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Tom Dalzell

A Lacanian Reading of Paternity in James Joyce

Summary:

Since Jacques Lacan regards James Joyce's father, John Joyce, as a "deficient father", this paper understands Joyce's writing, especially Finnegans Wake, in terms of the failure of his father to fulfil his paternal duty and of Joyce's attempt to redeem himself. It is argued, with Lacan, that Joyce had a latent disposition to schizophrenia due to a de facto foreclosure of what Lacan calls the "Name of the Father" and that, just as Finnegans Wake is structured like a Borromean knot which is constructed by the crisscrossing of three circular lines, Joyce's making a name for himself through his work repaired the error in the knotting of the three dimensions of his subjectivity, the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary, and so restored the paternal function for him which in turn prevented the precipitation of schizophrenia.

"Read *Finnegans Wake*", Jacques Lacan urged his listeners on June 16th 1975 at the opening of the fifth international Joyce Symposium in Paris. He referred to the fact that there is something in this book that plays on the pun, not in each line, but in each word. Although he was aware of Lewis Carroll's portmanteau words as a precursor, he maintained that no-one had ever made literature like this before (Lacan, 1987, p. 25). Lacan understood *Finnegans Wake* in terms of the *jouissance* – the English word "enjoyment" does not include the sexual connotation of the French word – of the one who wrote it, and yet he also realised that the French signifier *"fin"* (end) is in the title. He had already spoken about the paternal function – what he calls the "Name of the Father" – in terms of a no of the father to the oedipal child, playing on the homophony between the French words *"nom"* (name) and *"non"* (no). But, as we will see, the later Lacan contends that this paternal function should knot together the three registers of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary in a subject, ensuring that enjoyment is limited and sense is regulated. And in 1975 he promised, with the support of Joyce's text, to introduce a new paternal concept in his year-long seminar to come, which he would understand to put an end, a limit, to what he found revealed in Joyce.

Joyce's novel *Ulysses* had depicted the mythical history of a day, but the labyrinthine text, *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce, 2012), which was a "Work in Progress" for seventeen years and, towards the end, written at night, represents the unfolding of a dreamy night-time drama. To Jacques Mercanton, Joyce said that he had used many languages which he didn't know so as to capture the "dream state". And he expressed the hope that when he had left this "dark night", his daughter Lucia might be cured (Mercanton, 1979, pp. 213-14). The dream in question takes the form of Dublin's river, The Liffey, taking its course, its "riverrun", and then, corresponding to Vico's *ricorso*, returning to its source in Book IV when night gives way to day. As such, the text presents a series of displacements and condensations where characters come and go and are transformed into others. Conflict and incest, history and myth, and the crime and punishment of a certain Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker – HCE – are all carried along before the final awakening from the nightmare. In fact, the patterns of sleeping and waking, dying and rising, take their impetus from the central activities of HCE, the husband of Anna Livia, Joyce's name for The Liffey, but HCE is not, as Katie Wales (1992, pp. 141-43) has made clear, just one character in the conventional sense of the word. It is a set of initials completed by over sixty variations, beginning in the first paragraph: "Howth Castle and Environs",

“here comes everybody”, “haveth childers everywhere”, and this constant repetition parallels the recycling of the river. The book takes its lead from the resurrection of the New York-Irish hod-carrier, Tim Finnegan, from the comic ballad, “Tim Finnegan’s Wake” (with apostrophe): “Whack folthe dah, dance to your partner; Welt the Rure, your trotters shake; Wasn’t it the truth I told you; Lots of fun at Finnegan’s wake”. Finn also suggests the legendary Irish figure of Finn McCool, who would rise again from the dead like King Arthur. Tim Finnegan had fallen from a ladder because of too much drink and, in Joyce’s text, this comes to expression in the falls of Adam and Eve, Humpty Dumpty, Charles Stewart Parnell, the embattled pro-Home Rule Member of Parliament, whose political downfall was due to his relationship with Mrs. Kitty O’Shea, and, above all, in Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker. Finnegan’s resuscitation, however, after whiskey splashed over him when the wake had turned into a drunken riot, comes to be paralleled in Joyce’s book in the recapitulation of the river at the end of the book, when waking up also puts an end to the dream.

