

aqualavant to ... kaksitoista volts yksitoista volts kymmenen volts
yhdeksan volts kahdeksan volts seitseman volts kuusi volts viisi volts
nelja volts kome volts kaksi volts yksi! ... to the finish of helve's
fractures. ... For a surview over all the factionables see Iris in the
Evenine's World [285.16].

The solution is glossed by the marginalium "*Nom de nombres!*"

Now this particular solution does not yet in itself effect the explicit presentation of the "Name of Names," the "tomttitot" or "password" toward which the chapter and the entirety of the Wake have directed their currents. Its algebra is only the warm-up exercise; the centrepiece of the homework problem set will arrive shortly.

We do, however, discern among the tireless iterations of the electrical theme of "volts" (for visibility "see Iris" and her "surview") an equally relentless insistence of the number *twelve*. Or rather we discern it with McHugh's help. The grotesque exercise (in this instance neither particularly concise nor, perhaps, exquisite) names the numbers one through twelve in Finnish and then factorializes them (with the mathematical sign "!"). The number twelve in other words reaches its own sort of apotheosis in the multiplication of $12 \times 11 \times 10 \times 9 \dots$ etc. (479,001,600, if you want to know). Thus when we turn from the solution back to the problem we see the same number – twelve – there.

No wonder it's twelve factorial that gives the total of the "combinaisies and permutandies" – combinations and permutations – that "can be played on the international surd! pthwndxrclzp!" "Pthwndxrclzp!" is simply "thunderclap" with its vowels replaced by consonants and with an extra "P" added to bring the total number of letters up to twelve.

Talk about composing letter by letter. As we've seen, Joyce likes to micromanage his text. Indeed, "pthwndxrclzp!" is apparently "extracted" by taking "anan illitterettes, ififif at a tom." Though at this point the assertion seems nonsensical, this voiceless word claims to be constructed by taking "anan illitterettes" -- the letters of the mother's name -- one (?) at a time. We should note further, however, one by-now familiar index of the Joycean style evident in the letter-by-letter construction of this ab"surd"ity: the identity of its first and final terms, here no "terms" in the ordinary sense but, of course, letters. Given that the word obviously enough means "thunder," the cyclical structure here seems plausibly enough suggestive of the entirety of the Wake's temporal scheme.

But: when we count the letters -- which the text's adversion to "the twelve deaferended dumbawls abovebeugled" clearly asks us to do -- the resulting suggestion is that Wake contains *not* ten but *twelve* thunders in all. Note that Joyce has had to fudge the orthographic accounts to bring the eleven-lettered "thunderclap" up to what is apparently the requisite number. He's done this by doubling the terminal "p." We might suspect, thus that the thus far missing (more properly undetected) thunders will apparently be quite alike; we might say two "p"s in a pod. We can't expect them to be *utterly* identical; otherwise there really *would* be eleven instead of twelve. But they should evince some similarity.

And at least one of them should, like a teetotum, seem to contain or imply the entirety of a structural situation in itself, somewhat as does, evidently, the anticipation “pthwndxrclzp!” It should be what, as the text itself indicates, we can only “imagine” “pthwndxrclzp” itself to be: precisely “the contonuation through regeneration of the urutteration of the word in pregress.”

Note what is implied in this description: “the contonuation through regeneration of the urutteration of the word in pregress.” The “word” will be a thunder, since we’ve learned to trace the etymological fragment *ton-* and find it here again in “contonuation.” The word will effect apparently its own regeneration, of which the by now annihilated “etym” is obviously in sore need. It will be a *first* word, an “urutteration,” perhaps eve a beginning *before* the beginning, a sort of arch or archetypal beginning consituting the *ur*-utterance of the entire book. But perhaps most intriguingly, and consonant with its status as *ur* or germ: this “urutteration” will be of the “word in pregress.”

That is, this thunderword *will not be big*. It will *not* stand out like its ten brethren (or more likely, offspring), whose hundred-letter stentorian pomposities make them impossible to miss. It will be, like the stone of the philosophers, a *lapis via* or “stone of the streets;” humble and easily missed, but the key to an entire alchemy. We are looking for the word before it grew. We are looking for a seed: something, perhaps, like a “p.”

We have already seen something of the sort in III.4. Shem’s curiously written cry, we’ve learned, is a sort of thunder-in-germ which grows backwards in the night until it becomes the appropriated Letter Shaun struggles – unsuccessfully, given his exclusively vocal *penchant* (Shem by contrast produces as it were a pen chant) – to

reproduce the cry as “Peax! Peax!” As we’ve remarked, we should expect double “p”s to attend critical instances of the thunder, since it is precisely the sound represented by the letter that proves onomatopoeically inspirational of the original “Pa! Pa!” But despite some features that recommend it as at least one kind of “urutteration” – such as, notably, that it occurs in the “beginning” of the Wake’s “backward” time – Shem’s own cry in III.4’s does *not* seem to involve the requisite plosive or plosives. In any case II.2 itself has from its beginning tendered various hints -- substantially supported by our structural expectations that the centripetal thunder-scheme will shift its center from II.3 to II.2, as did the dialogues -- that the “urutteration” is to be found here. The algebra exercise, in the presentation of its “international surd,” has offered its candidate. But it proves to be merely proleptic. To find what we seek we will have to turn to the most conspicuous visual gesture in the Wake’s most visual chapter: the diagram, and the proof of which it’s part. And we’ll find that in setting the stage for the diagram’s solution the text renavigates familiar waters.

* * *

Agency

Immediately the algebraic exercise is over. The twins begin their proof of geometry’s own “urutteration,” Euclid’s first proof.

Problem ye ferst, construct ann aquilittoral dryankle Probe loom! ...

Concoct an equoangular trilitter. On the name of the tizzer and off the

tongs and off the mythametical tripods [286.17].

No sooner, thus, has the exercise begun than the nature of its solution is foretold: it will be “an equoangular trilitter” precisely “On the name.”

Euclid’s first proposition simply involves the construction of an equilateral triangle from two circles, the center of each placed on the tangent of the other. This doubleness reflects the twins who now, more conspicuously than was the case with the algebra exercise, bend their joint efforts toward the solution of this “Probe loom” which will also prove in so many senses “Problem ye ferst.” In fact we are now at the place in II.2 where it’s dialogue – sustained, recall, throughout the length of the chapter by the marginalia – begins to inhabit the text proper. We are at roughly the point, in other words, where in our own introductory chapter we originally departed from our examination of II.2 -- intriguing though the chapter promised to be -- to embark on our long tour of the Wake. This was effected in large part in order to assess the import of the “epicentral” convergence in II.3, without which, we asserted, II.2’s own central gestures would be ultimately intelligible.

The departure was in part necessitated, recall, by the fact that thus far no criticism – not even Hart’s – had made any substantial headway whatsoever with the notion of some convergence on a “cataclysmic conflict” in II.3 suggested by the disposition of the dialogues. There proved to be several reasons for this, aside from the obvious intractability of the work as a whole and particularly of its dense central sections. The puzzling dominance of the economic metaphor in II.3’s second and more crucial climax – which metaphor itself proved unintelligible without a careful retrospection of Joyce’s early fictions – was no doubt off-putting. Too, the fact that II.3 has not one

but two climaxes had gone undetected, chiefly due to extant criticism's most determinative failure: a failure to detect the way the thunder-words, only apparently higgled-piggledy, in fact mirrored the dialogues, with each scheme centering in II.3.

Or rather, as we've asserted, "epicentering" in II.3. We've already examined, again in our introductory chapter, the way II.3's large central dialogue clearly – and by the very evidence Hart used to make his case for II.3's centrality – cedes pride of place to II.2, itself in its entirety an enormous dialogue. Our plan, long in execution, has been to demonstrate the way in which the thunder-scheme likewise converges in II.3 only to then, like the dialogues, cede pride of place to some more "striking" central expression in II.2.

We've traced the death of HCE and his "etym" through the vortical currents that disappear from II.3 and debouch into II.2. Right away in II.2 thus we find the theme of the afterlife and the possibility of some Name proper to the post-mortem condition. We also find the implication of the closing and opening of the Vichian scheme at "Old Vico Roundpoint." The thunder, thus, has begun to make its present felt. But as it transmogrifies into a primarily visual register, it becomes increasingly associated with the spatial dialogic scheme which has always been the first thing to appeal to the eye. Now, that scheme itself has moved from the (highly visible) margins to the central text proper and, picking up the thunder (or more properly lightning) motif developed in the algebra exercise, is prepared to present the thunder's central "urutteration" in II.2's highly visual crescendo of its own dialogic scheme. This – more even than the "Nightletter" which constitutes the triple fusion of the twins and their sister in the joint utterance at chapter's end – will be bound up with the diagram and the solution to the "Problem ye ferst" that it represents.

In all of the dialogues, as we've seen, Shaun has tended to act as docent or instructor. But in keeping with II.2's sometime reversals of situations in the "barrabelowther," this time it is Shem who sees and Shaun who must be shown. Shem takes the name "Dolph." He is also the devilish "Nick" to his brother's "Mick" or "Mike" for the archangel Michael, or, as he was in III.4, "Sem," apparently due once more to infantile lispings. Shaun also appears, as he did in III.4, under the name "Kev" or "Kevin," for the saint.

Shem or Dolph, enjoying for once the superior position, does not fail to press his advantage.

Can yo nei do her, numb? Asks Dolph, suspecting the answer know.
Oikkont, ken you, ninny? Asks Kev, expecting the answer guess. Nor
was the noer long dissapointed for easiest of kisshams he was made
vicewise. Oc, tell it to oui, do, Sem! Well, 'tis oil thusly. First mull a
mugful of mud, son. ... Anny liffle mud which cometh out of Mam will
doob, I guess. ... Mux your pistany at a point of the coastmap to be
called *a* but pronounced olfa. There's the isle of Mun, ah! Now, whole
in applepine odrer ... [286.19-87.17]

When this emergent dialogue of the central text-proper picks up the themes of the chapter thus far, the first strand it adds to the braid of motifs is disturbingly familiar. Shaun is apparently to be made "wise" to some "vice" which has to do with the kissing of "hams." We already suspect a species of *osculum diabolum*, but even that construction does not grasp the full purport of the text at this point. Instead we are

moving into the tea-time proper – and strongly stained with vice it is – promised by the chapter’s first and last terms. It will be, however, precisely the kind of tea-time reluctantly discerned but justified by Hart in his final pages. As Kate enjoined us to “Tak!” a “plateful” of “*Shite!*” so Shem prepares a “mugful of mud” for his brother. And we begin to suspect, not merely that this is the sort of mud which might proceed from the hams to be kissed, but *whose* hams they are when Shem volunteers that “Anny liffle mud which cometh out of Mam will doob, I guess.”

