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Writing: A question of doubling the absent

Abstract:

Writing is bound by two silences: the one from which it emerges, and the one towards which it tends. Thus the writing process entails a dialectic between the absent and the double: the love object and its imaginative recuperation, the absent bearer of the law and its imaginative creation, the ego and its alter ego, or indeed the defective ego and its symbolic avatar. But what **is** writing? This paper seeks answers to this Mallarméan question in the teachings of psychoanalysis. It focuses on Lacan's seminar on Joyce (2005 [1975-76]) to show that although writing may be an uninterrupted work of mourning, it may also be a structural necessity. Lacan indeed suggests that Joyce avoided psychosis by deploying his art.

Keywords:

Writing – Creativity – Subjectivity and Writing – Psychoanalysis – Lacan with Joyce

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Only writing is stronger than the mother
Marguerite Duras

Writing is bound by two silences: the one from which it emerges, and the one towards which it tends. Thus the writing process entails a dialectic between the absent and the double: the love object and its imaginative recuperation, the absent bearer of the law and its imaginative creation, the ego and its alter ego, or indeed the defective ego and its symbolic avatar. But what **is** writing? This paper seeks answers to this Mallarméan question in the teachings of psychoanalysis. It focuses on Lacan's seminar on Joyce (2005 [1975-76]) to show that although writing may be an uninterrupted work of mourning, it may also be a structural necessity. Lacan indeed suggests that Joyce avoided psychosis by deploying his art.

Writing bears the mark of symbolic castration – the cut that produces the letter in the aftermath of the Oedipus complex. It signifies a loss and expresses a desire to retrieve the primary love object, i.e., the (m)Other, or its substitutes. In the handling of this loss, writing presupposes an encounter with the unconscious and a doubling of the absent. Marguerite Duras knew this well. Writing, she says comes from the 'inner shadow', or the 'black block' where one supposes the archives of the ego are, 'some region which hasn't been explored yet' (1993: 72). When writing, she wants to show the 'blank in the chain', the 'hole' (1974: 18); in other words, she wants to pen down the hole in the real, the very faltering of language even though, like Joyce, she also wants the enduring fame inscribed in the name she chose for herself (her real name is Donnadieu). Thus if writing is, as Freud (Anzieu 1981) and Derrida (2001) have shown in their own ways, an uninterrupted work of mourning it may also produce, through its own artifice, a kind of prop for the writing subject. In this sense, writing is indeed 'stronger than the mother' (Duras 1984).

'All writing of the narrative kind, and perhaps all writing, is motivated, deep down, by a fear of and fascination with mortality – by a desire to make the risky trip to the Underworld, and to bring something or someone back from the dead' (Atwood 2002: 156), for undeniably the requirements of the ego meet the aims of the unconscious in the compulsion to write. These, Freud argued, are founded on a third party that takes into account the imperatives of both super ego and ego ideal. Freud, however did not follow this up: because he believed in the desexualisation of the drives, he stopped short of the unconscious significance of sublimation (1923: 30). Melanie Klein saw writing as a desire for reparation in the wake of the destructive drive – if only because of the negation of the real world writing entails (1984). Winnicott placed writing in a potential space where it has the status of transitional object, the space of play and illusion between ego and object (1971). Worth considering though these views are, they do not enlighten us about the structural function of writing.

