

## ALLUSIONS ON LEWIS CARROLL IN JAMES JOYCE'S FINNEGANS WAKE

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### ABSTRACT

In his last and most enigmatic book *Finnegans Wake* Joyce extensively uses literary, biblical and mythological allusions, making the book multilayered, suggestive and open to interpretation.

The present article studies allusions to Lewis Carroll in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. The article argues that Joyce was particularly interested in Lewis Carroll both as a writer and a person. Carroll's innovative writing techniques intrigued Joyce as much as his personality. One of the themes of *Finnegans Wake* is an attempt of the father-figure to tempt the daughter and Lewis Carroll and his child-friends seemed to Joyce to fit in with the paradigm.

The article studies the allusions to Lewis Carroll and his works from these two perspectives.

**KEYWORDS:** James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, Allusion, Lewis Carroll

### INTRODUCTION

In 1923, a year after the publication of *Ulysses* Joyce wrote the first two pages of the enigmatic book, which would later become *Finnegans Wake*. After parts of it appeared under the title *Work in Progress*, the readers saw that Joyce took even more innovative and complex ways than in *Ulysses*. There was much criticism and Joyce's answer to it was simple: firstly, in contrast to *Ulysses* the actions in *Finnegans Wake* happen during nighttime, making things more obscure and secondly he regarded it was easy to follow a simple, chronological scheme which critics would understand, but his attempt was "to tell the story of this Chapelizod family in a new way" (Norris 1976:2). It is Joyce's extensive use of literary, biblical and mythological allusions which turns a simple Chapelizod Family into an archetypal image and the story told by Joyce becomes 'a history of mankind' as he told Harriett E. Weaver in 1922, in London. It is these allusions that make *Finnegans Wake* a multilayered intertextual text which is suggestive and open to interpretation.

"An allusion" as defined by William Irwin in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* is "an indirect reference". In *Finnegans Wake* there are two types of allusions to Lewis Carroll:

- **Lewis Carroll "The Writer"** – Allusions that prevail in this case are about *Alice in Wonderland* and *though the Looking Glass and What Alice found there*. *Sylvie and Bruno* and the dream-like condition of a person is a leitmotiv in *Finnegans Wake*, although Joyce himself denies of having read this work by Lewis Carroll. It is worth mentioning that other less known works, for example *The Hunting of the Snark*, are also present in *Finnegans Wake* but to a lesser extent.
- **Lewis Carroll "The Man/Person"** – Apart from what Lewis Carroll wrote, James Joyce was rather interested in his personality, namely his "friendship" with young girls. Accordingly, his numerous "child-friends" are

mentioned throughout the novel; yet, Alice Liddell and Isa Bowman being the most interesting cases, as both of whom are reflections of *Alice in Wonderland*.

## LEWIS CARROLL'S LITERARY DEVICES IN *FINNEGANS WAKE*

Many of the literary devices and innovations invented by Lewis Carroll were afterwards incorporated and further developed by Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*.

In *Finnegans Wake* we read, to tell how your mead of, mard, is made of. All old Dadgerson's dodges one conning one's copying and that's what wonderland's wanderlad'll flaunt to the fair. A trancedone boy-script with tittivits by. Ahem'' (FW 374.1-4). "Old Dadgerson" accompanied by "wonderland" is Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, or Lewis Carroll. 'Dadgerson's dodges' or the tricks that Joyce adopts from Lewis Carroll and uses throughout *Finnegans Wake* are quite a variety.

### Wordplay

Before Joyce, Carroll was the writer who enjoyed wordplay and by combining two words gave the word a new meaning and importance. In *Sylvie and Bruno*, for example, Literature becomes "Litterature" (Carroll 1939:278) and by adding a mere letter "T", Literature – becomes a combination of trash and literature. The same is being done by James Joyce as well. One of the striking examples of such wordplay is "Healiopolis" (FW 14.18) – a combination of Egypt and Dublin (Heliopolis - Greek name of Annu, capital of the 13th Nome of Lower Egypt and Tim Healy - Governor-General of the Irish Free State during 1922-1928). Therefore, by adding letter "a" Joyce unites Egypt with Dublin.