Of course we may mitigate the construction with the innocuous sense of alluvial mud extracted from the Liffey. But the passage will simply not allow the river’s waters to remain pure. When Shem begins his geometrical proof by designating the first point “*a*” he immediately dubs it “the isle of Mun, ah!” The Isle of Man has been distorted into *mun*, Irish for “urine” [*Annotations*]. It begins to look, as the end of the chapter might put it, that “tea’s set.”

But at this point the text is interrupted by the six-page run-on “sentence” which we treated in our introductory chapter. This, as we’ve seen, has generally been taken as the fusion of the twins in the river which swells its banks; in other words as the twins being absorbed by the waters of their mother. But even this gesture, despite its strength, will prove yet another prolepsis of a still more powerful fusion to ensue.

We don’t have time to examine the “sentence” at length. But if we apply our accustomed method of first and last things we can distill and indeed recognize a great deal of its import. If this passage is a fusion, it doesn’t simply fuse the twins. It fuses the figures from the early fiction that we have come to recognize as versions of Father and son. Its first words are “for – husk, hisk, a spirit spires – Dolph, dean of idlers” [267.18].

The first thing we're likely to note here is the return of the theme of the dead. Like the *psyche* of Shu rising up "a spirit spires." As we'll see the "sentence" is in fact designed as prelude to the chapter's most conspicuous recursion to an examination of the fate of the spirit in the afterlife. But for the moment we note also that Dolph – Shem – has acquired a curious and ironic title: not Dean of Studies but "dean of idlers."

The first intent of the passage is to return us to Stephen's school-days. We immediately find, however, the student fused with the teacher. Now it is the artist or "penman" himself, Shem or Dolph, who

recurrently often ... coached rebellumtending mikes of his same and over his own age at Backlane Univarsity, among of which pupal souaves the pizdrool was pulled up, bred and battered [287.28].

Shem or Dolph has once more usurped pedagogical authority, and doesn't fail to rub it in. He teaches his pupils – among which he so recently numbered himself – to salute him with "(Gratings, Mr Dane!) and kiss on their bottes (Master!)" [288.19]. Of course we recognize this "Dane" or Dean who received the sycophantic compliance of his students. So does II.2. Indeed, once the geometry exercise is concluded Shaun will salute Shem as "me elementator joyclid, son of a Butt! [302.12]. But we begin to suspect another reason – beside the candles that kindled the fire (in its grate or "Gratings") of this fatuous Prometheus – for naming him "Butt." For Father Butt, too, at least in Stephen's eyes, was accustomed to receive a certain *diabolum osculum*. As "kisshams" has already suggested, the "kiss" will now be directed to other "bottes;"

here, of course, to the usurping Shem's.

But the usurper wastes no time, it seems, in wielding his new-found authority in the service of an old agenda. For notice the tuition this strange fusion of Father Butt and his erstwhile students offers. It's still of the market-place (if that trace were utterly effaced this would be no fusion), but notice the fate of the market-place word when Dolph obliges his students,

for a dillon a dollar, chanching letters for them vice o verse to bronze
mottes and blending tschemes for em in tropadores and doublecrossing
twofold thruths and devising tingling tailwords [288.01].

The same "verse" which allowed Stephen to "combine the offices of penitent and confessor" [SH 32] has returned here in this usurpation, this "vice of verse." And we recognize it not just because of its situation in the original conflict with Father Butt but in that Dolph is "devising" words or "mottes" exactly as did the artist of *Hero*, who "put the lines" of his verse "together not word by word but letter by letter" [SH 32]. Here, this becomes Dolph's "chanching letters for them vice o verse" to facilitate his schemes of "blending" themes in "tschmemes" which would allow the semantic saturations – or more properly implications – of "doublecrossing twofold truths."

This is the composition of a new kind of text: "in fine," as the text asserts a few lines on, "the whole damning letter" [288.12]. For though I.5 has long been recognized as the chapter where the Wake's famous Letter is unearthed, II.2, we will learn, is unquestionably the place where it is written – better, perhaps, constructed – in the first place.

When we turn to the end of the run-on “sentence” six pages later it becomes apparent that this strange amalgamation of Father and son is itself the spirit of the departed negotiating the afterlife in “the clarience of the childlight in the studiorum upsturts.” But the psyche of this *psyche* is now even more clearly identified as the matrix or alembic of the new language. As the last page of the “sentence” remarks,

An you could peep inside the cerebralized saucepan of this eer
illwinded goodfornobody, you would see in his house of thoughtsam
(was you, that is, decontaminated enough to look discarnate) ... a
jetsam litterage of convolvuli of times lost or strayed, of lands derelict
and of tongues laggin ... not only that but, search lighting, beached,
bashed and beaushelled *a la Mer* pharahead into faturity, your own
convolvulis pickninnig capman would real to jazztfancy the novo takin
place of what stale word whilom were woven with and fitted fairly
featly for ... [292.11].

The “heaps of dead language” [P 193] among which Stephen walked when “his soul shrivelled up” in *Portrait* are here transformed precisely as that passage attempted to transform “ivory,” braiding it with *avorio*, *ivoire* and the *ebur* of a dead tongue. By the time of *Portrait's* scene the artist's etymological head was already packed itself with “a jetsam litterage of ... times lost or strayed, lands derelict and tongues laggin” of the “literary tradition.” But in this “novo takin place” the “stale words” are “woven with” each other and “fitted fairly featly for” the “vice o verse” that Stephen so long ago resolved to put together letter by letter. Thus it's among the

“jetsam litterage” of his own “convolvuli” (*convolvulus* is “bindweed” but also “brain;” *Annotations*) that this “discarnate” “capman” finds the letters revealed only *when the Father of the ordinary word and thus that ordinary word itself is dead.*

It seems that insofar as the psyche that kills the priest and king “in here” necessarily discovers in that very location its own identity with the priest and the king, it is precisely *in the realm of death* and simultaneous with an amalgamation of “Father” and “son” that the confrontation with the “subtymic” character of the barely material signifier occurs. As we will see more clearly, and as we have suspected since the rapid transfer of power from Pope to an amalgamated figure of penitent and confessor coincident with the construction from letters of a “primitive cry,” it’s the very “subtymic character” of the word that facilitates its rebirth: its return from death to life in a glorified, polysemantic body.

Thus as the “sentence” concludes we learn that it is this figure of the dead but amalgamated self – this “swiftshut scareyss of our pupilteachertaut duplex” [292.24] who will tell us “symibellically” [292.25] that henceforward we will proceed “in half a sylb, helf a solb” – through fragments of words allied in their decomposition to the cry that ramifies through Joyce’s work – “onward” [292.25].

Nevertheless: the “sentence” concludes with a final admonition that despite all of power of this new word – a power potentially as great as the power of the factorialized “Pthwndxrclzp!” – “you must, how, in undivided reawlity draw the line somewhawre” [292.29]. We have come at last to where lines are actually drawn: the diagram.

We approach the Wake’s ultimate epiphany, its most conspicuous visual gesture, that which from the first has like a silent siren lured the eye; whether into enlightenment, specular captation or some amalgamation of the two we must now

decide. The text that introduces the diagram itself situates the exercise in the theme that has dominated our entire exegesis: the theme of the Name. But with *this* Name we realize that we have arrived at the culmination of the esthetic agenda which, though it has dominated affairs almost from the first words of Joyce's fiction, only comes to full fruition in his final work with the representation or construction of an agency of the requisite self-recognition and deliberation. The first words on the top of page 293 seem to recall an ancient identity with the dead Father, this time Parnell. They may also speak of cause. But if so the causation is proper to the new agency now enjoyed by this fissioned, doubled personality.

“Coss? Cossist? Your parn! You, you make what name? [293.01].

* * *

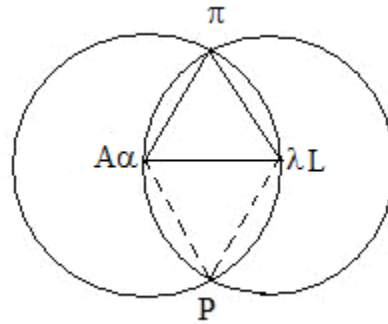
Tea Is Served

We have arrived at the place of the word as a deliberate construct. *It is not a given*; neither by the Vichian God nor Father Butt. This is a Name produced through the fiat of the artist's agency: this Name is *made*. But we've also notice that if progress toward this moment has been halting its partly because the moment seems to demand the integration of two halves of the self. That this synthesis remains the issue here is suggested not merely by the fusion of the twins in the “pupilteachertaut duplex” that prepares the scene, but by the language which immediately introduces and follows the suggestion of the making of the Name.

We note this first in the stuttered doubling of the “You” in “You, you make what name?” This is the same split and unifying subject which has been negotiating the

realm of death and transition into birth.

You, you make what name? (and in truth, as a poor soul is between shift and shift ere the death he has lived through becomes the life he is to die into, he or he had albut – he was rickets as to reasons but the balance of his minds was stables – lost himself or himself some somnion sciupiones, soswhitchoverswetch had he or he gazet ... in the lazily eye of his lapis,



Vieus ... ‘twas one of dozedreams a darkies ding in dewood)
[293.01-13]

And the diagram, or more properly its issue, will prove, as the words that bracket it inform, precisely the *lapis via*: the end of all our travels and the secret of eternal life.

The journey of this particular “poor soul” from life to death to life is presented with the relentless doubling of pronouns in which a potentially single but still divided subject strives to reach the “balance of his minds” or to become “stables.” Thus we begin to see some hint of self-recognition in the post-mortem progress of this suicidal soul. It’s the sort of self-reflection the apotheosized dead Father – HCE as Ainsoph –

wanted when he was “[t]o see in his horrorscup mehrkurios than saltz of sulphur” [262.24] in order to effect his “antisiences and his recognisances” [262.19] at the beginning of the chapter. And John Gordon, for one, detects that same reflecting subject here, in the diagram. The diagram on page 293 is for Gordon the moment when HCE “is seeing himself, a fact that seems to be acknowledged when one mirror-twin says to the other that both he and the diagram he has drawn are ‘Match of a matchness, like your Bigdud dadder’ (294.17)” [Gordon 191]. Gordon hasn’t effected a reading of II.2 – let alone the rest of Joyce’s fiction – of our sort. But his interpretation almost reads as though he had.

McHugh, however, detects in this moment the self-recognition of a subject who is, with respect to the text, necessarily even more august and apotheosized than Ainsoph: Joyce himself.

