

James Joyce's Father Foreclosure: The Symbolic Order of Language and Social Existence

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ABSTRACT

In symbolising society, the father is a significant cultural representation of authority or power. James Joyce's works are commonly read for Irish history, his unique style of writing, and as sources of autobiography. However, his *Finnegans Wake* (1939) stands out for its unanalysable textuality, creating a form of authority in itself. The omnipresence of the father figure as a performer of paternal authority in almost every page of Joyce's final work reflects an obsession within Lacanian psychoanalysis, that of imaginary and symbolic 'fathers' standing in for the biological father. This study thus attempted to identify the role of the father in Joyce's own life, as well as in *Finnegans Wake*, based on Jacques Lacan's definition of the father. In order to examine James Joyce's father foreclosure, that is, his expulsion of the father from the Symbolic order, this article focuses on the connections and functions of the writer's Real father, John Joyce; the Imaginary father in *Finnegans Wake*, H.C.E; and the role of the Symbolic father, performed conceptually by religion. John Joyce and H.C.E, his literary projection, prove impotent in performing their patriarchal responsibilities; while Joyce himself rejects the influence of the Church. In short, despite the paternal function being absent from Joyce's life, the father figure is very much present in his works. Studying the function of these fathers in Joyce's life indicates that he suffered from father foreclosure for two reasons: the failure of his real father, and his refusal to accept any other form of paternal authority.

Keywords: James Joyce, father foreclosure, Lacanian psychoanalysis, orders of subjectivity, paternal authority, castration.

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INTRODUCTION

Finnegans Wake (1939) stands out for its unanalysable textuality, creating a form of

authority in itself. The omnipresence of the father figure, as a performer of paternal authority) in almost every page of Joyce's final work, reflects an obsession within Lacanian psychoanalysis, that of imaginary and symbolic 'fathers' standing in for the biological father. This study thus attempted to identify the role of the father in Joyce's own life, as well as in *Finnegans Wake*, based on Jacques Lacan's definition of the father. In order to examine James Joyce's father foreclosure, that is, his expulsion of the father from the Symbolic order, this article focuses on the connections and functions of the writer's Real father, John Joyce; the Imaginary father in *Finnegans Wake*, H.C.E; and the role of the Symbolic father, performed conceptually by religion. Father, in Lacanian terms, is the one who introduces the child to order and social existence. The absence or impotency of the father in performing his responsibility will leave a hole in the child's psyche that the child will endeavour to fill. Before examining in detail the absence of paternal power in Joyce's life, we will discuss in brief Joyce's biological father, John Joyce, and Lacan's definition of different types of father figures.

JAMES JOYCE'S CATHOLIC UPBRINGING AND HIS ALCOHOLIC FATHER

In pre-school years, James's mind was shaped with the strict catholic ideas imposed by his mother and his tutor. He was told not to commit sins to avoid punishment. But if he did, he should repent. His father, on the other hand, was more a patriot rather than

a strong believer in Catholicism. For him, country was more precious than religion. Out of these contradictions, James was sent to Catholic school to become a priest. After years of Catholic schooling, and after which he was offered to become a priest, he refused but always felt guilty afterwards for disappointing his mother up to her death. Although his father did not play a noticeable role in James's religious training, John Joyce was seen as the main figure in the writer's life, to whom the French psychiatrist Jacques Lacan constantly refers.¹ As John Gross (1970) states:

[o]f all Joyce's emotions, as they figure in his work, the strongest were undoubtedly those centring on his father. In the earlier books they tend to be predominantly negative, not without good reason. From most points of view, John Joyce was a highly unsatisfactory parent: selfish, irresponsible, a heavy drinker, 'a praiser of his own past.' (p. 14)

John Joyce is also considered a failure by other Joycean biographers and critics, such as Jean-Michel Rabaté and Lacan himself, largely stemming from Ellmann's (1959) comprehensive documentation of

¹According to MacCannell (2008), Lacan's interest in Joyce was piqued when Hélène Cixous, who was writing a book on Joyce at the time, became Lacan's assistant. MacCannell also notes that both Joyce and Lacan were sons of alcoholic fathers, with both being "marked by the failures of the paternal metaphor" (p. 46). Joycean language reshaped Lacanian theory, as reflected in Lacan's *Seminar XXIII*, 1975-76.

