FAMILY AND SOCIETY

At the mythic heart of *Finnegans Wake* lies the model for all mythic designs—the human family. This family is Freud's oedipal family, a primal, law-governed unit in which the claims of society first impose themselves on the individual and are resisted in the interest of self-possession. Amid the catalogue of themes in the second paragraph of *Finnegans Wake*, the distinct oedipal elements of law and family conflict are presented in neat juxtaposition ("nor avoice from afire bellowsed mishe mishe to tauftauf thuartpeatrick: not yet, though venissoon after, had a kidscad buttended a bland old isaac: not yet, though all's fair in vanessy, were sosie sesthers wroth with twone nathandjoe" [3.9]). The unbegotten Yahweh announces His name to Moses from the burning bush—*mishe* is Gaelic for "I am"; *tauf*, the German word for baptize and christen, is followed by a reference to "Thou art Peter,..." Christ's simultaneous conferral of a new name and the temporal authority over the Church on Simon. Next is a reference to Jacob's deception of his blind father, Isaac, by which he stole the birthright from his twin brother, the goatherd Esau. In keeping with the particularly Irish allusions in the passage—"mishe," "Patrick" for "Peter," "peat" for "rock"—this segment also includes a reference to an Irish Isaac: Isaac Butt, who was replaced as head of the
Irish Party by the younger Charles Parnell. Finally, there is reference to a divided and reversed Jonathan Swift, "nathandjoe," whose amours with two girls, Esther Johnson (Stella) and Esther Vanhomrigh (Vanessa), form one of the basic configurations for a recurrent father-daughter incest motif throughout the work.

This family theme, which occurs throughout Joyce's works, consists of a series of oppositions in which the conflicting demands of the society and the individual are expressed. The Law is symbolically embodied in the father, actually in the name of the Father, as we shall see. The father's conferral of the birthright on his son preserves the hierarchy of authority that ensures the peaceful transition of the law through the generations. Joyce's allusion to the origin of the Church's hierarchy and authority in Christ's words, "Thou art Peter," indicates the function of the father as namer, or as designator of identity and position in the system over which he presides. The identity and position of the son in this system of lawful descent is always pre-ordained, a condition upon which young Stephen in Portrait reflects as he reads the inscription in his geography text:

_S Stephen Dedalus is my name,
_Ireland is my nation.
_Clongowes is my dwellingplace
_A_and heaven my expectation. (P, p. 16)

With his careful, child's logic, Stephen recognizes that God is non-contingent—not fixed in time, space, and identity like he is.

God was God's name just as his name was Stephen. Dieu was the French for God and that was God's name too; and when anyone prayed to God and said Dieu then God knew at once that it was a French person that was praying. But though there were different names for God in all the different languages in the world and God understood what all the people who prayed said in their different languages still God remained always the same God and God's real name was God. (P, p. 16)

The son's ability to conceive of himself as a center in the universe of his thought is impaired by his preordained position in the social order, and a struggle for selfhood ensues in the form of a struggle with the father, the end of which is symbolic parricide. In Joyce's earlier works, the escape from the social bondage that stifles the individual and inhibits his creative powers is provided by the dream of exile. Stephen Dedalus in Ulysses redirects his struggle toward the symbolic father
("[He taps his brow.] But in here it is I must kill the priest and the king"
[U, p. 589]).

The son's subordination to the father ensures not only the peace-
ful transmission of the law, but also the repression of incestuous
impulses, which constitutes the primal law of the social order. Accord-
ing to modern anthropological theorists, the viability of the social
group requires that systems of exchange within the society be subject
to law. Culture comes into existence with the incest taboo, the substitu-
tion of "the mechanism of a sociologically determined affinity for that
of a biologically determined consanguinity." Just as the son's rebellion
against the father disrupts the system of lawful descent, so incest
disrupts the social structure by destroying the preordained order of
lineages. This rudimentary outline of family function and structure
suggests that the conflict between the individual and society resides in
the opposition between lawful transference and exchange, and unlawful
appropriation. The ritual forms of giving and taking in Finnegans Wake
help to define the nature of familial relationships in the struggle for
self-possession and, therefore, warrant closer study.

In Finnegans Wake an early preoccupation of Joyce's merges with
a mature one. His interest in the problems of selfhood and his later
concern with Viconian social theory required a vehicle for the simulta-
neous expression of psychoanalytic and social processes. This need was
aptly filled by the Oedipus myth, which was familiar to Joyce from a
number of perspectives, including the Freudian. In the Oedipus myth,
private acts have public consequences, personal crimes become civic
crimes, parricide is also regicide, and the quarrels between brothers-in-
law threaten to result in civil war. Freudian psychology elaborates this
myth in the theory that infantile instincts persist in the character of the
adult, that familial relations express themselves collectively in the
conduct of nations, and that colonial revolutions can therefore be
treated as analogues of infantile patricidal wishes. Psychological con-
licts are also often translated into religious impulses, so that filial
disobedience becomes spiritual rebellion—as Joyce demonstrated in the
earlier Portrait.

Civilization requires repression, and Joyce's earlier works explore
the consequences of that repression in the spiritual paralysis of Dub-
liners, Stephen's artistic impotence in Portrait, and Bloom's sexual
impotence in Ulysses. The first agency of repression is the family, so it
is not surprising that when the strict conscience is relaxed, as in the hallucinatory ambience of Nighttown, it is the family members or their surrogates who rise in fantasy to torment Stephen and Bloom: Stephen’s mother and the priests of his childhood, Molly Bloom with her lover, Bloom’s father and dead son. But in Nighttown, Stephen strikes at his mother’s ghoulish image with his ashplant, and Bloom indulges his most shameful erotic fantasies. In the dream world of *Finnegans Wake* the family also engages in the gamut of antisocial activities, including war, seduction, kidnapping, murder, invasion, stealing, lying, slander, forgery, and hypocrisy. The teleology of their universe is freedom, and in the enduring struggle between the individual’s anarchic psyche and the laws that make civilization possible, the psyche is momentarily triumphant only in the dream.

**THE PRIMAL SCENE**

*Finnegans Wake* harbors at its center a myth of origins that functions as a living mystery for its figures. A secret source of guilt, like the theological Original Sin or the Freudian crimes of incest and paricide buried in the unconscious, its manifestation is an evasive and digressive narrative style. This quest for the “truth” of the ancient crime at the root of HCE’s downfall yields verbal accounts, like the testimonies of Oedipus’s messenger and shepherd, or the anamnesis of the psychoanalytic patient. In *Finnegans Wake* these take the form of rumors, scandal, interrogation, trials, analyses, and the like. From the varying details of many hypothetical versions and allusions, a basic configuration of the event emerges. The principals are always the same: an old man, two girls, and three soldiers—representatives of Earwicker and his children. The girls tempt the old man to commit assorted indecencies that the three men witness; in some versions, they then rise in battle against the father figure. These indecencies form an almost complete array of sexual perversions. According to Campbell and Robinson, “Butt’s ambiguities and innuendoes fan out into a veritable Krafft-Ebing report of sexual depravity, implicating even Butt and his soldier companions in a mishmash of homo-hetero-anal-voyeur misconduct.”

The voyeuristic and exhibitionistic aspects of the event require special notice. The girls tempt the old man by their exposure while urinating, and his peeping at them causes his downfall (“the besieged
bedreamt him stil and solely of those lililiths undeveiled which had undone him” [75.5]). HCE’s voyeurism, paralleled by Charles Dodgson’s hobby of photographing little girls, expresses his desire for his daughter Isabel, who appears in his dreams like Botticelli’s Venus (“I reveal thus my deepseep daughter which was bourne up pridely out of medsdreams unclouthed when I was pillowing in my brime” [366.13]). In turn, HCE exposes himself to the girls. Even by ALP’s well-intentioned account, he “dropped his Bass’s to P flat” (492.3) and “showed me his propendiculic loadpoker” (493.10). The exhibition, however, is clearly for the benefit of his daughter Isabel, who in the bedroom/nursery sequence of the last chapter in Book III, looks upon her father’s awesome erection (“The infant Isabella from her coign to do obeisance toward the duffgerent, as first futherer with drawn brand.... How shagsome all and beastful! What do you show on? I show because I must see before my misfortune so a stark pointing pole” [566.23]). The three soldier/sons of the Phoenix Park occurrence witness the old man’s showing and viewing; like Kev and Dolph in the nursery, viewing the “whome” of their “eternal geomater” (296.36), they are Noah’s sons, “mem and hem and the jacquejack” (422.33) to HCE, exposing the phallic secret of the father.

