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## Penman Contra Patriarch: Reimagining the Central Conflict of Joyce's Finnegans Wake

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Penman Contra Patriarch  
Reimagining the Central Conflict of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of Languages and Literature  
of Bard College

by  
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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To my *bestefar* Ola Egset, we miss you dearly

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### Introduction

In his biography of James Joyce, Richard Ellmann records that, to Virginia Woolf, *Ulysses*, the text which many regard as Joyce's *magnum opus*, "was 'the book of a self taught working man,' of 'a queasy undergraduate scratching his pimples'" (528). And if she thought that of *Ulysses*, one can only imagine how she would have balked at Joyce's next work entitled *Finnegans Wake*, a text which notoriously reads like a Dadaist performance piece. Even among the *Wake's* *initiés*, a very small but devoted group, many will willingly admit to its unreadability. And for this reason, *Finnegans Wake* is still, to this day, mostly ignored by the reading public. Despite this, it still manages to enjoy a glowing reputation as a modernist masterpiece. A little under a century has passed since its controversial publication, and it is now widely accepted as a *fait accompli* that *Finnegans Wake*, despite its unreadability, is among the greatest achievements of twentieth century literature. And it is the advent of the digital age that has, to some extent, made this possible, inviting us to see *Finnegans Wake* as visionary: a hypertext that long predates the personal computer.

But, though this reading of the text in conjunction with modern ideas about hypertexts and information technology is a great way to introduce the *Wake* to a new generation of Joyceans, its importance beyond that is overstated; and it ultimately contributes to the facile and understanding that *Finnegans Wake* is an odd one-off, a curiosity that is meant to be absent-mindedly browsed. It erroneously creates the impression that the pleasure of reading it is innately disinterested, when, in fact, the experience of reading the *Wake* is necessarily intense. Regardless of its possible links to hypertextuality, to the right person, reading *Finnegans Wake* is meant to be playfully frustrating. Its ludic though intense quality is an intentional feature of the text. Ellmann in his book writes that, in *Finnegans Wake*, "(Joyce) gives his humorous approval to 'that ideal reader suffering from an ideal insomnia'" (703). The ideal reader should thus, in Joyce's mind, flirt with madness by becoming obsessed with

the *Wake*'s puzzling contents. What this quote explicitly lays out is that, to Joyce's mind, at least, the text should not be written off simply as a curio, because it demands one's undivided attention. And, it is its obsessive devotees—the ideal insomniacs that Joyce mentions—who hold the key to demonstrating why this is so. It is only through sleepless nights of study that we can even begin the arduous process of explaining why a text like this is important.

Though many questions remain about *Finnegans Wake*, critics, in the time that has elapsed since its initial publication, have reached a consensus about its basic plot. A reputable denizen of Dublin with ancestral ties to Scandinavia, Humphrey Chrimpsden Earwicker (often called HCE) is the large good-natured proprietor of the Mullingar Inn. Following his nocturnal encounter with the cad in the Phoenix Park, he is dogged by rumors that he committed a vaguely sexual crime (although its exact nature is still up for debate). He becomes a pariah, with his reputation tarnished. And, his family, his wife Anna Livia Plurabelle (often referred to as ALP), his twin sons Shem, a writer, and Shaun, a postman, and his daughter Issy, scramble to make heads or tails of their new situation, each reacting to it in different ways. Most notably, the matriarch of the Earwickers ALP enlists her son Shem to help her write a letter that will both defend her husband and celebrate her. In this essay we will reject how the *Wake*'s commentators have interpreted this plot and its characters. Their interpretation assigns these characters with static identities. And the text's structure, because it is cyclical and consequently bound up in a loop, cannot support such static identities.

In addition, the commentators of *Finnegans Wake* have a vexing tendency to undervalue the antipodal relationship of twins Shem and Shaun. Our paper reacts against this trend, denying its validity by demonstrating that, on the contrary, their conflict lies at the heart of the *Wake*. We will accordingly seek to connect identity's necessary mutability in a narratively cyclical structure to antipodes Shem and Shaun. We will do so by arguing that the conflictual relationship of these twins reaches across the text as its *raison d'être*. As a

heuristic to better understand the connection of these two ideas, let us imagine a circle. Points “A” and “B” are diametrically opposed. And the twins, marking opposite points of this circle’s diameter, can move 360 degrees, rotating like a propeller, and thus existing on every point of its circumference. Their relevance to the cyclical narrative of the *Wake* as antipodes is then constant.

In other words, the relationship of twins Shem and Shaun is the key to understanding *Finnegans Wake*’s narrative. And their crucial importance to the text is embedded in its structural cyclicity. In order to demonstrate this, we will first examine the figure of Shem to understand the important role he plays in this dichotomous relationship. He is known as Shem the Penman because he is a writer, so it is only fitting that we both write about him as a character and write about his authorship. Secondly, we will analyze the figure of the sleeping giant and describe his connection to Shem, Shaun and to the narrative as a whole. Thirdly, we will look more closely at this text’s cyclical structure, connecting it to cyclical time, and describing how it benefits Shem while hurting Shaun. And, finally, we will discuss the *Wake*’s characters in their gendered aspect, allying Shem with the female and sympathetic characters and Shaun with the male and unsympathetic ones, thus proving that the narrative of *Finnegans Wake*, consisting of the Earwicker family’s movements, depends on the relationship of antipodal twins Shem and Shaun.



### The Illustrated Penman

Who is Shem the Penman in relation to his antagonistic twin Shaun the Post? Is he simply a bottom-feeding writer of obscenities? Or is he not instead more complex: given a more important role to play, and a greater purpose? What is his influence in the text? In his book *Lots of Fun at Finnegans Wake*, Finn Fordham writes: “Shem and Shaun have one early origin in Cain and Abel.” (39) However, Fordham stresses: “Cain, the primal murderer, may be the primal villain in Genesis but in *Finnegans Wake* Joyce retells the story, inviting us to invert our sympathies.” (Fordham, 39) This explains why, in chapter I.7, we can catch glimpses of this Cain-like figure, seeing him as his brother Shaun does, in a negative light. Inverting our sympathies, however, means in this context that it is the Abel figure (Shaun) that we must revile: “Shaun has consistently been viewed by critics as more suspect—a braggart, a bully, and a hypocritical sentimentalist—with Shem being the revolutionary artist anti-hero, the outcast with whom we commiserate.” (Fordham, 39)

This chapter goes on to describe Shem’s “bodily getup” (Joyce, 169). But it is only by marrying reality to its ostensibly Shaun-influenced exaggeration (thus “putting truth and untruth together” Joyce, 169), that “a shot may be made at what this hybrid” (Joyce, 169) Shem was “actually was like to look at” (Joyce, 169). So, in order to describe Shem we need to reconcile fact and fiction:

Shem’s bodily getup, it seems, included an adze of a skull, an eight of a larkseye, the whoel of a nose, one numb arm up a sleeve, fortytwo hairs on his uncrown, eighteen to his mock lip, a trio of barbels from his megageg chin (sowman’s son), the wrong shoulder higher than the right, all ears, an artificial tongue with a natural curl, not a foot to stand on, a handful of thumbs, a blind stomach, a deaf heart, a loose liver, two fifths of two buttocks, one gleetsteen avoirdupoier for him, a manroot of all evil, a salmonkelt’s thinskin, eelsblood in his cold toes, a bladder tristended (...) (Joyce, 169)

This description paints an altogether unflattering portrait of Shem as the deformed and disgusting reject. An “adze of a skull,” refers to the woodcutting tool, which hints at Shem’s apparently misshapen skull, an elongated skull shaped like the head or blade of an adze. This,

additionally, invites us to consider Shem's lowly and popular character, insofar as woodcutting is an occupation of the people, a form of manual labor that is alien to the wealthy higher classes. And, given the myriad pretensions of Shaun (described as being "a braggart," among other things) this classist dichotomizing of their relationship should hardly come as a surprise.

If this is so, it is because, in George Gibson's *Wake Rites*, a text which details the Pagan Irish influences of the *Wake* (and which we will frequently consult hereafter), the origin of these twins is traced back to Tara (the spiritual mecca of the Celts), where, like their parents HCE and ALP, they had "their close counterparts in the religion of Pagan Ireland" (66). Like Shem and Shaun, the Tara Twins function "as complementary pairs" (Gibson, 67) and oppose each other in every respect. The first such pair of mythical Tara Twins, according to Gibson's understanding in his book of *The Annals of the Four Masters*, is composed of "Eremon and Eber, the first Celtic colonizers of Ireland" (67): "prototypical Celtic Twins" (67) who "exhibit mutual hostility from their first days in Ireland" (67).

But there is another great division in Pagan Ireland that can account for the fraternal division of Shem and Shaun: the division between "Fianna and Tuatha" (Gibson, 67). And this one, "much like the rift in the Celtic royal line" (Gibson, 67) between Eremon and Eber, "has its origin in another set of Tara Twins" (Gibson, 67-8); it originates with the fighting of "the brothers Fiacha (the Shem type) and Tuathal (the Shaun type)" (Gibson, 68). Gibson continues:

The differences between Fiacha and Tuathal quickly expand into a rivalry between the social organizations they represent: Fianna, and its associations with nature, freedom, risk, shamanism, poetry, intuition, and fluid identities; and Tuatha, and its qualities of urbanity, society, status, security, material wealth, rationality, practicality, and fixed social roles. (68)

By seeing how Gibson places a particular emphasis on the polar opposition of the brothers Fiacha and Tuathal, we can understand the classist dichotomizing that was implied above. By

associating, like Gibson has, Fiacha (the head of the Fianna) with Shem, and Thuatal (the head of the Thuata) with Shaun, we are immediately associating each of the Earwicker twins to set interests and characteristics, and to drastically different, and opposed, social organizations.

Further, Roland McHugh in his *Annotations*, which we will frequently consult throughout this text, writes that an “eight of a larkseye” refers to an eighth of “a mischievous eye” (169). This makes his eye both mischievous or unserious, and incomplete: an eye that is, in all, underperforming. The “whoel of a nose” is interpretable, according to McHugh, as an indication that his nose can both be a “hole” and a “whole” (McHugh, 169): an all-or-nothing nose, that either craters into his face or is overlarge, protruding from it. Shem’s portrait is elaborated further when his facial hair is described in equally unflattering terms, albeit more precisely: “fortytwo hairs off his uncrown,” creating the impression both that he is balding and that his “crown” (head) is negated, reducible only to an “uncrown.” Then, there is his beard: “a trio of barbels from his megageg chin.” A “barbel,” according to McHugh, is “a filament that hangs from the mouths of some fishes” (169), but juxtaposed with the evocation of his “megageg chin” (which McHugh associates with both the bleating and chin of the goat) as a “trio of barbels,” becomes something far more sinister: the beard of an obscurely aquatic devil. Thus it fuses the bottom feeding of fish with satanic evil. (Satan is commonly depicted as having a goat-head.) And indeed, fish are sea creatures that dwell in the sea’s belly, which is adjacent (touching) the Earth’s (Hell).

In his book *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake*, Clive Hart writes that Shem the Penman is “the thinker, the artist who plumbs the depths and loses his soul in the process” (117), in essence, describing him as a Faustian figure. Hart continues: Shem, “though less attractive” (117), is “a Miltonic Satan” (117): the archetypal adversary. And the characterization of Shem as a satanic and aquatic being is carried over into the description, a

little later on, of him having “a salmonkelt’s thinskin,” and “eelsblood in his cold toes.”