A Deficient Father

In his twenty-third annual seminar, in the session of January 13th 1976 (1975-76, p. 77), Lacan argues that Joyce’s father, John Joyce, was an unworthy father, a deficient father *(un père carent)*. In fact, the ballad “Tim Finnegan’s Wake” was one of his father’s favourites. According to Gordon Bowker, the author of a recent Joyce biography, only a son of John Joyce could have written *Finnegans Wake*. It was only because of the significance of this father that Joyce could come up with Earwicker and his wife, Anna Livia, and their children Issy, Shem and Shaun. In this, Bowker agrees with Louis Gillet’s claim that the peculiar rapport between this father and son was the central factor in Joyce’s life, the basis and axis of his work (Bowker, 2011, p. 427). Of course, the question is: was John Joyce a father? Given the constant slippage of meaning and the excess enjoyment in *Finnegans Wake*, did he fulfil his paternal duty by, in Lacanian terms, instating the Name of the Father in his son and saying no to his excesses? Did he introduce Joyce into what Charles Melman has called “the consubstantiality of the father and the son” (2011b, p. xiii)?

The title of Seminar XXIII is *“Le Sinthome”* and where the French word *“sinthome”* suggests the English word “sin”, Lacan associates it with the first sin, the Fall, of which the Bible speaks. The word *sinthome* was an earlier spelling of the medieval French word for symptom, *“symptôme”* (*symptoma* in Latin). But we will see that Lacan’s *sinthome* concept is quite different from his understanding of the symptom. For the moment, however, what is relevant is that Lacan uses the word *sinthome* because he understands it to remove the *“ptoma”* contained in it, *ptoma* being the Greek word for “fall”. His *sinthome* indicates a restoration after a fall, and there is even a hint in the French pronunciation of sanctity and of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Lacan, 1975-76, p. 15). But there is no need to go back to the Biblical Fall of Adam and Eve, as Lacan put it in Seminar VIII, to make sense of someone’s desire. Three generations suffice (Lacan, 2001, p. 351). Joyce’s grandfather, James Augustine Joyce, was born in Cork in 1826. He was a horse-trader and a gambler who lost a lot of money. When his business failed, he became an inspector of hackney coaches. And while he was friendly with Fr. Theobald Mathew, who promoted the temperance movement after the Famine, Jackson and Costello relate his long periods of illness to the abuse of alcohol. Gambling on horses, smoking, and drinking were chief among his interests and he died before he was forty (Jackson and Costello, 1999, pp. 27-29; 45-47). But apart from these social and professional failures, James Augustine’s most important failure was his not being much of a father to his son. While he got on well with the young John, he got on too well with him, treating him indulgently, as Ellmann (1975, p. 14) expressed it. One day, for example, he caught his young son smoking a cigarette at a street-corner. But instead of laying down the law for the boy, he offered him one of his own cigars. So Joyce’s grandfather did not respect the difference in the generations but treated his only son more like a younger brother than a son.

John Stanislaus Joyce, Joyce’s father, was born in 1849 and he spent a short time at St. Colman’s College in the town of Fermoy, a school run by priests, although he later became anti-clerical. John was a good singer at school and he was fond not only of operatic arias but Irish ballads, something he bequeathed to James, along with a love of walks around Dublin. At university, Queen’s College Cork, where he was accepted for

medicine, John loved both sport and drinking, and he used to sing comic songs at concerts, including “Tim Finnegan’s Wake”. But he failed his exams in the second year and left the university without a degree. After working as an accountant, he became secretary of a distillery which went into liquidation. He then became secretary to the United Liberal Club and became involved in politics, and there was even talk of him securing a seat in parliament. But he was soon out of a job again and was lucky to be appointed a rates collector in Dublin, even though he would be accused of helping himself to the takings. And after the fall of the Irish politician, Parnell, John began drinking more heavily. His fortunes turned for the worse when most of the rates collecting staff were pensioned off. Heavy spending led him to be published as a debtor, and there soon began a gypsy lifestyle in which he and his family moved by night from one address to another so as to avoid paying his bills. He had become, as Stanislaus, Joyce’s younger brother, called him, “a failed medic, actor, singer and commercial secretary” (S. Joyce, 1958, p. 29). But while Stanislaus openly hated his father, James did not blame his father’s failure for the downturn of the family’s fortunes and his being moved from the prestigious Jesuit school Clongowes to Belvedere. Rather, he blamed “paralytic” Irish society (Joyce, 1952, p. 312). Paralysis became a *Leitmotif* of his collection of stories, *Dubliners*, and he regarded life in the city of Dublin to be suffering from social and religious paralysis. On the other hand, in the story “Grace” in *Dubliners*, Joyce depicted Mr. Kernan, representing his own father, as a legless drunk (Joyce, 1988, p. 169). When John died in January 1932, Joyce admitted to Harriet that, as a fellow sinner, he still liked the old man from whom he had inherited an extravagant licentious disposition, the source of his talent. And the prayer at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is addressed to his father: “Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead”, despite his being a deficient father. Nevertheless, in *Ulysses*, he would not find the father he was seeking, because, in Lacan’s words, he had had a bellyful, and wanted no more father (Lacan, 1975-76, p. 77). So it is no accident that, despite his remorse for not having visited his father for twenty years, Joyce did not attend his funeral.