Joyce and his family life.² The John Joyce represented in this study is also based on Ellmann's biography, in his role as the carrier of what is known as the Lacanian Law-of-the-Father for his son's life. This Law refers to the set of universal principles which make social existence possible; since communication is the most basic form of social exchange, this law is a linguistic entity, and it is the father figure as a signifier who imposes this law on the subject (Evans, 1996).

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is held that the function of the father figure is a determining factor in the subject's psychic structure. Besides being a rival for the mother's love, the function of the father figure (the paternal function) is to introduce the child to the limited and symbolic order of language, and in so doing, the order of social existence, via a castration achieved by the imposition of the Law (ibid.) Castration here refers to the child's recognition of the order of the symbolic system and its limitations as set by the phallic authority. The only way for the subject to enter this order, according to Evans, is to identify with the father through the Oedipus complex (ibid.). In other words, Lacan holds that the father is not so much the one who intrudes upon the mother-child relationship, but more so, the one who should function to prevent the subject from developing psychosis—a mental condition akin to madness, caused by the absence of the Law-of-the-Father,

which leaves a hole in the psychic structure of the subject (ibid.).

Since Lacan makes direct references to John Joyce (Harari 2002), a review of his definitions of the three types of father is necessary here. The Real father for Lacan is the one who owns the mother, and is usually the biological father of the subject. He is usually responsible for the symbolic castration of the subject. However, in some cases, the Real father may be physically present in the subject's life, but may be unable to perform this function. The Imaginary father, meanwhile, is an image that the subject constructs of the father; either to be what the real father could not be; or to be like the real father who could not castrate him (Evans, 1996). The latter can be seen in the imaginary fathers that Joyce creates, such as H.C.E in *Finnegans Wake* (1939). He is a failure like John Joyce, perhaps more so.

The Symbolic father is not a real subject but a concept, position or function. It is also called the Name-of-the-father (Lacan, 1977). It is the paternal function that the Real, biological father may or may not have performed, namely imposing the prohibitive Law upon the subject (Evans, 1996). For the subject, this Law defines limitations both in the system of signifiers and in his social existence, reflected in the form of language. The real father can be the performer of these functions, but is not the only one who can do so—other people (including the mother) or other concepts can carry the function of the Name-of-the-Father. Based on these definitions of

²Ellmann (1959) tells the story of the Joyce family, before James's birth until his death. It contains details of James's relationship to them and his friends, as well as details of his works.

the father in Lacanian psychoanalysis, the paternal function exercised upon Joyce will be examined in the following sections, in relation to John Joyce, as the Real father, H.C.E as the Imaginary father, and religion as the Symbolic father.

BREAKING THE LAW OF THE REAL FATHER

Although John Joyce was physically present in his son's life, he was absent as the carrier of the Law and as the Name-of-the-father, and was thus unable to perform the paternal function in Joyce's mind. Although John Joyce was a witty and talented man, his recklessness led to continuous career failures, losing job after job in a short span of time (Ellmann, 1959). He eventually found a well-paid job in an office, but this did not last long; he was left with an insufficient pension in 1892, after which the financial status of the family began to gradually decline (Ellmann, 1975). By 1902, "the house was in despair, the banister broken, the furniture mostly pawned or sold" (Ellmann, 1959). Not being able to support his family, John Joyce started to sell household items, including the piano, which was a "desperate act for a musical man and one which roused James to fury when he came home to discover it" (p. 143). After the death of Mary Jane Murray, Joyce's mother, the rest of the family sometimes found themselves without anything to eat. Once, when James was away from home for several days, and his siblings asked him if he was ill, he said that he "was suffering from inanition" (p. 144).