“Eelsblood in his cold toes” is fairly self-explanatory. More complicated, however, is the part about his having “a salmonkelt’s thinskin,” which could be seen as ambiguous: a “kelt” is indicated by McHugh, in his *Annotations*, to be a “salmon after spawning” (McHugh, 169), so “salmonkelt’s thinskin” denotes the fragile “thinskin” of a recently spawned salmon: metaphorically describing Shem’s easily hurt feelings, and his vulnerability to Shaun’s verbal abuse. But, though McHugh omits this from his annotations to this passage, salmon in the context of the *Wake* can also be a positive image.

In George Gibson’s book, we find mention of Finn MacCool (originally written Fionn Mac Cumhail), identified as “the last” (68) and “greatest” (68) “leader of the Tara Fianna” (68). Gibson recounts his boyhood and his encounter with “Fintan (‘the ancient Finn’), the Salmon of Wisdom” (160):

In “The Boyhood Deeds of Finn,” the “holy child of Coole” (531.33) (now known as “Demne”) is rejected by his mother and raised in secrecy by two Druidesses (...) who train the youth in tracking, hunting, weaponry, and martial arts. After this physical preparation, young Demne plans to return to Tara to claim the position held by his father. On his way, guided by the river Boyne herself, he meets an old Druid (...) searching for Fintan (“the ancient Finn”), the Salmon of Wisdom (...). It has been prophesied that whoever eats the salmon will acquire the Three Illuminations: *imbas forosnai* (“incantations from the palm,” “knowledge that enlightens”); *teinm laegda* (intuitive perception, “knowledge from the pith,” mantic utterances); and *dichetal do chennaib* (the ability to recite and recall using the fingers). (160)

The old Druid (named Finnecces) “catches Fintan and orders Demne to cook it” (Gibson, 160). “Demne burns his thumb” (Gibson, 160) on Fintan, and “quickly places it in his mouth” (Gibson, 160), thereby acquiring “the Three Illuminations.” Upon realizing that “the prophecy has been fulfilled” (Gibson, 160), the old druid “gives both his name and identity to the youth” (Gibson, 160): “Demne is now ‘Finn’—the ‘Bright,’ the one who possesses ‘bright knowledge.’” (Gibson, 160)

Fintan, or the Salmon of Wisdom, is thus central to Celtic myth as the bearer of wisdom, so likening Shem to the Salmon of Wisdom immediately associates him with

wisdom. Moreover, by identifying Shem with Fintan, we are further identifying him with the Finn MacCool who ingested Fintan. Earlier in chapter I.7, this parallel is further demonstrated when Shem's diet is described (and features salmon quite prominently): "Shem was a sham and a low sham and his lowness crept out first via foodstuffs" (Joyce, 170) for he preferred "Gibsen's tea-time salmon tinned, as inexpensive as pleasing, to the plumpest roeheavy lax" (Joyce, 170).

Shem, this description argues, prefers salmon that is "as inexpensive as pleasing" and is tinned (in a tin can), to the "plumpest roe-heavy lax," which, as McHugh shows in his *Annotations*, refers to the plumpest "roeheavy," or egg-heavy, "lax" (salmon) (170). Why is this the case? To answer this question, let us return to Gibson's comment on the closeness of Shem to Fiacha, who represents the Fianna (68) and shuns all that which his rival brother Thuatal (associated in turn with Shaun) venerates (68). Shem, unlike his brother Shaun, does not care for material wealth, or security, and instead prefers poverty, and risk (Gibson, 68). Tinned, or canned, food is an inexpensive substitute for finer "foodstuffs" (Joyce, 170), and potentially also a vector for the transmission of "botulism" (Joyce, 170), and that's just as well because Shem enjoys it more: "no junglegrown pineapple ever smacked like the whoppers you shook out of Ananias' cans" (Joyce, 170). Where the name of the nineteenth century Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen makes its way into "Gibsen's tea-time salmon tinned" (Joyce, 170), we find that this kind of salmon now connects more fully to literature than it otherwise would have.

We have seen that Shem's "bodily getup" is described in chapter I.7, but what about his work? Is there any overlap, whereby elements of his "bodily getup" can influence its course, playing an active role in its creation and subsequent development? In order to find an answer to this question, we will have to examine another passage from this chapter:

Then, pious Aeneas, conformant to the fulminant firman which enjoins on the tremylose terrian that, when the call comes, he shall produce nighthemerically from

his unheavenly body a no uncertain quantity of obscene matter not protected by copyright in the United States of Ourania or bedeed and bedood and bedang and bedung to him, with this double dye, brought to blood heat, gallic acid on iron ore, through the bowels of his misery (...) this Essuan Menschavik and the first till last alchemist wrote over every square inch of the only foolscap available, his own body, till by its corrosive sublimation one continuous present tense integument slowly unfolded all marryvoising moodmoulded cyclewheeling history (thereby, he said, reflecting from his own individual person life unlivable, transaccidentated through the slow fires of consciousness into a dividual chaos, perilous, potent, common to allflesh, human only, mortal) but with each word that would not pass away the squidsself which he had squirtscreened from the crystalline world waned chagreenold and doriangrayer in its dudhud. (Joyce, 185-6)

What is it that this passage describes? It is this passage that Finn Fordham analyzes in the first part of his book. Shem, the scandalous author, “because he has no paper” (Fordham, 41), uses “his own body” (Fordham, 41), mixing his “excreta and urine” (Fordham, 40) (a “no uncertain quantity of obscene matter” produced from “his unheavenly body”) to make the ink that he writes with. Thus we see that the point of contact for us in connecting his physical description to the work he produces is located on the surface of his body (its outermost organ): his skin. The “salmonkelt’s thinskin” referring then also to the “thinskin” on which he writes: his own.

Our connection of his physical description, his “bodily getup,” to what it is he is writing is further legitimized when what he his writing is referred to as “one continuous present tense integument slowly unfolded all marryvoising moodmoulded cyclewheeling history.” Fordham writes: “Integument is an archaic word, meaning *covering*, *clothes*, or a *skin*.” (42) And, in his telling, “there are ambiguities in the words ‘tense’ and ‘present’ being at once adjectives and nouns” (Fordham, 55): “As an adjective meaning ‘taut’, tense describes the ‘integument’ as if it’s stretched out, as skin would be that is to become parchment. And this tense covering is ‘present’ –that is ‘existing’ and ‘available’—just as it is lasting (‘continuous’).” (Fordham, 55) But this is not only a point of contact further confirming the closeness of Shem’s physical body to the work he writes.

It is also ambiguously depicting the nature of what he is writing, and this is only apparent if we understand the use of “continuous present” as a noun: “as a noun it describes the temporalities of action: the ‘continuous present’ is a tense which describes an act not yet completed: that is, ‘I am singing, I am walking.’” (Fordham, 55) This history that Shem writes, because it makes use of the “temporalities of action,” bears a striking resemblance to lived experience, where time never seems complete. (We will return to the topic of the “cyclewheeling history” that Shem writes in the next section.) But, why is it important that Shem the Penman produces this document on his body? And, how significant is his body’s alteration?

Shem’s skin, as the very surface on which he writes, echoes a specific and important moment in the *Wake*: the early introduction of the “form outlined aslumbered” (Joyce, 7), which is to say, of the anthropomorphized ground on which our story rests (Bishop, 36). Joyce in the *Wake* writes that “the great fall of the offwall” (3) (a great fall off a high wall) entailed “the pfjschute” (3) (from the French *chute*: “great fall”) of a once upstanding, or “wallstrait” (3), “oldparr” (3) (or “old-parr,” from the French *père*: “father,” designating an old father). And there, “the humptyhillhead (...) promptly sends an unquiring one well to the west in quest of his tumtytumtoes” (Joyce, 3). His “humptyhillhead,” which joins the fallen figure of Humpty Dumpty to the hilly head, fused with the surrounding landscape, of this giant, “promptly” (promptly) sends an “unquiring” (enquiring) one (its exact nature is unknown) west in search, or “in quest,” of his “tumtytumtoes.” The word “tumtytumtoes” has the same number of syllables as the word “humptyhillhead,” and thus the two are linked as disparate parts of the giant’s body.

Bishop illustrates this vast “form outlined aslumbered” (Joyce, 7) in a relief map (34-5), to outline its large body, presenting it as a giant who is “reclined from cape to pede” (Joyce, 619), or “*de cap-à-pie*,” (the French for “from head-to-toe”) and who sleeps, merged

with the landscape around him. This figure is consequently then of great spatial importance to the text: “More than the Dublin of any authoritative history or guidebook, this is the space within which all of *Finnegans Wake* takes place.” (Bishop, 36-7) And Bakhtin, in *Rabelais and his World*, can explain where the inspiration for such an odd figure comes from: “All the legends of giants are closely related to the relief of the locality where the story is told. The legend always finds a visible, obvious support in the physical setting; the dismembered, scattered, or flattened body of the giant is discovered in the natural landscape.” (Bakhtin, 342). So it would seem the giant who we’ve observed bears a special relation to Shem also has roots in Irish legend. But, what then (or rather who) is this spatially expansive giant? Joyceans have not reached a consensus on this matter. The first page of the *Wake* refers to “Finnegan, erse solid man” (Joyce, 3) in around the same place that this giant is introduced, thus leaving us to infer that this giant’s name is then Finnegan.



### Spatial and Temporal Flesh: The Giant's Chronotope

This giant named Finnegan, as an anthropomorphized microcosm, is a blown up and macrocosmic view of Shem's body, on which a complex history is being written (Joyce, 186). Shem's body then, if we follow Bishop's logic regarding the sleeping giant, either is equivalent to, or actually is "the space within which all of *Finnegans Wake* takes place." This gigantism, and its spatial contiguity to the action of the plot, is the nexus point linking Shem to his father, because, as we later shall see, his father is also associated with this figure. Accordingly, we may find that he is like "bygmester Finnegan" (Joyce, 4) in that he too, like his father, is a *bygmester* (Danish for "master builder"): he constructs a manuscript world on his body, setting the male-dominated scene on himself in "a no uncertain quantity of obscene matter." Bridging the gap between these two figures would turn this giant into a reflection of Shem the Penman, becoming Shem the Penman's mythic alter-ego.

And, assuming now that Shem is this giant, what can that tell us? In Bakhtin's book *The Dialogic Imagination*, the essay titled "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," describes, among other things, the Rabelaisian chronotope. And, it applies remarkably well to Shem, in his connection to the "form outlined aslumbered" upon which our story takes place:

What is at issue here is that special connection between a man and all his actions, between every event of his life and the spatial-temporal world. This special relationship we will designate as the adequacy, the direct proportionality, of degrees of quality ("value") to spatial and temporal quantities (dimension) (...) This means that everything of value, everything that is valorized positively, must achieve its full potential in temporal and spatial terms; it must spread out as far and as wide as possible, and it is necessary that everything of significant value be provided with the power to expand spatially and temporally; likewise, everything evaluated negatively is small, pitiable, feeble and must be destroyed—and is helpless to resist this destruction. (167-8)

Shem, if he is the giant, shares this chronotope and is then similar: he is "valorized positively," and his dimensions are thus impressive. This is consistent with the idea that what he is writing on his own body bears some relation to what it is we, as readers, regard as the book we are reading: it is, after all, highly valued if it appears on such a great surface.

Moreover, it is not only Shem that operates according to this chronotope but his brother too, when he is standing in opposition to him. Shaun is, as it were, pulled into Shem's orbit when addressing him, and is thus subject to the same chronotope in that moment.