This inordinate emphasis on watching and being watched in the midst of sexual activity (“They were watching the watched watching” [509.2]), suggests that this primal sin is in fact a primal scene.5 The “treefellers in the shrubrubs” (420.8) and “our maggy seen all, with her sisterin shawl” (7.32) are clearly the three little Earwicker children watching their parents’ copulation.

Yet they wend it back... to peekaboo durk the thicket of slumbwhere, till their hour with their scene be struck for ever and the book of the dates he close, he clasp and she and she seegh her tour d’adieu, Pervinca calling, Soloscar hears. (O Sheem! O Shaam!), and gentle Isad Ysyt gag, flespering in the nightleaves flattery, dinsidously, to Finnegan, to sin again and to make grim grandma grunt and grin again.... (580.13)

The coincidence of primal sin and primal scene draws attention to several interesting complications of the fall in *Finnegans Wake*. An essential characteristic of both theological and psychoanalytic primal sins, the sin of Adam and the crime of Oedipus, is their legacy to progeny and populace: all men are born with the stain of Original Sin, and all will be guilty of oedipal wishes. An individual, private crime becomes a public, universal, and unconscious sin. This essential relation-
ship between private and public acts, which is dramatized in the primal scene, forms a major theme in *Finnegans Wake*. HCE's sin is private and hidden, buried in the past, and perhaps even lost to consciousness. Yet the sin in Phoenix Park becomes a public matter, a "municipal sin business" (5.13), a scandal that dominates universal concern and conversation.

The primal sin, in both the Edenic and Oedipus myths, is the sin of usurping the prerogative of the father, be it acquisition of his knowledge, or appropriation of his throne and wife. The guilt engendered by the primal sin is of this order: the child watching the copulation of his parents learns the secret of procreation, a knowledge that will eventually enable him to replace the father as creator. This is the central teaching of the "Night Lesson" in the *Wake* (II.2).

For, let it be taken that her littlenist is of no magnetude or again let it be granted that Doll the laziest can be dissimulant with all respects from Doll the fiercest, thence must any whatyoulike in the power of emphood be either greater THAN or less THAN the unitate we have in one or hence shall the vectorious ready-eyes of evertwo circumflicksrent searchers never film in the elipsities of their gyribouts those flickers which are returnally reprodicive of themselves. (298.8)

This passage seems to involve dream reversal since it contains an obvious error. "Thence must any whatyoulike in the power of emphood be either greater THAN or less THAN the unitate we have in one..." suggests that any number ("whatyoulike") raised to the power of zero ("power of emphood," $2^0$, for example) must be greater or less than one. A number raised to the power of 0 is, of course, equal to 1. Since the entire paragraph comprises a theorem, we may assume that an error in one part also reverses other elements in the theorem. "Doll the laziest" (last) and "Doll the fiercest" (first) may be as identical as Isabel and her mirror image rather than $D_1 \neq D_2$. The last section of the theorem—which, as a whole, deals with parenthood ("power of emphood")—may therefore also be reversed. In other words, the voyeuristic twins ("vectorious": victorious, "ready-eyes" or "searchers": searchers; also the radial ["ready-eye"] vectors of two flickering search lights or circles) may indeed be able to film the "elipsities" (lapses, ellipse: curve, ellipses: gaps) of the spiraling ("gyribout") movements of those "fickers" (fuckers, figures) that are "returnally" (eternally) "reprodicive" (reproductive, predictive) of themselves—their parents.

The passage suggests that it is not the erotic but the procreative aspect of parental copulation that intrigues the Earwicker children.
"The 'sin' in the sex act is not that of love but that of parentage," writes Norman O. Brown. "It is the father and the mother, not the lover and the beloved, who disappear from the highest Paradise." Helmut Bonheim notes the same phenomenon in *Finnegans Wake*. "Even Adam and Eve seem to sin in *Finnegans Wake* as the parents of Cain and Abel rather than as the children of God. . . . Adam's guilt is associated not so much with disobedience as with fatherhood and age." Of course, Adam's disobedience is itself a son's rebellion against the father; Adam hides the procreative phallus that has usurped God's prerogative ("Feigenbaumblatt and Father" [150.27]). The father engenders his own patricide by the begetting of sons. "Sonship and brotherhood are espoused against fatherhood: but without a father there can be no sons or brothers." The attribution of the Original Sin to God, which James Atherton regards as a basic axiom of *Finnegans Wake*, very likely refers to the father's responsibility for the self-destructive aspect of his creativity. If the parricidal wish is inevitable, then the father must murder his children or be murdered. Laius orders Oedipus exposed, Cronus eats his children, and HCE, like these analogues, has an "eatupus complex" (128.36), revealing his own cannibalistic designs on his children. The Earwicker sons' fear of the father is expressed as "a child's dread for a dragon vicefather" (480.25). It causes the nightmare of the infant Jerry who is assured by his mother, "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" (565.18). But murderous intentions are reciprocal in the Oedipal family. The boys plot parental death and burial while their parents copulate ("and the youngfries will be backfrisking diamondcuts over their lyingin underlayers, spick and spat trowelling a gravetrench for their fourinhand forebears" [572.3]).

**TRIANGULAR DESIRE**

While the father-son conflict operates at a visceral level in the nursery, around feelings of danger and self-preservation, the thematic development of their adult confrontations broadens into a complex dramatization of the struggle for selfhood in intersubjective relationships. The expression of both paternal and fraternal rivalry, through the models of imperialistic conflict and the love triangle, suggests that the male conflicts in *Finnegans Wake* are founded on a dialectic of desire that revolves around mediated objects.
The love triangle is a predominant theme in Joyce’s work, even as early as the poem about the rival in *Chamber Music*. Joyce develops the jealous emotions engendered by competition for a beloved in the relationship of Stephen to Emma Clery and Father Moran in *Stephen Hero*. But not until *Exiles* does he also explore the homosexual and masochistic aspects of such affairs. *Exiles* is notable too for shifting the focus from the man-woman to the man-man relationship, thereby relegating the woman to a mediated position.

The triangular relationships in *Finnegans Wake* are developed most fully in the children’s games of II.1 and the Tristan/Isolde chapter, II.4. Other love triangles occur in parables and fables, for example, the tale of Burrus, Caseous, and Margareen. But the unmistakable oedipal configuration of these affairs is best revealed in the myth of King Mark’s betrayal by Tristan and Isolde, and in its analogue, the legend of Finn MacCool, Dermot, and Grania. Tristan and Dermot are nephews of the older men, or sons by displacement; the women they *steal* are bride and wife, respectively, of Mark of Cornwall and Finn MacCool. Among the many permutations of the oedipal triangle in *Finnegans Wake*, the father’s position as an obstacle to the son’s desire for* the mother is clearly a factor. Yet the Tristan myth in the *Wake* emphasizes the wish to replace the father as King; the stealing of his bride seems to be a means to that more primary objective. The chapter devoted to the Tristan myth (II.4) opens with a verse or song mocking the defeated, impotent, old king.

—*Three quarks for Muster Mark!*
SIRE he hasn’t got much of a bark
And sure any he has it’s all beside the mark.