What effect did this failed medic, actor, singer and commercial secretary father, this *“père carent”*, have on Joyce? In *A Portrait of the Artist*, Simon Dedalus, the father of Stephen, reveals that his own father – based on James Augustine Joyce – had been more like a brother to him than a father. And when Simon and Stephen visit the Cork medical school’s anatomy theatre, looking for the initials that Simon had once etched there, what does Stephen find but the word “foetus”, a discovery which “startled his very blood”. It had shocked him, according to the text, to find in the outer world a trace of what he had deemed until then “a brutish and individual malady of his own mind” (Joyce, 1991: 109). Foetus, not born, not named. Hence the remarks of Flavia Goian in relation to Joyce’s wanting the universities to talk about him for three hundred years (Lacan, 1975-76, p. 22) that he was seeking to become someone of renown, *renommé* – literally to be re-named (Goian, 2014). He was trying to make up for what his father didn’t give him. But this was not a question of university knowledge, despite Lacan’s remarks that his father had “taught him nothing” (1975-76, p. 127).

The Borromean Knot

What was it that John Joyce did not teach his son, or better, did not transmit to his son? In Seminar XXIII, Lacan states that one could not have had a worse start in life than Joyce did (Lacan, 1975-76, p. 22). He explains that the male organ is not sufficient to make a son. What is required is the “phallus”, which, more than the male bodily organ, is symbolic and is transmitted from father to son. And so when he claims that Joyce’s art supplied for his “poor phallic bearing”, he is not reducing Joyce’s difficulties to anatomy. His argument, rather, is that Joyce’s work restored a subjective “Borromean knot” for him. This restoration amounted to a tying together in Joyce of the three subjective registers of the Real – in which Lacan locates everything that is outside language, such as enjoyment; the Symbolic – which is the realm of language, and is made up of signifiers; and the Imaginary – which, dating from what he calls the “mirror-stage” (Lacan, 2006a, pp. 75-81), provides the subject with an ego and body-image and the signified as a component of meaning. To illustrate this nodal conception of how a subject is held together, Lacan links three circles – representing the Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary – in such a way that each circle passes over and under the

next one twice. And he calls this structure “Borromean” because, like the knot of that name, they are linked in such a way that if one register is loose and breaks free, the whole construct falls apart.