The poverty dragged them from one neighbourhood to another, compounding the familial instability. John Joyce was not able to manage the family finances, and his weak figure could never fill Joyce's paternal lack. Moreover, John Joyce was also a heavy drinker, according to Joyce's brother, Stanislaus Joyce (1957). He used to drink to excess in both joy and sadness (Ellmann, 1959). In addition, the father who smoked expensive cigars, while his family did not have anything to eat was also very aggressive towards his wife and daughters. Stanislaus Joyce (1957) also recalls how John Joyce attacked their mother, which affected Joyce's ideas of marriage and family.

The illness of Mary Jane Murray also made John Joyce less of a father. Not only was he unable to purchase good medication for his wife due to his poverty, but he was also very unsympathetic towards her illness (S. Joyce, 1957). This is, at least, what his children thought of him. However, as Ellmann claims, it was the heavy medical costs that led him to seek refuge in heavy drinking, wanting to show his devotion as a husband in his own way (1959). In any case, after his mother's death, Joyce lost the only principal of order in his life. She had been trying hard to keep the family together amidst the instability, but after her death the family became scattered (S. Joyce 1957), which John Joyce did little to prevent.

It should not be ignored, however, that John Joyce was very fond of his eldest son, knowing that Joyce was highly talented (S. Joyce, 1957). Joyce became the focus of his father's attention after he and other relatives

predicted a promising career (Ellmann, 1975). John Joyce wanted to provide the best education for his son despite the poverty that the family suffered from most of their life, and he succeeded in that regard (Ellmann 1959). The father-son love was mutual. According to Stanislaus Joyce, the love of the father was a "dominant passion" in his brother's life, to the extent that it became a "millstone around his neck" (1957, p. 234). Ellmann is also of the belief that Joyce loved his father unconditionally, sins and all. He also loved travelling with his father: according to Frances Restuccia (2009), "breaking the law seems to have united real father and son" (p. 15).

But the love and attention that John Joyce showered upon his son could not compensate for the former's poverty or reckless drinking habits. In the end, his inability to provide a stable life for his wife and children made him a defeated father in James's mind. This also meant that he could not impose the Law upon his son (which in most cases would lead the sons to develop psychosis). In a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver on his father's death, Joyce writes:

He was the silliest man I ever knew and yet cruelly shrewd. He thought and talked to me up to his last breath. I was very fond of him always, being a sinner myself, and even liked his faults. Hundreds of pages and scores of characters came from him. (Ellmann 1975, p. 360-1)

The mutual father-son love could not be a substitute for the lack of a strong father. Thus, John Joyce could not be the bearer of the Name-of-the-Father, since he could not help Joyce accept the Law of Signifiers and enter the Symbolic order (Evans, 1996). To Lacan, language is a vicious circle of signifiers or symbols; in order to function properly in this system, the speaking subject has to yield to the Law of Signifiers, where one signifier leads to another. When the speaking subject is not introduced to this Law, or refuses it, the signifiers cease to be symbolic, but are taken as real instead. In short, they do not refer to any conceptual idea, but are what they are.

As noted above, it is not only the biological father who can impart the Law, but any other person or set of rules. Although this study focuses primarily on John Joyce, it does not mean, however, that the Lacanian distinction between the Real, Imaginary and the Symbolic father has been ignored. The latter two fathers are not physical beings as such, but are instead Symbolic positions that can perform the paternal function: "the composite of all the imaginary constructs that the subject builds up in fantasy around the figure of the father" (Evans, 1996). It must be reiterated that there was no other Imaginary or Symbolic father figure for Joyce, therefore no Law/Name-of-the-Father was imposed upon him to prohibit a *jouissance* (an excess of pleasure, that then becomes pain) and the desire to achieve the Other (*ibid.*). Since the paternal function is absent from the formula of Joyce's psychic structure, he would thus be capable of committing any sin.