*............................
You’re the rumnest old rooster ever flopped out of a Noah’s ark
And you think you’re cock of the wark.
Fowls, up! Tristy’s the spry young spark
That’ll tread her and wed her and bed her and red her
Without ever winking the tail of a feather
And that’s how that chap’s going to make his money and mark!* (383.1)

The subordination of the love affair to the father-son conflict is suggested by the reference to Mark as a drunken Noah, recalling the encounter of HCE and the three sons in the Phoenix Park incident and the pun on “mark” itself ("beside the mark" versus "make his money
and mark"), indicating the son’s usurpation of the father’s position. Since Isolde is clearly desired by the son because she is also desired by the father, her position is mediated in the quarrel between father and son. René Girard, who reveals this same configuration of “triangular desire” at the thematic core of the novels of Flaubert, Stendhal, Proust, and Dostoyevsky, points out that the motivating principle of this type of love relationship is the subject’s imitation of the desire of the other, in order to be like him, to become him.¹⁰

Not only do love triangles often have political consequences, as young Stephen Dedalus learns over a spoiled Christmas dinner, but the same competitive dynamics that prompt rivalry in love also prompt rivalry in war. Joyce features those military conflicts in Finnegans Wake—Clontarf, Balaklava, Waterloo—that are marked not only by imperialistic consequences, but also by strong interpersonal rivalries that simulate paternal and fraternal conflicts: King Sitric and Brian Boru, Lord Lucan and Captain Nolan, Wellington and Napoleon. Like little Tommy and Jacky Caffrey battling over the sand castle in Ulysses, or young Stephen competing in math class under the silk badges of York and Lancaster, military disputes are motivated in Joyce’s works by a desire for dominance both stronger and more complex than the mere desire for possession. (“This is hiena hinnessy laughing aloud at the Willingdone. This is lipsyg dooley krieng the funk from the hinessy” [10.4]). The slapstick wargames of the Wake’s mock Waterloo battle test the manhood of each participant in the face of raucous humiliation. The battles between males in the Wake have the earmarks of the classic Master-slave dialectic of Hegelian philosophy. According to Kojève, Hegel’s definition of man’s humanity rests upon a distinction between his animal “desire,” which is directed toward objects, and his human “Desire,” which is directed toward another “Desire.” “Therefore, to desire the Desire of another is in the final analysis to desire that the value that I am or that I ‘represent’ be the value desired by the other: I want him to ‘recognize’ my value as his value. I want him to ‘recognize’ me as an autonomous value. . . . Therefore, to speak of the ‘origin’ of Self-Consciousness is necessarily to speak of a fight to the death for ‘recognition’.”¹¹ Hegel’s fight to the death for “recognition” devolves into the Master-slave dialectic, which Norman O. Brown attributes to the father-son relationship. “The dispute between fathers and sons is over property . . . paternal power is a property which is
inherited and which consists in having property in one's own children. To be the subject of a king is the same as to be the son of a father; and to be a son is the same as to be a slave."  

Significantly, the most overt act of parricide in *Finnegans Wake*, Buckley's shooting of the Russian General, finds the warring sons united in the aspects of the newly liberated ("BUTT and TAFF [desprot slave wager and foeman feodal unsheckled, now one and the same person....]") [345.7]). The objective of parricide is a noncontingent selfhood, an identity with appurtenant rights and powers not subject to bequest, but wrenched violently from the father by the unlawful appropriation of his wife, property, and life; having killed the father, the slave/son comes into possession of himself.

The fraternal rivalry in *Finnegans Wake* is also patterned on the Hegelian dynamic of the father-son conflict. Campbell and Robinson comment on the brothers' opposition, "If it is the typical lot of Shem to be whipped and despoiled, Shaun is typically the whipper and despoiler." Although the brothers are presented as equal opposites and therefore interchangeable ("Galliver and Gellover. Unless they changes by mistake. I seen the likes in the twinningling of an aye" [620.13]), their relationship consists of a power struggle. Shaun's shrill denunciation of Shem as a sham (I.7) whose "lowness" is the hallmark of his character, employs the strategy of the Hegelian Master, who maintains his authority over the slave by refusing to grant him "recognition." In the fable of the Mookse and the Gripes, it is precisely the humanity of his antagonist that the Shaun-like Mookse refuses to acknowledge, while demanding obeisance for himself ("Blast yourself and your anathomy infairioribos! No, hang you for an animal rurale! I am superbly in my supremest poncif! Abase you, baldyqueens!" [154.10]).

The configuration of the enemy twins enjoys a dual function in expressing antagonistic relationships in the *Wake*. On one hand, the fraternal struggle reflects the same dynamic process of Hegelian intersubjective struggle as the father-son conflict. On the other hand, the Wakean enemy twins clearly constitute a divided self. The twins have their philosophical roots in Bruno's dualism ("every power in nature must evolve an opposite in order to realize itself"). This evolution of opposites is a dynamic struggle in *Finnegans Wake*, a process of simultaneous identification and aggression in which the chief weapon is unlawful appropriation.
The relationship of Shem and Shaun as a divided self is always implied and can be found stated explicitly in some passages. "He's the sneaking likeness of us, faith, me altar's ego in miniature. . . . I'm enormously full of that foreigner, I'll say I am! Got by the one goat, suckled by the same nanna, one twitch, one nature makes us oldworld kin. . . . I hate him about his patent henesy, plashf it, yet am I amorist. I love him" (463.6). Foreign and old world kin—this relationship has psychoanalytic resonances, like Oedipus and Laius in bloody combat at the crossroads as ostensible aliens, but really father and son. As the relationship of the doubled self, it has intrasubjective resonances as well, for the experience of being simultaneously oneself and a stranger—even an enemy—to oneself, describes the experience of the infant first confronted with its mirror image. French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan calls this primordial event in the child's life the stade du miroir. This first confrontation with his mirror image is an alienating experience for the child, because for the first time he perceives himself as an object, an "other," an image of an "I" that is "me." This alienation from the self as "other" results in aggressivity with the intent of appropriating or controlling the "other" self.14

The Wake's enemy twins as mirror image antagonists are even represented by mirror-reflected typographical symbols ("Here [the memories framed from walls are minding] till wranglers for wring-wrowdy wready are, F*1" [266.20]).15 According to Lacan, the child will be enthralled to his "other" until he can reclaim his own subjectivity, his sense of himself as subject rather than object. This liberation comes with the acquisition of language, which Lacan characterizes as an act of appropriation, of taking for one's own.16 By acquiring language, the child can participate in the world as speaker rather than spoken about, as namer rather than named, as judge rather than judged. He becomes assured of his control over his mirror image, because that alter ego cannot initiate speech.

The struggle between the mirror twins of Finnegans Wake involves many kinds of appropriation, including the theft of love and ambiguous exchanges of money reminiscent of the gold coin in "Two Gallants." But word-stealing plays the major role in the brother conflict. If Shem, the underdog, invariably bests his brother, it is precisely because his nefarious linguistic activity functions as an ineluctable threat. Shem is variously described as an eavesdropper and word-stealer, "treasuriing with condign satisfaction each and every crumb of trektalk, covetous of
his neighbour's word" (172.29); a would-be forger, who studies “how
cutely to copy all their various styles of signature so as one day to utter
an epical forged cheque on the public for his own private profit”
(181.15); and a plagiarist (“Who can say how many pseudostylic
shamiana, how few or how many of the most venerated public impos-
tures, how very many piously forged palimpsests slipped in the first
place by this morbid process from his pelagiarist pen?” [181.36]).
Reference to Shem’s writing as “some most dreadful stuff in a mur-
derous mirrorhand” (177.30), provides the first clue that the victim of
this thieving is his mirror-image twin—a suspicion seemingly confirmed
by Shaun’s blustering accusations before the four old men (“As often as
I think of that unbloody housewarmer, Shem Skrivenitch, always
cutting my phrase to please his phrase, bogoror, I declare I get the
jawache!”[423.14]). However, when asked insistently about his own
language and writing ability, Shaun reveals his vulnerability with lame
excuses (“Outragedy of poetscalds! Acomedy of letters! I have them
all, tame, deep and harried, in my mine’s I” [425.24]) and evasion of
the issue (“I would never for anything take so much trouble of such
doing” [425.33]). Shaun hates Shem for his “root language” (424.17)
with good reason: at the end of the Justice and Mercy debate Shaun
“points the deathbone and the quick are still” (193.29), while Shem
“lifts the lifewand and the dumb speak” (195.5). Shaun as “our
handsome young spiritual physician that was to be” (191.16) is de-
feated by “Pain the Shamman” (192.23)—calling to mind Lévi-Strauss’s
explanation that the shaman heals by providing the patient with a
language. 18

Many infantile traumas inform the anxieties that rule the dream
world of Finnegans Wake. The infant’s sense of powerlessness pervades
many Wakean fantasies: the child’s bewilderment and exclusion in
viewing the parental sex act, the jealous love for the parent of the
opposite sex, the trial of acquiring control over bodily functions, and
the terror of feeling one’s reality suspended between one’s body and the
mirror image. The many violent events in Finnegans Wake are plausible
as expressions of infantile combat against this powerlessness: taking the
mother away from the father, aggressive defecation and urination,
stealing words with which to slander everyone, like young Stephen at
boarding school feeling the mysterious power of “smuggling,” “suck,”
and “belt.”