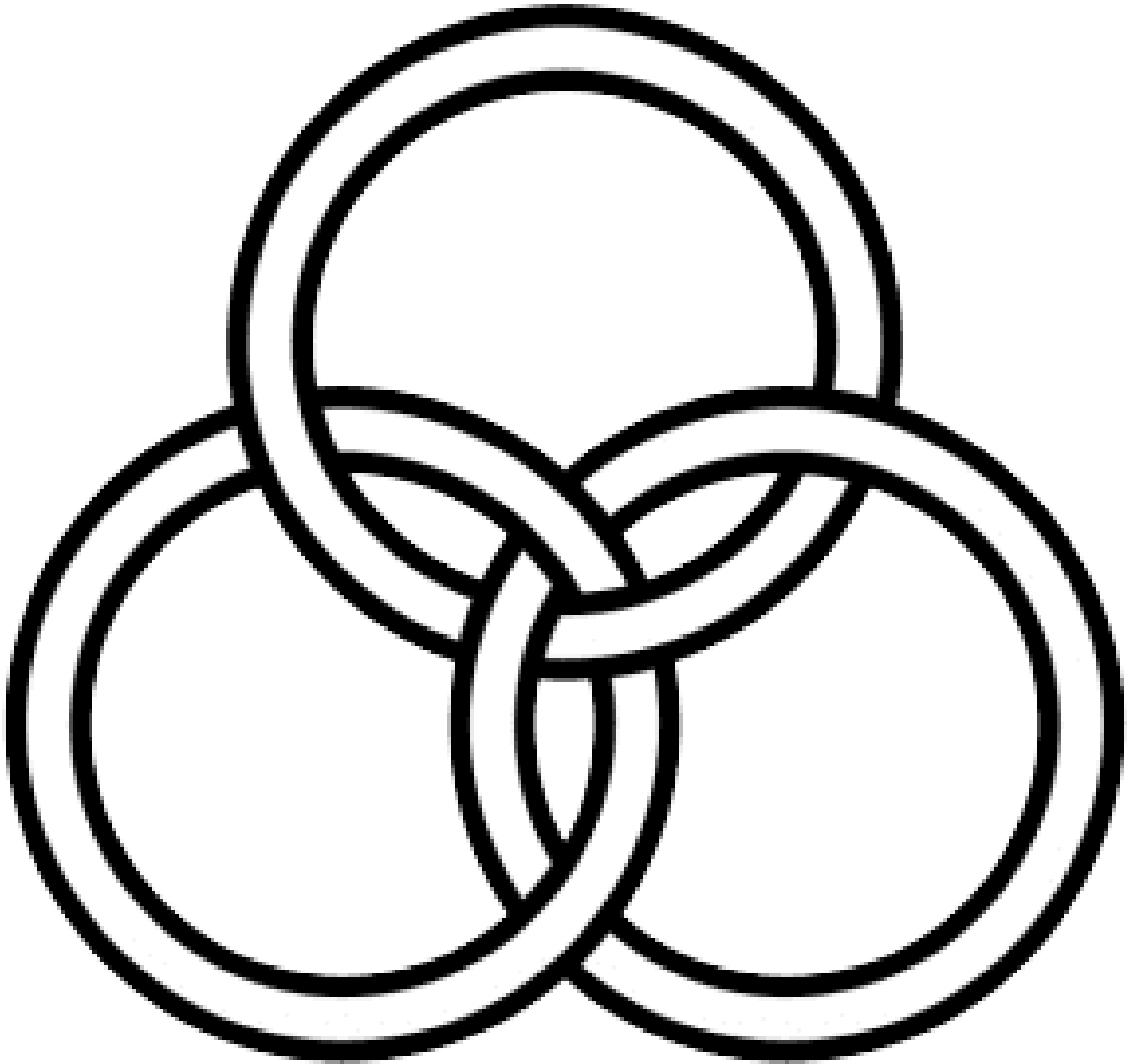

Figure 1[1]

In paranoia, now called delusional disorder, it is the Symbolic that is at risk of breaking free, as happened in Freud’s Schreber case. In schizophrenia, it is the Imaginary circle that is loose and puts the knot ast risk of collapse (Dalzell, 2014, p. 101; Darmon, 2004, p. 372). This is how Lacan understands the error in Joyce’s subjective knotting because the paternal function had not been instated in him to hold the three registers firmly in place.

The problem Lacan sees in Joyce is a failure of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary to hold together properly. In the neurotic subject, the “Name of the Father” – the organising principle of psychical life – holds the three circles together in a borromean way. But in *A Portrait of the Artist*, Stephen is beaten up, and he doesn’t react. It is not just that his relation to the body is faulty, but in Lacan’s terms, his Imaginary register, where the image of the body is located, is not knotted to the Real and the Symbolic. The Name of the Father had not been transmitted to him and this is why Lacan thinks that Joyce himself needs a remedy, a

supplementary ring to restore the fallen father, to make up for the Original Sin of the father (1975-76, p. 19) which was a sin of omission.

When Lacan says that Joyce's father taught him nothing, what was he meant to teach him? We gain some insight from Schreber's father, the famous German educator who, according to Schreber's patient files, experienced compulsive ideas and murderous impulses. According to Charles Melman, Schreber's father did not know what the Name of the Father meant. He did not take his authority from the dead father, but from himself as an educator, as someone who transmits a body of theoretical knowledge *(connaissance)*, rather than the subjective knowledge *(savoir)* a child needs (Melman, 2011a, p. 6). Rather than theoretical knowledge, the father is meant to give the child a knowledge of what the mother desires, by way of what Lacan calls the "paternal metaphor", his linguistic version of the Oedipus complex. In this paternal metaphor, which is absent in a psychotic subject, the Name of the Father takes the place of the desire of the mother and also names what the mother wants, what the father has, the symbolic phallus. Schreber had seen through his educator father and foreclosed the Name of the Father with the result that his nodal structure was vulnerable to a psychotic collapse (Lacan, 2006b, p. 484). As for Joyce's father, he had taught his son nothing, apart, perhaps, from singing and storytelling (Lacan, 1975-76, p. 127; Bowker, 2011, pp. 21-22).

For his part, Melman has claimed that the Irish know in their bones what the Name of the Father is, that it is a name, a signifier, and that this signifier did not allow the Irish to be recognised adequately in the field of reality and, more fundamentally, that it obliged them to give up their original language, Irish. Joyce's father, John Joyce, who was also for Home Rule for Ireland, only a limited form of independence from Britain, went along with this. The Census return for 1901, which was completed by him as head of the household at number 8 Royal Terrace, Clontarf, on the north side of Dublin, indicates that only his sons James and Stanislaus could speak Irish as well as English.[2] The Irish language had suffered because of the Great Famine in the 1840s, but it was already banned from being taught in the newly established "national schools" in the 1830s, and children were beaten by teachers for using it. In *A Portrait of the Artist*, Stephen says: "My ancestors threw off their language and took another…. They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them. Do you fancy that I am going to pay in my own life and person the debts they made?" (1991, p. 220). But in fact Joyce was paying those debts.