In his famous essay ‘The Death of the Author’, Roland Barthes points out that to write is both a transitive and intransitive verb, the intransitive form being performative ‘in which the enunciation has no other content ... than the act by which it is uttered’ (1972 [1968]: 146). Like Lacan (1957), and unlike Derrida (1967 [1976]) Barthes takes into account the precedence of writing over speech. What Lacan teaches us is that if an enunciation produces an utterance, it also veils the fact that it is the void that supports it. Some *unutterance* is included in the act of uttering. Included, but hidden. The task of the poet is to utter that which cannot be enunciated. Writing in the intransitive sense testifies to this movement, this game of hide and seek with the real – the unnamable. Writing is ‘both keeping silent and speaking’ (Duras 1974: 19). If it tends toward silence, it is in the sense that Flaubert expressed it, he, who aspired to write a book about nothing – a book where some unknown substance would appear in a pure state with no characters for support, themselves as much as possible with no support. This is the silence of the Other *jouissance*, the silence of the drive at work in the ‘ciphering’ of writing (Attié 2005: 192), the silence at stake in Gerald Murnane’s ‘The Breathing Author’ (2005), not the silence of exhaustion of the phallic *jouissance* that Maurice Blanchot hints at in *L’espace littéraire* (1974), the silence of the finishing line whereby the farther along in the process of creation, the closer the work draws to that point of inescapable silence, the vanishing point where the desire to become silent lies.

‘Only writing is stronger than the mother,’ insists Duras (1984). Would writing then play the role of paternal function? For Lacan, writing is a knotting, not a tracing. In this sense it is radically different from Derrida’s ‘arche-writing’ as the transcendental backdrop of linguistic systems (1967 [1976]). For Lacan, the written is inherent in the act of speaking (Miller 2003: 6) and so writing precedes the act of speaking. It has ‘the effect of a pure signifier’ (the signifier of the Father as author of the Law and death) because there is a law which is ‘revealed ... as identical with an order of language’ (1977: 66), a law whose ‘subjective pivot’ is the prohibition of incest, a law which is dialectically opposed to the (1977 [1953]: 67) desire of the (m)Other. It is the function of the father to impose this law on the subject in the Oedipus complex. Indeed, it is ‘in the name of the father that we must recognise the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law’. In other words, to speak is nothing else but consent to the prohibition of incest. Nowhere is this made clearer than in Lacan’s paper ‘On a Question Preliminary to any possible Treatment of Psychosis’ (1959) where he presents the Oedipus complex as a metaphor, i.e., the paternal metaphor, in which the signifier of the Name-of-the-Father substitutes for that of the desire of the mother. The importance of the Name of the Father as structuring agent is developed in the seminar on the psychoses (1993 [1955-56]), where he shows that if this signifier is foreclosed, or, arguably *de facto* foreclosed (Harari 2004), psychosis results. Thus, the function of The-Name-of-the-Father is to confer identity on the subject by naming and positioning him or her in the symbolic order as well as to signify the prohibition of incest.

Psychosis results when the key signifier of the Name-of-the-Father is not admitted to the symbolic system and thus leaves a hole where this signifier should be inscribed in the

unconscious. Though foreclosure occurs at the moment of the Oedipus complex, the onset of psychosis is triggered years later by a particular type of encounter that Lacan calls an ‘encounter with A-father’. For Lacan, this implies that the psychotic structure will have existed long before a crisis suddenly and dramatically appears as is obvious in the case of President Schreber, who had led a relatively normal personal, social and professional life until the age of 51 (Freud 1909; Lacan 1959 [1953-56]). The encounter with A-father, which is a call for symbolic recognition, is brought about in situations that arise when the subject is in a particularly intense relation with a narcissistic component; and when, in this situation, the question of the father arises from a third position, one that is external to the erotic situation. Once the psychosis is triggered, everything changes, of course. But what about before the onset? It is in pursuing this question that Lacan proposes that in some cases there is something that plays the role of *suppléance* (often translated as supplement), i.e., a substitute, a stand-in.

It is indeed intriguing, that some psychotics have been capable of making important scientific or artistic contributions. French mathematician Cantor and his compatriot, writer Artaud, are famous examples, for their psychotic episodes are well documented. Thus Lacan speculates that there may be cases where the psychosis never declares itself. In these cases the pre-psychotic subject seems to find a substitute for the foreclosed signifier that enables him or her to maintain the symbolic links necessary for relatively normal, or even stunningly creative, functioning. Lacan argues that James Joyce was such a case (Lacan [1975-76]) and this line of thought has recently been taken up by a number of analysts (Brousse 1988; Miller 1993; Skriabine 1988; Soler 1993).