The correlation between value and size, consistent with this chronotope, could then explain what Fordham notes to be Shaun's derision for Shem, which is so excessive that it seems "pathological" (Fordham, 40). It is through this derision that he negatively influences his brother's description throughout chapter I.7 (Joyce, 169-95), portraying him in terms that make him out to be especially "small, pitiable" and "feeble." So, not only is Shem defined by this chronotope in the text, but his brother is as well, at least in his words and actions. Shaun's forced entry into *Finnegans Wake* forces his behaviors (exemplified by words and actions) to fit inside the Rabelaisian chronotope. His belittling of Shem in chapter I.7 and beyond is proof of this. But it is not sufficient to say that what is positive, and perceived as valuable, is imposing and great in size, it must also be "provided with the power to expand spatially and temporally" (Bakhtin, 167).

As Bakhtin further writes: "everything that is good grows: it grows in all respects and in all directions, it cannot help growing because growth is inherent in its very nature," while "the bad, on the contrary, does not grow but rather degenerates, thins out and perishes" (168). In McHugh's book *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake*, we see this quite clearly when he states that, in the preceding chapter of the book (I.6), "time and space begin to interact" (31), or speak, with Shem being associated "with time (as the elm's growth)" (31) and Shaun "with space (the stone's fixity)" (31). This interaction is first mentioned, even earlier, in chapter I.5: a chapter on the "mamafesta" (Joyce, 104) that Shem supposedly writes in defense of his father and at his mother's behest. We will operate on the assumption that this mamafesta (introducing the word "mama" to "manifesto") is a written celebration of life-giving maternal forces (mama-fest). It is the writing inscribed on the giant's body that constitutes the book we

are reading. Joyce writes “to=introducere a notion of time” (124) “upon a plane (?) sù’fàç’e’ ” (124) (upon a plain surface, or plane), and does so by “punct! Ingh oles (sic) in iSpace” (124) (punching holes in his space, or is-space), thus illustrating how time (Shem) influences space (Shaun). The particular emphasis Joyce places on punctuation, in this example, further introduces the primacy of time, linguistically decided by punctuation. The stone (Shaun) erodes with the passing of time, eventually disappearing, while the elm (Shem) is enriched and continues to grow. What benefits the elm (Shem) slowly disappears the stone (Shaun).

The symbolism of the elm and the stone (that marks the distinctiveness of Shem and Shaun) is described at the end of chapter I.8, when night is falling and the two washerwomen (who all throughout I.8 were gossiping about the Earwicker parents) are transformed. In the process, they introduce Part II (Joyce, 219-399), which focuses almost exclusively on the Earwicker children. However, the distinctiveness in the *Wake* of time and space can also be negated, insofar as time can also merge with space. Both time and space can, as it were, be welded together in a way that confuses what, in this text, is their usual narrative distinctiveness. And that is, in literature, exactly what the chronotope is: “We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, ‘time space’) to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (Bakhtin, 84), where “spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole” (Bakhtin, 84). And where, according to Bakhtin, “time (...) thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible” (84), while space, likewise “becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history” (84). But this has yet to answer our initial question: how is Shem, who is positively valued, provided with “the power to expand spatially and temporally?” (Bakhtin, 167)

If we choose to see *Finnegans Wake* as “ALP’s all-important letter” (Fordham, 40) and Shem as its “author/forgery/copyist” (Fordham, 40), the task of writing time and space into

the novel falls on him. Thus the constant oscillation between space and time's fusion and particularity becomes an intentional feature of the text, decided by Shem himself. This pairs remarkably well with our previous argument concerning the, erstwhile described, sleeping giant (who is central to the *Wake*). If this is so, it is because these ideas, though they were separately developed, can overlap. Shem's body, equivalent to the giant's, is the bedrock of our story, and it is governed by the Rabelaisian chronotope. He writes on himself, and thus "takes on flesh" (Bakhtin, 84). Fordham writes: "(for Shem), writing is a second skin to cover up his naked body" (42).

It is then a new skin that marks his simultaneous expansion both in space and time, and affirms Shem's "power to expand spatially and temporally" (Bakhtin, 167) through his writing. But that's not all, it also hides his unique chronotopic identity from the world. To justify the qualification of Shem as one who hides, we must return to the analysis of the above excerpt (Joyce, 185-6), from chapter I.7, on Shem's writing; it is there that we can uncover how consistent his hiddenness is with what is written in the *Wake*, where we find "the squidsself which he had squirtscreened from the crystalline world" (186). On this subject, Fordham notes: "The squid, squirting its ink defensively, hides itself from attack. So, too, Shem protects himself while writing the first and last lines of defense against a hostile world." (53)

The "squidsself" (Joyce, 156) of Shem is "squirtscreened" (Joyce, 156) thereby shielding him from the "crystalline" (clear) world where his true body is all too visible, warts and all: "this suggests that the relation between the writer and the written" (Fordham, 42) is not just a depiction of the surrounding world, but also "a deception" (Fordham, 42), or "a layer of muck that follows the contours of the body while hiding it" (Fordham, 42). Moreover, still quoting from the same excerpt of the *Wake* (Joyce, 185-6), we find the words: "gallic acid on iron ore" (Joyce, 185). According to Fordham, this is "quite literally the chemical

make-up of black ink” (55). The presence of black ink, in turn, refers back to Shem’s “squidself” (Joyce, 156), which, Fordham writes, is like that of a squid that “is squirting its ink defensively” (53). But, what do we make, then, of the “excreta and urine” (Fordham, 40) mentioned earlier? “It takes Shem towards *conventional* ink,” writes Fordham (55). Is this not a contradiction? Fordham explains that if we see Shaun as someone who finds that “anything that darkens and stains” (55) is tantamount to excrement (55), it is not. But we have to object to this characterization. It implies a misunderstanding of Shem, because the *Wake* explicitly describes him as an “alchemist” (Joyce, 186).

Fordham’s reading presupposes that what was always “*conventional* ink” (Fordham, 55) was earlier merely mistaken for excrement by Shaun, and thus cancels out the charge given to Shem by the word “alchemist” (Joyce, 186), which modifies the word “alchemist” to include Shem’s name. Shem and alchemy are thus inextricably connected. This justifies that what Fordham assumes is a simple error on Shaun’s part may in fact hint at a very real alchemical transformation. Shem, as an “alchemist” (Joyce, 186), can make black ink from “obscene matter” (Joyce, 185) that is defecated by his “unheavenly body” (Joyce, 185) in roughly the same way that alchemists in the Middle-Ages famously sought to turn lead into gold: producing something valuable and exalted from something valueless and base. Fordham further notes in his book that, though “writing with excrement” (41), or excrement alchemically transformed into black ink, “seems infantile or perverse” (41), “it may be the last resort of a prisoner forbidden use of pen and paper” (41). Like Bobby Sands, “the Republican hunger-striker” (Fordham, 41) who “famously did so in the H-Blocks of Northern Ireland” (Fordham, 41), Shem writes to rebelliously match his oppressor’s strength. And *Finnegans Wake* is his riposte to his disapproving brother Shaun’s many intolerant attacks.

### Cyclical Time: The Great Equalizer

The mamafesta was written by Shem the Penman on his own body, and “in the name of Annah, the Allmaziful, the Everliving, the Bringer of Plurabilities” (Joyce, 104) (his mother ALP). Its stated purpose lies in “memorialising the Mosthighest” (Joyce, 104), which ambiguously could correspond either to the defense of his father Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker or to the celebration of his mother Anna Livia Plurabelle. The topic of this letter, referred to in the text as an untitled “mamafesta” (Joyce, 104) (mama-fest, or manifesto), is treated in chapter I.5 (the Mamafesta chapter), but its influence, of course, is not limited to this chapter and extends far beyond it, considerably impacting our reading of the narrative. This section will then endeavor to provide a bird’s eye view of this letter, which we will prove to be synonymous with *Finnegans Wake*, by describing its cyclical structure as a representation of cyclical time.

Going back to the idea, expounded earlier by Fordham, that Shaun equates “anything that darkens and stains” (55) with excrement (55): behind “the equation of writing and filth” (42) is “the feeling that writing (...) has to be moved through proper channels, checked and treated” (42), that writing “has to be recognized as a material which is as dangerous as excrement itself, since it too can spread diseases and must be controlled” (42). But, why is this? Fordham accepts this without question as evidence that Shaun is generally graphophobic. He cites as evidence Shaun’s occupation: he is a postman, and, in this role, can “control as much as carry the message” (Fordham, 42). We take this to mean that his role is that of a messenger who is never exposed to the messages he conveys. He carries the messages in their envelopes, where what they communicate is concealed. But more than that, writing has to be “checked and treated.” This implies the sanitization of writing. The idea that Shaun is generally graphophobic is quite accurate, then, to the degree that countless autocrats

have shown a certain distrust for the written word and have sensed, just like he has, its subversive potential.

Shaun is opposed only to Shem but in the context of the *Wake*, Shem is alone in writing: he is the writer *par excellence*. Moreover, while missives are usually a private affair, Shem literally wears his on his sleeve and its content is provocative. The mamafesta, like excrement, “can spread diseases.” But this is not simply because it is not “controlled,” and because Shem wears it on his body. There is also something about its subject that Shaun the Post finds revolting. Shaun even says as much. In chapter III.1, when asked if he could read “the strangewrote (...) shemletters” (Joyce, 419) (the mamafesta), he states that the letter “which the mother” (Joyce, 420) (ALP) and “Mr Unmentionable (O breed not his name!)” (Joyce, 420) (Shem) wrote is “not a nice production” (Joyce, 419). Explaining that the mamafesta is not well-written, Shaun thus derides the part of it that Shem is responsible for, calling it “a pinch of scribble” (Joyce, 419) that is “puffedly offal” (Joyce, 419) (perfectly awful), and “overdrawn” (Joyce, 419). This is not new for Shaun the Post, who has consistently shown disdain for Shem’s artistry and erudition. What is new is what he says afterwards: its subject is “auctionable” (Joyce, 419) (actionable), and “all about crime and libel” (Joyce, 419).

When the contents of the mamafesta are finally introduced in Part IV, however, the whole thing feels like an elaborate joke: a red herring in its apparent ordinariness. If, however, we observe its presentation in the text, this seemingly anodyne letter (so small and pedestrian) becomes far more interesting and complex. It is fused with the surrounding text in a way that camouflages it. It is its postscript (beginning on p. 619) that accomplishes this, by virtue of its merging with ALP’s riverine soliloquy: the soliloquy that closes the *Wake* with the first half of the “riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay” (Joyce, 3) that it opens with. This proves what earlier was merely assumed: that the letter is the *Wake*, and that

this mamafesta was in full, from the outset, fused with the book that we are currently busy analyzing. Let us then take a closer look at this text's internal structure, which is renewed now in its importance to our inquiry. *Finnegans Wake* refers to itself at one point as a "millwheeling vicociclotometer" (Joyce, 614). What is that, and can we connect it to the "cyclewheeling history" (Joyce, 186) that we have previously referred to? Can the term "vicociclotometer" shine a light on the character, internally, of the "cyclewheeling history," or mamafesta, that we've now determined is also the *Wake*?