When Joyce was born in 1882 in Victorian Dublin, British authority resided in Dublin Castle, but the country was ruled from London. According to Bowker (2011, p. 19), by subverting the "intrusive English language", Joyce would help put Ireland firmly on the literary map. It is true that Joyce was keen to assert his independence from the English, in whose language he wrote, but did not wish to think. Hence his saying to Stefan Zweig, while an exile in Zürich: "I cannot express myself in English without enclosing myself in a tradition" (Zweig, 1943, p. 225). In *Finnegans Wake*, he attacks the English language. Indeed, he doesn't write in English but in what Melman has called *"le Joycien"* (Melman, 1992: 172). But Joyce was no William Butler Yeats. He doesn't fit easily into the Celtic revival, which wanted, among other things, to restore the Irish language. He had tried to improve his knowledge of the language, but had quickly given it up. But, more importantly, Joyce was not trying "to put Ireland on the map" as Bowker claims. He was trying to establish himself as a subject, after the bad start he had had in life.

Foreclosure of the Name of the Father

Lacan asks in Seminar XXIII if Joyce was psychotic. If he was, he was no Schreber. Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter (Schreber, 1955, p. 25) could say that they had met many Schrebers since they had translated his *Denkwürdigkeiten*. But, after Lacan, who stresses the uniqueness of every subject, there is no cohort of "all psychotics" and Joyce was certainly not another Schreber. In Schreber, the Imaginary circle was to the fore, as is clear from his relations with his doctor, Flechsig, his "fleetingly improvised men", and even God. It was the Imaginary that had kept him going for so long before his illness. In terms of knots, his Real circle went over and under his Imaginary only once, and so his Symbolic was detached. As Marc Darmon has

explained, this meant that the Symbolic could disappear, along with what Lacan calls phallic or limited *jouissance* as well as sense (Darmon, 2004, p. 372). Where Lacan had earlier attributed the regulation of both sense and enjoyment to the Name of the Father, his use of the Borromean knot allows sense to be "cornered" into the hole between the Symbolic and Imaginary circles. Phallic – or limited – *jouissance* is contained within the hole between the Symbolic and Real circles. And what he calls "Other *jouissance*", an enjoyment that is not limited by the Symbolic and is described by him as feminine and "Other", for both men and women, comes to be located between the Real and the Imaginary (1974-75, pp. 24-25). In Joyce, on the other hand, it was the Imaginary circle that is at risk of detaching, as is clear from the incident in *A Portrait of the Artist*. So Joyce was not in the same position as Schreber. Nevertheless, Lacan does speak of a foreclosure in Joyce, a *Verwerfung de fait*, foreclosure of the Name of the Father being the mechanism of psychosis in his seminar of 1955-56, Seminar III (Dalzell, 2011). Although it is true that Lacan appears to leave the question open – whether or not Joyce was suffering from schizophrenia – the use of the word *Verwerfung* does indicate that he is positing an underlying psychotic structure in Joyce, even if an illness was not precipitated. But the fact that this *Verwerfung* was a *de facto* foreclosure, a *Verwerfung* in practise, made Joyce different to Schreber. It is not that Joyce himself foreclosed the Name of the Father. Its being excluded from his psychical reality was due to the "sin" of his father, and indeed of his father's father. If Joyce's making a name for himself had not compensated for the foreclosure of the Name of the Father, he would have developed schizophrenia. Schreber's Imaginary – he was dominated by imaginary relations – was intact ever since his childhood "mirror stage", but Joyce's was not, and without that unifying register of the Imaginary, the fragmentation of schizophrenia remained a possibility for him.

Carl Gustav Jung, who, like his "boss", as Freud called him, Eugen Bleuler, took Schreber to be suffering from schizophrenia, also diagnosed schizophrenia not only in Joyce's daughter, Lucia, but as latent in Joyce himself. After Lucia spent a week in September 1934 at the Burghölzli or what Joyce called "Zurich's Bedlam", she was moved to the private clinic at Küsnacht where Jung was on the staff. Not that Joyce himself had any time for psychoanalysis; he used to call Jung and Freud: "Tweedledum and Tweedledee". And Jung later commented on both daughter and father in these terms:

> "If you know anything of my anima theory, Joyce and his daughter are a classical example for it. She was definitely his 'femme inspiratrice' …. which explains his obstinate reluctance to have her certified. His own anima, i.e. unconscious psyche, was so solidly identified with her, that to have her certified would have been as much an admission that he himself had a latent psychosis. It is therefore understandable that he could not give in. His 'psychological' style is definitely schizophrenic, with the difference, however, that the ordinary patient cannot help himself talking and thinking in such a way, while Joyce willed it and moreover developed it by all his creative forces. Which, incidentally explains why he himself did not go over the border. But his daughter did, because she was no genius like her father, but merely the victim of the disease" (Hutchins, 1957, pp. 184-85).