Finnegans Wake contains another configuration explicitly repre-
senting the *stade du miroir*: Isabel and her looking glass image. James Atherton finds the source of Isabel’s split image in Morton Prince’s account of a female split personality, whose two major components rival Shem and Shaun in antagonism and paranoia. In contrast, Isabel’s relationship to her alter ego, Maggie or Madge, is one of simple narcissism. The program at the Feenichts Playhouse lists Isabel as, “IZOD (Miss Butys Pott . . .), a bewitching blonde who dimples delightfully and is approached in loveliness only by her grateful sister reflection in a mirror” (220.7). Joyce spares the women in his later works the self-contempt that afflicts his males, and their self-love is often expressed in their mirrors. Gerty MacDowell knows “how to cry nicely before the mirror. You are lovely, Gerty, it said” (*U*, p. 351). Molly Bloom likewise remembers her juvenile narcissism, “I used to love myself then stripped at the washstand dabbing and creaming” (*U*, p. 763).

Because of their narcissism, Joyce’s women need not compete and war with one another for self-possession, as do their brothers. Hardly a feminist, even Molly Bloom speculates, “I dont care what anybody says itd be much better for the world to be governed by the women in it you wouldnt see women going and killing one another and slaughtering” (*U*, p. 778). But the lack of alienation and intrasubjective conflict costs the women a price in self-awareness. Asked about immortality, struggle for life, and Darwinism, Issy—like Gerty MacDowell—can only think of romance, sex, and simple piety (“Of I be leib in the immoralities? O, you mean the strangle for love and the sowiveall of the prettiest? Yep, we open hab coseries in the home” [145.26]). Only the women of the early works, Eveline, Greta Conroy, and Bertha Rowan, suffer internal conflict and alienation—an alienation of the ego like that experienced in the *stade du miroir*, and which, according to Lacan, is a precondition for human knowledge.

Like Gerty and Molly, Isabel is a temptress. But unlike the complex, mediated desires of men, the psychology of female desire is so narcissistic as to be primitive by Hegelian standards. In the monologues of Gerty, Molly, and Isabel, the men are virtually pretexts for fantasies about clothes, undergarments, perfumes, the accouterments of their own bodies, as though the women were their own erotic objects (“God I wouldnt mind being a man and get up on a lovely woman” [*U*, p. 770]). Yet by combining Isabel’s role as a temptress with the mirror-image double, Joyce has utilized the narcissistic components of her
characterization to create a further ingenious and subtle example of triangular desire in one of the major configurations of *Finnegans Wake*: the old man with two girl-loves.

The triangle’s analogues, representing HCE’s attraction to his divided daughter that brings about his fall in the Phoenix Park incident, include Swift-Stella-Vanessa, Daddy Browning and the peaches, and Napoleon-Josephine-Marie Louise. But it is the allusions to Charles Dodgson in *Finnegans Wake*, impressively enumerated and explained by James Atherton, that most clearly contain both the theme of mirror-image narcissism and the old man-young girls configuration: Alice and her looking glass image (“Nircississes are as the doaters of inversion. Secilas through their laughing classes” [526.34]) and Dodgson’s susceptibility to little girls, particularly Alice Liddle and Isa Bowman, “isabeaubel” (146.17). Freud explains in his essay on narcissism how the two configurations are related.

Such women have the greatest fascination for men, not only for aesthetic reasons, since as a rule they are the most beautiful, but also because of certain interesting psychological constellations. It seems very evident that one person’s narcissism has a great attraction for those others who have renounced part of their own narcissism and are seeking after object-love; the charm of a child lies to a great extent in his narcissism, his self-sufficiency and inaccessibility. . . .

Lewis Carroll’s Alice is undoubtedly the charming, self-sufficient child par excellence in literature, and Carroll, like HCE, is a man who loves little girls because they love themselves.

Since the girl-child’s self-love engenders the old man’s desire for her, the configuration forms an attenuated situation of “triangular desire.” In the Tristan myth, Joyce superimposes the conventional love triangle of the old man-woman-young man oedipal type with the figure of the old man and two girls: Iseult is a type of Isabel (“Iseult la belle” [398.29]), split into the doubles of Isolde of Brittany and Isolde of Ireland. The Tristan myth in *Finnegans Wake*, therefore, duplicates the sin in Phoenix Park to demonstrate intersecting incestuous desires: Isabel, combining functions of mother and daughter, is the object of both the father and the sons in their struggle for family primacy.

**IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER**

While the family in *Finnegans Wake* is a complicated psychological constellation, it also serves as the paradigm of a primal social structure.
The problem of relating the psychological and social significance of family dynamics is not without precedent: Freud himself delineated the social analogue of the Oedipus complex in *Totem and Taboo*. The investigation into the sin in Phoenix Park delves into life's most fundamental mysteries, the mystery of human origin, the mystery of sex fraught with the prohibited oedipal wishes. Yet while incest and parricide are crimes committed in the bosom of the family, they are of all crimes most worthy of public concern, since they strike at the very foundation of the social order. Oedipus's sins jeopardize society and must, therefore, be publicly tried and punished. HCE's family affairs, likewise, become the leaven of a veritable "hubbub caused in Edenborough" (29.36).

Joyce discovered and utilized a third theory of social origins to complement his use of the Edenic and Oedipus myths in *Finnegans Wake*. Found in Vico's *Scienza Nuova*, this myth significantly juxtaposes the origins of society and language. The following translator's summary retells Vico's account of the event when the sky first thundered.

The descendants of Ham and Japheth and the non-Hebraic descendants of Shem, having wandered through the great forest of the earth for a century or two, had lost all human speech and institutions and had been reduced to bestiality, copulating at sight and inclination. These dumb beasts naturally took the thundering sky to be a great animated body, whose flashes and claps were commands, telling them what they had to do. The thunder surprised some of them in the act of copulation and frightened copulating pairs into nearby caves. This was the beginning of matrimony and of settled life.23

Vico's myth skillfully illustrates the impossibility of civilized society amid conditions of sexual promiscuity and mutism. Vico's post-diluvial peoples specifically lack a law-governed system of exchange, which would establish order and communication among them. Kinship laws are therefore a major prerequisite for civilization. "The primordial Law is therefore that which in regulating marriage ties superimposes the kingdom of culture on that of nature abandoned to the law of copulation."24 Kinship laws, such as the incest taboo, govern a system of possible combinations in mating, and are therefore analogous to linguistic laws, such as phonotactic laws which govern the possible combinations of sounds, and syntactic laws which govern the combination of words in a sentence. "This law, therefore, (the incest prohibition) is revealed clearly enough as identical to an order of Language. For
without kinship nominations, no power is capable of instituting the order of preferences and taboos which bind and weave the yarn of lineage down through succeeding generations.\textsuperscript{25}

Both kinship systems and language, instituted by the clap of thunder in Vico’s myth, serve the foundation of civilization by introducing those distinctions that linguistically and socially constitute meaningful systems. The source of this meaning in the myth is the voice of the thunder, which in Eliot’s \textit{Wasteland} spoke its humanizing commands, and which, interpreted as the voice of God by “the dumb beasts,” functions as a version of the theological Word or Logos.

Although Joyce clearly derived the thunder in \textit{Finnegans Wake} from Vico, the image is as polyvalent and overdetermined as all other elements in the dream. Its significance is concealed not only in the hundred letters of its name, but also in the contexts and associations that surround it. The thunder is associated with male conflict, presumably the father’s fall, “the hundering blundering dunderfunder of plundersundered manhood” (596.2). It is always sounded at moments of great crisis, like the Prankquean’s assault, the publication of the scurrilous ballad or the letter, the trials of HCE in the tavern and of Shaun on the mound, and the father’s interruption of the children’s sexual play, like Vico’s thunder or the fireworks on Sandymount Strand in “Nausicaa.”

Because the thunder occurs when the father is falling, it is analogous to other noises that suggest sin or guilt in the work. These are human noises, like HCE’s stutter that itself resembles the garbled speech of Tom Kernan, who in “Grace” fell drunkenly down the pub’s WC steps and bit off a corner of his tongue. The thunder also resembles the thumping, bumping noise of someone falling down a ladder,” . . . drumstrumnromiumahumptadump . . .” (314.8), or the noise of a shutter being shut after HCE is threatened by the Prankquean and later by a lynch mob outside his tavern, or when the father shuts the door in several languages after bringing the children in for the night, “Lukkdeoer-endunandurraskekdylooshoomoporter . . .” (257.27). The thunder is a cough that interrupts Shaun while telling his fable. It is also, of course, the anal/gunshot noises of the father shitting or being shot.