The "vico" in "vicociclotometer" (Joyce, 614) refers to Giambattista Vico, the Italian thinker whose eighteenth century work *La Scienza Nuova* (translated as *The New Science*) proposed a cyclical theory of history that acts as a model for the structure of the *Wake*. Clive Hart in his book titled *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake* writes about Vico's theory of history:

Each complete historical cycle consisted of an uninterrupted succession of three great 'Ages'—the Divine, the Heroic, and the Human—followed by a very brief fourth Age which brought the cycle to an end and ushered in the next. The cyclic progress began with a thunderclap which frightened the primitive, inarticulate man out of his bestial fornication under the open skies, caused him to conceive of the existence of a wrathful, watchful God, to utter his first terrified words—"Pa! Pa!"—and to retire modestly to the shelter of caves to initiate the history of the family and of society (...) Following the third Age, toward the end of which man's governing power vanished in a general dissolution and neo-chaos, all fell once again into the hands of Divine providence. During this brief interregnum, usually called a *ricorso*, the skittles of the Heavenly game were set up afresh so that God might blast them with another terrifying thunderbolt to start a new cycle rolling. (47)

*Finnegans Wake*, which is also the mamafesta that metafictionally represents it, is structured in four parts. Each part can easily then be associated to a Viconian Age. Part I can thus be the Divine, a theocratic era dominated by the concept of "a wrathful, watchful God" who is responsible for all natural phenomena. Part II can then correspond to the Heroic, an aristocratic quasi-feudal age where power is very unevenly distributed and concentrated (Hart, 48). Part III corresponds to the Human, a largely democratic period. And finally, Part IV, with



its one chapter, corresponds to “(the) brief interregnum,” the *ricorso* that brings us back to the beginning, thus simultaneously completing the cycle and starting it anew.

And, this is not a coincidence. There is no doubt that this is an intentional feature of the text. It has long been argued that Vico is to *Finnegans Wake* what Homer was to *Ulysses*. It is so commonly argued, in fact, that Vico’s influence on the *Wake*’s structure is by now a commonplace in *Wakean* criticism. As Clive Hart puts it, “it is by now thoroughly well known that in *Finnegans Wake* Joyce made use of the cyclic theories of history set out in Vico’s *La Scienza Nuova*” (46). This is in part because: “Joyce made frequent mention of Vico both in letters and in conversation” (Hart, 46) and encouraged Samuel Beckett to write an article “about the relevance of Viconian theory to the structure and philosophy of ‘Work in Progress’” (Hart, 46) (*Work in Progress*: the title *Finnegans Wake* temporarily had before its completion). It is only “since the publication of Beckett’s article” (Hart, 46) that “almost every commentator of *Finnegans Wake* has (...) discussed the Viconian theories and shown how they apply in general to the book” (Hart, 46-7). Joyce was then well acquainted with Vico’s philosophy. And as such, it influenced the progress he was slowly making on the *Wake* and informed its burgeoning structure. But where can we find evidence of this Viconian structure in the text, setting aside the mention of the “millwheeling vicociclotometer” (Joyce, 614) that we’ve previously observed?

The *Wake* features ten thunderwords, which could only be described as multilingual words agglutinated together to echo the sound of thunder (3; 23; 44; 90; 113; 257; 314; 332; 414; 424). This is something that we can also see expressed in Gibson’s book: “Throughout the *Wake* (...) are the sounds of thunder—in the form of the famous hundred-letter ‘thunderwords’ (...) And Joyce (through reference to Vico) tells his readers—the audience and participants of the *Wake*—that these thunder sounds are the voice of the thunder god.” (90) Let us recall the important role of thunder in Vico’s cyclical theory of history. The cycle

began with “a thunderclap” (Hart, 47), and ends with “another terrifying thunderbolt” (Hart, 47). In Vico’s theory, then, thunder serves an all-important divine annunciatory function, insofar as it simultaneously announces both the closing of the old cycle and the start of the new one.

Continuing along these lines, Gibson in his book further connects the thunderwords to the mysterious figure of Magrath (90), whose name, in Druidic tradition, “is not a name at all but rather a title” (86): “The prefix ‘Mog’ or ‘Mug’ imparts a theophorous sense to a name and also indicates that the second element of the name in which it occurs is something divine, if not actually a divinity. ‘Ruith’ or ‘Roth’ means ‘wheel,’ therefore, divine or sacred wheel.” (86) Mog Ruith, then, is a title assigning the bearer the role of serving the “sacred wheel” (Gibson, 86). Magrath, in the *Wake*, could be interpreted as serving the unfolding of cyclical time, and is then naturally antagonistic towards patriarchal power, as “the mortal enemy of HCE” (Gibson, 82). He can thus be seen as an extension of Shem the Penman, whose writing of the *Wake* we’ve already described. But, where does this Magrath appear in the text? And, how can we directly connect him to the *mamafesta* and its author?

Most of the information supplied on Magrath is provided in chapter I.4. Gibson agrees with this, claiming that it is “at this point in the *Wake*” (84) that “Joyce provides most of his strange details about Magrath” (84). And, at least some of these details can aid us in our appreciation of Magrath’s pivotal importance to *Finnegans Wake*’s narrative. His importance is decided by the appearance of a strange wooden device given to him by a mysterious “kind workman” (Joyce, 98): “On Umbrella Street where he did drinks from a pumps a kind workman, Mr. Whitlock, gave him a piece of wood (...) Batty believes a baton while Hogan hears a hod yet heer prefers a punsil shapner and Cope and Bull go cup and ball.” (Joyce, 98) This wooden device is confusing as this passage points out: some believe it to be “a baton,” while others think it “a punsil shapner” (a pencil sharpener) and still others feel it is a “cup

and ball.” And Gibson may well hold the key to understanding what this “piece of wood” does. His explanation is closely tied to the title of Mog Ruith that “Cornelius Magrath” (Joyce, 98) holds.

Gibson, in describing Pagan Ireland’s ritual culture, refers to “an enigmatic cry heard near the *Lia Fail* (Stone of Fal), the phallic monolith at Tara” (88) that was also known as the Stone of Destiny (88). This “enigmatic cry,” described as “a peal of thunder, a rumbling, a screaming, or a low moaning” (Gibson, 88), was known as “the Voice of Fal” (Gibson, 88): “The sound was, for the Irish pagans, the aural credential of a divine authority” (Gibson, 88) and acted both as “the death knell for a failed king and the unearthly voice of approval for his legitimate successor” (Gibson, 88). The aural trick of the Voice of Fal originates with “a shamanistic instrument used by certain Irish Druids, known in Old Irish as the *Roth Romach* (...) and commonly known to anthropologists as the *bull-roarer*.” (Gibson, 88-9) The Voice of Fal was produced by “the whirring moan of the *Roth Romach*, secretly wielded by designated Druids to dramatically punctuate key moments in the wake and marriage rites” (Gibson, 89) at Tara, that marked both the beginning and the end of the king’s reign.

Gibson describes it as “a deceptively simple device to construct” (89): “from hardwood (traditionally, an oak hit by lightning) or a piece of flat bone, a small paddlelike lath—usually four-sided and inscribed with (...) sacred designs—is whittled” (89). Gibson further notes that, “In one end of the lath, a perforation is made through which a length of rope is fastened; traditionally, this length is the exact distance from the center of the heart to the furthest extension of the right arm.” (89) And, for the Druid or shaman to operate the *Roth Romach* he has to hold the cord “by its free end” (Gibson, 89) and then whirl the lath in a circle overhead (Gibson, 89): “the lath then strikes the air rapidly and obliquely and begins to rotate axially at the end of the cord” (Gibson, 89). And it is this “axial rotation” (Gibson, 89) that produces the Voice of Fal. When the cord “cannot tighten any further” (Gibson, 89) after

having been too “tightly coiled” (Gibson, 89), “the axial rotation of the *Roth Romach* (...) reverses direction in midair flight and continues in this manner until it reverses again” (Gibson, 89). The sound produced “is therefore not continuous” (89): it “rises and falls” (89) just like thunder.

And in the right hands, the *Roth Romach* can even produce a rumbling sound quite like that of thunder. Where are we getting at? “On pages 98 and 99 of the *Wake*, Joyce describes the strange wooden device possessed by Magrath” (Gibson, 90), a description that certainly reinforces the impression that what we have here is the *Roth Romach*. It is then clearly connected to the figure of Mog Ruith: the Servant of the Sacred Wheel. And, not only this, but, according to Gibson, a clear connection can be drawn to the thunderwords observed earlier: “The mysterious thunderwords that punctuate the *Wake* rites are nothing less than Joyce’s rendition of the ancient Voice of Fal, thundering his sanction through the Servant of the Sacred Wheel.” (90)

The Sacred Wheel that Mog Ruith “Cornelius Magrath” (Joyce, 98) serves is then not only an allusion to the cyclical nature of historical time in Viconian theory, but also to the circle traced by the whirling *Roth Romach*. An interesting question is still left unanswered, however: who is then the still mysterious “Mr. Whitlock” (Joyce, 98) that gave the wooden device to Magrath (Joyce, 98) in the text? The answer that Gibson provides bridges the gap that separates Magrath from Shem the Penman: “‘Whitlock’ is a portmanteau word” (90), where “‘Whitl’ plus ‘ock’ suggests whittled oak” (90), or the wooden device, and, more importantly, “‘Whit’ plus ‘lock’ implies knowledge concealed” (Gibson, 90), or the *mamafesta* itself, authored by Shem, which, in its *Wakean* form, is just that: wisdom, or knowledge, concealed.

And we must once again stress that Shem the Penman, as the sleeping Finn MacCool, writes the *mamafesta* on his body. Because of this, the identification of the *Wake* with the

concealment of wit, or knowledge, is practically literal: it hides the body of wit, cloaking the body of the wise man. Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World* is very helpful in this respect. Especially because it describes Rabelais' appropriation of the "grotesque image of the body" (Bakhtin, 316): "The grotesque body (...) is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body." (Bakhtin, 317) This is why special attention is paid to "the shoots and branches, to all that prolongs the body and links it (...) to the world outside" (Bakhtin, 316-7). Descriptions of orifices, and conversely, of protrusions, are thus prioritized in the grotesque portrayal of bodily life: a particular emphasis is placed on "the shoots and branches" that prolong the body and have a quasi-exploratory link to "the world outside."

In brief, Bakhtin explains that "the artistic logic of the grotesque image ignores the closed, smooth, and impenetrable surface of the body and retains only its excrescences (sprouts, buds) and orifices, only that which leads beyond the body's limited space or into the body's depths" (317-8). This explains why the grotesque puts a premium on bodily organs that transmute, or otherwise come into contact with, the external world: "(the grotesque) never presents an individual body" (Bakhtin, 318). Instead, it presents the body "as a point of transition in a life eternally renewed" (Bakhtin, 318). But where is this leading us?

Let us now return to the description in chapter I.7 of Shem's body. Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World* writes that "the bowels and the genital organs" (317), "the mouth" (317), through which the world can be "swallowed up" (317), and "the anus" (317) are all prominently displayed on the grotesque body. The evocation of Shem's "blind stomach" (Joyce, 169) and his "manroot of all evil" (Joyce, 169) (which, according to McHugh in his *Annotations*, refers to Shem's penis) can begin to confirm the idea that Shem's body is, in Bakhtinian terms, grotesque. But, what about the anus? Joyce skirts around it in his description of Shem, where the closest he comes to it is through the evocation of Shem's "two

fifths of two buttocks” (Joyce, 169). Why is that? And why does he do the same for the mouth, which on this page, is similarly circumvented with the evocation of Shem’s “mock lip” (Joyce, 169)? Bakhtin writes that “the grotesque face is actually reduced to the gaping mouth” (317), so such an omission seems damning to the idea that Shem has a grotesque body.