But let us return to the Oedipus complex whose outcome is a symbolic castration that signifies a renunciation, a loss, but is also a symptom. This is ‘because the Name-of-the-Father is also the father of the name that everything holds together, which doesn’t make the symptom less necessary’ (Lacan 2005 [1974-75]: 22). Speech needs to be anchored in an enunciation. Anchored by way of inking, perhaps, with writing as the trace of the anchoring process. In that sense writing would be the archiving of speech. By signing the subject’s inscription writing would testify to its own enunciation—writing as a recognition of the place where speaking originates from. Thus writing brings into being the subject’s renunciation of the mother. Writing inscribes the void—the hole with no support but itself. It is in this sense that writing has a paternal function. One might say that to write oneself into the symbolic order is an act of self-creation that entails symbolic parricide, or as Barthes puts it, ‘a staging of the (absent, hidden, or hypostatized) father’ (1976: 10).

The American writer Paul Auster wrote his first literary novel ‘in response to [his] father’s death’ (1998: 275). The book is called *The Invention of Solitude*. Here is what he says about his experience of the writing process:

The astonishing thing [...] is that at the moment when you are most truly alone, when you truly enter a state of solitude, that is the moment when you are not alone anymore,

when you start to feel your connection with others. I believe I even quote Rimbaud in that book, '*Je est un autre*'-- I is another--and I take that sequence quite literally. In the process of writing or thinking about yourself, you actually become someone else. (1998: 276)

If there is such a thing as the pleasure of the text, it is because the text is a substitute for a lost satisfaction. There is a kind of victory over this loss which manifests itself in the work of mourning – as fury, ecstasy, denial, anxiety, negation, for what inhabits the text is, like couch grass, silently pushing its way forward. Between the loss and its symbolic recuperation, there is something else: the trace of desire in the transgression, which is no other than a symbolic killing of the father as symptom. In the case of James Joyce, as in the case of his fictitious alter ego Stephen Dedalus, this symbolic murder is necessary to ensure redemption (1967 [1976]: 79) in the construction of the ego, what Lacan calls *sinthome*.

Sinthome is an archaic spelling of the French *symptôme* from which the English symptom derives. Lacan (re-)introduces the term in 1975 as the title for his seminar on James Joyce for its punning possibilities (eg, *saint homme*). Through an elaboration of his topology of the subject as underpinned by the concept of the Borromean knot (so called because the figure of the three interrelated knots is found on the coat of arms of the Borromeo family) and a reading of Joyce's writings, Lacan redefines the symptom not as a formation of the unconscious underpinned by linguistic concepts, but as that which ensures the subject's survival by providing a unique organization of *jouissance*. In this sense, the conceptual shift from linguistics to topology which marks Lacan's later work in fact confirms the symptom as 'inscribed in a writing process' (1966 [1957]) while constituting the *sinthome* as a kernel of *jouissance* immune to the efficacy of the symbolic – as the trace of the unique modality of the subject's enjoyment.

Lacan's seminar on Joyce elaborates upon his theory of the Borromean knot. The knot we are dealing regarding Joyce and the function of his art is the Borromean knot as Lacan envisages it in *Encore*, i.e., as a group of three rings which are linked in such a way that if any one of them is severed, all three become separated (1975 [1972-73]: 124). Lacan indeed at this stage conceives of the subject's structure as a Borromean knot that ties the real, the symbolic and the imaginary registers together so that if one is cut loose all three are set free. The three dimensions, it must be stressed, operate on the same plane, which also means that there is no beginning and no end, no first word and no last word--as in *Finnegans Wake* ...

With regard to Joyce, Lacan claims that there is an extra ring to the knot, a fourth ring that he calls symptom or *sinthome*. In fact, Lacan gives quite a few names to this fourth ring: symptom, father, ego, *suppléance*, etc. In this light, the father stands out as symptom (2005[1974-75]: 19).