It is difficult to determine the common link of all these manifestations of the thunder, unless it is the klang-association of thunder-shutter-stutter-shitter-shooter, a connection not at all unlikely in a dream-work since the unconscious connects words by sounds as well as
meaning. It is clear, in any event, that all of these activities suggest either Wakean sins, like shitting and shooting, or guilt, like stuttering, nervous coughing, or shutting oneself away from persecution. Wake thunder, unlike Vico’s thunder, does not function as the civilizing command of God. On the contrary, instead of promoting matrimony, the thunder words themselves express obscenities (“...foul...whor...strump...porn...kocks...tupper...strip...” [90.31]).

James Atherton coalesces thunder and stutter as symptom of the original sin of God, “Joyce is suggesting that the original masterbuilder is God and that He stutters when his voice is heard in the thunder—thus proving that He is conscious of having committed a sin!”

As Vico’s thundering God is law-giver, so the Wake’s thundering HCE is law-breaker. If the thunder is understood as a language, either as authoritative or fallen, the father’s symbolic function emerges more clearly. The Christian tradition defines the source of authority as the Word. The authority of the Symbolic father resides, therefore, in his name, because he names himself, designates his own function, and creates his own identity. Jacques Lacan writes, “It is in the name of the father that we must recognize the support of the Symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law.” The prototype of the Symbolic father is therefore the Mosaic God, whose justification as the source of law resides in the tautology of his name, the inviolable certainty of his identity. The Symbolic father, “he who is ultimately capable of saying ‘I am who I am’ ” is the center or pivot who defines, names, and gives meaning to the constellation of personages around him. Finnegans Wake contains numerous references to the Yahwistic “I am,” as well as to the naming ritual of baptism, by means of the recurrent verbal motifs “mishe mishe” and “tauf tauf.”

The father corresponds to the semantic function of language; he is, as it were, the legal “equivalent to the law of speech which fixes each in his place.” The peculiar language of Finnegans Wake expresses the analogy between the law of man and the law of language. Broken language reveals the broken law, as Joyce may have learned from Freud’s “The Psychopathology of Everyday Life,” or from the accidents of history itself: the Wake contains frequent allusions to the misspelling of “hesitancy,” which revealed Pigott’s forgery at the Parnell inquiry.

In Finnegans Wake, then, the Viconian myth of social and lin-
guistic origin is essentially reversed: in Vico, the thunder creates language and kinship laws while in the *Wake*, the stutter serves as a symptom of linguistic breakdown and incestuous wishes. Edmund Epstein comments on the characteristic behavior of HCE as “nervous, stuttering denials that he ever thought of incest with his daughter alternate with fearful praise of his wife. . . .” But denials are of no avail. During one of his trials he is charged with “Begetting a wife which became his niece” (373.26); during a later inquest, irresistible voices call out, “Rape the daughter! Choke the pope!” (500.17). An account of the Earwicker parents’ copulation is interrupted by the passage often cited as the most lurid in the work. It tells the fable of the polymorphous sexual depravity in the household of Honophrius, a type of HCE (III.4). Involving every character cluster in the *Wake*—even those agents of inquiry and judgment, the four old men and the twelve customers of the pub—the story is a lively fantasy of incest (“Honophrius, Felicia, Eugenius and Jeremias are consanguineous to the lowest degree” [572.25]). Presented in the form of a case at law, these unseemly familial gambollings are claimed to be widespread, even universal, occurrences (“This, lay readers and gentlemen, is perhaps the commonest of all cases arising out of umbrella history . . . in our courts of litigation” [573.35]). “The incest that rules Earwicker’s night ruled Freud’s days,” writes William York Tindall.

The social consequence of incest is the destruction of the social order. Vico describes the underworld as the place where “vagrants remained in their infamous promiscuity. The god of this underworld is Erebus, called the son of Chaos; that is, of the confusion of human seeds.” Incest obliterates those distinctions that create a system of relationships in which every individual has a function and an identity. Laius’s attempted infanticide robs the child Oedipus of his true identity and casts him among strangers. At the fatal crossroads father and son meet as strangers, an alienation consequent to Laius’s disturbance of kinship laws—his “underestimation” of the father-son relationship, to borrow a term from Lévi-Strauss.

The great encounter between HCE and the cad in *Finnegans Wake* also involves mistaken identity and lack of recognition. HCE’s clothes, as in all later accounts of this incident, comprise an eclectic foreign costume with India rubber military cap (“caoutchouc kepi” [35.8]), Indian gaiters (“Bhagafat gaiters” [35.10] also Bhagavad Gita), Scottish rain cape (“inverness” [35.10]), and a roadstaff reminiscent of Laius’s
two-pointed goad. The foreign, military costume suggests an analogue to native-invader confrontations in the *Wake*. The cad is carrying his overcoat ("overgoat" [35.13]) under his shoulder ("schulder" [35.13]: German, Schuld, sin, guilt) sheepside out, to look more like a comfortable, countrified gentleman. The allusion to the Jacob and Esau myth in this passage is important because it introduces into the HCE-cad encounter a cluster of provocative references to confused identity and unlawful family descent. The coat worn sheepside out to look more like the hirsute, country-boy Esau is, of course, the ploy used by Jacob to impersonate his brother and so defraud him of his lawful birthright. This also makes the cad something of a wolf in sheep's clothing, a further clue that all is not well and that HCE is right to be suspicious and defensive.

Interference with kinship laws causes the social fabric to unravel and identities to become indeterminate once again. When Oedipus discovers the truth of his double crime, he also learns his identity at last. But that identity is no more: as husband/son/father/brother there is no longer a locus in his relationships in which he might find definition. Like Oedipus, HCE is guilty of an ancient crime ("ages and ages after the alleged misdeemeanour" [35.5]) that seems to involve the confusing of races and lineages consequent to violation of kinship laws ("the anniversary, as it fell out, of his first assumption of his birthday suit and rights in appurtenance to the confusioning of human races" [35.3]). Pursuit of the criminal leads even deeper into the morass of his uncertain identity. "Whence it is a sloppisher matter, given the wet and low visibility (since in this scherzarade of one's thousand one nightinesses that sword of certainty which would identiside the body never falls) to idendifine the individuone" (51.3).

This matter of the uncertainty and indeterminability of HCE's identity deserves special consideration because it is too easily dismissed as merely an aspect of his archetypal function, his embodiment of multitudes and subsequent lack of individuality. While all the Wakean characters have many names and conditions, these are not generally in themselves the subject of dispute in the narrative. Yet HCE's name and identity are the topic of frequent controversy. The uncertainty of HCE's identity must be accorded thematic rather than purely stylistic status in the work, since parricide and questions of identity are thematically related. In other words, questions of who HCE is and what he has done are inseparable.
Frequently, HCE is portrayed as everyman and no man. He is seen as "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" (32.19). He is called "a manyfeast munificent more mob than man" (261.21). However, the investigation into the HCE-cad encounter is thwarted by the retort, "But how transparingly nontrue, gentlewriten! His feet one is not a tall man, not at all, man. No such parson. No such fender. No such lumber. No such race" (63.9), and after a recount of his sins, he is warned, "First you were Nomad, next you were Namar, now you're Numah and it's soon you'll be Nomon" (374.22).

Like the father, the figure of law and authority, and namer of family members, the name of the father has special significance. His given name is uncertain from the start ("concerning the genesis of Harold or Humphrey Chimpden’s occupational agnomen" [30.2]), he is even called "Haromphreyld" (31.8) to signify this initial confusion. The story of the origin of his surname is unconfirmed ("Comes the question are these the facts of his nominigentilisation as recorded and accolated in both or either of the collateral andrewpaulmurphyc narratives" [31.33]). It is by the presence of his initials in arbitrary three-word sequences, "tristurned initials, the cluekey to a worldroom beyond the roomwhorld" (100.28), that HCE is identified in most passages of the Wake. The initials are indeed merely a "cluekey" (clew: ball of thread used in guiding one’s way out of a labyrinth), or a guideline through the maze of the Wake. In such sequences as "Haveyou-caught-emerald’s" (63.18), *"hears cricket on the earth" (138.26), "Heinz cans everywhere" (581.5), or the transposed "coal at the end of his harrow" (127.8), the initials tell us not *who* HCE is, but merely where he is present. Considered in the light of dream language, the initials signal a repressed reference to the father, an involuntary and unrecognized thought of him. We find the greatest multiplicity of HCE’s names in the passage preceding "The Ballad of Persse O’Reilly," where he is named at will by the citizenry. "Some vote him Vike, some mote him Mike, some dub him Llyn and Phin while others hail him 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).35

*Italics mine.*
In contrast to that certainty of identity which makes the Symbolic father the figure of the Law, the Wake's father figure emerges as indeterminable, dependent, and variable by name. He is called "Cloudy father! Unsure! Nongood!" (500.18); and he resides, via initials, in the phrase "Haud certo ergo" (263.28), "nothing certain, therefore."