It is not damning, however. This omission is purposeful. If the description both of “the anus” (Bakhtin, 317) and “the mouth” (Bakhtin, 317) is so circumvented, it is to emphasize their special importance to the writing of the *mamafesta*. We are told that “(Shem’s) lowness crept out first via foodstuffs” (Joyce, 170). This is to say that his lowness as a grotesque body “creeps out,” first and foremost, through his diet. This reintroduces the notion that Shem, as a grotesque body, is primarily reduced to a “gaping mouth” (Bakhtin, 317). In fact, his mouth is so important that we have to see it described “via foodstuffs,” which is to say, through that which it swallows when it is “gaping.” And the same holds true for “the anus,” which is only really observed in the description of Shem’s writing practices (Joyce, 185-6) because they are almost indistinguishable from his defecation: “(Shem) shall produce (...) from his unheavenly body a no uncertain quantity of obscene matter not protected by copyright” (Joyce, 185). He uses this “obscene matter,” or excrement, to write over “his own body” (Joyce, 185) by alchemically bringing it to “blood heat” (Joyce, 185), thereby transforming it into black ink (Joyce, 185). And, this excremental connection is ratified by the use of the portmanteau word “copyright,” which fuses the Greek “*kopros*,” meaning “dung,” and the term “copyright” (McHugh, 185). Where are we going with this?

If we recall that Shem the Penman’s body is also the sleeping Finn MacCool, the influence of the grotesque is not limited to Shem but grows to include the giant Finn who, in our understanding of the text, is Shem’s mythic alter-ego. Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World* believes “the artistic logic of the grotesque image ignores the closed, smooth, and

impenetrable surface of the body” (317), retaining only “its excrescences (sprouts, buds) and orifices” (317-8). Now, we have to remind ourselves that, according to Fordham in *Lots of Fun at Finnegans Wake*, “writing is a cover” (42). Shem’s writing of the mamafesta disguises him: hiding his grotesque body beneath “a layer of muck” (Fordham, 42). This creates the illusion of “(a) closed, smooth, and impenetrable surface” which “the artistic logic of the grotesque image” can ignore. Moreover, the connection of Finn MacCool’s great frame and Shem’s grotesque body is further warranted by the insertion, shortly before the mamafesta’s appearance, of the exclamation: “Fennsense, finnsonse, aworn!” (Joyce, 614) Where “fennsense” is a portmanteau word combining “fenn,” a misspelling of the word “fen,” and “sense,” this denotes indecipherability. Then “finnsonse” is yet another portmanteau word; but this time, its object is to combine the name “finn” (Finn MacCool’s) and “sonse,” a distorted spelling of the word “sense.”

This spelling fits in with our conception, because instead of its original “e,” we are presented with the modified “o,” a letter that is reminiscent of an orifice, and thus also reminiscent of the grotesque Fenian body. But what is the end result of this subterfuge? Ultimately, what we find ourselves with here is a stratification. The bedrock, which is greatness itself (the sleeping Finn MacCool that is Shem the Penman’s mythic alter-ego) is coated by, or enveloped in, what Fordham terms “a layer of muck” (42), and, in so doing, hides his grotesque nakedness from the world. But the “layer of muck” is itself significant because it emanates from Shem. And it has its own superficial identity, with which it can secretly express and conceal the underlying Rabelaisian chronotope. (This, we will see in the next section.)

It recounts a never ending loop—a cyclical tale—of patriarchal power and its infinite rises and falls. The title of the book keys us into this by slightly modifying that of the bawdy Irish-American ballad alluded to previously: “Finnegan’s Wake.” Its apostrophe disappears,

and with that disappearance, so does its clarity. The title becomes ambiguous and is thus made enigmatic. Hart's book *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake* relates that the cyclicity of the *Wake* is alluded to in it:

It is interesting to note how (...) the title, with which Joyce said he was making 'experiments', reflects the cyclic structure of the book: three syllables in a group followed by a fourth, the 'Wake', just as the three long Books forming the cycle proper of *Finnegans Wake* are followed by the coda of Book IV, the book of Waking. Similarly, the title may be read '*Fin negans Wake*', thus revealing possibilities of cyclic endlessness. (46)

By Hart's logic, then, the title is reflective of the cyclical structure of *Finnegans Wake* simply by virtue of its syllabic make-up. But there is yet another reading of the title that is far more interesting still, and which Hart does not point to, although many others have. The title may also be read *Finn egans Wake*: the descendants of Finn—Finn again—wake. If this is so, it is because "ho" is repeated four times in this quote, thereby imitating what Hart writes about the title, where each of its four syllables represents one of the *Wake*'s four parts: "hohohoho, Mister Finn, you're going to be Mister Finnagain" (Joyce, 5). This four-part structure presents the debasing of "Mister Finn."

Therefore, history, in Shem's view, as it advances, is degenerative. Instead of descendents who surpass the mythic hero Finn MacCool, or improving upon him, we are provided with the saga of just another drunken builder, bloating the Fenian body on which it rests, a bland, and watered-down version of the sleeping giant: Tim Finnegan, the protagonist of the comic ballad "Finnegan's Wake," a drunken family man who, reincarnated in Joyce's text, becomes HCE, or the maturation of Shaun. (A process that we will discuss in the next section, and that Bakhtin's study of the literary chronotope can help better explain.)

Fordham helps to confirm this interpretation when he writes that Shem's mamafesta, on his body, represents "the generation of a pessimistic vision" (43) that unfolds as a universal history "which fails to affirm" (43) the creative potential of progress. The story of *Finnegans Wake* then, if it is anyone's, is really theirs. It is a his-story of their failure: the



universal history of oppressive patriarchal victors and their mediocrity. And the narrativization of their pretensions to invincibility does nothing to dispel their ultimate vulnerability to the whims of cyclical time. This vulnerability is already present in the tale the ballad tells, and which is summed up in chapter I.1: the builder Tim Finnegan, “a man of hod, cement and edifices” (Joyce, 4), is said to have died falling off of his ladder, or “stottered from the latter” (Joyce, 6).

After this fall, his acquaintances thought “(Finnegan) was dud.” (Joyce, 6) (dead). And “sobs they sighdid” (Joyce, 7) at “Fillagain’s (...) Wake” (Joyce, 6), which conflates the nature of the Irish Wake where attendees refill (or “fillagain”) their drinks, “finisky” (Joyce, 6) (from the Latin *finis* for “end”/whisky) or “guenesis” (Joyce, 6) (genesis/Guinness), in remembrance of the deceased, and Finnegan’s name. There he shall lie and “all the way from fjord to fjell” (Joyce, 6) (*fjell*, Norwegian for “mountain”) his neighbors and acquaintances shall say that he is “rockbound (hoahoahoah)” (Joyce, 6-7) (“rockbound”: bound for burial). But when will he awake, resurrecting like he does in the song, to reveal that he was only just passed out? The parenthetical insertion says it all: “hoahoahoah.” Here again, each syllable is associated with one of the text’s parts. But why then does it exclude the fourth? He will awake at the end of *Finnegans Wake*’s Part III. We can connect this, furthermore, to the similarly three-syllabled words “humptyhillhead” (Joyce, 3) and “tumtytumtoes” (Joyce, 3) that we saw in the description of the fallen giant Finnegan, thereby proving that this is the fallen giant seen earlier.

Tim Finnegan, as Finn-again, thus becomes the eternally pathetic descendent of Finn MacCool. Tim Finnegan’s story bloats Finn’s mythic body, disguising it as a hill or a burial mound, because the mamafesta, when it does finally appear, suggests both with its reference to “Dirtdump” (Joyce, 615). This mundane convexity is representative of the history of Finnegan’s rise and fall. The story of the *Wake* which bloats the body of Finn to disguise it

thus describes the ebbs and flows of Shaun's reign culminating in his death as the middle-aged HCE, whereupon he will be replaced by one of his own twins. Accordingly, the book then has quite clearly, as its agenda, the goal of rewriting history by turning it on its head, thereby "inviting us to invert our sympathies" (Fordham, 39). The victor becomes the vanquished and vice versa. Having said this, however, the story of the book still retains an element of the great Finn. But what is this element? And, how cosmically significant in the text is Shem's body if it is capable of generating such a history?

### The Gendered *Wake* Part I: Fertile Femininity

We have previously determined that this great body, hidden under cover of the mamafesta's writing, is that of Finn MacCool, Shem's mythic alter-ego. We have also previously determined that it has, according to Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World*, all the trappings of a grotesque body. And, Finn's, because of its grotesque aspect, is, according to Bakhtin, "cosmic and universal" (318). More than anything, it prizes its connection to the world that exists beyond it. And, what is more connected to what lies beyond than the universe itself, which constitutes the most radical example of a beyond? Bakhtin writes:

Finally, let us point out that the grotesque body is cosmic and universal. It stresses elements common to the entire cosmos: earth, water, fire, air; it is directly related to the sun, to the stars. It contains the signs of the zodiac. It reflects the cosmic hierarchy. This body can merge with various natural phenomena, with mountains, rivers, seas, islands, and continents. It can fill the entire universe. (Bakhtin, 318)

As such, the grotesque body, by virtue of the fact that it is "cosmic and universal," stresses elements that are "common to the entire cosmos," elements such as "earth, water, fire and air." (Bakhtin, 318) Bakhtin claims that this amounts to a reflection of "the cosmic hierarchy." And, judging from its alleged connection "to the sun," "to the stars," and, lastly, to the "signs of the zodiac" which are astrologically dependent on both "the sun" and "the stars," such a comment is entirely believable and can then prove useful.

The underlying great body of Finn rubs off on the characters of the *Wake*, which means that all of the Earwickers, both male and female, figure on its surface, as an extension—a new layer—of its great buried mass, and are thus appropriated by it. They are assimilated to it, become integrated into this great body and, consequently, become integrated also into Shem's. Moreover, the nuclear members of the Earwicker clan are, along very gendered lines, with the exception of Shem, associated either with land or water, and so the family as it is depicted in the mamafesta forms a limited earthly cosmos. This earthly cosmos will expand through its connection to the grotesque Finn Mac Cool and then grow to fill "the

entire universe” (Bakhtin, 318), because such is the grotesque body; it cannot help but expand, growing to ungodly dimensions, becoming even larger than the grotesque eponymous giants of Rabelais’s *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Bakhtin adds, briefly, to the discussion of the grotesque body’s universalizing nature by stating that “(it) can merge with various natural phenomena” (Bakhtin, 318). Let us then briefly describe, to illustrate this, the female Earwickers: the mother Anna Livia Plurabelle (or ALP) and her daughter Issy. What about them is merged with “various natural phenomena” and consequently introduces the earthly cosmos to the greater Finn’s body, perhaps even providing a link to the macrocosm?

Anna Livia Plurabelle, according to Gibson’s *Wake Rites*, corresponds to the pagan Irish *Mor-Rigu*, the Great Queen (49) and “primeval goddess ‘Ana’” (48): “She is *Danu*, ‘The Flowing One,’” (49) and is thus hailed as “the *Dea Nutrix*” (49): “the matrix of feminine energy, nurture, and sustenance for all her Irish children” (49). She embodies, in Gibson’s view, “the Great Mother” (49) as the “valuable vessel of life-bearing liquids” (53). In *Finnegans Wake*, Anna Livia, through this connection, acts as the matriarchal “paragon of women” (49), becoming the great mother and queen of Ireland. And, as such, following Irish myth, her life-giving bears an important relation to micturition (that is, urination) and other bodily fluids: “menstruation and micturition in early Irish literature are both centrally connected with the life-bringing powers of the Celtic mother goddesses” (53). If this is the case, it is because “the micturition of the mother goddess in Irish myth is strongly connected with the life-bringing powers and creative fertilization of water—rain, rivers, and amniotic fluid” (Gibson, 53). She, as the “little wonderful mummy” (Joyce, 194) that is “ducking under bridges” (Joyce, 194), creates all the roaring rivers of the world, and so provides humanity with life.