TAKING IN RELIGION AS SYMBOLIC FATHER

As discussed above, John Joyce does not function as the carrier of the Law, or the one who castrates him. As a result, the Phallus and phallic function (that of representing ultimate masculinity) are absent from Joyce's life. As with carrying the Law, it is not necessarily only the Real father who can function as the phallus; even abstracted concepts, such as religion and society, can perform the function—both embody a set of principles that impose the prohibitive Law, which draws the boundaries of a world of symbols, and 'entraps' the subject within it. In Joyce's case, due to his childhood education and the religious schools he attended, religion could have functioned as both a Symbolic father and the phallus for him; but as this section will illustrate, Joyce manages to make his escape from its clutches.

In short, Joyce resisted patriarchal authority wherever he found it (Restuccia 2009). After his real father is proved impotent (in terms of imposing the Law), the prime patriarchal substitute in Joyce's life would have been the church.³ This is mainly because Joyce was raised by his Catholic mother, who wanted him to be a priest, as well as his Catholic education at Clongowes College. However, despite of this religious background, he protests against its influence of religion later in his life; as he stated in the letter to Stanislaus Joyce in 1905: "I am

³Religion, as an imposer of the Law, can be considered as a symbolic father. If the subject accepts this Law, he/she will be posited within the boundaries imposed by the symbolic father, and can lead a social existence that adheres to these boundaries.

incapable of belief of any kind" (Ellmann 1975, p. 62). In another letter to his wife Nora Barnacle in 1904, Joyce states:

Six years ago I left the Catholic Church, hating it most fervently. I found it impossible for me to remain in it on account of the impulses of my nature. I made secret war upon it when I was a student and declined to accept the position it offered me. By doing this I made myself a beggar but I retained my pride. Now I make open war upon it by what I write and say and do (in Ellmann, 1975, p. 25).

Joyce was exposed to religion from early in his life, but repeatedly confesses in his letters to Nora and Stanislaus "How I hate God and death! How I like Nora!" (p. 27). He did not want to accept any kind of imposition of law, and was struggling with the conventions to follow his nature, rather than protesting against them. Furthermore, Joyce did not even get his children baptised because he did not intend to impose religion on them, as it had been imposed on him (S. Joyce, 1957). In short, Joyce does not allow the limitations of any Law to be imposed upon himself, and thus does not experience the fear of castration—both because John Joyce fails to act as the Phallus, and because Joyce himself resists the mastery of potential Symbolic fathers, such as the church. It is the recognition of these very limitations that defines the subject's boundaries, and thus determines his masculinity (Voruz & Wolf, 1999).

To Lacan, the role of the father is very important in the process of shaping the structure of the psyche (Evans 1996). On the other hand, however, Jean-Michel Rabaté (1991) believes that Lacan's reading of Joyce is actually autobiographical, because Lacan did read Ellmann's biography of Joyce very carefully. In any case, John Joyce did play an integral role in shaping Joyce's psychic structure. Although the former could neither possess the Phallus, as it were, nor function as a proper father, his son was enamoured by him—as noted above, Stanislaus Joyce (1957) claims that his brother and his father were close, and they enjoyed travelling together. Thus, despite John Joyce being absent from his son's life as the bearer of the name of the father, the phallus, or the performer of the phallic function, his impotency in performing these functions and foreclosure from his son's life—in that his function and significance as a father figure to his son are repressed or shut out prematurely—is nevertheless present in the male characters of Joyce's major works.

In *Finnegans Wake*, the father figure is slandered on every page (Rabaté 1991). It is as if by this "Symbolic liquidation" of the father, Joyce attempts to eternalise the failures of his real father in his texts. According to Ellmann and Stanislaus Joyce, John Joyce is the chief model for many of the characters in his son's novels—most pertinently to this subject of this paper, he has been the chief model for Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker (H.C.E) in *Finnegans Wake* (Ellmann, 1959) and Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* (S. Joyce, 1957). These male

characters draw upon John Joyce in that they are also failures in their paternal duties; they are merely the biological fathers of their sons, and lack the force of castration due to their insufficiencies and irresponsibility.