Leopold Bloom, the father in Ulysses, also has variable names since his family name has been changed from Virag to Bloom, and he uses "Flower" as a pseudonym in his guilty correspondence. Joyce's cynical notions of fatherhood, which Stephen calls a "necessary evil" and a "legal fiction," are amplified to primal and mythic proportions in the portrayal of HCE. "Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten. On that mystery and not on the madonna which the cunning Italian intellect flung to the mob of Europe the church is founded and founded irremovably because founded, like the world, macro- and microcosm, upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood" (U, p. 207). The very certitude of the name of the Mosaic God is challenged, then, as in the prophecy of Shaun ("you sprout all your abel and woof your wings dead certain however of neuthing whatever to aye forever while Hyam Hyam's in the chair" [455.21]). HCE as God in the Wake is invoked as "Ouhr Former who erred in having" (530.36). The paired Celtic-German refrain from the first page of the work—"mishe mishe": "I am, I am" and "tauf-tauf": "baptize, baptize"—is linguistically profaned throughout the work.

The Wakean vision of a universe ever hurtling toward chaos is based on the theme of the fallen father. He is named rather than namer. He is uncertain of name and identity, unlocatable rather than a center that fixes, defines, and gives meaning to his cosmos. He is a lawbreaker rather than lawgiver. As head of the family, he is incestuous rather than the source of order in the relations of his lineage.

REDEMPTION: THE FAILURE OF THE SON

From the orderly progression of Vico's downward spiral (theocracy-monarchy-democracy-anarchy) as well as from mythic and Freudian sources, we might expect the sons to assume the position of law and authority upon their parricide of the father. Freud says of the parricidal sons in Totem and Taboo, "They revoked their deed by forbidding the killing of the totem, the substitute for their father; and
they renounced its fruits by resigning their claim to the women who had now been set free. They thus created out of their filial sense of guilt the two fundamental taboos of totemism, which for that very reason inevitably corresponded to the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex." 36 The murder of the father, therefore, establishes a debt and a guilt that bind the son to the Law for life. 37

The sons of HCE, however, appear to find no such redemption in the *Wake*. If Christ atoned for the sin of Adam and founded a spiritual kingdom on earth, Shaun in his reenactment of the *via crucis* and its commemorative, the Mass, perverts the salvation process and affirms a hypostatic union of shame with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

—Ouer Tad, Hellig Babbau, whom certayn orbits assertant re humeplace of Chivitats Ei, Smithwick, Rhonnda, Kaledon, Salem (Mass), Childers, Argos and Duthless. 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! (481.20).

In parody of the Lord’s prayer, “Ouer Tad” is not so easily and centrally located in heaven (Chivitats Ei, civitats dei: state of god); he may also be found in Scotland, Greece, and Salem, Massachusetts. He is both patriarch (hellig, hellish, heilig: German, holy; Babbo: Italian, endearment for father; Abraham) and totem animal (Babba, baboon, Brookbear)—“Well, I am advised he might in a sense be both nevertheless.” He is also a terrifying figure of power and law as “tiptip tim oldy faher now the man I go in fear of” (481.31) (Babau: “bogie with which nurses in Langedoc terrify unruly children,” according to Adaline Glasheen 38 ). But the father and son are bound by a crime so great that even the self-name of the Mosaic God, “mishe mishe”—I am, I am—becomes “Mushame.”

The precise nature of the criminal union of father and son adds a startling sexual dimension to the theme of parricide. In a veiled but interesting allusion to *Ulysses*, the three grenadiers or soldiers who surprise and attack the father throughout the *Wake* are described as a profane Trinity in III.3:

*Three in one, one and three.*
*Shem and Shaun and the shame that sunders em.*
*Wisdom’s son, folly’s brother.* (526.13)

The words “the shame that sunders em” recall Stephen’s discussion of father-son incest in *Ulysses*. “They are sundered by a bodily shame so
steadfast that the criminal annals of the world, stained with all other
incests and bestialities, hardly record its breach. Sons with mothers,
sires with daughters, lesbic sisters, loves that dare not speak their name,
nephews with grandmothers, jailbirds with keyholes, queens with prize
bulls” (U, p. 207).

In Finnegans Wake the sons are charged with violating this taboo
of taboos, male homosexual incest—specifically buggery. The guilty
fusiliers in “The Ballad of Persse O’Reilly” are the three soldier/sons
who rise up against the father during the incident in Phoenix Park:

He was jolting by Wellington’s monument
Our notorious hippocopotamums
When some bugger let down the backtrap of the omnibus
And he caught his death of fusiliers, . . . (47.7)

During Shaun’s inquest he is asked, “Did any orangepeelers or green-
goaters appear periodically up your sylvan family tree?” (522.16). He
answers with a revealing denial, “Buggered if I know!” (522.18),
whereupon he is charged with “homosexual catheism of empathy be-
tween narcissism of the expert and steatopygic invertedness” (522.30).

In the manner of dreams, a number of closely related themes are
superimposed or condensed in Finnegans Wake and thereby elaborated
into a fabric of highly integrated psychic stuff. The most explicit
instance of parricide in Finnegans Wake is Buckley’s shooting of the
Russian General, presented through the Butt and Taff skit in II.3.
Buckley shoots the Russian General in the ass, after he has defecated
and wiped himself with a bit of Irish sod. Like every story in the Wake,
this one has its versions, including the Russian General impaled on a
bishop’s crozier (“I gave one dobblenotch and I ups with my crozzier.
Mirro!” [353.19]), or shot with an arrowlike Cock Robin (“With my
how on armer and hits leg an arrow cockshock rockrogn. Sparro!”
[353.20]). The sons’ buggery and parricide of the father are, therefore,
erotic/aggressive versions of the same act, the same sin, that is, the
father’s anal impalement.39

The father’s sin, his defecation, is simply the reverse of the same
act. So is Shaun’s redemptive (Last Supper) activity in III.1. After an
extravagant meal of “spadefuls of mounded food” (405.30), Shaun
follows this Last Supper with the fourteen answers of his via crucis
before catapulting into the Liffey in his barrel, in a kind of parody of
Christ’s ascension. This same disappearing act is so scatological as to
thoroughly profane the sacred event of Christ’s ascension. The narrator
of the passage calls himself “I, poor ass” (405.6); and Shaun himself becomes “the soft semplgawn slob of the world” (426.10), a soft, foolish person, but also a soft lump in Gaelic. After a bit of sentimental weeping, he takes “a wipe at his pudgies” (426.14)—cheeks, we assume, reminding us of the Russian General who uses a bit of Irish sod for the purpose. Sleepily, Shaun looks at the star-studded heaven, when “the dreamskhwindel necklassed him” (426.27) (“dreamskhwindel”: Scandinavian, dreamy whorl or spiral; “windel”: German, diaper) and caused him to lose the balance of “his ballbearing extremities” (426.29), which in a scatological passage are probably not feet. Dream reversal causes Shaun to descend rather than ascend. The dreamy spiral that lassoes Shaun suggests a stream of urine or the flush of a toilet, as it causes Shaun’s barrel to roll backwards into “Killester’s lapes and falls, with corks, staves and treeleaves and more bubbles” (427.1) until he is momentarily uprighted down in the valley “in a dip of the downs” (427.6), where he disappears and vanishes “like a popo (German: ass) down a papa, from circular circulatio” (427.7). There follows a gurgling “Gaogagaone” (427.9) until only a single clue betrays his late presence, or the presence of his spirit, “A reek was waft on the luftstream. He was ours, all fragrance” (427.11).

Sin and redemption in terms of anal ingress and egress in the Wake reveal the failure of the father-son relationship to effect the stability of the social order through the restorative power of the Law. Redemption in Finnegans Wake does not result from the new covenant forged by the guilt of the sons, nor from a divine pardon. As in Christian mythology, redemption comes from a type of grace, but here a grace that transforms chaos into play, the loss of identity into freedom, and the fall of man into a celebration.