### Reading Words Backwards

Another innovation that Lewis Carroll used was reading some words backwards; one example of this could be Bruno's words that Evil is the same as Live (Evil read backwards gives us Live and vice versa) (Carroll 1939:529). Noteworthy is that allusion to this passage from *Sylvie and Bruno* can be found in *Finnegans Wake*, when Joyce writes "Evil-it-is, lord of loaves in Amongded" (FW 418:6). We can argue that one of the reasons, why Joyce was so interested in anagrams, was that it can be an allusion to the mirror, where the written word alters and changes.

### Portmanteau Words

James Joyce extensively uses portmanteau words throughout the novel, coined by Lewis Carroll in 1872, based on the concept of two words packed together, like a portmanteau; when Alice comes across Humpty Dumpty in Chapter VI of *Through the Looking Glass and what Alice found there*, Humpty tells her 'Well, "slithy" means "lithe and slimy." "Lithe" is the same as "active". You see it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word.' (Carroll 1896:83). Likewise, Joyce uses portmanteau word, but moreover he tries to put as many meanings in one word or symbol as possible. An interesting example of this is Humpty Dumpty, one of the characters of *Alice* who becomes one of the central symbols of *Finnegans Wake*. Humpty Dumpty on the one hand is the symbol of a fallen and cracked man, as well as a symbol of Easter (because it is an egg). Humpty Dumpty is Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker as well as Tim Finnegan himself – two fallen men waiting for resurrection. Humpty Dumpty is also the ancient Egyptian cosmic egg "The Great Cackler comes again" (FW 237.34), according to which by the ancient Egyptian belief the universe started its existence. Humpty Dumpty in itself incorporates the symbol of Dublin and whole Ireland as well. Although there are numerous

examples of it throughout *Finnegans Wake*, one of the most interesting is the two-stanza verse that can be found in Herbert Gorman's *James Joyce*

Humpty Dump Dublin squeaks through his nose;  
 Humpty Dump Dublin hath a horrible vorse;  
 But for all his kinks English, plus his irismanx brogues  
 Humpty Dump Dublin's granddada of all rogues."

(Gorman 1939:340)

The verse tells us the whole story starting from the emergence of Dublin as a Viking settlement ending with its fall under the British rule. At a glance one may be surprised of the combination of Humpty Dumpty and Dublin, but if we delve deeper we will come across at the passage in P.S. O'Hegarty's book *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, which says: The irregulars drove patriotism, and honesty and morality out of Ireland... They demonstrated to us that our deep-rooted belief that there was something in us finer than, more spiritual than anything in any other people was sheer illusion and that we were really an uncivilized people with savage instincts. And the shock of that plunge from the heights to the depths staggered the whole nation. The "Island of Saints and Scholars" is burst like Humpty Dumpty" (O'Hegarty 1924:126).

## LEWIS CARROLL'S WORKS IN *FINNEGANS WAKE*

### Allusions Tominor Works By Lewis Carroll in *Finnegans Wake*

Lewis Carrol is mostly known for his *Alice in Wonderland*, and his other works are not paid proper attention, while they were even more eccentric and experimental. Thus, Joyce alludes not only to *Alice in Wonderland*, but also to Carroll's other works.