The reason for what Jung called Joyce's obstinate reluctance to have Lucia certified, is indicated by Joyce's biographer Richard Ellmann (1975, p. 263): Joyce felt responsible for Lucia's condition; he thought that her mind was like his own and he refused to accept any diagnosis which did not promise hope. Roberto Harari (2002, pp. 195-96) has linked this situation to the *filioque*, the dogma of Western Christianity which turns up in *Finnegans Wake*, in the sense that Lucia's troubles proceeded from the father and the son, from her grandfather, John Joyce, and her father, James. Joyce's defending Lucia, instead of doing something about her, and his calling her a telepath, which Lacan interprets in terms of the "imposed speech" he finds in Joyce himself, are understood as a paternal failing, not only on the part of Joyce, but of Joyce's own father (1975-76, pp. 134-135).

So why was Joyce's own latent disposition to psychosis not precipitated, as Jung said? Lacan states in Seminar XXIII, that "in his whole *œuvre*, there is no trace of anything in Joyce's text that resembles a Borromean knot". Nevertheless, he contends that Joyce's text is constructed like one. He even finds that the lack of explicit reference to the knot to be a sign of authenticity (op. cit., 197). The reason he can claim that *Finnegans Wake* is structured like a Borromean knot is the prevalence in the text of circles and crosses. Lacan had remarked (1987, p. 28) at the start of the Joyce symposium in 1975, "some of you know that with this circle and cross, I draw the Borromean knot". By joining up the loose ends of the cross, conceived as infinite straight lines, Lacan was able to construct the three rings and knot them together in a borromean way. The importance Joyce attached to the circle and the cross is clear, as Clive Hart has shown (1962, p. 110), from Joyce's assigning the mandala symbol, a crossed circle, in the manuscript for the passage in the text which deals with the pattern of cycles. Therefore, in the list of symbols which he gave to Harriet to explain the main characters, it could be argued that a circle would have been more appropriate than the square with which he designated the secret title of the book (Joyce, 1952, p. 213). Of course, Lacan was familiar with Hart's *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake* (Hart, 1962). Hart had demonstrated how the whole book is cyclical in its structure after the theory of Vico. Within sections I, II and III, which correspond to the three cycles of Vico, birth, marriage and death, there are four cycles of four chapters, and section IV is their culmination. Furthermore, the characters of the book themselves revolve in circular paths: Earwicker pedals around the Garden of Eden; Anna Livia revolves in the curve of The Liffey river; and the twins Shaun and Shem circumnavigate the globe. Shaun travels from East to West, whereas Shem moves from North to South, and their respective cycles intersect in Dublin and in Australia, on opposite sides of the globe.

In addition, cross-symbols appear frequently, and these replicate the two central crosses made by the intersections of the orbits of Shem and Shaun. A prominent example is the cross of the "Four Old Men", a quincunx, the fifth point being the donkey which carries them, just as the donkey, with the sign of cross on its back, was said to have carried Jesus into Jerusalem. This word, quincunx, suggests the *Tunc* page of the *Book of Kells*, the book of the Gospels produced by Irish monks in the late 8th Century. In the illustrations of that book, the lines forming the letters pass over and under each other. The *Tunc* page is so named because it depicts part of the Vulgate text of St. Matthew's Gospel about the crucifixion – *Tunc crucifixerant XPI cum eo duos latrones* (then were crucified with Christ two thieves, Mt 27: 38) – and a crux decussata. In Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, the series of signifiers: "Pitchcap and triangle, noose and *tinctunc*" refer respectively to Shaun, Anna Livia, the Twelve, and the Four (Joyce, 2012, p. 216). And the *tinctunc* associated with the Four is a play on quincunx. In addition, and perhaps of more relevance, both Hart and Atherton (2009: 30-31) recognise that Joyce refers to the *Tunc* page of the *Book of Kells* to identify Christ's "fall" on the cross not only with the fall of Adam, but with a fall on the part of God the Father, something which brings us back to the *sinthome* which Joyce used to make up for the fall of his own father.