MAKING UP THE IMAGINARY FATHER

Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker (henceforth H.C.E) first appears under the name of Finnegan on the first page of *Finnegans Wake*, after which he is given various names and is involved in multiple stories. According to Adaline Glasheen (1993) he takes the role of thirty-four different characters, most of whom are historical;⁴ he even performs a role to pinpoint geographical locations like Ireland, and parts of nature, like a mountain. The delicate part of playing multiple characters is that the whole Earwicker family—the mother, Anna Livia Plurabelle (ALP); the twins Shem and Shaun; and the daughter, Issy—shift in accordance to all the characters. H.C.E can be considered on two levels; "he is the Macrocosm, Here Comes Everybody, and the Microcosm, Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, a tavern keeper of Chapelizod, a suburb of Dublin on the river Liffey" (Glasheen, 1993, p. 54).

Within the first twenty-eight pages of *Finnegans Wake*, H.C.E is introduced as the prehistoric "hod carrier" called Finnegan. "Bygmester Finnegan, of the Stuttering Hand, freemen's murer, lived

⁴This character shift reinforces the fact that H.C.E can stand for everyman, or every father. And every father might lack the phallic force and might appear as a failure. Also, H.C.E can be considered a space for the contestation of possible symbolic father figures.

in the broadest way immarginable ...” (*Finnegans Wake*, 1999, 4: 18-19). Big Master Finnegan builds a “skyerscape” (4: 36) on the bank of the river Liffey. All of a sudden “wan warning Phill felt tipping full” (6: 7) and “Damb! He was dud.” (6: 10). “It may half been a missfired brick” (5, 26), and this is how Finnegan falls and dies. His fall happened at the identical place where H.C.E will be involved, and from the same spot the fall of his reputation starts: “His clay feet, swarded in verdigrass, stick up start where he last fellonem, by the mund of the magazine wall, where our maggy seen all, with her sister in shawl.” (7: 30-32). Finnegan wakes but not as Finnegan the big master, he is replaced by H.C.E who appears as a Hill beside the river Liffey, his wife Anna Livia Plurabell.

In the first ten pages of *Finnegans Wake* we are told of two falls and the two people who fall; Tim Finnegan who falls due to a misfired brick as mentioned above and H.C.E due to the sin that he committed or imagined he committed. The fall is of significance not in the way that they fall but in relation to their inability to stand and play the role of the phallus for their children. Their fall is both real and imaginary. They fall for real, they hit the ground and they also fall, from grace. This fall is what makes H.C.E similar to John Joyce. In the following part, we attempt to show how Joyce creates H.C.E as a failed father, following John Joyce as his model.

In the story of Wellington (on page eight of *Finnegans Wake*) who is an incarnation of H.C.E (Campbell & Robinson 1944, 41),

Joyce writes about what will happen later to H.C.E on the same spot that Finnegan falls. In the story there are six characters, a big man “this is the big sraughter Willingdone, grand and magnetic in his goldtin spurs and his iron dux and his quarterbrass woodysshoes and his magnate’s gharterd and...” (8: 17-19), three soldiers “this is the three lipoleum boyne grouching down in the living detch. This is an inimyskilling inglis, this is a scotcher grey, this is a davy, stooping.” (8, 21-23) and two girls “this is the jinnies... the jinnies is a cooin her hand and the jinnies is a ravin her hair...” (8, 31-34). These are all the parallel characters in the famous scandalous scene in the park that grows to become a big rumour in the city and marks the fall of H.C.E.