Like the detection of the philosopher’s stone, the detection of this effect depends on the words that abut the diagram. The way it’s situated on the page makes the diagram almost seem to be part of the sentence which “contains” it. Coming as it does directly after the words “the lazily eye of his lapis,” the highly visual diagram seems itself to be a kind of eye, a suggestion strengthened when on the same page Shem asks Shaun to “lens your dappled yeye here.” Indeed if the intersecting circles form an eye it must be one of double vision, the sort perhaps suitable for looking in a mirror where opposites are reconciled.

But McHugh glosses “lazily eye of his lapis” as *lapis lazuli* and then adds the parenthetical information that “[Joyce] had blue eyes.”

Of course lots of people have blue eyes. Certainly the figure, in the geometric reflection of its symmetry, evokes a mirror, and, in “he or he gazet,” someone *looking*

at the mirror. Whether that someone is really the author as well as the principal character and the reader is hard to say. What we *can* say is that when we see an eye in a mirror it's generally our own. So if the mirror is or contains – as the “eye of his lapis” that introduces its suggests – an eye, this figure of seeing seeing itself is perhaps the aptest figure of immediate self-consciousness that could be drawn.

Nowadays however such a figure is likely to draw an immediate response, even a rebuke. “Immediate self-consciousness!?! There's no such thing!” And fortunately for this sensibility it seems to be the case that however this figure may be of some august male self-presence at long last in some neo-Platonic study of self-apprehension, it must be said that this same male gazing at himself is actually – and not so much in addition as primarily – looking at someone *else*: namely, a *woman*. For this, as has been long known to criticism, is precisely what the diagram is a picture of; that's why it's labeled “A.L.P.” Obviously enough, this Anna Livia Plurabelle herself, “the mother of the book” [50.12].

Or, strictly speaking, and inevitably given the relentless doubling here, it's the mother of the book and her reflection. Indeed, when we first see the equilateral triangle that has been generated in the geometric proof and which is itself the Greek Delta which forms the “sigla” for ALP in Joyce's notes (and occasionally throughout the text), it is not, strictly, labeled A.L.P. but $\alpha.\lambda.\pi.$ And this is appropriate; for Euclid, of course, is a Greek, and in the original Euclid and in virtually every other text in which the proposition is to be found, the only triangle to be represented is the upper, though it is necessarily the case that the intersection of two circles of equal circumference each of whose centers is tangent on the circumference of the other generates not one but two equilateral triangles, an upper *and* a lower. And perhaps the

greatest trick and synthesis this chapter of the “upper” realm will effect is, as we’ll see, the sudden and not entirely welcome introduction of the lower into itself at a most crucial moment.

When we look at the diagram first we recognize “the mother of the book” only when we look at the upper triangle. For this is the way a capital Delta always appears, one vertex up. Nevertheless, Joyce – or Shem – has chosen to represent the other, lower triangle as well, in dotted lines that distinguish it from the upper. And to distinguish itself further from the exalted Greek of its archetype or original, the lower is demotically labeled in the humble Roman letters of everyday use: A.L.P.

A situation is thus set up in which two versions of the mother, two version of ALP, are presented side by side or more properly top by bottom, and ally themselves respectively and from our first apprehension with upper and with lower things. Given the theme, however, of fusion which we already know characterizes the chapter, we might suspect some eventual meeting or superposition of these two triangles, and we will not be disappointed.

This is one of the things about II.2 which is clear enough, and has been well-recognized by criticism at least since *A Skeleton Key*. The twins draw Euclid’s proof as a diagram of their mother’s body. The lower triangle seems to be her delta. Not just the delta of the river Liffy, though it certainly is that, but her pubic delta and finally her vagina. It’s also, however, apparently her dress or apron. 297.11 calls it her “maidsapron.” But it apparently becomes her “headdress” when the twins seems to actually pry the lower triangle out of the page and flip it up into coincidence with the upper. On the one hand this seems to expose the mother’s lower body to a horrified Shaun. Simultaneously, however, a variety of other effects are implied.

It will be Shem, as director of operations, who will effect this bit of engineering. He soon enough calls attention to the respective apices of the triangles, one upright, one inverted, and in describing their properties assigns the upper to his brother and the lower to himself. At this point the twins, in a surreal bit of play, have actually entered into the diagram itself and clamber about as it were on the scaffolding of its outlines. Shem issues observations and directions which are interspersed with Shaun's occasional replies.

Now, as will pressantly be felt, there's tew tricklesome pointds where our twain of doubling bicirculars, mating approxemetely in their suite poi and poi, dunloop into eath the ocher. ... The doubleviewed seeds. Nun, lemmas quatsch ... and I think as I'm suqeez in the limon ... for seminal rations I'd likelong ... to mack a capital Pee for Pride down there on the batom where Hoddum and Heave, our monsterbilker, balked his bawd of parodies. And let you go, Armienious, and mick your modest mock Pie out of Humbles up your end. Where your apexojesus will be a point of order [295.29-296.11].

The two vertices – the upper and the lower, the Greek and the Roman – become precisely what the pronunciations of the letters that label them would suggest: “Pie” and “Pee” respectively. We thus have the oral and anal – or more properly oral and urethral – zones of the mother's body. But in various ways this body seems invaded by another, and one of those ways is suggested by the designations and associations that accrue to the points, both singly and as a pair.

For Shem makes his “Pee” on the “batom” precisely “for seminal rations;” in fact at this point he’s being “sparematikally logoical” [296.26] (“spermatikoi logoi: the ‘seeds’ of individual things in Stoic philosophy;” [Annotations]). The “tew tricklesome poiinds” are the “doubleviewed seeds” which will be “mating approxemetely in their suite poi and poi.” These designations become less puzzling when we look back at the diagram on page 293 and read the marginalium that glosses it. For the diagram, apparently, is a picture of “*Uteralterance or the interplay of bones in the womb*” [293 L1].

Roland McHugh has devoted some valuable space to this idea in his book *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake*. We can’t reproduce the entirety of his exegesis, which weaves in much of interest and value from the Dublin theosophical scene of which Joyce was a peripheral member in his youth. But the critical recognition is that the way Joyce has reproduced the diagram turns it into the construction not just of an equilateral triangle but of the medieval *Vesica Piscis*, likewise derived from Euclid’s first proof.

Writing of the Wake’s diagram McHugh notes that:

The sexual interpretation of the figure has a precedent in the associations of the *Vesica Piscis*, or fish’s bladder, which is the central ovoid portion, where the circles overlap. In 1821 the Rev. Thomas Kerrich demonstrated the precise accomodation of the Vesica into numerous Gothic plans, windows and doorways as a standard measure. William Stirling [*The Canon*, pub. 1897] went on to probe its significance.

It is known both to freemasons and architects that the mystical figure called the Vesica Piscis, so popular in the middle ages, and generally placed as the first proposition of Euclid, was a symbol applied by the masons in planning their temples ... the Vesica was also regarded as a baneful object under the name of the 'Evil Eye', and the charm most generally employed to avert the dread effects of its fascination was the Phallus ... In the East the Vesica was used as a symbol of the womb ... To every Christian the Vesica is familiar from its constant use in early art, for not only was it an attribute of the Virgin and the feminine aspect of the Saviour as symbolized by the *wound* in his side, but it commonly surrounds the figure of Christ, as his Throne when seated in glory.¹

In the Wake, too, this womb seems to be a sort of an eye. We can't explore all of the implications of the citation above – for instance the way in which Finnegan becomes a mason or Master Builder of the reconstructed Temple, which indeed seems to have been one of the authorial intents – but some will prove pertinent to our immediate discussion, as we'll see.

But perhaps the most useful function of the marginalium that glosses the diagram is the amplification of the identity of the twins. As the *Annotations* point out, it refers in part to the “wrestless in the womb” [143.21] or Jacob and Esau. Hence a few lines

¹ p. 68 McHugh, Roland. *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake*.

London: Edward Arnold, 1976.

below the diagram we learn that we will be “heaving alljawbreakical expressions out of old Sare Isaac’s universal of specious arismystic unsaid, A is for Anna like L is for Liv” [293.16]. In case we miss the parents of the biblical twins, “Sare Isaac’s” takes the footnote “O, Laughing Sally ...”, which reminds us that “Sara laughed when God said she was to bear a child at age 90 (hence name Isaac means ‘he laughed’)” [Annotations].

The most useful thing about detecting Jacob and Esau here is that we recognize that we are once more precisely where we were in III.4, the last chapter of the “temporal” Wake. For there, recall, as we were “talking amnessly of brukasloop crazedledaze” [562.16] we met “Jerkoff and Eatsup” [563.23] witnessing their version of the Wolf Man’s primal scene from III.4’s four “positions” or points of view. What’s the difference now? We’re seeing the same scene, but from a *uniquely privileged position*, which is in one sense the only position from which we could determine whether or not consummation has occurred: inside the womb. As II.2 itself observes, there are at last “five positions” [274.06], not four. We are now in the fifth, the central position of the “quincecunct” [206.35] or “*tinctunc*” [278.L5]; the quincunx Hart finds so structurally important as the central point of his Timaeian “X,” which closes, as we’ve seen, II.2. The four sides of the Wake, the teetotum with which II.2 opens, revolve indeed, but they revolve around an axis. We are there.

In fact we are precisely at the place described by Question Nine of the lecture chapter, I.6, in which Shaun as Professor Jones asks and answers questions on the Wake itself, or more precisely, as McHugh has demonstrated in *Sigla*, on the meanings behind the sigla in Joyce’s own notes. Question Nine – which, with its answer, appears in its entirety on page 143 – is whence the reference to the “wrestless

in the womb” [143.21] is derived.

McHugh himself has wondered over the siglum assigned to question nine, which clearly does not represent any of the Wake’s protagonists. Indeed he confesses that this siglum above all others continues to conceal its mystery; but he wonders whether its shape – an “X” surrounded by a circle – might refer to the entirety of the book *Finnegans Wake* itself “apprehended ... from an extratemporal vantage point” or from “a tranquil equipoise at the hub of time [*Sigla* 121].

Indeed it does. For when we consider the burden of the question its pertinence to II.2 – which we are learning and will further learn to read as the place *par excellence* of the extratemporal or eternal (IV notwithstanding) – begins to emerge, and not simply from the womb.

Nine asks:

If a human being duly fatigued by his dayety in the sooty, having plenxy off time ... and ... hapless behind the dreams of accuracy ... were at this actual futule preteriting unstant, in the states of suspensive exanimation accorded, throughout the eye of a noodle ... an earsighted view of old hopeinhaven with all the ingredient and egregiunt whights and ways to which in the curse of his persistence the course of his tory will had been having recourse ... then what would that fargazer seem to seemself to seem seeming of, dimm it all? [143.04 – 27].