From Nomination to Sinthome

The title of Lacan's twenty-second seminar is *RSI* (Lacan, 1974-75), pronounced in French as *hérésie* (heresy). Underscoring a shift in the later Lacan beyond the Symbolic register to that of the Real, this seminar appears to question his own dogma in relation to the centrality of the Name of the Father. The Name of the Father, as we have seen, was symbolic. It was a signifier that takes the place of the desire of the mother in the Oedipus complex, ordering sense for a child and regulating enjoyment. Its foreclosure from the battery of signifiers in the Symbolic register meant, in Lacan's view, that psychosis is on the cards for the subject. But in *RSI*, Lacan no longer speaks only of the Name of the Father, but of the "names of the father". Now, as the title of the seminar indicates, all three registers, Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary, can be names of the father. And any of the three circles can be foreclosed in psychosis by not being firmly knotted to the other two. But what is important to us in this seminar is that Lacan introduces a fourth circle to hold the other three together (Lacan, 1974-75, pp. 170-179). Depending on its location in the knot, this fourth element allows a particular register to have a bearing on the other two in such a way that it can make a hole

between them. He calls this function “nomination” (op. cit., p. 52) and so the hole between the Symbolic and the Imaginary, for example, in which he situates sense, is formed by Real nomination (Figure 2).

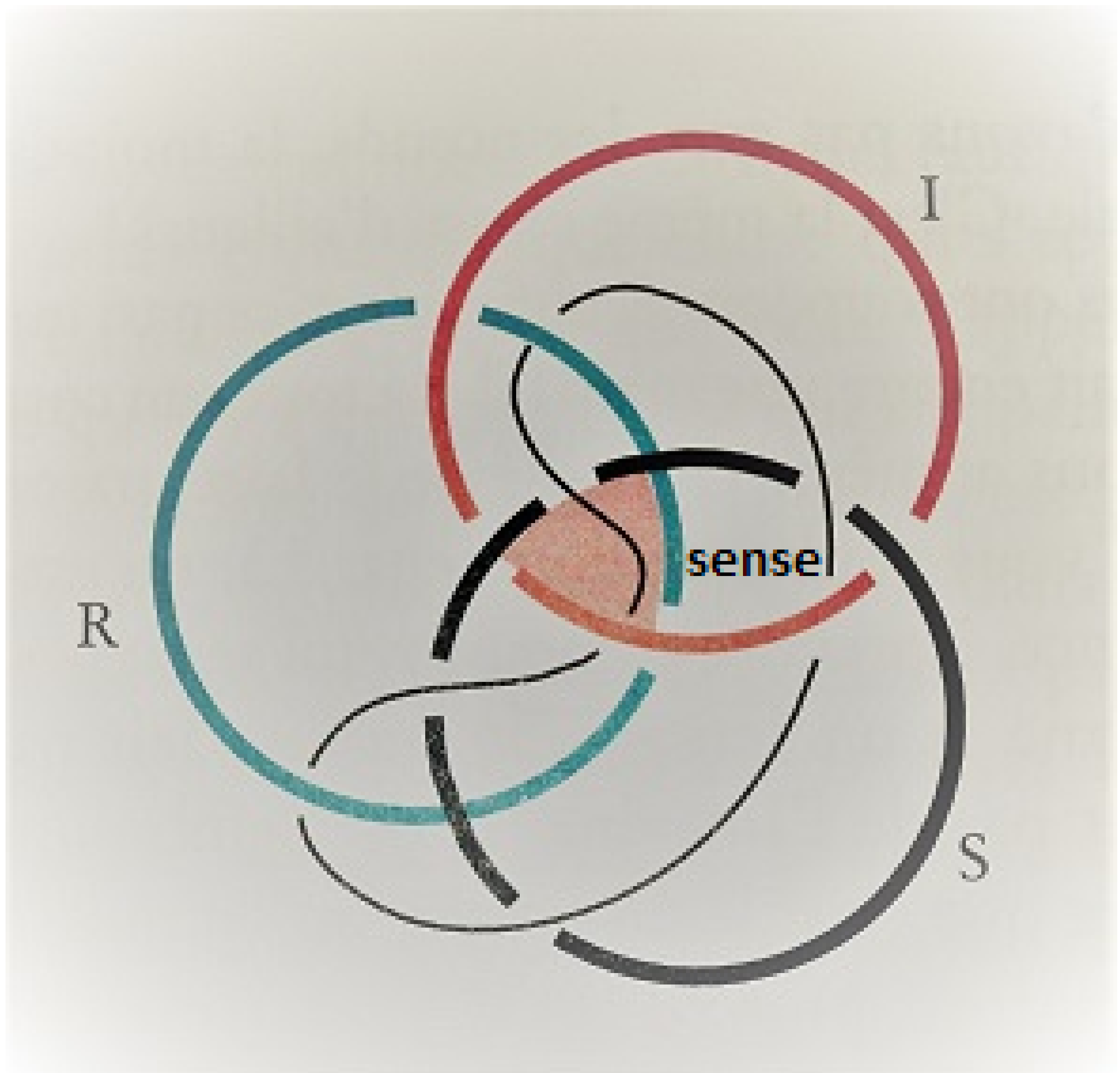

Figure 2[3]