The story of H.C.E, two girls and three soldiers are repeatedly told all over the book, implied in the dust of battles or in the various stories: “one’s upon a thyme and two’s behind their lettice leap and three’s among the strubbely beds” (20, 23-24). For example, take the story of Jarl Van Hoother and the Prankquean: there was a lonely man living in the peaceful time of Adam and Eve. His “two little jiminius” (21: 11) Tristopher and Hilary are kidnapped in turns by Prankquean who has been refused three times by Van Hoother. The boys who, according to Glasheen are Shem and Shaun, H.C.E’s twin sons, (1663, xxvii), are taught by four wise men and are trained to be blackguards and Cromwellians. The father fails in keeping them and creating the law for them. Finally, “it was resolved that the boys keep the peace, the prankquean should

hold the dummy and van Hoothier let off steam" (Campbell & Robinson, 1944, p. 50). "Thus, the hearsomeness of the burger felicitates the whole of the police" (23: 14) Van Hoothier, the Earl of Howth a failed father becomes the joke in the town.

The character of H.C.E indirectly implies other important heroic figures in history such as Wellington and Napoleon. Joyce "amplifies the private sin of HCE into an image of a hero" (Campbell & Robinson 1944, 42: 24). A hero's fall is more hurting and painful than an ordinary man; like the fall of a father in the eyes of his son. This is because the father is a hero for the son and he is the one who should have the phallus and make the son possess it through the fear of castration. The father's failure in performing the phallic function is as painful as the fall of a hero. This painful fall makes the father a big failure and shatters the phallus he was supposed to have.

As the main male character of *Finnegans Wake*, H.C.E is like John Joyce in many respects. This will be discussed in detail in the following section, but suffice to say at this stage that the locus of the novel is centred on the sin H.C.E commits, or those he is thought to have committed; although he himself is absent from the text except in the first two chapters, the story of his fall is present throughout. Given Glasheen's claim that Shem represents the author, it is then only fitting to see parallels between H.C.E and Shem, and John Joyce and his son. What links H.C.E's appearances as historical characters (from the biblical Adam, to Issac, Noah, the Duke of Wellington, Oscar Wilde, Napoleon and many more) is that they all,

like John Joyce, suffer a fall. However, the character that the discussion will focus on is H.C.E himself, as a father who is expected to bear the Name-of-the-Father, and castrate his son Shem, but fails to do so.

TRACING THE 'PHALL' OF H.C.E

Like John Joyce, H.C.E is a drunkard and a sinner who loses his reputation in the town. In the first 28 pages of *Finnegans Wake*, H.C.E is introduced as the prehistoric hod carrier called Tim Finnegan. "Bygmester Finnegan, of the Stuttering Hand, freemen's murer, lived in the broadest way immarginable"⁵ (*Finnegans Wake*, p. 4). Big Master Finnegan builds "skyerscape[s]" on the bank of river Liffy. One day, "wan warning Phill [he] felt tipping full" and "Damb! He was dud" (pp. 6-10). He falls on the identical place where H.C.E will later be involved; and it is from the same spot that his figurative fall begins: "His clay feet, swarded in verdigrass, stick up start where he last fellonem, by the mund of the magazine wall, where our maggy seen all, with her sister in shawl" (p. 7).

The dead Finnegan wants to wake, and asks: "Anam muck an dhoul! Did you drink me doornail?" (p. 24), which translates as "Soul of the devil! Did you think me dead?" (Campbell & Robinson, 1994, p. 30). He is told that he is known as an honourable man, and since "everything's going on the same or so it appeals to all of us" (*FW*, p. 26), it

⁵What attracted the critics to *Finnegans Wake* was the arcane language of the text, where newly coined words were either stuffed with meaning, or were not meaningful at all. Critics endeavored to find meaning for these words in the hope of understanding the message(s) of the whole text.

is better for him to remain dead: “Repose you now! Finn no more” (p. 28). Finnegan wakes, but not as Finnegan the big master, but rather H.C.E, who appears as a hill beside the river Liffy, his wife ALP.

H.C.E is introduced here by a citizen who is speaking with Finn. He is trying to persuade him not to rise:

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...humphing his share of the showthers is senken on him he’s such a grandfaller, with a pocked wife in pickle that’s a flyfire and three lice nittle clinkers, two twilling bugs and one midget pucelle (*Finnegans Wake*, p. 29).