To begin with, one of the names Joyce uses for *Finnegans Wake* is "Tis jest jibberweek's joke" (FW 565.14), a clear allusion to Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" a nonsense poem written by Lewis Carroll about the killing of an animal called "the Jabberwock", which was included in his 1871 novel *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*. The earliest version of the "Jabberwocky" first appeared in *Mischmasch* – a periodical that Lewis Carroll wrote and illustrated for the amusement of his family from 1855 to 1862. In German *Mischmasch* refers to a disorderly mixture of things. *Mischmasch* is also mentioned in *Finnegans Wake* several times: mitsch for matsch (366.13), mishmash mastufactured on europe you can read off the tail of his, (466.12-13), (msch!msch!) with nurse Madge, my linking class girl (459.4). Another nonsense poem by Lewis Carrol *The Hunting of the Snark* also appears in *Finnegans Wake* as "...bedattle I did are donit as Cocksark" (FW 353:11). Written from 1874 to 1876, the poem borrows the setting, some creatures, and several portmanteau words from Carroll's earlier poem "Jabberwocky". In a letter to the mother of his young friend Gertrude Chataway, Carroll described the domain of the Snark as "an island frequented by the Jubjub and the Bandersnatch—no doubt the very island where the Jabberwock was slain." (Gardner 2006:7)

### Allusions Tomajor Works by Lewis Carroll in *Finnegans Wake*

The major works by Lewis Carrol that are mostly alluded to in *Finnegans Wake* are *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. Although Joyce denied having any knowledge of *Sylvie and Bruno*. In a Letter to his patroness Harriet Weaver Shaw Joyce stated: "Another (or rather many), says that he is imitating Lewis Carroll. I never read him till

Mrs. Nutting gave me a book, not *Alice*, a few weeks ago - though, of course, I heard bits and scraps. But I have never read Rabelais either though nobody will believe this. I will read them both when I get back” (Letters 1966:255) there are quite a lot of allusions about it, proving the contrary of what Joyce wrote. As for Rabelais, he also appears rather frequently through *Finnegans Wake*, making it difficult for the reader to believe that Joyce had not actually read it.

Lewis Carroll should have been particularly interesting for Joyce, because he was the very first to begin his exploration in the dreamland and the unconscious of people. Lewis Carroll was interested by the issue of what happened to a dreaming person and his characters during dream alter, merge or even change their personality. For example in *Sylvie and Bruno* Sylvie in the Fairyland is the sister of Bruno and one of the most attractive and interesting fairies, whereas in real life she is Lady Muriel; the same happens with the Professors, who constantly worries about his identity: whether he is “this professor” or “that professor”. The duality of an individual was a rather interesting issue for Joyce and he demonstrates it several times throughout the novel. One of the best examples of it can be found on page 107, where Joyce writes “Closer inspection of the *bordereau* would reveal a multiplicity of personalities.... In fact, under the closed eyes of the inspectors the traits featuring the *chiaroscuro* coalesce, their contrarities eliminated, in one stable somebody” (FW 107.23-30). This extract shows at the same time the multiplicity as well as unity of one and the same object or a person. Rather interesting in this sense is an essay by Miran Eide, which explores Joyce's “fluidity of language” in *Finnegans Wake* and asserts that the book “performs an exploration of the interactive relationship between oppositional entities.” The elimination of the contraries and their union in one person is also present in the case of Butt and Taff, a vaudeville team, the twins (representing Shem and Shaun – two oppositional brothers – one representing creative power and the other rationality) in the end merge and become one whole, BUTT and TAFF (*desprot slave wager and foeman feudal unshekkled, now one and the same person*” (FW 354.7-8). The alteration of a person during the state of dream is one of the core issues of *Alice in Wonderland*, we can see it clearly during the dialogue between Alice and the Caterpillar, when Alice is asked who she is, she replies “I-I hardly know Sir, just at present- at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then” (Carroll 1939: 53). While speaking about Alice and her identity, it should be highlighted that for Joyce Alice was another example of a dual/split personality among many others, such as Isolde, Guinevere, Christina Beauchamp and Swift's two Stellas. Issy, one of the main characters in *Finnegans Wake*, the daughter of Humprey Chimpden Earwicker and Anna Livia Plurabelle, unites in herself all the elements of the women mentioned above. By merging all those different legendary, imaginary or real individuals Joyce created his own character who constantly changes and has not got one a definite identity.