In I.6 the answer is “A collideorscape!” [143.28] which is, as has been often remarked, a good description of the Wake. But we notice that the question has

essentially been describing precisely the HCE we've been meeting in II.2, already dead and seeking his reward in the afterlife, "in the states of suspensive exanimation" looking for "hopeinhaven" or, as II.2 would put it, "Length Without Breadth, of him, a chump of the evums" [261.13] in "the suite poi and poi" [295.32]. II.2 brings us to "Old Vico Roundpoint" [260.14] where and when "old is said in one" [261.07] or as Nine puts it the place where "all the ingredient and egregiunt whights and ways to which in the curse of his persistence the course of his tory will had been having recourse" or *ricorso*. Time undoes or transcends itself in the "off time" of an "unstant" and in the "eye of a noodle" we see the same mirror in which HCE (and possibly Joyce) is seeing himself when "that fargazer seem to seemself to seem seeming." And in II.2 we are indeed "behind the dreams;" not just in the "Real life behind the floodlights" of the dream of the Wake itself, but of the dream its dreams of, as we'll see.

But this position of ultimate transcendence has been made precisely identical with the womb of Anna Livia.

The "wrestless in the womb" are no longer merely *on* their mother's body; they are *inside it*. The "doubleviewed seeds" are the seeds of reproduction, and the brothers must guide one seed – the lower, "for seminal rations" – into the other, the upper, if their mother is to conceive. That is, the lower triangle must be inverted, flipped up and as it were out of the page so that it swings into alignment with the upper triangle so that the respective vertices – "mating approxemetely in their suite poi and poi" – will coincide.

This operation, too, proceeds under the directon of Shem.

Now, to compleat anglers ... join alfa pea and pull loose by dotties and,
to be more sparematically logoical, eelpie and paleale by trunkles.
Alow me align while I encloud especious! The Nike done it. Like pah,
I peh. Innate little bondery. And as plane as a poke stiff. Now, *aqua*
in buccat, I'll make you to see figuratleavely the whome of your eternal
geomater. And if you flung her headdress on her from under her
highlows ... we carefully, if she pleats, lift by her seam hem ... the
maidsapron of our A.L.P. ... till its nether nadir is vortically where ...
its naval's napex will have to beandbe [296.22-297.14].

Shem, also Nick or here “Nike” to his brother’s Mick or Mike – as the archangel Michael who appropriately takes the upper register of the “apexojesus” – becomes, in this exercise, curiously identified with his father. In part this union is effected precisely the way Stephen and Bloom bond beneath Molly’s window in Ithaca, crossing their arcs of urine. Shem is of course at the “Pee” point and so asserts “Like pah, I peh.” This, he plausibly claims, effects an “Innate little bondery” and one which – unsurprisingly, given the presence of semen and urine, is phallic or “as plane as a poke stiff” (according to the *Annotations* “pikestaff” is also slang for “penis”). In case we’re still in doubt as to what’s going on, “poke stiff” takes the last footnote of the page: “The impudence of that in girl’s things!” Considering the “girl’s things” Shem’s in, “impudence” might be an understatement. In phallically assimilating to his father he’s going to be inseminating his own mother.

“*Aqua in buccat*,” however, suggests another, simultaneous fluid transfer: it’s Latin for “water in mouth.” When we realize that *Peh* is Hebrew for “origins” or

“mouth” as well, we begin to detect a pattern. And in fact as “semenal rations” suggests, when the seeds of the parents “mate” it will be in an act which is also an act of ingestion. This will prove particularly vexing for Shaun. For it is he, stationed at the “naval’s napex,” who, taking the feminine and receptive role, will find that the “Pie” he’s eating contains a variety of things he’d rather it didn’t, including, of course, “semenal rations” and, as the vertices coincide, the demotic “Pee.”

In order “to compleat anglers” the twins “pull loose by dotties” – that is, actually pull the lower triangle, consisting of dashed or dotted lines, loose from its page – and, so that Shem can “make” Shaun “see the whome” – apparently not just the vagina but once more the womb – of his “eternal geomater” “carefully, if she pleats, lift by her seam hem ... the maidsapron of our A.L.P.” and fling “her headdress on her from under her highlows” “till its nether nadir is vortically where ... its naval’s napex will have to beandbe.” Thus we are in the “suite poi and poi” where Shem predicted the “doubleviewed seeds” would be “mating approxemetely.” Fertilization has occurred.

Thus it is that in the few immediately ensuing lines – glossed by the marginalium “*Prometheus or the Promise of Provison*” – the exercise, the episode and the Wake itself come to a head. Shem, amalgamating with his brother in this strangest and most climactic version of the structurally crucial fusing of the twins, calls Shaun over as their triangles coincide.

You must proach near mear for at is dark. Lob. And light your mech. Jeldy!

And this is what you’ll say. Waaaaaa. Tch! Sluice! Pla! [297.14]

Shaun opens his mouth in an infantile cry which is also a cry of horror. But his

“Waaaaaa” is stopped by the sudden introduction of *aqua in buccat*. And the water that enters his mouth is the same water we’ve seen at the chapter’s beginning, and at its end. We first met it in I.5, when we learned that the Letter ended with a certain signature: the “teatimestained terminal;” the “tag” or punchline we were enjoined not to reveal until the proper time. And the proper time is here. For what enters Shaun’s mouth at this point is precisely what I.5 has also called the “tache of tch” or the stain of tea. Shaun opens his mouth in a cry of “Waaaaaa” and the “Tch!” goes in. Tea is served.

* * *

Consciousness of and in Thanatos

The archetype of the scatological communion of Hart’s final discussion has just occurred, as the “tricklesome poind” – one of the “doubleviewed seeds” that recall the W.C. – of the “Pee” point on the mother’s “batom” flips up into the putatively sublime Pi or “Pie” Shaun has been eating. As II.2’s beginning and end predicted, the tea-motif has come to its head here. In fact all of the elements of the “teatimestained terminal” – the end of time with a stain of tea – are here in the pithy formulation “Waaaaaa. Tch! Sluice!”

At first the time is not evident. But if one looks long enough it comes precisely into view as we “Waaaaaa. Tch!” or watch. But this isn’t simply an injunction to look. It’s also our old friend the chronometer or “watch,” long identified with HCE himself. Here in fact we might recall the last riddle in the riddle-series: “The first and

last rittlerattle of the anniverse; when is a nam not a nam whenas it is a. Watch!” We now see that the last riddle, with its own “tag,” has directed us precisely here. Looking in the mirror here, “watch”-ing his reflection, HCE becomes the opposite of a man indeed – in fact the reflection of “man” in “nam” – when, in this “anniverse,” he discovers not himself but ALP. Already, we suspect, his “flutterby has been netted and named” with the “nam” of the Mother who is in fact HCE’s very essence or inward spirit when he’s at “hume.”

Which brings us to the other reason HCE is not a man at this point: he’s *dead*. That is to say, his time has stopped or more to the point transcended itself in eternity. We are again at what Question Nine would call the “unstant” which is reflected below in II.3 as the “noon minutes none seconds” of HCE’s murder. In the breaking of the “Waaaaaa. Tch!” here we see in fact what the end of II.2 suggested would be found at the terminal tea-time: “a split second per the chancellory of his exticker.” HCE’s ticker has stopped; in fact it will prove apt to say, in the words of the villanelle sequence, that his “heart’s cry is broken.”

But the perpendicular “off time” of II.2, this breaking of time, also signals the advent of precisely the “eternal geomater” whose womb we find at the extratemporal axis anticipated by Question Nine. – the geometric, spatial earth mother of this neo-Platonic realm outside of time – or the “nam” HCE turns into in this amniotic mirror.

Just to remove any remaining doubt that the tea of “Tch!” marks the terminus of time and the whole affair, “Tch!” is followed by “Sluice!” As McHugh notes, this is a version of German *Schluss*: a “close” or “end” [*Annotations*]. But at this point the text itself goes on to indicate as much with its syntax in any case, turning back on itself to indicate the moment just passed as the end of the demonstration, now Shem’s

triumphant *fait accompli*.

And there, redneck ... mygh and thy, the living spit of dead waters ...
your sow to the duble ... midden wedge of the stream's your muddy
old triagonal delta, fiho miho, plain for you now, appia lippia pluvaville
... the no niggard spot of her safety vulve, first of all usquiluteral
threeingles, (and why wouldn't she sit cressloggedlike the lass that
lured a tailor?) the constant of fluxion, Mahamewetma, pride of the
province and when that tidled boare rutches up from the Afrantic,
allaph quaran's his bett und bier! [297.17]

This denouement reminds us that what we have just seen is not just the “inside” scoop on III.4's primal scene, but what that scene itself was a version of: the parent's wedding night, which, with the central thunderword, forms the first climax of II.3. Here, thus, we see once more the faintly incestuous tailor's daughter, awaiting the sailor HCE who “rutches up from the Afrantic” like the tidal bore that rushes into Dublin Bay and travels up the Liffey. Indeed, the oedipality of the moment renders death and entry to the mother simultaneous. Shem, already in the womb and waiting to be born, has become his dead father in an “innate little bondery.” But when his father, like a tidle bore, rushes into the “Sluice!” as the “doubleviewed seeds” meet in the sweet-by-and-by, he rushes not just into his own end but into the body and particularly the sex of the mother. For “sluice,” the *Annotations* inform us, is also slang for “cunt.”

Thus it is that for HCE “allaph quaran's his bett und bier!” *Quarrons*, too, as

McHugh notes, is old thief's slang for "cunt." When the father beds the mother he finds not just a "bett" but a "bier;" he's laid out for his funeral like Parnell on his catapult. We are "befinding ourselves when old is said in one and maker mates with made (O my!) before a mosoleum" [262.07].

And this, if we recall the linguistic situations of the earlier fictions, is precisely where we want to be: in the womb which is the zone of death. Why? Because, we suspect, this is the only place in which the artist can find the synthesis and reconciliation of the aspects of the self which the incest-taboo, or some form of it, has kept apart. Our examination of Stephen's encounters with the the signifier – of whose body he must as it were take conscious possession – suggested that self-consciousness and agency must be made to prevail even in the face of sexual rivalry with the Father, and likewise must survive the oblivion that an oedipal possession of the mother's body – curiously linked to advent of the letter in *Portrait's* composition of the villanelle – would entail.

Now, though, we see the simultaneous resolution of all of the varying checks to Stephen's progress in this regard. The artist is having his cake – or his "Pie" – and eating it too, in more ways than one. The desired access to the mother has been achieved, and partly in the way that the standard version of the Oedipus myth would suggest. The Father, after all, has been killed, and with him his hated word. This has been done deliberately and in full consciousness of the motivations and consequences; indeed in the strange perpendicular time of II.2 we find ourselves, immediately following the father's death, in a possession of the mother that is complete beyond the dreams of avarice. For we possess her in precisely the doubled way that *Portrait's* strange scene of inspiration seemed itself to require; both as a child returning to the

embrace of the amniotic, and as an adult male in sexual possession. Both the erotic and the thanotic drives of oedipality are satisfied.