The news of H.C.E and his family’s arrival in town is then spread. After presenting several different theories about the origin of H.C.E, he is given a name: “Harold or Humphrey” Chimpden, affixed with the nickname “Earwicker” (p. 30). As mentioned earlier, these initials are used throughout the book in various combinations, but “it was equally certainly a pleasant turn of the populace which gave him as sense of those normative letters the nickname Here Comes Everybody” (p. 32). What we first read about H.C.E are his impressive looks. He is said to be “an imposing everybody he always indeed looked, constantly the same as and equal to himself and magnificently well worthy of

any and all such universalization...” (ibid.). He has a normal reputation in the town, and is known as a family man.

But almost immediately, slanders are held against him. We are then told of two falls and two fallers; Tim Finnegan who falls due to a misfired brick, and H.C.E, due to the sin that he is thought to have committed. The latter refers to the story of the Duke of Wellington, an incarnation of H.C.E (Campbell & Robinson, 1994), wherein H.C.E is rumoured to have transgressed with two girls in Phoenix Park (*Finnegans Wake*, p. 8). The rumour eventually spreads around town and marks the fall of H.C.E—both literally, and from grace (as a father in general, and in particular, as a representation of John Joyce). H.C.E, who is supposed to stand for his children, is unable to exert any paternal authority onto them; in seeing John Joyce do the same, Joyce performs a foreclosure that extends beyond the former, but also onto his Imaginary father(s) as well.

The story of H.C.E’s transgression is told repeatedly throughout the book, implied in the dust of battles or the various stories, such as in the story of Jarl Van Hooter and the Prankquean. In this story, Van Hooter has his “two little jimnies” (*Finnegans Wake*, p. 21), Tristopher and Hilary, kidnapped by the Prankquean. The two boys, who Glasheen (1993) contends are Shem and Shaun, are taught by four wise men and are trained to be a Blackguard and a Cromwellian. In this regard, Van Hooter has not only failed to keep hold of them, but also fails in imposing the Law upon them. Finally, “it was resolved that

the boys keep the peace, the Prankquean should hold the dummy and van Hoothier let off steam" (Campbell & Robinson, 1994, p. 50). In the line, "Thus the hearsomeness of the burger felicitates the whole of the police" (*Finnegans Wake*, p. 23), we see Van Hoothier's failures become the joke of the town.

Similarly, H.C.E.'s transgression becomes a self-perpetuating story which eventually reaches the ears of three singers, who then sing it to the world in the form of "The Ballad of Persse O'Reilly" (pp. 44-7). This drags H.C.E down from folk hero-father to a failed tavern keeper. The metaphorical falls of H.C.E's incarnations are of significance not only in the way that it actually occurs, but in relation to their inability to stand and play the role of the phallic authority to their children. This fall from grace is what makes H.C.E similar to John Joyce.

Furthermore, talking about H.C.E in parallel to historical figures such as Wellington and Napoleon is not merely an avant-garde technique to subvert historicity,⁶ but one that "amplifies the private sin of H.C.E into an image of a hero" (Campbell & Robinson, 1994, p. 42). A hero's fall is more dramatic than that of an ordinary man, and hence more painful to witness—very much like the fall of a father in the eyes of

his son. In Lacanian terms, this is because the father is the one who should possess the Phallus, and make his son possess it eventually through the fear of castration; the father's failure in performing this phallic function is as painful to the subject (the son) as the fall of a hero.

As we saw previously, Joyce's biological father could not function as the Phallus, and Joyce himself does not accept any other type of father figure. Therefore, since Joyce performs a father foreclosure, his writing can be seen as an effort to fill this lack—in Lacanian terms, to erect the fallen Phallus—by elevating him to hero-status, and in terms of the posterity of *Finnegans Wake*, immortal.⁷ As Suzette Henk (1996) claims, "the impudent son forges the name and authority of the Father in letters that litter a world of his own androgynous making" (p. 207). However, where we differ from Lacan is in his belief that *Finnegans Wake* was written to replace the fallen Phallus, John Joyce—we believe instead that the novel is the ever-erect Phallus, instead of a testament on the failures of various father figures. Joyce himself vividly describes the immortality of his creation: "Four things therefore...in Dyffinarssky ne'er shall fail," with those four things being H.C.E, ALP, Issy, and the twins.