Lacan reads Joyce's writing as an extended *sinthome*, a fourth term whose addition to the Borromean knot enables the subject to cohere. As a child, Lacan speculates, Joyce faced the deficiency of the Name-of-the-Father, but managed to fend off the onset of psychosis through his art. Writing acted as a *suppléance*, a supplementary link in the subjective knot.

For Lacan, the art of the writer who made his name famous, was a way of compensating for the fact that in his case the knot had come undone (2005[1974-75]: 87). Joyce's desire to become an artist would hence be a way of compensating for the fact that his own father was defective and Joyce's symptom would consist in substituting his own ego for the defective father. Joyce's father had indeed neglected his son's education, leaving him instead in the hands of the Jesuits. For Joyce, Lacan says, 'the fact of being a writer compensates for the fundamental deficiency of the father, for the abdication of his paternal responsibility' (2005[1974-75]: 89). In other words, to give one's name value is one way of compensating for the father's resignation of his part. And so Joyce's name and self-made ego, Lacan argues, is the mythically inflected Stephen Dedalus.

Studying Joyce prompts Lacan to speak of the failure of the knot, i.e., the slip of the knot (as in slip of the tongue). Joyce's valuing of his own ego compensates for the slipping and untying of the knot. The knot is faulty; not properly tied with respect to the three dimensions of the real, imaginary and symbolic. This faultiness is due to the fact that the father becomes absent as signifier from the symbolic dimension. In the chapter titled 'The Writing of the Ego' Lacan dwells on Joyce's weird relationship with his own body. Joyce's ego, he suggests, has the specific function of an object that can be discarded. It is abject. Writing is that which props it up, indeed, is necessary to its (re)structuring (2005[1974-75]: 147).

Let us see how fiction stages Joyce's family romance with writing as a work of mourning and as a structural prop that appears in the place the paternal function.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Stephen Dedalus is only six when he joins Conglows Wood College. On his first day at school he is flanked by a teary mother and a father who urges him never to do in a friend. At school, Stephen feels different. He lacks the physical abilities and worldly knowledge which is part of his schoolmates' social grammar. He longs 'to be at home and lay his head on his mother's lap' (12).

Stephen is eleven when the family moves to Dublin because of his father's bankruptcy. At one point, walking at his father's side, listening to the same old stories of his father's youth, Stephen feels no compassion, but 'a faint sickness sighed in his heart' (145). Stephen remembers his father's voice: 'I'm talking to you as a friend, Stephen. I don't believe a son should be afraid of his father. No. I treat you as your grandfather treated me when I was a young chap. We were more like brothers than father and son. I'll never forget the first day he caught me smoking ... He didn't say a word ...' (84).

From Simon Dedalus' confidences to his son, two statements strike the reader: 'I don't believe a son should be frightened of his father' and 'we were more like brothers than father and son'. It seems that Simon Dedalus does not make much of what Lacan calls 'the authority of the father's speech' (1959). This 'letting down' is a 'falling down' for Stephen and it glaringly and noisily enhances his feelings of alienation, indeed, dissociation: 'nothing moved him or spoke to him from the real world unless he heard in it an echo of the infuriated cries within him. He could respond to no human appeal, dumb and insensible to the call of summer and gladness and companionship, wearied and dejected by his father's voice' (85). It is at this point that Joyce evokes the feeling of estrangement that Stephen experiences towards his own thoughts: 'I am Stephen Dedalus. I am walking beside my father whose name is Simon Dedalus. We are in Cork, in Ireland. Cork is a city. Our room is in the Victoria Hotel. Victoria and Stephen and Simon. Simon and Stephen and Victoria. Names' (85). For Stephen, there is nothing to hold on to, but names. Names without referents. The order of language collapses. Stephen is even unable to read the signboards of the shops he passes, for he can 'scarcely interpret the letters' (85).