At this point, in addition, and contrary to the case in the earlier fictions, the death of the Father is clearly maintained in the immediate vicinity of the desired feminine – and more to the point maternal – body. Indeed this death is made *precisely* coincident with that body when the “bett” and the “bier” coincide. But further; this coincidence itself suggests precisely the identity with the son which is part of the Wake’s characteristic fusion of the aspects of the psyche that remained separated in *Hero* and *Portrait*, and which, we have suggested, is part of the self-recognition which will prove so crucially constitutive of agency and of the artist’s full possession of his radical but erstwhile theoretical technique.

But does our crucial, terminal scene stage this self-recognition? Certainly the entire chapter, and the geometry exercise in particular, have enacted tropes of precisely this kind. Ainsoph would gaze “in his antiscipiences as in his recongizances” in the mirror of his “horrorscup,” which “horrorscup” seems to be the mirroring diagram itself, the “Evil eye” (requiring, suggested Stirling, the complementary gesture of a “Phallus”) into which “he or he gazet.” But what about the specific moment we have now designated as the “teatimestained terminal” forecast by I.5?

That moment, recall, is introduced as follows. “And here’s what you’ll say. Waaaaaa. Tch! Sluice! Pla!” The word “say,” as it happens, gets a footnote: “Mi vidim mi.” This, as the *Annotations* inform us, is Russian – possibly in deference to the General, possibly in recollection of the Wolf Man – for “I see myself.” Thus at the precise moment at which the twins, on their respective vertices, move into the

conjunction which is the insemination of the mother by the father who is the son, the text helpfully and pointedly glosses the moment as precisely one of self-consciousness.

And this, if self-consciousness is associated with the sort of agency we've been looking for, is what we've expected ever since the geometry exercise began. For precisely in the presentation of the mirroring diagram, that "eye of his lapis," we realize that some double-subject – "You, you" – will "make what name?" The name or word at last will be made and accepted by the subject himself.

The very punctuation, however, reminds us that this is still the question. What name? What name, precisely, is made?

* * *

Mum's Mutyness

A name can be a signature. We've learned that we should look for the signature at – and indeed as – the "teatimestained terminal." So we should return, once more, to the "teatimestained terminal" where so many of the characters seem to come together and where "I see myself." We want to "Waaaaaa. Tch!" as we and Shaun are shown not just what we'll "say" but – when we take our cue from the visual theme and pronounce "see" with a brogue – precisely what we'll see. "Waaaaaa. Tch! Sluice! Pla! And there, redneck ... fiho mio, plain for you now."

Indeed, the text has made it *quite* plain for us now. We are led up to a revelation and then told precisely where it has occurred: "And there" And the "there" looks backward on to what it is we'll "say." We've seen the time, and the tea, and the

terminal. But all of them are proleptic to the last word, the signature that is the “there” there, situated between prolepsis and a backward glance. This, indeed, is the signature of the Letter and the entire book, and, *par excellence*, the Word and Name the artist made for *himself*: “Pla!”

But what could such a ridiculous name possibly mean?

The first and most obvious answer is also a large part of the correct one. “Pla,” as we’ve probably already guessed if we’re following the reflective suggestions of the exercise, is precisely that inverse triangle raised and come into its own. In other words it’s the name of the mother – ALP – backwards. As the text itself has already remarked just below the diagram, “Aha haha, Ante Ann you’re apt to ape aunty annalive.” Further, it is precisely this backwards Name of the Mother, as the *aqua in buccat*, which has along with everything else been precipitated into Shaun’s mouth.

Of course it does not seem to stay there long. As “the living spit of dead waters” and “you’ve spat your shower” [297.05] both suggest, “Pla!” is also what it sounds like; Shaun spitting out the water or the “tea” that’s come into his mouth.

And why wouldn’t he? It’s not just that this water has proceeded from the “Pee” point associated with the mother’s “batom” below. This kind of scatology has, as Hart was at pains to point out in his analysis of the “tea” motif, informed that motif throughout the entire book. Tea, remember, is communion with the Blessed Virgin Mary; but precisely because it is her urine. As Lynch might say in Nighttown (and as Hart recalls), “Piping hot!”; or as Zoe might return, “Came from a hot place” [U 450].

On the other, hand given the relentless mirroring and reversal, perhaps we should consider the direction of ingestion as well as expulsion. If the “tea” is going out as “Pla!” – and thus as well proceeding from the mouth as a kind of name – presumably

it went in as well. And maternal fluids, particularly in the womb, are, we've learned, sometimes precisely what the artist wants. When we bear this in mind, we begin to understand more fully what is happening here, and its relationship to the earlier fictions. When "Pla!" goes in as tea, it goes in precisely of course as the archetypically fluid ALP herself or rather as a version of her Name. But this, in turn, brings us to the question of precisely why the mother is named "ALP" in the first place.

Well, of course we know that ALP is named ALP because that's the acronym for her "real" name: Anna Livia Plurabelle. Anna is an Irish goddess; Livia refers to the river Liffey. "Plurabelle" seems to be purely whimsical neologism but suggests the beauty and abundance proper to a mother-goddess.

But ALP is not referred to in the text as "Anna Livia Plurabelle" or its variants nearly as often as she is referred to as "ALP" or its variants. Indeed, in the exercise with which we're currently concerned, a great deal of the point of the diagram seems to be to showcase her name precisely as "ALP." And so the question becomes, what if Anna Livia Plurabelle *isn't* the mother's real name so much as ALP is? What if the acronym, which seems to be derivative, is actually the foundation, and "Anna Livia Plurabelle" consists of names chosen to conform to the real matrix, which is contained in the initials?

This question has never been answered by criticism. Indeed, it has barely been asked. But it has an answer, and the answer begins precisely with ALP's status as a mother.

In one sense, ALP has three children: Shem, Shaun and Issy. This trinity, however, can be represented in another way: as three individuals, one and one and

one or 111: one-hundred and eleven.

One-hundred and eleven, thus appears throughout the Wake nearly as often as ALP herself. Countless changes are rung on it, and it insinuates itself into dates, time, enumerations, etc. The *Annotations*, however [201.30], record a particularly interesting fact about one-hundred eleven. When “ALP” is transliterated into Hebrew, the corresponding letters are *aleph*, *lamedh*, *pe*. And since in Hebrew every letter corresponds to a number, each of these letters has a numerical value. Aleph, sensibly enough, equals one. *Lamedh* equals forty, and *pe* eighty. When the value of these letters is added together the sum is thus one-hundred and eleven.

In II.2, this condition is likely to strike us as particularly suggestive. This is chiefly because of the kabbalistic gestures with which the chapter opens and closes (though there are others we haven’t discussed); Ainsoph and his bride at the beginning, and the ten emanations of the sepiroth in the chimes of the clock at the end.

But reference to the kabbala is pertinent to the Wake for another reason. Kabbalistic reading, of course, emphasizes that the real meaning of scripture is derived from the value and manipulation of individual letters. Individual letters, in turn, themselves have two numerical values: one derived from the number associated with the letter, and one associated with the *name* of the letter *when that name is written out*.

Among the most important letters is the letter *aleph*. It is one of the three “mother letters.” Often it stands for the radically transcendent unmanifest God precisely because in isolation it has no phonetic value; it is a species of surd. What concerns us, however, is chiefly the way the name of the letter *aleph* is written. Classical Hebrew lacking diacritical marks for vowels, its written *aleph*, *lamedh*, *pe*: ALP. The name of the “mother of the book” is what it is because the mother of the book is the first of the

mother-letters and of course the first and most representative letter in almost every alphabet derived from the ancient Near-East. Though this has gone unremarked, ALP is simply the letter “A.”

The twins, thus – and primarily Shem – have successfully followed the instructions set them at the very beginning of the exercise, when they were told to “Concoct and equoangular trillitter. On the name ... “. The capital letter “A” in fact contains an equilateral triangle; it thus is in itself a sort of “trillitter.” But of course this letter has also been constructed “On the name” or rather as a name, and a name with precisely three letters. Indeed it’s the name of a letter whose name in Hebrew is three letters long. But this brings us in turn to the question: why Hebrew?

And the answer of course is that Hebrew makes ALP particularly apt as an “urutteration” that precedes and in a sense trumps the thunders of the ordinary Vichian time that governs the bulk of the Wakean text “below.” It’s not just that Hebrew is often taken as the Adamic language that is the *ur* of the *ur*. More to the point, recall, it is taken as such by Vico himself, with the result that the Hebrews exist as a sort of supplement to ordinary history, a supplement which is – like II.2 – at once parallel and prior.

But this observation in *its* turn anticipates the answer to the *next* question. Why is this Hebrew alphabetic Name of the Mother “spelled” *backwards*? There, this being the Wake, many simultaneous and equally valid answers to this question. But the first and most important answer for an investigation which acknowledges the centrality of Vico is of course that by rendering “Alp” as “Pla!” Joyce has produced his closest parody yet of the original Vichian thunder. For this of course is what the backwards letter “Pla!” is. The written, visible, silent translation of the the audible thunder that

governs the bulk of the Wake.

* * *

The Thunderletter

This has been forecast first by the algebra exercise that immediately precedes the geometry, and which wanted to know precisely “how minney combinaisies and permutandies can be played on the international surd! pthwndxrlzp!” We saw one answer, and quite a large one: twelve factorial. But that’s not, as it happens, the first answer that’s given. It’s just that we weren’t in a position to read the first answer until now.

The first answer is given in the following formula.

Pthwdnxrclzp!, hids cubid rute being extracted, taking anan illitterettes, ififif at a tom. Answers, (for teasers only). Ten, twent, thirt, see, ex and three icky totchty one. From solation to solution [284.14].

When “hids cubid rute” – the Father’s hidden root – is “extracted” from the patriarchal thunder, what you get is “anan illitterettes;” the letters of Anna, the mother. So how many “combinaisies and permutandies?” “Ten, twent, thirt, see, ex and three icky totchy one.” Nobody, not even McHugh, seems to know why the *numbers* are there, “Ten, twent, thirt” totaling to sixty. But when the numbers turn to *words* the answer becomes obvious enough. It’s precisely “anan illitterettes” or Anna’s letters. “See” is C – one hundred. “X” of course is ten. Add the three ones

and the rute of the thunder is revealed: 111, the number of the letter that *is* the Name of the Mother.

“Pla!” in other words, is, precisely as it looks and sounds, the Wake’s most centrally constructed parody of the original Vichian Name of the Father: “Pa!” It is, in other words, just as predicted, the Wake’s “urutteration of the word in pregress:” the Vichian thunder in it’s radically primordial germ, before it grew to its more recognizable and thus familiar one-hundred letters.