Anna Livia Plurabelle in her connection to “rivering waters” (Joyce, 216) is then, in a very real sense, just as grotesque in the *Wake* as her son Shem the Penman. And, it is in large

part through her that the grotesque continues to exert its power in the narrative. The conflict opposing the antipodal twins Shem and Shaun thus morphs into a clearly gendered conflict, where Shem is on the side of sympathetic womanhood, aligned with the women of the *Wake*, while Shaun is on that of men, repeating his father's mistakes. The flowing of a river is continuous and so associates women, and the feminized Shem, with the cyclicity that we've previously observed is integral to the text and its grotesque character. ALP, as the Earwicker family's matriarch, connects the great Finn's body to all of the world's rivers and is then bound to the element of water as it infinitely runs its course, while nourishing her children as the mother goddess of Ireland. This is why the chapter that discusses her most faithfully is 1.8: the number eight, lying on its side, turns into the mathematical symbol of infinity and, in this way, cements her role as the great Irish progenitrix of humanity. Her character is still more complex, however, if we pause to take into account yet another facet of Gibson's analysis. And this one will fuse her with her daughter Issy.

Gibson points out that "Ana, the primordial *Mor-Rigu*" (49), hereafter referred to as the Sovereign, can appear as "the ancient Triple Goddess of the pagan Irish" (49). And, "this triune manifestation" (Gibson, 49) is also present in the *Wake* as one of Anna Livia's "strong characteristics" (Gibson, 49). But why is this, and how can we relate this to her daughter Issy? The book *Wake Rites* answers that "many of *Finnegans Wake*'s readers have felt that "the three main female protagonists" (49)—namely Issy, Anna Livia, and Kate, the elderly maid—are the three aspects of "one individual" (49). In this study, we will limit ourselves to a brief observation of only the first two: Issy and her mother Anna Livia. Gibson states that we can distinguish them by stating that Issy is the Sovereign in her Maiden aspect, while Anna Livia is the Sovereign in her Mother aspect (49), thus representing two distinct "phases of a woman's life" (50).

Another way of viewing this triplicity, in Gibson's view, is temporal, because, of course, "the dimension of time is also triune" (50) and can be superimposed over the previous: where Issy is past, Anna Livia is present. Both of these interpretations make clear that the grotesque link to interconnectedness and life-giving is feminized in the contents of the *mamafesta*; and, because of this, we can note that Shem's derision is only directed towards the patriarchal male figures of the *Wake*. But there is yet another way for us to distinguish the two as aspects of "one individual" Sovereign; and, this will give ALP a macrocosmic significance, leaving the realm of the earthly cosmos and linking Finn's body to the greater macrocosm.

The Earwicker family lives in a house that is "a three-story structure" (Gibson, 50) and this is fortunate because we can also note that the Sovereign manifests "through spatial relationships (high, middle, lower)" (Gibson, 50). What is interesting then is this house's structural similarity to Gibson's description of "the macrocosm" (50), which consists of "three realms" (50): "the heavens, the surface of the earth, and the chthonic world" (50). These two correspondences can again be superimposed, but this time over the "three-story structure" of the house. Issy, who corresponds temporally to the Sovereign in her past, or Maiden, aspect, has her room on the topmost floor: "the heavens" of the Earwicker house. Information on her heaven-dwelling is relatively sparse, but her connection to the sky is clear: her bedroom is described in no uncertain terms as a celestial "great blue" (Joyce, 627). Most important, however, is her connection to the heavens *in toto*, which is traceable to her fondness for the stars. White stars decorate the ceiling of her room where "the twinkly way" (Joyce, 148) winks at her when she lies "in bed" (Joyce, 148). In fact, one of our earliest encounters with her in the *Wake* presents her as an astrologer reading from her "handmaid's book of stralogy" (Joyce, 8).

But how then can we reconcile Anna Livia's elemental river connection to Issy's strange fascination with, and study of, the heavens? We had previously noted that the *Mor Rigu*, the primeval goddess, is connected to rivers in their generative and fertilizing function, feeding the earth. Issy, as the Maiden aspect of the Sovereign is similarly related to rivers but to rivers at a different stage of their development. Anna Livia in her role as the Mother is "a fecund river system, the mature and revered *Dea Nutrix*" (Gibson, 51).

By contrast, in her role as the Sovereign Maiden, Issy is "a trickling rivulet emerging from a sacred spring in a *leittir*, a watery hill" (Gibson, 51). Elsewhere in *Wake Rites*, Gibson explains that "one of the defining characteristics of the Sovereign Maiden is her tendency to manifest as a doublet" (57): "Think of a maiden, Presentacion. Double her, Annupciacion." (Joyce, 528) She often appears gazing "at her own double" (Gibson, 59) through what is referred to, in the *Wake*, as "her alluring glass" (Joyce, 59) (or mirror). But what connects the doubling of a mirror image to the rivulet, "emerging from a sacred spring" in a *leittir*? Water, especially that of a spring or a well, acts as a reflective surface. And what does this have to do with the heavens and their stars? On a clear night, "this trickling rivulet," viewed from above, can become a "twinkly way" (Joyce, 148). It is through this connection to the stars that ALP, as the Sovereign Maiden, who is at one and the same time both herself and her daughter Issy, links Finn's body below to the macrocosm beyond.

### The Gendered Wake Part II: Sterile Masculinity

We have previously observed that Shem can be identified with the giant on top of which the *Wake* is set; and, we've presented that he accordingly plays both the role of Fintan (Old Finn; the Salmon of Wisdom) and that of the great Finn MacCool who ingested Fintan and was possessed of Fintan's knowledge. We have also recorded that he is feminized, his literariness likened to the life-giving of the Sovereign Mother and Maiden of the *Wake*. But what about the other Earwickers? What about Shaun and HCE? We will argue here that, like the Sovereign, the primeval goddess observed above, HCE, ALP's royal consort, passes through three distinct phases of development throughout *Finnegans Wake*.

The first is as a brash young Shaun, Shem's vocal rival and twin (in Parts I through II); the second is as the ambitious young upstart, Shaun as the ruling patriarch (in Parts III through IV); and the third is as the now older, and paternal, patriarch, a father with twins of his own, middle-aged and embattled in his role (in Part I through to his fall). Nowhere does Shem completely disappear, however. It's just that for most of Part III he recedes into the background, and in Part IV reemerges in a veiled form (during the conflict opposing the archdruid and St. Patrick). Overall though, we should note that this rivalry is, all throughout the text, paraded around in many different guises. The best way, then, to introduce this discussion into the male Earwickers is with a truncated exploration of the first phase of development: Shaun (before becoming king) in his connection to Shem as his rival twin (in Parts I through II).

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Evidence of the first phase of Shaun's development is pervasive throughout the *Wake*, spanning the text, where fabular sketches of his antagonistic relationship with Shem, from Part I all the way through to the *ricorso* of Part IV, abound. According to Hart's book, these can be brought together as an example of the breeding ground for the *Wake*'s most poignant



literary *leitmotiv*: the conflicts opposing the twins throughout the text. But why is that a *leitmotiv*? “The main requirement of a true *leitmotiv* is that it should, as its name implies, *lead* from point to point” (Hart, 165). It links each of the stages of HCE’s narrative development. But “it must have an active, rather than a passive, function” (Hart, 165) while doing so. Thus, to be effective, “(the) *leitmotiv* (...) must in fact grow functionally from the evolving material” (Hart, 165), but it cannot do so while recurring regularly “in a wholly predictable way” (Hart, 165): “(the *leitmotiv*) must arouse expectations of its reappearance and yet give new insights when it does recur” (Hart, 165). Following Hart then, there is also a behaviorist Pavlovian dimension to this device: “the reader is gently conditioned to expect a motif when he is subjected to certain ‘stimuli’.” (166). And, these stimuli may consist of “narrative situations” (Hart, 166) like the ones that pit these two contrary figures against each other.

This encounter is highly stylized. it exists all throughout the text, and is always differently the same: two contrary figures always spar but, every time, they do so in a thematically different disguise. The *leitmotiv* is the conflict opposing various sets of two, but the exact nature of these sets of two varies. The literary *leitmotiv* is thus vital to our argument as confirmation that the fraternal rivalry of twins Shem and Shaun is crucially important, pulling every other aspect of the text into its orbit. We have already determined the reason why, of course. The Earwicker family is divided into two gendered camps, and these camps are vastly different: the female characters are all aspects of the feminized Shem, while the male ones are all aspects of the masculine Shaun. This fraternal conflict thus lies at the heart of the *Wake*’s narrative. We will now study two of these: the story of Burrus and Caseous (Joyce, 161-7) and the story of the Ondt and the Gracehoper (Joyce, 414-9).

In chapter I.6, we find the story of Burrus and Caseous (Joyce, 161-7) (Butter and Cheese/Brutus and Cassius). Burrus (Shaun), on the one hand, is “the real choice, full of natural grease, the mildest of milkstoffs yet unbeaten as a risicide” (Joyce, 161). Referred to

as “the real choice,” the figure of Burrus is lauded then for being “full of natural greace” (a portmanteau fusing together the words “grease” and “grace”) as the mildest of “milkstoffs” (*stoff*, German for “stuff”) or dairy products. And yet, he is still “unbeaten as a risicide” (fusing the Latin *risus* meaning “laugh” with regicide), as a deadly serious person who kills both laughter and the king. Caseous (Shem), on the other hand, “is the revise of him” (Joyce, 161) (his opposite) and is “not an ideal choose” (Joyce, 161) (choice/cheese) “by any meals” (Joyce, 161) (with any meal/by any means). Having said this, “the betterman of the two” (Joyce, 161) (Shaun as Burrus) is “as zealous over him as is passably he” (Joyce, 161) (as jealous over him as is possibly he). Seeing as they are polar opposites, brothers who share a “Duddy” (Joyce, 161) and “Mutti” (*German* for “mommy”), Burrus is no more jealous of Caseous than Caseous is of Burrus. This is where the “Home and histry” (Joyce, 161) (Roman history) that “(they) used to be reading” (Joyce, 161) for school comes in.

We have now then established that the Burrus and Caseous of chapter 1.6 are likely a pantomime of brothers Shem and Shaun, and are thus just as antagonistic towards each other. They study Roman history, and the attention they pay to Roman culture merges with their interest in gastronomy when their mother brings them “(their) poor suppy” (Joyce, 161) (poor supper). Here the Latin names of condiments like paprika flakes and salt have been transformed into proper nouns (Joyce, 161): “Acetius” (Joyce, 161), for instance, comes from the Latin for vinegar, *acetum*. This repeats the process by which we obtained the names Burrus and Caseous in the first place, taking Latin names for various foods and turning them into Latinized proper nouns. And, like Vaclav Paris writes in his article for the *James Joyce Quarterly* titled “Picturing the *Wake*: Archimboldo, Joyce and his ‘Monster’,” in *Finnegans Wake*, “liking food and being food are not so clearly delimited” (229). The food theme is thus a perfect smokescreen behind which to hide this literary *leitmotiv* of conflict. But where is this conflict?