REDEMPTION: MATERNAL SALVAGE

The agent of grace and redemption in Finnegans Wake is Anna Livia Plurabelle, the mother of the Earwicker family and the river Liffey. Like male characters in the work, ALP is identified with all female characters; she therefore serves a dual role in relation to HCE as both temptress and savior. Although the function of the temptress as mediated object in the conflicts between fathers and sons has been discussed earlier, some reference to the means and motives of seduction will be necessary in order to examine ALP’s redemptive role.
ALP attempts to rescue HCE from the persecution of the populace and to restore him to the position of the potent father.

She who shuttered him after his fall and waked him widowt sparing and gave him keen and made him able and held adazzillahs to each arche of his noes, she who will not rast her from her running to seek him till, with the help of the okeamic, some such time that she shall have been after hiding the crumbends of his enormousness in the areyou lookingfor Pearl far sea, (ur, uri, uria!) stood forth... with pawns, prelates and pookas pelotting in her piecebag, for Handiman the Chomp, Esquoro, biskbask, to crush the slander's head. (102.1)

ALP, crushing the slander's head, recalls the icon of Mary, crushing the head of the Edenic serpent. But ALP is as much a profane Mary as her son Shaun is a profane Christ. Unlike the immaculately conceived Virgin, ALP, already tainted in her youthful role as the temptress Eve, undertakes her mission of salvation burdened by "the weight of old fletch" (621.33), a scavenger woman collecting rubbish, or the muddy Liffey bearing Dublin's sewage out to sea.

ALP's redemptive act, like the sin in Phoenix Park, is retold in alternate versions of the same tale. In one, she is the scavenging old "turfwoman," (12.11) or a "gnarlybird ygathering" (10.32), distributing gifts and food; in another, she is the hen who scratches the letter from the dump or the faithful wife ("who but Crippled-with-Children would speak up for Dropping-with-Sweat?" [102.29]) delivering her "mama festa" (104.4) to save her fallen man. Woman and hen are the same figure, and the letter and gifts of debris are analogues. The same actions characterize each of ALP's redemptive acts: finding and giving, gathering and dispersing. Her acts are not acts of atonement; "she is mercenary" (12.6), we are told. In Finnegans Wake the act of redemption is secular, not religious, an act of salvage rather than salvation.

ALP's scavenging and distribution of goods supports those functions upon which the viability of society depends: communication and exchange. Her actions can best be perceived as means of reconciliation, in contrast to the many unlawful appropriations in the work which sunder family members in divisive power struggles. According to Lévi-Strauss, communication in a society involves the exchange of women, goods and services, and messages; all three are the subject of culpable transactions in the Wake. There are shady financial dealings in the work, found in their most primitive form in the dialogue of Mutt and Jute, where a wooden nickel changes hands ("Let me fore all your hasitancy cross your qualm with trink gilt. Here have sylvan coyne, a
piece of oak" [16.29]). Besides its probable worthlessness, the coin is a bribe, for "hesitancy" is a catch-word for lying in the *Wake*.41 The pair who "excheck a few strong verbs weak oach eather" (16.8) presumably deal in faithless messages as well, reminding us of the word-stealing and counter-charges of lying about word-stealing in the brother conflict.

Other notable instances of stealing occur in the parallel but inverse tales of the Prankquean and the Norwegian captain ("Stop deft stop come back to my earin stop" [21.23] cries Jarl van Hoother, and later the ship's husband cries, "Stolp, tief, stolp, come bag to Moy Eireann!" [312.1]). ALP is the culprit only in the tale of the Prankquean, but in both tales the stealing of children, suit, dinner, and the like, serves the ultimate function of founding and uniting the family. The Prankquean's tricks and deceit are needed to civilize the fierce father. The Prankquean washes and converts the twins before returning them, and the Norwegian Captain is "poptethes" (326.6) before the wedding. ALP converts the heathen, and as Grace O'Malley and the stolen Irish bride, assimilates the Scandinavian (van Hoother and Norwegian Captain) into the Irish culture. She domesticates the rover ("His loudship was converted to a landshop" [332.23]), and they drink tea ("they all drank free" [23.7]) and produce babies ("he put off the ketyl and they made three" [332.2]). Like the Prankquean, the scavenging old ALP is a thief of sorts, ("where in thunder did she plunder" [209.12]), but her stealing is not for herself as she forever disperses her booty to her children ("How bootiful and how truetowife of her, when strengly forebidden, to steal our historic presents from the past postpropheticals so as to will make us all lordy heirs and ladymaidesses of a pretty nice kettle of fruit" [11.29]).

The unlawful appropriation of women, whether the bridestealing cuckoldry of the Tristan and Finn MacCool myths, or the incestuous fantasies that they represent, stands in significant contrast to ALP's efforts to procure women for her husband ("Calling them in, one by one ... and legging a jig or so on the sihl to show them how to shake their benders ... and all the way of a maid with a man ... Throwing all the neiss little whores in the world at him!" [200.22]). The aim of her pandering is to restore HCE's potency, therefore aligning it with her distribution of food, gifts, and the Letter in an effort to reverse HCE's downfall.

ALP's acts are essentially selfless. She steals van Hoother's children, but returns them improved and at peace. She plunders the
battlefield and the dump, but uses the junk and the Letter to bring about the reconciliation and restoration of others. ALP’s work stands in opposition to the unlawful appropriations of father and sons because she does not seek self-possession through the capture of the other. The problem of ALP’s own self is not posed until her final monologue, when she reclaims it by a total repudiation of all others.

The raw material of ALP’s redemption is the debris and litter that results from battle, catastrophe, and destruction ("all spoiled goods go into her nabsack: curtrages and rattlin buttins... keys and woodpiles of haypennies and moonled brooches with bloodstaned breeks in em, boaston nightgarters and masses of shoesets and nickelly nacks and foder allmicheal and a lugly parson of cates and howitzer muchears" [11.18]). This grim military rubble she transforms into Christmas gifts which effect a kind of Christmas armistice perhaps best remembered in the nostalgic annals of World War I ("But it's the armitides toonigh, militopucos, and toomourn we wish for a muddy kissmans to the minutia workers and there's to be a gorgeups truce for happiest childher everwere" [11.13]). She appears on the scene after the biblical deluge that destroyed the world, as a "peacefugel" (11.9), a Noah's dove bearing the olive branch. The debris she gathers includes the scattered remains of her dismembered husband. Like Isis restoring her brother/husband (Osiris) to life, she manages to put Humpty Dumpty together again, and prepare him for communionlike distribution ("And even if Humpty shell fall frumpty times as awkward again in the beardsboosoloom of all our grand remonstrancers there'll be iggs for the brekkers come to mournhim, sunny side up with care" [12.12]). ALP as the faithful old wife also gathers together the shreds of HCE's reputation in the form of the "mamafesta" (104.4) she delivers, or the Letter the hen scratches from the dump. The Boston nightletter is one of the pieces of trash in ALP's litterbag ("boaston nightgarters and masses of shoesets" [11.22]), that serves as a redemptive gift ("Hen trieved it and plight pledged peace" [94.7]).

As the verbal motif of the "Felix culpa" announces throughout the work, ALP's redemptive act, like Christ's, requires a fall. Of the war, destruction, and catastrophe in the Wake, Marcel Brion writes in Our Exagmination, "This chaos is the condition necessary to all creation." The interdependence of creation and destruction provides a further technical and thematic application of Bruno's contraries in Finnegans Wake.
The redemption/creation process itself, however, deserves careful study, beginning with some skepticism toward Brion’s further analysis. “In this apparent chaos we are conscious of a creative purpose, constructive and architectural, which has razed every conventional dimension, concept and vocabulary, and selected from their scattered material the elements of a new structure.”\(^4\) ALP’s distribution is an act of communication and exchange, rather than an act of reconstruction or design. She selects bits of rubble randomly; the nature of her gifts is arbitrary, and her mode of distribution, indiscriminate.\(^4\) Her generosity respects no hierarchies, ranks, orders, or distinctions (“a cough and a rattle and wildrose cheeks for poor Piccolina Petite MacFarlane; a jigsaw puzzle of needles and pins and blankets and shins between them for Isabel, Jezebel and Llewelyn Mmarriage; a brazen nose and pigiron mittens for Johnny Walker Beg; a papar flag of the saints and stripes for Kevineen O’Dea; a puffpuff for Pudge Craig and a nightmarching hare for T echertim Tombigby” [210.9]). If law is a structuring, ordering principle governing societal systems, then ALP’s gift-giving is unsystematic and anarchic. She observes no such distinctions as those that lie at the foundation of the concept of law, which is based on the orders of preference, and on prohibitions, as is language itself.