Now this is bound to remind us of another thunder-in-germ: Shem’s strangely written cry of III.4, which, though itself a sort of “urrutation” in “pregress,” grew backwards through the night until it became the Letter delivered by Shaun. But now we recognize some affinities between these urutterations.

First, they are, in contrast to their “grosser” counterparts or descendants, *mute* as opposed to *voiced*, written as opposed to uttered. Shem’s written cry, recall, evolved into Shaun’s all-too audible one. And whereas ordinary Vichian thunder of the type that governs the Wake’s temporal cycles is an audible phenomenon – indeed it’s extreme audibility is a great deal of its terrifying power – “Pla! is, precisely because it’s a letter, *written*. In other words, when not the thunder but the lightning “flash becomes word,” it’s “silents selfloud.” But the recognition of this affinity between III.4’s cry and the “Pla!” that, entering Shaun’s mouth as the tea, mutes his cry of “Waaaaaa,” allows us to recognize another affinity. For as a letter itself, “Pla!”, is itself the ultimate – indeed precisely the transcendent archetype and origin – of the Wake’s famous missive, about whose provenance and content so much fuss has been made. This thunder, like Vico's original "echoes" or reflects itself by turning "Alp" into "Pla." But then it immediately insists the identity of the iterations by folding up

the reflection into the original. At this point, we realize that this thunder, like the thunder that issued from III.4's primal cry, simply *is* the Wake's famous Letter.

Criticism has often remarked with disappointment the banal character of what has been imagined to be the final revelation and instantiation of the Letter; the text of what looks like an actual epistle [615.12] in IV. But content disappoints here precisely because it is not, in IV, reduced to its primal form, the extraordinarily compact presentation of the word that is the Letter of Letters and whose meaning is found in the context of the entire book. In fact IV's letter bears the same relationship to "Pla!" as do the thunders, or that the name "Anna Livia Plurabelle" does to ALP; it's the *longer* form that's derivative and comparatively empty, while the shorter form proves to be primordial and in part on that account for fraught with meaning. On the other hand, there is at least one extremely important structural fact about the Letter that appears in IV.

IV, like II.2, and this Hart has long recognized, is an extratemporal zone. When we bear this in mind, and simultaneously bear in mind that "Pla!" is the Letter written backwards so as to become the thunder, we suddenly understand why, as II.2 has clearly indicated, there are in fact *twelve* thunders where we thought there were but ten.

Indeed, there are ten thunders, but these formally ostentatious devices are merely the thunders of the Wake's ordinary time. Outside that time, too large and too small to be seen, are the poles of the extratemporal axis around which that time revolves. And each of them contains a thunder. For the great secret of "Pla!" at last is that the thundered Name of the Father is reduced to a humble maternal letter. In Finnegans Wake, the thunder simply is, at last, not a word but a letter. But the word "letter" is a

pun that in two senses means writing. Thus as one “thunderletter” appears in II.2, the other half of the pun and thus the other “thunderletter” appears in IV, precisely as the other kind of letter; the kind of letter you send through the post-office.

This recognition itself does two things. First, it tells us why, despite Shem’s obvious authority in II.2’s scene, Shaun is the one compelled to “say” “Pla!” Shaun is of course Shaun the Post. And as such, he’s got to deliver the *letter*. II.2 thus becomes the place par excellence where the letter is delivered; precisely, in the Wake’s circular logic, in the place where it’s in every sense *conceived*. But second, it lets us know why from the first II.2 has insisted there are twelve thunders instead of ten. There are ten in the Wake’s ordinary time. But when we take the Wake’s two “extratemporal” zones into account – II.2 with its “eternal geomater” along with IV – we understand where the missing thunders have been placed. For the letter simply is the thunder, whether the letter is large or small. “Pla!” is the Letter as well as the thunder in “pregress;” IV’s epistle is simply the same thunder writ large.

The Wakean Letter as conventionally understood by criticism – as the actual epistle which generates so much speculation in I.5 – has long and rightly on the basis of I.5 been taken as the Wake’s own version of itself. Now though we recognize how pithy this self-conscious synecdoche really is. For the ultimate synecdoche of *Finnegans Wake* is the letter indeed, but the letter which is simultaneously its most primordial word – no word at all, but a letter.

The synecdoche could not be more apt. For of course the entirety of *Finnegans Wake* has been written precisely as Stephen would have “put his lines together” in *Hero*, if only he could at that time have dealt with the strangely fraught associations: letter by letter.

Letters, after all, were from the beginning to be the units which the very revolutionary agency of the young artist would conscript to escape from words he had neither “made nor accepted” into words that he had. And yet the full exploitation of the device was apparently checked in part by a strange, implicit equation that only worked its way to the surface of consciousness over the span of Joyce’s entire career: the letter is the mother, the material desire that precedes the law of the father and who is first accessed only by the destruction of that father and that law, though that destruction imperil the very existence of the subject. The question, thus, is how to appropriate the letter while remaining a conscious agent.

The first answer to this question is provided by the chief structuring device of *Finnegans Wake* itself: its circularity. Theoretical meditations are not in themselves necessary in order to recognize that Joyce has staged the ultimate usurpation: traveling back in time to the moment of conception and there installing a conscious, deliberate agency that takes possession of the letter as it oedipally takes possession of the mother. In some ways the gesture is more extreme still; for both the mother and the letter are in fact “made” or “extracted” by the deliberate manipulations of the artist. As Shem builds the very body of the mother he inhabits through his careful geometric engineering, he also, preposterously, builds what should itself be even more radically atomic than the word: the letter itself, now reworked, inverted, by the reversal of the letters of which the letter is composed.

And of course the device effects at last what is perhaps the Wake’s greatest structural coup. The book’s two great architectonic schemes -- the dialogues and thunders -- have converged in II.3’s respective anecdotes. The thunders, like the dialogues, have however now revealed a more central and original convergence in II.2.

but it's not just that both schemes now reveal II.2 as their central -- rather than their "epicentral" -- expressions. In II.2 the structurally central expressions of each of the schemes in fact amalgamate, like the twins, into a *single central utterance*. For "Pla!" of course is revealed not simply as the Wake's central and genetically original thunder. It is also the moment that marks, as we have seen from the beginning, the central fusion of the twins in the dialogic scheme that Hart first recognized as architectonically decisive.

This fusion of the Wake's "temporal" and "spatial" texts in a central expression thus bears a particular relation to II.3. In II.3, though the thunders announce the consummation of the parents in the first anecdote, while the second's dialogue stages its own version of the twins' fusion, these two fusions themselves remain unassimilated, awaiting as it were the "exquisite concinnity" of II.2. But the sense that II.3 thus constitutes as it were an antechamber or anticipation of II.2 is augmented when we consider the fate of language in the respective chapters. II.3 stages language's negation in the destruction of the Word. II.2 central affirmation -- in a way a match to the "yes" that closes *Ulysses* -- is the very *Letter* that the Word's disintegration has revealed. And this ordinarily sub-semantic unit, the humble materiality whose usual role is no more than to be as it were the vehicle of meaning's tenor, is itself revealed as the Mother that has always underpinned the Father's Word, now accessible due precisely to the Father's death and disintegration in II.3. This situation might seem more like the febrile and predictable retrospections of theory did not Joyce's own texts clearly limn from their inception the oedipality implicit in what at first seems no more than the curious and faintly impossible agenda of putting, like Stephen Hero, one's lines together letter by letter.

And of course these theoretical hallmarks of maternity continue to surround the letter of *Portrait's* villanelle. As we now recognize, II.2's *vesica piscis* is precisely the "virgin womb of the imagination" where the "word is made flesh" or, rather, "flash becomes word" as the "liquid letters of speech" (and now we know another reason ALP is the amniotic river that swallows the twins when the marginalia disappear) flow into and out of Shaun's mouth. In fact we see the actual conception of the word when the "doubleviewed seeds" collide. The father and the mother meet when "Pa!" becomes "Pla!" and the child conceived in that fertilized egg is not simply the Word as the "apexojesus" of the medieval *vesica* but Finnegan himself. IV may be where Finnegan is reborn; but II.2 is where he is conceived.

Letters, it might be remarked, are *de facto* a sort of written, visible version of the Kristevan semiotic. Children learn them first, before they learn the word, and often learn them at home. Whether through some sort of tortuous association of this sort, they certainly become associated in the Wake with what we recognize as the abject. This, after all, is the scatological maternal fluid Shaun is forced to introject in a reversal of abjection that stages precisely and apparently deliberately the contravention not just of oedipal but of pre-oedipal law, which contravention is necessary precisely in order to gain access to the mother. The most startling aspect of Shaun's introjection of this fecalized and reversed name of a parent is the precision with which it mirrors the "Wolf Man's Magic Word" as described by Abraham and Torok. The Wolf Man, of course, is precisely where the Wake meets Freud.

These meditations deserve more time and space than they can be accorded here. Better, perhaps, to bring them to a close with a theoretical version of the maternal letter which at least has the virtue of reflecting the threat that has always, apparently,

been implicit in the promise of Joyce's radical technique: precisely the loss of agency.

* * *

Diving, not Drowning, in the River

Joyce's mighty line. Three letters – finally, one letter – long. But from this particular constituent of the annihilated “*etym*” of the ordinary word Joyce has “extracted” a cosmos which bears the same relationship to ordinary text that the ten-dimensional universe of superstrings bears to the space we know. This is no exaggeration, and devoted readers of the *Wake* come to know it as it re-orders the entire process of reading and, potentially – to the degree that language is conceded to be foundational of thought – thought itself.

Consider the geometric implications of this simple bit of nano-engineering. An ordinary subject-object-verb sentence takes up, when written, so much space and time: space on the page, and time to read it. No more space or time is taken up by the *Wakean* word. Yet when that word abuts its fellows in the ordinary syntax that the *Wake* conserves, quite likely two and sometimes three additional meanings are *intentionally* – through the agency of the artist – implied precisely by *spelling* the words “wrong.” At first, of course, one can't really read such a sentence. But after sufficient familiarity one can. And when one does, one is reading, to take our examples (when one does the math it turns out to be a version of the factorial) eight or even *twenty-seven* sentences in the space and time in which were formerly read one.

Now it certainly isn't always the case that every line marshalls this sort of explosive power. Even constructions that take full advantage of the device generate in

some of their parallels sentences which are redundant, due to the syntactical incongruity of their units, no sentences at all. But by and large – and especially in the densest central sections – something of the sort is going on. And each of these sentences in turn is contextualized, of course, in a textual body of *similar sentences*. As II.2 puts it in describing ALP immediately after the geometric proof, this Mother-Letter seems to “expense herself as sphere as possible, paradismic perimutter, in all directions on the bend of the unbridalled, the infinisissimals of her facets becoming manier and manier” [298.27].