Later, on the day the family home is sold, Stephen follows his father around the city from bar to bar, with Simon Dedalus telling the same old tale: 'that he was an old Corkonian, that he had been trying for thirty years to get rid of his Cork accent and that Peter Pickackfax beside him was his eldest son but that he was only a Dublin jackeen' (86). One humiliation succeeds another, and when the question of Simon's paternity arises in a tease, a further experience of dissociation befalls Stephen:

An abyss of fortune or of temperament sundered him from them. His mind seemed older than theirs ... No life or youth stirred in him as it had stirred in them. He had known neither the pleasure of companionship with others nor the vigour of rude male health nor filial piety. Nothing stirred within his soul but a cold and cruel and loveless lust. His childhood was dead or lost and with it his soul capable of simple joys, and he was drifting amid life like the barren shell of the moon. (88)

This passage marks Stephen's final rejection of everything his impostor of a father stands for. It also suggests how Stephen's imagination functions. To the chaos and ugliness he associates with the world of the father, he opposes a new order. Presently he invokes Shelley's unfinished poem 'To the Moon' (1824), the lost object (both mother and ego) of the above passage. At other times he builds his own new order, drawing upon linguistic inventiveness, literary lore and mythological references. But when the illusion of resisting the sordid fails him, he re-finds and makes use of that which he loathes in a gesture of *père-version*.

In this *Bildungsroman*, Joyce famously evokes the torments of puberty and tells of Stephen's first encounter with a woman – this does not necessarily take us away from the Name of the Father and The last Judgment, only closer to perversion.

Stephen is thirteen and ablaze with desire: he turns to woman as fantasy ‘to appease the fierce longings of his heart before which everything else was idle and alien’ (89). Joyce makes it clear that despite all attempts at sublimation there is no barrier between within and without. The real of *jouissance* constantly threatens to erupt: ‘from without as from within the waters had flowed over his barriers: their tides began once more to jostle fiercely above the crumbled mole’ (89). Moreover, desire is a guilty desire: ‘beside the savage desire within him to realize the enormities which he brooded on nothing was sacred’ (90). Stephen’s transgressive fantasies are presented thus:

He bore cynically with the shameful details of his secret riots in which he exulted to defile with patience whatever image had attracted his eyes ... A figure that had seemed to him by day demure and innocent came towards him by night through the winding darkness of sleep, her face transfigured by a lecherous cunning, her eyes bright with brutish joy. Only the morning pained him with its dim memory of dark orgiastic riots, its keen and humiliating sense of transgression. (91)

Stephen’s desire is an infernal desire for transgression, a desire to sully his language and his faith: ‘verses passed from his lips and the inarticulate cries and the unspoken brutal words rushed forth from his brain to force a passage’ (91). Thus Joyce speaks of a breaking in, out and through, i.e., a forcing. Stephen is drawn to sin as though he were animated by some daemonic, sardonic, infernal force. This *push-to-sin* proves to be a *push-to-jouissance*. ‘He wanted to sin with another of his kind,’ writes Joyce, ‘to force another being to sin with him and to exult with her in sin’ (91). The *jouissance* adumbrated here is equivalent to some mental invasion brought about by a slow and painful infiltration of the drive: ‘He felt some dark presence moving irresistibly upon him from the darkness, a presence subtle and murmurous as a flood filling him wholly with itself. Its murmur besieged his ears like the murmur of some multitude in sleep; its subtle steams penetrated his being’ (91). The being at stake here is a sinning one, and so one obscene word imposes itself on Stephen’s mind: ‘the cry that he had strangled for so long in his throat issued from his lips. It broke from him like a wail of despair from a hell of sufferers and died in a wail of furious entreaty, a cry for an iniquitous abandonment, a cry which was but the echo of an obscene scrawl which he had read on the oozing wall of the urinal’ (92).