The fact that ALP’s gifts are trivial or nonsensical does not diminish their value as tokens of good will and gestures of peace. ALP even unites her enemy sons for a time (“like Santa Claus at the cree of the pale and puny, nistling to hear for their tiny hearties, her arms encircling Isolabella, then running with reconciled Romas and Reims, on like a lech to be off like a dart, then bathing Dirty Hans’ spatters with spittle, with a Christmas box apiece for aisch and everyone of her childer” [209.23]). Jacques Lacan explains that gifts are symbols and symbols are pacts. The uselessness and superfluity of gifts is proof of their symbolic value.\(^4\)

As Dionysius, Osiris, and Christ are mythical analogues of the sacrificial god, so ALP’s redemptive act occurs in several analogous forms: the gathering of junk and distribution of gifts, the retrieval of the Letter from the midden heap and its presentation to save HCE, and, quite likely, Joyce’s production of *Finnegans Wake* itself. The linguistic correspondence of ALP’s gathering is etymologically valid according to philosopher Martin Heidegger. “Originally *logos* did not mean speech, discourse. Its fundamental meaning stands in no direct relation to language. *Legó*, *legein*, Latin *legere*, is the same as the German word
"lesen" (to gather, collect, read) ... "ein Buch lesen" (to read a book) is only a variant of "lesen" in the strict sense, which is: to put one thing with another, to bring together, in short, to gather; but at the same time the one is marked off against the other." \(^46\)

Certainly the process of reading *Finnegans Wake*—or the hen’s Letter, insofar as we see the text—represents a primitive sort of *lesen*: not the rapid, automatic decoding to which we are accustomed, but a slow, patient, bringing together, putting one thing with another, looking for similarities and contrasts rather than intrinsic meanings.

That Joyce was not only aware of the etymological information just cited, but also deemed it relevant to *Finnegans Wake*, is demonstrated by Beckett’s description of the evolution of the Latin word "Lex," found in his essay in *Our Exagmination*.

1. Lex = Crop of acorns
2. Ilex = Tree that produces acorns
3. Legere = To gather
4. Aquilex = He that gathers the waters
5. Lex = Gathering together of peoples, public assembly
6. Lex = Law
7. Legere = To gather together letters into a word, to read \(^47\)

The prototypical meaning of "Lex" as a gathering together of peoples sheds further light on ALP’s success in peacemaking through her gathering and gift-giving. This earlier meaning of law does not yet contain reference to the authoritative and prohibitive aspects of law as we know it, aspects that relate the concept of law to the figure of the father. In contrast to the father, ALP, the mother, embodies the law as a lack. She does not arrange, regulate, designate, or judge, but merely gathers together her children and the fragments of her fallen husband. The linguistic correspondence of her function is the potentiality of language for an infinite number of combinations within a finite system, rather than the semantic function of language. ALP’s law may be the law of the great maternal deities, who Freud believed "perhaps in general have preceded the father-gods." \(^48\)

Neither ALP’s redemptive efforts, nor the Letter, function as an atonement or a pardon in the tradition of Christian salvation. Nor do they serve an architectural function, the creation of a new society or the restoration of HCE’s tattered reputation through a Letter of authoritative meaning. Instead, the Letter, like ALP’s gifts, is a product of the fall itself, a tea-stained bit of litter from the dump whose content, as far
as we can tell, consists of the flotsam and jetsam of family life and history: news, gossip, requests, and more accounts of the fall. The redemptive act in the *Wake* appears to be the acceptance and celebration of the fall rather than the institution of a new covenant, or the restoration of the Kingdom of God.

That the Letter is itself a further manifestation of the fall can be seen in its intriguing resemblance to HCE himself. Like HCE, its origins are obscure ("Say, baroun lousadoor, who in hallhagal wrote the durn thing anyhow?" [107.36]), and there exist a number of different accounts. One version has it that the Letter was originally sent from Boston, Massachusetts, possibly by someone named Maggy (111.9), who may also be the silent mirror reflection of Isabel. Other accounts suggest that the entire family had a hand in it ("Letter, carried of Shaun, son of Hek, written of Shem, brother of Shaun, uttered for ALP, mother of Shem, for Hek, father of Shaun" [420.17]). Again, like HCE and all other characters in the *Wake*, it has no true title and yet a multiplicity of names, "Her untitled mamafesta memorialising the Moshighest has gone by many names at disjointed times" (104.4). The text of the Letter is as indeterminate as "the unmistak identity of the persons in the Tiberiast duplex" (123.30) whose revelation is promised throughout the Letter and throughout the work, but never delivered.

As with HCE’s nature and actions, we receive a number of versions of the Letter’s text: it deals variously with general family trivia ("well how are you Maggy & hopes soon to hear well" [111.16]); a list of ALP’s desires, including a new bankside, love-making, gainful employment as a washerwoman, and a romp on the beach (201.5); gossip of the father’s tribulations and a request for money (301.5); and a review of all the themes in the *Wake*, particularly the original sin business with a bias toward HCE’s innocence (615.12). Atherton goes so far as to consider the Letter as "something crooked and depraved." Tindall calls it "trivial, illiterate, and repetitious," not unlike ALP herself, who sings, babbles, fiddles, whistles, and crows throughout most of the chapter devoted to her.

Whatever the Letter may be, it is not a document that clarifies anything, proves anything, renders any verdict, or pardons anyone. We are no more certain about its origin, name, or meaning than we are of any other character or event in the work. If anything, its own slovenly condition and confusing content affirm and manifest the chaos of the fall. As just one among the "literish fragments" (66.25) in ALP’s
womblike mail pouch, the Letter’s value is not its message or its meaning, but—like her other tacky gifts—its function as a token of peace and reconciliation.

The legend of the Letter suggests that it not only affirms the condition of the fall, but also celebrates it. Paradoxically, it is said to be “sealed with crime” (94.8) yet “made ma make merry” (94.10). The same paradox informs the “felix culpa” motif and the “lots of fun at Finnegans’s Wake” refrain, which broadcast throughout the work their boisterous and happy celebration of fatal tumbles and broken laws.

The grace that effects redemption in Finnegans Wake seems to be the triumph of freedom over law, a freedom expressed in every thematic ambiguity and uncertainty, every aberrant lexical item or syntactical distortion of the work.

It is ALP in her final monologue who accepts the passing of the generations, their blood commingled (“Yes, you’re changing, son-husband, and you’re turning, I can feel you, for a daughter-wife from the hills again. . . . Try not to part! Be happy, dear ones!” [627.1]). In her final renunciation, she nonetheless acknowledges her former celebration of her husband (“I thought you the great in all things, in guilt and in glory” [627.23]). Musing upon the world founded on the void, upon incertitude and unlikelihood, Stephen comments, “Amor matris, subjective and objective genetive, may be the only true thing in life” (U, p. 207). “I done me best when I was let” (627.13), says ALP.

The most striking image of ALP as the agent of freedom through communication or exchange, and freedom’s triumph over the law, is as Arrah-na-Pogue, from the play by Dion Bouicault. Arrah, in the play, saves her foster brother from execution for his role in the political uprising, by a kiss, during which she effects an exchange from her mouth to his of a small scroll containing the plans for his escape. This richly symbolic vignette contains attenuated reference to both oedipal crimes, incest and parricide. Joyce amplifies the incestuous innuendoes of the chaste brother-sister kiss in “Arrah-na-pogue, in the otherworld of the passing of the key of Two-tongue Common” (385.3), where the reference to Tutenkamen recalls his famous brother-sister marriage. The parricide is implicit in the brother’s leadership of a political rebellion, which recalls the instances of imperial conflict (Napoleon and Wellington, Buckley and the Russian General) as types of the father-overthrow in Finnegans Wake. But Arrah’s letter, like ALP’s, is the key to freedom—not pardon—but the triumph over the law. And as Atherton
points out, we find among ALP’s last few words in the work, “Lps. The keys to. Given!” (628.15), which—though resonating against the New Testament’s “Power of the Keys” by which the Son of God empowered man with his authority—will open not the kingdom of Heaven, but the free “chaosmos” that is *Finnegans Wake*. 