The letter thus is geometric in two senses and the effect, after one has learned through reading and rereading to read it, is the sort of synaptic jolt one gets from the simultaneity of a pun; only *much* more so. In principle it’s the sort of thing one might expect to trigger a *petit mal*. II.2 is apt when it describes the power generated by the lightning that strikes in its central device as the “volts ... volts ... volts” etc. of the factorial solution of the “Pthwndxrclzp!”

What has been exposed, in fact, is the very good reason that ordinary repression does its *sub rosa* diacritical work to render each signifier precisely *not* every other one. The converse would be overwhelming. Though that kind of literal infinity is not quite what the Wake threatens, the effect is certainly overwhelming enough.

In fact the very experience of reading the Wake – let alone thinking about it – begins to produce an understanding what is possibly the chief reason that the seemingly innocuous strategy of the letter reveals itself as an undertaking of such peculiar and, finally, oedipal or pre-oedipal peril. The strategies Joyce employed to “kill the father” of ordinary signification would, in theory, imperil subjectivity in any case. But now we see, perhaps, the *particular way* this theory would instantiate itself

in the subject's experience of language.

Not just promising but threatening an overwhelming, polysemantic superabundance, the letter represents the sudden eruption of so much previously repressed content that the subject would find itself unable to navigate, unable to choose among, the perpetually multiplying avenues of reference. The letter, in other words, represents in principle the entire contents of the unconscious. Not the unconscious as the reservoir of illegitimate urges (though of course those come up, apparently, whenever tea is served) but the unconscious as *everything* you *could* be thinking but don't happen to be thinking at the moment. It represents, in other words, a radical, ultimate *jouissance* of the kind that spells the end for the self that drowns in the oceanic terror and ecstasy of death, in the ocean of the unconscious *per se* revealed as it surrounds and drowns the subject.

The letter, in short, is body of the primordial mother of *thanatos* and the "oceanic feeling." And if it is that mother, it can only be accessed through the death of the father, the purpose of whose threat and Law has always been to protect us from this ancient threat to selfhood, as the medieval Phallus would protect us from an "Evil Eye" of the kind that – somewhat like the eye of Oedipus but, again, *much* more so – would see too much.

This having been said, it should also be said that this is a threat that does *not* in the event entirely materialize; at least not in *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce found a way, apparently, to use the letter before it used him; to travel as it were back to the body of the primordial mother with his agency intact and there "extract" a letter powerful enough for his new language but tractable to consciousness. He traveled back, in other words, with the Name of the Father, even though that "*etym*" had been

annihilated. In as sense it's as though John Joyce was already there – or at least his Name was – in the death and silence that is the radical condition of *infans*-cy, and there as fused precisely with the son. There, in other words, as John Joyce Jr. – Shaun – still, from this impossible stage, thundering the Name of the Law. And when we consider that new Name more closely, it of course reveals itself as precisely the marriage of old and new, mother and father, that we would expect from the union of the “doubleviewed seeds.” In fact it simply is the same old name of the Father: “Pa!” It's just that it's spelled wrong. *Per* the new strategy, a letter has been added. Now it's the Mother's Name as well; or rather both names, at precisely the same time.

And, in fact, as is also obvious with a minimum of reflection, a great deal of the ordinary operation of the Symbolic does in fact survive the operation. The text and the experience it produces is very close to overwhelming – for the writer as much as the reader, if Ellmann's biography is any guide. It is, however, buffered, managed and controlled – for the reader as well as by the writer – by the situation of the densely polysemantic word *within the operational matrix through which we are already accustomed to organize our thoughts*. For the grammar and syntax of the Wake, as has often been remarked, are with rare exceptions simply those of the best King's English; in other words, of the – apparently not entirely – hated ordinary language. After all, “you must, how, in undivided reawlity draw the line somewhawre” [292.32].

But the chief thing, clearly, that allows the artist to preserve craft, deliberation and agency in the face of a potentially overwhelming semantic overload is the very thing that makes that overload textually possible in the first place: the letter itself, or writing.

This is at last why Shem's primordial cry in III.4 is precisely written, and why

writing stops and transforms Shaun's audible cry in II.2 precisely by the filling his mouth with the letter. The most important thing Shem the Penman takes with him in his "dreaming back" [295.10] to "crazed/daze" [565.16] – indeed it's probably a large part of what keeps him from being entirely crazed or dazed by the encounter with the *infans* that would see and say too much – is precisely his pen.

First, only an alphabetical writing can allow the "superfetation" of the word to the degree that it's practised in the Wake. Deliberately or otherwise the voice does, it's true, sometimes felicitously condense for instance "wince" and "flinch" in "winch" or "charge" and "trudge" in "chudge;" but try saying "searchers" [298.15] out loud and see if your auditor understands "circlers" *and* "searchers" *and* "circle hers."

But writing also solves what, for the artist, is a far more pressing problem than this.

Perhaps *avorio*, *ivoire* and *ebur* really *did* all announce themselves in Joyce's imagination precisely simultaneous with *Ivory*. Perhaps in fact everyone is capable, to a greater or lesser extent, of this kind of linguistic simultaneity. (Perhaps; try "saying" or more to the point thinking four words simultaneously to yourself. I can't even do two unless I visualize them or render them as an already accomplished portmanteau.)

But even assuming Joyce *did* have such an experience, the testimony of *Portrait* unsurprisingly indicates that the experience simultaneously involved precisely the loss of conscious control over the direction of thought and language. Since our ordinary mental experience indicates that this kind of simultaneity is difficult if not impossible to achieve, then we might intuitively expect that it could only come when we were in one way or another "not ourselves." But more confounding than this would be the difficulty indicated earlier.

If one really does lapse – and really, it could be nothing else but a sort of falling

into a fit – into the condition of thinking four words simultaneously, each of which in turn suggests four more densely imbricated words and so on, thought as we know it and *certainly* any kind of conscious, *deliberate* thought will terminate itself almost immediately in an orgy of undecidables.

But writing slows things down.

True, it simply takes longer to write than it does to speak. More to the point, though, writing is *designed* to thwart time – to spatialize it, really, turning the temporal act of speech into what is, *de facto*, a spatial arrangement on a page – by making speech “stay” in a presence that dwarfs the self-presence of voice because what was written ten minutes or ten years ago is potentially as present as what one just wrote. The consequence is the opportunity for deliberation, for the deliberate building of connections across the space and time of the text – and for going over the text again and again to discover and build more connections still – of the type that even the voice we imagine issuing from the bards, those mnemonic titans, cannot achieve.

But most crucially, this principle holds true at the level of the individual word. You can craft it, letter by letter, deliberately choosing or at least influencing the progress of “Ivory.” One can seize the very means of production of the process of association which Stephen can merely suffer when he hears the word “ball” and is immediately transported whither he would not go (useful though that transport proves). It’s not as though ordinary involuntary associations stop; on the contrary, they are bound to accelerate. But they may be admitted, denied or modified with more dexterity than can be expected from a slipping tongue.

Joyce writes, then, of a letter; indeed the letter of letters. It’s a strange thing to assess the position – whether or not in the wake of the Wake it’s hard to say, but what

we know of the Wake's readers certainly makes it possible – this letter has assumed in contemporary strategies of reading. Of course it's simply an accident that "other" starts with "a" in French. But to turn from the Wake's diagram to a picture of the Borromean knot best-known to the contemporary mind is certainly to be struck by the literal centrality of the "a" which theory has elevated to its pride of place and charged with the coordination of the entire psyche in the circling synthesis of the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic. The same accident, of course, determines that this same "a," when written "A," becomes no longer the preserving phallus in the center of the Borromean evil-eye but what we've discerned as the matrix and original of the eye itself, "the mother who first occupies the position of the big Other for the child, ... she who receives the child's primitive cries and retroactively sanctions them as a particular message" [Evans 133]. The Symbolic, in other words, is not really – that is, not originally – the province of the Father at all, as the equivocation of this "A" reminds.

And this is precisely the "A" that Shem learns to write, to "extract" as a primordial cry as the Law or the Name of the Mother when he assumes, as an agent, the place where Freudian slips are willed, the place of the unconscious, the lower, repressed, ordinarily-unwritten triangle whose un-abjected "tea" comes unbidden into Shaun's mouth as the "liquid letters of speech, symbols of the element of mystery, flowed over [the] brain" of an artist too young to look in the glass and recognize himself as she whose name is the first and final signature of *Finnegans Wake*.

"They needn't worry," Joyce once remarked, in a reaction to the reaction to *Work in Progress*, "I'll give them back their English language." The Wake itself says as much when it sums itself up – in IV, its "last" book and chapter – as:

Our wholemole millwheeling vicocicrometer, a tetradomational gazebocriton (the “Mamma Lujah” known to every schoolboy scandaller ...), autokinatonetically preproved with a clappercoupling smelting works exprogressive process (for the farmer, his son and their homely codes, known as eggburst, eggblend, eggburial and hatch-as-hatch can) receives through a portal vein the dialytically separated elements of precedent decomposition for the very petpurpose of subsequent recombination so that the heroticisms, catastrophes and eccentricities transmitted by the ancient legacy of the past, type by tope, letter from litter, word at ward, with sendence of sundance ... in our mutter nation, all, anastomosically assimilated ... in fact, the sameold gamebold adomic structure of our Finnius the old One, as highly charged with electrons as hophazards can effective it, may be there for you, ... when cup, platter and pot come piping hot, as sure as herself pits hen to paper and there’s scribings scrawled on eggs [614.27].

IV’s Letter immediately follows.

One couldn’t find a better description of the entire process, first conceived in the first pages of *Hero* but only realized in the *Wake*. The wheeling, four-sided teetotum depends at last – in a sense simply is – the “Mamma” known to the “schoolboy scandaller” of II.2, where the “exticker” or heart of the book receives “the dialytically separated elements of precedent decomposition” – the reverse of ordinary composition

when the word is taken apart in the “*abnihilation of the etym*” – but only for the purpose of “subsequent recombination” which produces, from the subatomic particles of the word, precisely the “samebold gamebold adomic structure” of the Father (and his word) reborn “as highly charged with electrons as hophazards can effective it.”

This, at last, is what’s served, “piping hot” with “cup” and “pot” for tea, just as the end of II.2 promised: an egg, the product of ALP as the well-known Hen who scratches the letter from the mound and who, having had her egg fertilized in II.2, serves it here as a word electrically charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree. This fertilized egg, which in II.2 represented the union of the male and female gametes or principles by the introduction of the “L” into “Pa!” to produce “Pla!,” was the conception of Finneghan himself, as it were the grandfather of the book or “Finnius the old One,” here brought back to life by being born again as the Hen’s egg, and the Word made flesh.