Stephen is now sixteen. We are about to witness his first encounter with a prostitute: ‘a young woman ... laid her hand on his arm to detain him and gazed into his face’ (92). Upon which Joyce describes Stephen’s first embrace as a fall, an abandonment to sin--utter symbolic castration:

Give me a kiss, she said.

His lips would not bend to kiss her ...

With a sudden movement she bowed his head and joined her lips to his and he read the meaning of her movements in her frank uplifted eyes. It was too much for him. He closed his eyes, surrendering himself to her, body and mind, conscious of nothing in the world but the dark pressure of her softly parting lips. They pressed upon his brain as they pressed upon his lips ... and between them he felt an unknown and timid pressure, darker than the swoon of sin... (92-94)

In *A Portrait*, the fear of God both exists and does not exist, just as the father is and then disappears, yet Joyce insists on the impossible redemption of sins. The *jouissance* portrayed above as a flowing of substance out of the body has neither brought about the wrath of God nor the much feared castration: 'at his first violent sin he had felt a wave of vitality pass out of him and had feared to find his body or soul maimed by the excess' (96). What exultation.

There are two other crucial passages in *A Portrait* where Joyce presents Stephen's relation to his body which Lacan dwells on. Interestingly, both passages revolve around a beating episode: the first when aged six Stephen has undergone some corporeal punishment at school and the second following a fistfight in his early teens.

Soon after starting school, Stephen breaks his glasses. This prevents him from getting on with tasks such as writing. When Father Dolan, the prefect of studies, barges into the classroom in search of 'little loafers that want flogging' (44) he catches Stephen idle. Questioned about this idleness, Stephen cannot speak out of fear. The class teacher explains why Stephen is unable to write, but Father Dolan does not want to hear. He calls Stephen a little schemer and crashes the cane again and again on each of Stephen's hands. Despite the terror and the pain, Stephen manages to withhold his tears and 'the cry that scalded his throat' (46) until Father Dolan is done. Then, 'the scalding water burst forth from his eyes and, burning with shame and agony and fear, he drew back his shaking arm in terror and burst out into a whine of pain' (47), his body shaking 'in shame and rage' (47). When ordered to kneel down, he does so, quickly pressing his hands to his sides. 'To think of them beaten and swollen with pain ...', Joyce comments, 'made him feel so sorry for them as if they were not his own but someone else's that he felt sorry for' (47), suggesting that it is **as if**, because of the pain, the child willed his hands metaphorically cut off from his body.

The second episode sees Stephen aged about twelve discussing with his schoolmates the literary canon. Stephen ends up being beaten up by Heron, the leader of the mob. They are discussing Byron, whom Stephen ranks as the finest poet. Heron disagrees and demands that Stephen retract his judgment. Stephen refuses to comply. Heron flies into a rage. 'Behave yourself!' (75), he yells, cutting at Stephen's legs with his cane. At this, 'one chap has Stephen's arms pinioned behind while another picks up a stick. Under the blows of stick and cane Stephen is sent crashing against a barbed wire fence' (75).

The rage and hatred that Stephen feels as he stumbles on after the beating dissipate in no time and Joyce has Stephen wonder ‘why he bore no malice now to those who had tormented him (75). Lacan ponders the metaphor in the following sentence: ‘even that night as he stumbled homewards along Jone’s road he had felt that some power was divesting him of that sudden woven anger as easily as a fruit is divested of its soft ripe peel’ (77). Lacan sees in this metaphor a reference to Stephen’s relation to his own body, the sign of a reaction of disgust, of a feeling of detachment.

Something falls off as readily as Stephen’s rage dissipates, and this falling off is imposed on Stephen in the same involuntary way as speech is imposed. Stephen’s experience is an event in the body, a certain manner of not feeling it, of letting it down, letting it fall like a superfluous peel. For Stephen, the knotting of thought, soul and body depends on the relation between the abdication of the father, an acute awareness of sin and the corporeal sensation of a letting fall.