Brutus and Cassius were famously among those who, as Caesar's allies, betrayed him on the Ides of March. Behind the smiling food associations, Shaun as Burrus is Brutus, who was particularly close with Caesar (mirroring Shaun's closeness to HCE), while Shem as Caseous is Cassius. Their story is intertwined with that of Caesar (an analog of the senior HCE), because the older "sisars" (Joyce, 162) (Caesars) are, for younger idealists, "unbeurrable" (Joyce, 162) (a portmanteau combining the French for butter, *beurre*, and the word "unbearable") with age. This is why, according to Burrus, Caseous and their co-conspirators, "older sisars" have to be "chewly" (Joyce, 162) (merging the words "chew" and "duly") removed. It is only once their common enemy the tyrant has been killed, that their enmity for each other flares up anew. Now, Burrus and Caseous are billed to make their "reuppearance" (Joyce, 162) (reappearance) as "kneck and knife" (Joyce, 162) (a violent play on the expression "kneck-and-kneck," exposing the hatred they have for each other). And they do this on a "deserted *champ de bouteilles*" (Joyce, 162), turning the French for "battlefield," *champ de bataille*, into the French for "field of bottles."

Such a transformation has the undeniable effect of trivializing what, described differently, would be an epic battle, rendering this episode in parodic terms. But does it add something to the *leitmotiv* of conflict? The food theme cloaking the *leitmotivistic* dichotomy of Burrus and Caseous is a composition: many parts make the whole. Paris in his article describes the Italian Renaissance artist Giuseppe Arcimboldo's *The Cook* (238). He writes: "a silver plate is lifted from a tumbling mass of cooked meat, whole piglet roast, baked rabbit, the nutty brown and glistening flesh of unidentifiable beasts and fowl" (Paris, 238). Rotating this painting "180 degrees" (Paris, 238), "we find ourselves face to face with a grotesque human being" (Paris, 238). We will place a special emphasis on the use of the term "grotesque." Why is it that he uses this word? Here, it is most likely used in its adjectival sense. But it might as well also be used in the way Bakhtin uses it, regarding the work of

Rabelais. It makes great sense, either way. Both Rabelais and Arcimboldo worked in sixteenth century Europe, at the height of the Renaissance, when the concept of the grotesque was particularly widespread. Paris writes that “in Joyce’s world, as in Arcimboldo’s, food is what we are made of: it is the basis of our constitution.” (Joyce, 238) We should now remind the reader of Bakhtin’s statement, in *Rabelais and his World*, that “the most important of all human features for the grotesque is the mouth” (Bakhtin, 317): “The grotesque face is actually reduced to the gaping mouth; the other features are only a frame encasing this wide-open abyss.” (Bakhtin, 317)

This is a world that swallows, integrates and is interconnected; it is opposed to the narrow-minded view that an individual is isolated from others, and that their body is walled off from the rest of the world. This Arcimboldean attachment to the idea of composing a mosaic person from outside elements, following Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and his World*, is attributable to the fact that “the grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming” (317). It is a body that needs the world to further its growth. Paris then adds in his article that Joyce and Arcimboldo, both sharing in this Rabelaisian spirit of the grotesque, “use similar rhetorical or poetic strategies of hybridization, recombination, or *bricolage*” (240). This act of Arcimboldean composition is, in Rabelais as in Joyce, representative of the grotesque body as life-affirming: in Bakhtin’s words, “(the grotesque body) is never finished” (317) and “never completed” (317). The story of Burrus and Caseous is thus held up as affirmative, lauded as a productive interplay. But what about the Ondt and the Gracehoper of Part III?

In chapter III.1, we are presented with a new take on Aesop’s fable “The Ant and the Grasshopper”: the tale of the Ondt and the Gracehoper (Joyce, 414-9). And, while Burrus and Caseous, though they were opposites of each other, were, in essence, equal, the relationship of the Ondt and the Gracehoper is radically different. It implies a moral and economic hierarchy,

where the high and mighty Ondt (Shaun) comes out on top, while the lowly starving Gracehoper (Shem), down and out, unsuccessfully begs for scraps at the bottom. Behold “His Gross” (Joyce, 417) (Grace) the Ondt, like a king, sitting “upon his dhrone” (Joyce, 417) (throne), while the poor unfortunate Gracehoper is starving (Joyce, 417).

The Gracehoper (Grace-hoper) was “hoppy” (Joyce, 414) (hopping/happy): he sang by scraping his “findlestilts” (Joyce, 414) (fiddlesticks/fondle stilts/fond old stilts) against each other (like all Grasshoppers do) all summer long. And, when he was not singing, he made “ungraceful overtures” (Joyce, 414) to “Floh” (Joyce, 414) (proper noun/German for “flea”) and “Luse” (proper noun/Danish for “louse”) and “Bienie” (proper noun/German for “bee”), crudely trying to seduce them. When summer ended, however, he was “heartily hungry” (Joyce, 417). He begged the Ondt for money, and literally hoped for his grace, hence his name. But the Ondt refused: “Not one pickopeak” (Joyce, 416) (kopeck: Russian coin) to “bag a tittlebits” (Joyce, 416) (buy a little bit) of food. The Ondt is then in this story set up to be the Gracehoper’s superior enemy: he is “weltall” (Joyce, 416) in stature, “abelboobied” (Joyce, 416) (able-bodied, or with the body of Abel) and with a “raumyult” (Joyce, 416) (raum-y-bult: roomy build). The Gracehoper, by contrast, presents a “veripatetic” (Joyce, 417) (very pathetic) image. What we are presented with then mirrors almost exactly the fable: the hungry Grasshopper, after irresponsibly shirking all of his responsibilities to play all summer long, unsuccessfully goes to beg the industrious Ant for help. The Joycean Gracehoper is thus from the very start, because of the Aesop connection, in stark contrast with the Ondt. Unlike the story of Burrus and Caseous in chapter I.6, there is a clear imbalance: they are not on equal footing here.

The insect theme that the *leitmotiv* of clashing opposites, in this fable, is coupled with is important. Taken into better consideration, the insect theme can change the way we view this fable, casting the Ondt in a very different light. While “a lot of ink has been spilled

decoding this fable” (Paris, 246), “what has gone unobserved is the composite creature itself” (Paris, 246). Paris explains that “the Ondt is a vision of a crawling multitude on a body” (246): “Insects teem upon the page, and one can almost hear the ring of cicadas and the leisurely flap of a butterfly’s wings, as the Ondt swarms himself.” (246) Hiding in “the polylingual puns that describe him” (Paris, 246) are “his minions, parts of himself” (Paris, 246). The figure of “His Gross the Ondt” (Joyce, 417), like one of Arcimboldo’s figures, “has no strict border but emerges from the interaction of many parts” (Paris, 246). As the king “upon his throne” (Joyce, 417), he refuses to stay still, “dancing, spizzing, formiculating, tickling and tackling, eluding determination” (Paris, 246), unstably about to collapse. Paris writes: “the Ondt is (...) a being multiple and moving in all directions” (246), barely unified. This reflects a shift, from unification to division, that obliges us to seriously consider Joyce and Arcimboldo through their “common interest in *decomposition*: the point at which assumed wholes fall apart” (Paris, 242). But what does this instability say about the fable?

In Bakhtin’s “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel,” he writes: “(equality) is specifically contrasted with medieval verticality” (Bakhtin, 168). It is this “polemical opposition” (Bakhtin, 168) that receives special attention both in Rabelais’ work and in the *Wake*: the polemical opposition between equality and, what Bakhtin refers to in this essay as “medieval verticality”: a transcendent ideology rooted in hierarchy. Recall that in the story of Burrus and Caseous, the clashing figures were equal, while in the fable of the Ondt and the Gracehoper, there was a clear verticality: the starving Gracehoper begged, while the Ondt disdainfully looked down on him from his high throne. Rabelais’ artistic method sought to accommodate equality in his writing and thus consisted in the fusion of two tasks: the “polemical” and the “affirmative tasks” (Bakhtin, 169). Joyce does the same in *Finnegans Wake*, and especially in these stories, through the *leitmotiv* of clashing opposites. The story of Burrus and Caseous represents the more positive task of the two that are fused together: the

affirmative task of “re-creating a spatially and temporally adequate world able to provide a new chronotope for a new, whole and harmonious man” (Bakhtin, 168).

The Ondt and the Gracehoper fable then represents the “polemical” task of purging the “spatial and temporal world” (Bakhtin, 168) of those pernicious “remnants” (Bakhtin, 168) of a “transcendent” (Bakhtin, 168) worldview, which is vertical. In the story of the Ondt and the Gracehoper, this is made literal: the crawling multiplicity of the Ondt’s body presents an Arcimboldean façade that textually enacts the decomposition of this transcendent worldview’s “remnants.” We must once again stress that the *Wake* is a closed loop: *Wakean* time is cyclical. And, cyclical time blurs past, present and future, thereby fusing these two tasks. We could easily then say that these two stories are a diptych of sorts: contrasting each other perfectly just like twins Shem and Shaun.

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Bakhtin, in *Rabelais and his World*, relates that “(there) is a dimension in which thrashing and abuse are not a personal chastisement but are symbolic actions directed at something on a higher level” (197): “the king” (197). Bakhtin claims that “in the popular-festive system of images, which is most clearly expressed in carnival” (197), representing “the king is a clown” (197) who “is elected by all the people and is mocked” (197). The clown was, for a time, “disguised as a king” (Bakhtin, 197). But “once his reign had come to an end his costume was changed (...) to turn him once more into a clown” (Bakhtin, 197): “abuse and thrashing are equivalent to a change in costume, to a metamorphosis” (Bakhtin, 197) because they reveal “the other, true face of the abused” (Bakhtin, 197). The clown was therefore beaten, and abused, to be stripped of his disguise. Bakhtin describes this as “the king’s uncrowning” (197), where “abuse is death” (197) and “former youth transformed into old age” (197). Gibson’s *Wake Rites* attributes a remarkably similar function to HCE, in part by virtue of his nominal connection to ECH: “‘ECH’ is, of course, the reversal of ‘HCE,’

Joyce's name for the *Wake*'s ultimate male hero." (Gibson, 43) This nominal connection, rooted in a reversal, is given to signal a renewal (Gibson, 43). But what is it exactly that is being renewed?

In "the complex series of events that comprise the Rites of Tara" (Gibson, 40), the "most important male protagonist" (Gibson, 40) is "the *ard rí*, the high king" (Gibson, 40). And "the high king" was not just a king: he was "elevated to godhead" (Gibson, 40), as "the physical vehicle" (Gibson, 40) that "a divinity has chosen to inhabit" (Gibson, 40). But, what does this have to do with ECH? Gibson notes that "the famous *Annals of the Four Masters*" (40), which is a "long history of these god-kings at Tara" (40), "indicates that the same few names—all cognates—repeat throughout the entire regnal line: Eochu, Eocha, Eocho, Eochaid" (40). And, "the actual identity of this singular being who manifests as All-Father, ultimate Irish Patriarch, Master Builder, Thunderer" (Gibson, 43), husband of the Sovereign and father of the Twins (Gibson, 43), is the god whose Celtic name is ECH: this is the divinity that chose to inhabit "the physical vessel" of the "high king." HCE then, just like the "*ard rí*, the high king," is presented as the renewal of ECH. But what does this have to do with the carnival image of "the king's uncrowning"?