In a sense, we have our language back. But only after it has been exposed to – perhaps even caught the disease of – a writing that, in its capacity to rework the “assembly-language” of ordinary thought (that is, language itself), bears in principle not just the relationship to ordinary writing that ordinary writing bears to speech but very nearly the relationship that speech bears to animal cries. If language is the apparatus *par excellence* through which we perform imaginative, abstract operations by lifting the brute experience of “undivided reawlity” into the *aufhebung* of the sign, the Wake expands – again, in principle – that power geometrically. It’s the sort of language one would wish to use if, for instance, one realized that every abstraction really articulated its opposite condition as its own condition of being, or wished to articulate the ways in which texts widely separated in time and space seem to hold

secret colloquies of dissemination while the Law is turned the other way. In principle, at least, the effect on intellectual history would be on the level of the change wrought by print.

But. No one has written another *Finnegans Wake*, and likely no one ever will.

To the degree, then, that the *Wake* enters history in the way that Joyce's parody of the very foundation of language and history themselves seems to imagine, it does not really do so as writing. But it has begun to, perhaps, as *reading*.

Instruction in literature has always emphasized that words may mean more and other than they seem to at first. Poetry has always been taught, if not as language "as highly charged with electrons as hophazards can effective it," at least as language unusually charged. But certain recent strategies have increased this tendency; to such a degree, indeed, that some view the development with alarm. Surely this is a practice of "hophazards" indeed, hazardous in its indiscriminate hopping from sense to sense and text to text, and so often on the basis of what should be the mere contingency, the non-semantic *material*, rather than the soul, of writing; on the basis, that is, of the letter. The very letter indeed which, having the shape of Hegel's pyramidal tomb or "mosoleum," preserves the written silence of *differance*.

The time of these reading practices may already be drawing to a close> Such has been said before, though each time prematurely. But if Joyce's project will have any real entry into or effect on history, it will be through an academy that arrogates to itself the right to read strangely. And one of the virtues of a certain kind of strange reading is that it is able to detect and deal with precisely the kind of resonances that sometimes emerge between texts widely separated in space or time, resonances that seem almost to be deliberate effect but in which, precisely because of the disparate

contexts in which the texts were produced, we hesitate to detect agency.

We might as well close with an example of this kind of undecidability. For though the texts in question are by the same author, at first it seems unlikely in the extreme that the particular resonance they evince and the precision with which they evince it could be intentional.

* * *

Men and Women of Letters

ALP, we now know, takes her name from the letter. But no similar explanation seems to satisfy in the case of HCE. When we consider, however, the relatively contingent and derivative position that the Father, despite the thunder of his Law, enjoys both in a certain kind of theory – even a certain kind of psychoanalysis that proceeds in the Name of the Father – and in Joyce, a certain resonance with Joyce's early writing suggests itself once more.

Stephen Hero, as we've seen, seems to reflect its place in the Joycean canon in its actual content. As an unpublished work it is in a sense not *in* the Joycean canon, though of course it's not entirely outside of it. Partly on this account it is not – at least not to the degree of the published works, *Exiles* perhaps excepted – as an actually *read* text part of an ordinary consciousness of Joyce, neither in scholarship nor education. And then in another sense it's not even a text at all, but half of one, that half of the abandoned ship that still protrudes above the water.

Despite or because of this liminal position, it seems to represent in itself precisely what we have found most fascinating about Joyce's work: the character of the

“unconscious” in it. In fact, in its almost immediate presentation of Stephen’s new strategy of composition – though this immediacy itself seems to be based on the contingency of the partial preservation of the manuscript – it outlines an agency, but of a kind that theory has imagined to be precisely “in the unconscious:” the agency of the letter.

We have said, though, that in *Hero* itself no actual example of composing the text “letter by letter” actually occurs. And yet, strictly speaking, this isn’t true. In fact we do get such an effect; precisely once. It’s a strange example of the effect, seeming to be halfway between the “*abnihilation*” and the “recombination” of the “*etym.*” But it is an effect which indubitably required, though to a modest degree, an attention to the fragment of the word.

It emerges late in the book when Stephen turns to a consideration of the content, rather than the form, of his verse.

He ... toyed with a theory of dualism which would symbolise the twin eternities of spirit and nature in the the twin eternities of male and female and even thought thought of explaining the audacities of his verse as symbolical allusions. ... He was passing through Eccles’ St one evening, one misty evening, with all these thoughts dancing the dance of unrest in his brain when a trivial incident set him composing some ardent verses which he entitled a “Vilanelle of the Temptress.” A young lady was standing on the steps of one of those brown brick houses which seem the very incarnation of Irish paralysis. A young gentleman was leaning on the rusty railings of the area. Stephen as he

passed on his quest heard the following fragment of colloquy out of which he received an impression keen enough to afflict his sensitiveness very severely.

The Young Lady – (drawling discreetly) ... O, yes ... I was ... at the ... cha ... pel ...

The Young Gentleman – (inaudibly) ... I ... (again inaudibly) ... I ...

The Young Lady – (softly) .. O ... but you're ... ve ... ry ... wick ... ed ...

This triviality made him think of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies. By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments [SH 211].

This is *Hero's* version of the genesis of the villanelle whose actual form we will not see until *Portrait*. Stephen is musing the construction of “symbolical” archetypes of man and woman when he sees their instantiations in the street. What he hears will prove, apparently, the immediate inspiration of the villanelle itself. Since this is the origin of a kind of language that will prove so important to the young artist, it bears our investigation. It's important to Joyce; he records it minutely.

The “Young Lady” is described as “drawling discreetly.” “Discreetly” indeed; for she only seems able, as the “stout student” in *Portrait* would put it, to “Get it out in

bits!” [P 251]. This is not the first time the text of *Hero* has resorted to ellipses; it deploys them frequently. But here they seem to be particularly concentrated, slowing speech down and, finally – in the only instance of its kind in *Hero*’s extant pages – fragmenting the words themselves until we are proceeding only “half a sylb, helf a sob ... onward” [292.27].

The “Young Lady” seems to have the upper hand. At least, she’s doing most of the talking, while the “Young Man” seems effaced into near silence. But if we are by now alert for instances of “precedent decomposition,” the word most likely to attract our attention is the very first in Joyce’s extant texts ever to suffer the effect. In consequence of suffering the effect it’s not of course strictly speaking a word any more – though it’s recognizable as one – but a collection of “discreet” letters: “cha ... pel.”

Stephen might well say that this is a “fragment of colloquy” which has tendered “an impression keen enough to afflict his sensitiveness very severely.” These fragments of a word in a fragmentary speech from a textual fragment might well deserve to remain beneath notice. And yet they help, apparently, to mark what is for Stephen an important inspiration. And though it’s difficult to judge the importance of the connection, if any, it seems at least to be worthy of remark that this the moment that inspires the poem at last described as “letters of speech, symbols of the element of mystery, flowing forth” over the artist’s brain.

For speech here has, of course, done precisely what writing – the writing which, we have come to suspect, can be so crucial in preserving “You, you” or “I ... I” in the midst of sudden accesses which in their better instances are inspiration – allows speech to do: *slow down*; here, to the point that it resolves into independent fragments

of the “*etym.*”

But when we consider the “twin eternities of male and female” with which Stephen has here decided to populate his text, this first Joycean “word” of “cha ... pel” – almost in its way an “urutteration of the word in pregress” – seems obscurely but increasingly apt. If such “eternities” were to meet, would they not meet in a sort of wedding; the sort perhaps postponed or substituted for but in any case in some way alluded to here? Wouldn’t they meet in the very word “cha ... pel”?

If we imagine a wedding between the theoretical form of Stephen’s verse as discussed at the beginning of *Hero* and the theoretical content discussed here near *Hero*’s end, we can almost imagine that the choice of this first word to bear the brunt of “precedent decomposition” was occasioned by the desire to effect the sort of density toward which “Ivory” strove or which is effected in the *Wake*. If one *were*, that is, to attempt to stage some synthesis of male and female in a single word which meant that synthesis itself, one could do worse than take “chapel” and then divide it so that discreet but potentially amalgamating persons could be represented by its symmetrical fragments.

The interpretation, if perhaps enthusiastic, is at least, given the penchants of the author, plausible. The only difficulty of course is that neither “Cha” nor “Pel” look particularly like the names of any characters that might represent the “twin eternities of male and female.”

Much, much later in his career Joyce would have occasion to represent characters of this type, and, of course, with strange names that seem somehow themselves fragmentary, revealing themselves as fragments of words indeed when we consider that they’re acronyms or more properly initials: that is, names composed of letters

removed from other names or words.

One of these names has come to signify a great deal for us, and precisely because it signifies so much for the Wake and perhaps for much of Joyce's fiction. The derivation of this name for a "female eternity" – indeed, for an "eternal geomater" – is intelligible to us now. She is named for the letter that is the formal principle of Stephen's projected verse.

The name of her consort gives more trouble. It's not reducible to a letter, either in Hebrew or anyplace else. No number system like the one that guides us towards ALP's quasi-kabbalistic provenance emerges to aid inquiry.

But if you read backwards through Joyce's texts until you find the very first example of "precedent decomposition" that they yield, you discover an interesting thing. Somewhat like the stuttering and effaced "Young Man," somewhat like the Father at last do a great degree displaced by his bride, HCE himself emerges as the merely contingent leftover when "chapel" is relieved of "a, l, p." It's almost as though the pre-eminence of the mother has been forecast from the first. The most striking thing, though, is that whether through the agency or contingency of the letter, the archetypes of HCE and ALP have been, also from the first, "the twin eternities of male and female" acrostically wedded in the word – "chapel" – of this crucial scene.

And a crucial scene it is. This is a part of *Hero* that *is* well known; for it's the earliest example in the texts of an epiphany. Indeed, strictly speaking this is the *only* epiphany *soi-disant* in the published Joycean text. It seems almost inconceivable that Joyce has not reached out from the heart of his last work to touch the heart of his first. Of course we have no idea whether or to what degree *Hero's* strange scene conditioned the central epiphany of the Wake, or even precisely what it was that

compelled a “man of letter,” wandering in the twilight, to record it. of this crucial scene, the word “chapel.” of this crucial scene. Whether through the agency or contingency of the letter, HCE and ALP have always been wedded in “chapel.”

This is a part of *Hero* that *is* well-known. It’s the earliest example in the texts of an epiphany; indeed the only *soi-disant* epiphany in the Joycean text. Of course we have no idea of whether or to what degree it conditioned the central epiphany of the Wake, or even precisely what it was that compelled a “man of letters” to record it.

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