However, in Lacan’s next year-long seminar, Seminar XXIII, the fourth element in *RSI* is replaced by a new one, the *sinthome*. Again, his sinthome concept is different from his understanding of the symptom. To his mind, a neurotic symptom is formed by the Symbolic having a bearing on the Real. His *sinthome*, however, is a psychical prosthesis constructed by the subject to repair a structural vulnerability to psychosis. As we saw earlier, Lacan notes that the word *sinthome* includes the English signifier “sin”, and he relates this to the Original Sin from Christian doctrine (1975-76, p. 19). In Joyce, the sin in question was the sin of the father. John Joyce had not mediated the Name of the Father to his son. This was the origin of Joyce’s disposition to psychosis. His deficient father had fallen like Adam and Eve, and Joyce’s *sinthome* – without the *ptoma*, Fall

– made up for his father's fault. How did this operate in practice? In the Borromean knot, which holds the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary together, and limits phallic *jouissance* by cornering it in the hole between the Symbolic and the Real, and regulates sense in the hole between the Symbolic and the Imaginary, the sequence for each ring should be over, under, over, under. The Real, for example, should go over the Symbolic, under the Imaginary, over the Symbolic again, and under the Imaginary. In other words, the Real should go over the Symbolic twice. But, in the case of Joyce, it went over the Symbolic only once. The Symbolic and the Real were only linked, not knotted. This is why the lines of *Finnegans Wake* are dripping, as it were, with *jouissance*. But, more importantly, because the Symbolic was surmounted by the Real only once, the Imaginary remained completely loose. It was not knotted to the Real and the Symbolic, as we saw in Stephen's relation to the body in *A Portrait of the Artist*. Furthermore, sense fell away too and so, in *Finnegans Wake*, meaning is constantly slipping. To remedy this, Joyce constructed his *sinthome*, a new fourth element, a paternal remedy to make up for the absence of the Name of the Father in him and hold the three circles tightly knotted together. Something of the error in Joyce's knotting is hinted at in *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce 2012, p. 216) in the fable of the Mookse (represented by Shaun) and the Gripes (represented by Shem), which retells the theological disputes between Western and Eastern Christianity. In a letter to Frank Budgen (Ellmann, 1975, p. 367), Joyce explained: "All the grotesque words in this are in Russian or Greek for the three principal dogmas which separate Shem from Shaun. When he gets A and B on to his lap, C slips off, and when he has C and A, he loses hold of B". Interestingly, Joyce says "looses".

What repaired the "*lapsus de noeud*", as Lacan calls it, the lack of borromean knotting in Joyce, was his creating for himself what Lacan calls an "ego", not – as Jean-Michel Rabaté (2001, pp. 7-8) has thought – the ego in Freud's second topology and which stems from Lacan's "mirror stage" as part of the Imaginary, but an ego in the sense of self-importance. Hence Joyce's wanting the critics speak about him for three hundred years. This was a solution within the field of his Imaginary, just as Schreber's ultimate solution was to write his autobiography to make up for the error in the field of his Symbolic after he had foreclosed the Name of the Father.

Figure 3[4]

Joyce's "making a name for himself" as an author, rather than as the son of John Joyce, acted as a compensation for the fact that his father had not been a father for him, for the paternal resignation which brought about in him the *Verwerfung* of the Name of the Father. Joyce's solution was to have his name recognised the world over as something proper to himself rather than inherited from his father. By creating a new "ring" at the specific place of failure in his subjective knotting, he was able to repair himself. This ego, by going over and under, over and under – over the Symbolic twice and under the Real twice – corrected the error in a borromean way. It knotted the Real and the Symbolic in him in such a way that his Imaginary was also held secure. That is to say, it restored the paternal function for Joyce after his father had let him down.

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Notes:

[1] Reproduced with permission from J. Lacan (1975-76: 28).

[2] https://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Dublin/Clontarf_West/Royal_Terrace/1271356/

[3] Reproduced with permission from J. Lacan, 1974-75: 52.

[4] Reproduced with permission from J. Lacan (1975-76: 196).

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