Two situations determined by the Borromean knotting arise in Joyce with regard to the three registers. First, from his early epiphanies to *Finnegans Wake*, his writing presents us with enigmas – an enigma being ‘a statement that cannot find its enunciation’ and that presents us ‘with a fault in the imaginary and its eventual patching up’ (2005[1974-75]: 67). Thus Joyce cares little for whether he is understood or not; this is why his enigmas give way to a writing of the letter (Lacan 1957; 1971) and eventually to deciphering rather than the interpreting we are all familiar with from English Seminars.

For Lacan, the epiphany may be ‘the result of this error, namely that the unconscious is tied to the real’ (2005[1974-75]: 73). The unconscious tied to the real: the enigma as epiphany bound up with Joyce’s ego, or rather, bound up with the slip – through excess or absence, which occurs in the writing of the Borromean knot, i.e., in this instance a trefoil, with a slip that calls for the reparation to be crafted by the ego.

This is poetically adumbrated in two epiphanies of the artistic vocation in *A Portrait*. The first, cryptically, epiphanises Stephen’s name and presents a moment of near imaginary collapse occurring at the climax of Stephen’s exilic positioning in Ireland, i.e., when he has rejected father, Church and country. As a visionary insight, the epiphany is also a creative event, but as a slip of the imaginary, it bears the mark of manic omnipotence. Either way, it is possible to read into it the traces of three registers of foreclosure. This complex correlation of the three registers can be traced in the epiphany of the birth of what Stephen calls ‘the soul’ (152) soon after he has rejected a possible career in the religious orders. Teased by his schoolmates who disfigure his name, he suddenly understands how his name contains the potentialities of his vocation. Thus, realising the prophetic meaning of his own name, Stephen’s imagination takes wing. He sees a Daedelian figure ‘flying above the waves and slowly climbing the air (153). This causes him to wonder whether this hawk like man (154) stands for ‘a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve...a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being?’ (154) As Stephen identifies with this birdlike figure; he struggles to articulate a cry:

His throat ached with a desire to cry aloud, the cry of a hawk or eagle on high, to cry piercingly of his deliverance to the winds. This was the call of life to his soul, not the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair, not the inhuman voice that had called him to the pale service of the altar. (154)

Similarly, the second epiphany is triggered by the question of the patronym. It occurs at the end of the novel when Stephen understands the necessity to go into exile in order to become an artist. As Stephen watches birds outside the library and listens to their cries, sensations of dissociation foster a vision of Thoth, which he relates to himself through the association of the hawklike man evoking Daedalus:

A sense of fear of the unknown moved in the heart of his weariness, a fear of symbols and portents, of the hawklike man whose name he bore soaring out of his captivity on osierwoven wings, of Thoth, the god of writers, writing with a reed upon a tablet and bearing on his narrow ibis head the cusped moon. (203)

Note the juxtaposition of the Daedalian motif with the image of the moon, the shadow of the absent cast upon the writer.

For Lacan, then, Joyce's ego is a writing and Joyce's writing is one that inscribes something that never ceases not being written, for indeed writing is 'essential' to Joyce's ego. This is highlighted in the conclusion to Seminar XXIII, *Le Sinthome*, when he sums up his views about the structure of Joyce's ego, i.e., what he calls the **writing** of the **knot**, with the emphasis on **writing**. The emphasis on writing as essential for the ego reveals itself to be derived from Joyce's thrust to attain the position of ego arch with regard to pleasure and hence with regard to the Name-of-the-Father, i.e., what Lacan calls *père-version*. Interestingly, page 188 of *Work in Progress*, to become *Finnegans Wake* anticipates Lacan's thesis: 'Condemned fool, anarch, egoarch, hiresarch, you have reared your disunited kingdom on the vacuum of your own most intensely doubtful soul.' The ego evoked here is one concisely linking heresy with the law in relation to subjectivity, as it does with writing and the knot, i.e. the idea that 'a fourfold structure can be always demanded from the unconscious in the construction of a subjective ordering' (1966 [1962]: 779).

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