The popular-festive image of uncrowning is literalized in *Finnegans Wake* via the book's understanding of Celtic kingship rites, especially in its understanding that the *Wakean* HCE, as the renewal of ECH, is curiously associated with the wily fox (Gibson, 46). In *Wake Rites*, Gibson describes how, all throughout "the Celtic realm" (46), "vulpine names were taken by, or associated with, royalty" (46). A failed king, however, a king that was "rejected by society" (46), in Ireland was referred to as "a 'wild fox'" (46), and was hunted: HCE, as one such king, "is ritualistically murdered (...) on a pagan holy day" (46), thus literalizing the carnival image of uncrowning described in Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World*. The thinking goes that, by ritualistically murdering the failed king, ECH can be reborn and "thus



superannuated by a younger version of himself” (Gibson, 47): “ECH will remain as long as his mortal vessel is capable.” (Gibson, 47). And, “when the aging ECH becomes unfit, he will be killed and replaced by a member of the *derbhfind*, a group comprised of the younger male members of the same royal family. And, “when the new ECH resurrects (...) the ancient cycle continues (Gibson, 47).

In *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin writes that “images of feces (...) are ambivalent” (151) because these images “debase, destroy, regenerate, and renew simultaneously.” Excrement is, in Bakhtin’s view, “the most suitable substance for the degrading of all that is exalted” (152). And this purpose—the degradation of “all that is exalted”—is closely connected to uncrowning. Uncrowning is similarly rooted in degradation, and features all the same elements (destruction, regeneration and renewal). But the difference is that it displays them in a way that is not simultaneous; it fits them into a linear ritual timeline: a linear ritual timeline that is bent, by the sheer will of Shem, into a circle: the cyclical structure of the text. All that is exalted will be exalted again, but not before first being laid to waste. Moreover, by making this linear, or horizontal, time cyclical, we are effectively eliminating the difference opposing the past, the present and the future, making time homogeneous within the text. Let us now recall that the material Shem alchemizes into the ink with which he writes is fecal (Joyce, 185). Past, present and future, in a cycle, merge. It would be reasonable then to posit that the *Wake’s* narrative, through its metafictional representation as the cyclical contents of the *mamafesta*, and because of its essential connection to excrement, would be ambivalent.

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The whole *mamafesta* is then saturated with this ambivalence, an ambivalence whose elements (destruction, regeneration, renewal) are all simultaneously implied by the alchemization of black ink from excrement and the narrative positioning of this story in cyclical time. But how does this Rabelaisian ambivalence feature in the inherently political

story of the male Earwickers? In chapter III.3, informally known as The Inquest, Shaun, now exhausted, with “heartsoul dormant” (Joyce, 474) and “lashbetasselled lids” (Joyce, 474) (eyelids) “on the verge of closing time” (Joyce, 474), becomes Yawn. And he is safe enough now in his role as patriarch that he can lay with his guard down: “arm loose” (Joyce, 474) (or, for McHugh in the *Annotations*: “harmless”). But what is “the staff of citron briar” (Joyce, 474) lying by his side? Gibson in *Wake Rites*, apropos of the high king, writes:

ECH is a great equestrian and mounted warrior. In the Otherworld, he possesses a terrible weapon, a spear that harnesses the power of the sun, the *gae bulga*, a Celtic lightning rod that at once conveys the sexual potency synonymous with the Great Horseman as well as the power of the heavens in both its creative and destructive aspects. (45)

At the Rites at Tara then, “the representative of ECH, the *ard rí*, carries a mundane facsimile of the *gae bulga* of ECH—as the royal wand of office” (Gibson, 45). We can then understand “the staff of citron briar” as “a mundane facsimile of the *gae bulga* of ECH”: “the royal wand of office.” And this is proof that Shaun, as the exhausted Yawn, is now officially high king, and thus holds royal office, having inherited the “tradition stick” (Joyce, 474).

But, why is this facsimile of the *gae bulga* described as mundane? It is now made from the thorny branch or twig (“briar”) of a citron tree. This is a far cry from the “terrible weapon” brandished by ECH in the “Otherworld”: the spear known as the *gae bulga*. Gibson writes that the Earwicker family’s senior patriarch, HCE, as the renewal of ECH, is often seen clutching “a plethora of limbs, branches, canes, and staffs” (Gibson, 45). In *Wake Rites*, he provides a few examples taken from Joyce’s text (Gibson, 45) to better illustrate the prevalence therein of this royal symbol. In chapter I.2, for instance, the older HCE appears, “roadstaff to his stay” (Joyce, 35) (walking stick at his side). Even before this allusion to his walking stick, though, in chapter I.1, we are told of the “supershillelagh” (Joyce, 25). McHugh in the *Annotations* defines the “shillelagh” as a black wooden cudgel. Attaching the prefix “super” to it would thus make this blunt object, this cudgel, superior and perhaps even

larger: this is not just any cudgel; this is not just an ordinary stick. And this is consistent with the reading that this is a royal staff, a symbol of authority that is unmatched. It is then because Shaun is in possession of a similar staff as Yawn that we know he has now taken his father the senior HCE's place as high king.

In the latter half of this chapter, the spirit of the deceased senior HCE is called upon: "Ho, croak evildoer! Arise, sir ghostus!" (Joyce, 532) Hailed by his initials in the condemnation-rich "ho, croak, evildoer," the "sir ghostus" (or spectral sir) possesses Yawn, imbuing him with his kingly airs: the words "Eternest cittas, heil!" (Joyce, 532) inaugurating the official rebirth of ECH in the body of the sleepy Yawn. These words also announce the start of HCE's third developmental stage: his fall. In this third stage, Shaun, no longer the exhausted Yawn, reemerges in Part I as the older HCE. A few chronotopes will be of great interest with regard to this last stage of HCE's narrative development: the chronotopes of the road, encounter and threshold are combined. And, their fusion in the text enables a fuller treatment of Rabelaisian ambivalence as it relates to the third stage of HCE's narrative development. The first of many challenges to the power and influence of the patriarchal HCE, now an older Shaun the Post with twins of his own, is the Encounter with the Cad (Joyce, 35-6).

In chapter I.1, a much-debated incident occurs in Dublin's Phoenix Park, which is referred to here as "(their) greatest park" (Joyce, 35). HCE meets "a cad with a pipe" (Joyce, 35), a disreputable character who asks him "how much a clock it (is)" (Joyce, 35), explaining that his watch "(is) bradys" (Joyce, 35). This term, as McHugh explains in his *Annotations*, is ambiguous: *bradys* means "slow" in Greek, but it can also allude to, given the place of their meeting, Joe Brady, who was one of the perpetrators of the infamous politically-motivated Phoenix Park murders of 1882. This allusion casts a pall over the cad's seemingly benign request and it makes HCE nervous: "the Earwicker of that spurring instant" (Joyce, 35)

realizes “on fundamental liberal principles the supreme importance (...) of physical life” (Joyce, 35). But there may still be a more lurid reason for his nervousness. Because he does not want “to be hurled into eternity right then” (Joyce, 35), he halts to quickly produce his watch (Joyce, 35), giving “the inquiring kidder” (Joyce, 35) the time, and he is “standing full erect” (Joyce, 36) while he does so. It is late at night. But, what is it that is “full erect”? Is it innocently his spine, or is it something more untoward? And besides, what is the proprietor of “the Mullingar Inn” (Joyce, 138)—a pillar of his community—doing out so late?

The rumor now gets out that “the big cleanminded giant H.C.Earwicker” (Joyce, 33) is “a lustsleuth” (Joyce, 33) (lust-sleuth: a voyeur) who is “nosing for trouble” (Joyce, 33) in “the people’s park” (Joyce, 33). This rumor turns him into the object both of ridicule and abuse, thus marking his fall. But, beyond that, what can we glean from this encounter? In “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel,” Bakhtin explains that “in any meeting the temporal marker (‘at one the same time’) is inseparable from the spatial marker (‘in one and the same place’)” (97). Thus, HCE and the Cad only meet on that fateful night because they were both at the same place (somewhere in the Phoenix Park) at the same time (sometime at night). And, it is this “unity of time and space markers” (Bakhtin, 97) that gives the chronotope of meeting “an almost mathematical character” (Bakhtin, 97). Of course, this “almost mathematical character” remains “highly abstract” (Bakhtin, 97): “The motif of meeting is (...) impossible in isolation” (Bakhtin, 97) because “it always enters as a constituent element of the plot into the concrete unity of the work” (Bakhtin, 97). And, as Bakhtin makes quite clear the chronotope of encounter is consequently just a bit part of “the concrete chronotope that subsumes it” (97). In *Finnegans Wake*, this is of course the Rabelaisian chronotope.

Consequently, the chronotope of the encounter, because it does not have to create a spatial and temporal world of its own, can more easily merge with other chronotopes like it:

the chronotope of the road, for instance. Bakhtin notes that such encounters, in a novel, “usually take place ‘on the road’” (243). If this is so, it is because “the road is a particularly good place for random encounters” (243). He continues:

On the road (“the high road”), the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people—representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages—intersect at one spatial and temporal point. People who are normally kept separate by social and spatial distance can accidentally meet; any contrast may crop up, the most various fates may collide and interweave with one another. On the road the spatial and temporal series defining human fates and lives combine with one another in distinctive ways, even as they become more complex and more concrete by the collapse of *social distance* (...) Time, as it were, fuses together with space and flows in it (forming the road); this is the source of the rich metaphorical expansion on the image of the road as a course: “the course of a life,” “to set out on a new course,” “the course of history” and so on; varied and multi-leveled are the ways in which the road is turned into a metaphor, but its fundamental pivot is the flow of time. (Bakhtin, 243)

The Encounter with the Cad is a perfect example of this: it is on the road that HCE, in his nice clothes (Joyce, 35), encounters the loutish cad (Joyce, 35), and it is safe to assume that otherwise they never would have met. They “accidentally meet” where “time (...) fuses together with space and flows in it (forming the road),” where “the most various fates may collide and interweave with another,” collapsing the “social (...) distance” that separates them. However, the the chronotopes of the road and the encounter are not alone in their fusion. They are fused with yet another chronotope in the Encounter with the Cad: the chronotope of the threshold.

This chronotope can merge with the two others through its possible connection with the encounter (Bakhtin, 248). Bakhtin writes that “the word ‘threshold’ itself already has a metaphorical meaning in everyday usage (together with its literary meaning), and is connected with the breaking point of a life, the moment of crisis” (248): “In this chronotope, time is essentially instantaneous; it is as if it has no duration and falls out of the normal course of biographical time.” (248) This is certainly true of the Encounter with the Cad, which, ironically perhaps, only happens because the cad’s watch is slow and he can no longer accurately tell what time it is. Let us now conclude our discussion of this chronotope

confirming the truth of what Bakhtin writes when he claims that, “in literature, the chronotope of the threshold is always metaphorical and symbolic, sometimes openly but more often implicitly.” (248) The Encounter with the Cad marks an important milestone in HCE’s life: it becomes synonymous with HCE’s fall.

But, why is the fusion of these three chronotopes in this passage, regardless of how important it is in the text, so important? The story arc of the male Earwickers hinges crucially on the road’s merging with the encounter and the threshold, because the Encounter with the Cad that so prominently features their fusion is the catalyst for the plot of *Finnegans Wake*. And, specifically, one of the more salient features of this agglutination, which is its ability to connect people, via the chronotope of the road, who are separated by vast social distances. It is this egalitarian power that ultimately antagonizes the patriarchal HCE, and precipitates his fall from grace. Through its metaphorical usage as a course, the road becomes synonymous with the *Wake* itself: a book that collapses all hierarchies, decomposing these in a way that mirrors the decomposition of the stately Omdt. This is because the *Wake* represents the fusion of the course of bodily life and the course of history. They combine to form a new course: a course that is, as it happens, because of its cyclicity, not so new.

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