⁶As David Sidorsky (2001) states, the substance of *Finnegans Wake* corresponds to "a Derrida-like deconstruction of objective history," and the pastiche technique a "parody of historical teleology" (p. 301). The point being that this substance or technique do not merely function in isolation, but are meant to convey meaning.

⁷Critics reacted differently to the obscure language of the text; some found it a waste of genius and nonsense, where others thought that he purposefully created the unanalysable text of *Finnegans Wake* to be studied for a long time—immortal posterity to compensate for the failings of his real father.

THE BALLAD OF A FAILING FATHER

He was one time our King of the
Castle
Now he's kicked about like a rotten
old parsnip.

...

Arrah, why, says you, couldn't he
manage it?

They curse the waves that brought
him to their city and want him
punished. They want him dead
And we'll bury him down in
Oxmanstown

Along with the Devil and Danes,
With the deaf and dumb Danes,
And all their remains.

And not all the king's men nor his
horses

Will resurrect his corpus
For there's no true spell in Connacht
or hell

That's able to raise a Cain.
(*Finnegans Wake*, pp. 45-7)

"The Ballad of Persse O'Reilly" above results in a poisonous atmosphere surrounding the town, which eventually ruins H.C.E's reputation. This ballad is about a hero falling to ground and from grace; and relates to how a father of the family, the person who is expected to carry the Law and castrate his sons, fails to perform his paternal function. Like John Joyce, H.C.E is a failure, both as a member of his own community and as the father of a family. Although they fall for different reasons, both are unable to stand up again.

The effect of this impotency is reflected in the structure of their psyche.

The various versions of the story of H.C.E's scandalous deed in the Phoenix Park are told repeatedly throughout the text. These repetitions reflect the failure of not only one father, but many fathers, including Joyce's own. In the third chapter of *Finnegans Wake*, we hear H.C.E in the middle of a radio programme announcing his innocence and his phallic power: "my guesthouse and cowhaendel credits will immediately stand ohoh open as straight as that neighbouring monuments..." (*Finnegans Wake*, p. 54). H.C.E knows that as a father, he has a responsibility to possess the Phallus, and even when he found himself falling from the dignity of phallic figure, he claims it.

But the rumour has spread around in the town, which causes everybody to review the incident. Moreover, H.C.E's family hears about it and they are waiting for a letter to come and reveal the truth: "the letter! The litter! And the soother the bitther! Of eyebrow pencilled, by lipstipple penned. Borrowing a word and begging the question and stealing tinder and slipping like soap..." (*Finnegans Wake*, p.93). The story of H.C.E is told from different perspectives, but it does bring similar emotions for the family members: "it made ma make merry and sissy so shy and rubbed some shine off Shem and put some shame into Shaun" (p. 94).

CONCLUSION

Joyce's social existence and exchanges, like any other speaking subject, were

highly dependent on the function of phallic authority. His Real father, John Joyce, was a complete failure in his paternal duties; his offspring never felt his paternal power over their lives, not even Joyce, who was his favourite son. In this study, H.C.E. acts as the Imaginary father, who can be seen as a projection of John Joyce. James represents the reality of his Real father in the character of H.C.E. rather than what he might expect his father to be. Moreover, James refuses to accept the Law imposed by religion, as his Symbolic father. Whether deprived from a strong Real father, or refusing the Symbolic father, Joyce's psychic structure is void of phallic authority. This lack is the father foreclosure that Joyce suffers from, and is the reason for him developing psychosis, as the language disorders in his text show. Joyce, however, represents his unanalysable, individual style of writing in the text of *Finnegans Wake* in order to keep critics guessing for many years—the continual effort to analyse this perplexing text renders it immortal, and in a way becomes the Phallus for Joyce, as a compensation for the lack of phallic figure he desired.

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