## LEWIS CARROLL'S CHILD FRIENDS IN *FINNEGANS WAKE*

### *Alice Liddell in Finnegans Wake*

The relationship between Alice Liddell and Lewis Carroll has been a source of much controversy. Many biographers have supposed that Dodgson had a paedophilic attraction to the girl. The Liddell family moved to Oxford in 1856. Soon after this move, Alice met Carroll who encountered the family while he was photographing the cathedral on 25 April 1856. He became a close friend of the Liddell family in the subsequent years.

Lewis Carroll was rather fond of photography and he took several pictures of Alice as well as her sisters, but particularly interesting for us is the photo of Alice Liddell of 1858. It was quite a provocative portrait of Alice at the age of seven or eight, posing as a beggar against a neglected garden wall, showing as much as possible of her bare chest and

limbs. It can be argued that Joyce was aware of this photo, because in *Finnegans Wake* we read “Through Wonderlawn’s lost us forever. Alis, Alas, she broke the glass! Liddell Lokker through the leafery, ours is mistery of pain” (FW 270:19-22). “Wonderlawn” or the wonder lawn is some kind of hint on the Garden of Eden and the innocence of a child. Interesting may also seem “Lokker”, which on the one hand can be seen as a “Looker”, and on the other as a “Locker”. Therefore the allusions here are on both Alice – the innocent child looking from the “Leafery” as well as Eve – the sinful woman, because of whom “Wonderlawn’s lost us forever”. The combination of “Mister”, “Mystery” and “Misery” seems also quite an intriguing one, suggesting that all humans are and their actions are mysterious and even in the Garden of Eden human was not content and their sin (action) brought us nothing but misery. “Alis, Alas, she broke the glass!” gives us the name of “Alice”, but if in the previous case we had Alice combined with Eve, in this extract we have her merged with Lilith, Adam’s first wife. “Glass” mentioned here can also be a “mirror”, because mirrors were particularly interesting in Lilith’s case, because according to ancient belief all mirrors are portals that lead to the cave of Lilith. Lilith and her offspring can travel anywhere in the world via mirrors. Through mirrors Lilith and her offspring can tempt, deceive, and possess mortals. Alice Liddell is mentioned several times throughout the novel “He addle liddle phifie Annie ugged the little craythur” (FW4:28) suggesting a sexual intercourse between little Alice and him – the reverend mathematician Charles Lutwidge Dodgson.

Interesting seems the passage “I used to follow Mary Liddlelambe's flitsy tales, espically with the scentaminted sauce (FW 440:18-19). Although it has been suggested by the commentaries that this sentence is an allusion on Alice Liddell, it can be argued that “Mary Liddlelambe's” despite having “Liddlel” in it does not allude to Alice. It may either be Mary Ann Lamb - an English writer, best known for the collaboration with her brother Charles on the collection *Tales from Shakespeare*, moreover, it will also remind the reader of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” - an English language nursery rhyme of nineteenth-century.

The allusions to Alice Liddell are quite limited and Joyce was more interested in Carroll’s relations with Isa Bowman, which is the topic of the next section.

### **Isa Bowman in *Finnegans Wake***

Isa Bowman, was another important child friend of Lewis Carroll, who played the role of Alice when some extracts were put on stage and whom Carroll dedicated *Sylvie and Bruno*. Isa used to visit and stay with Lewis Carroll in Oxford between the ages of 15-19 and is rather interesting due to her memoirs *The Story of Lewis Carroll, Told for Young People by the Real Alice in Wonderland*. While alluding to Isa, Joyce like it was in Alice’s case unites her with other characters or people; for example “It seems to same with Iscappellas?” (FW 517:1), gives us the union of Isolde and Isa.

The reason why Isa’s and Carrolls relationship was of such importance to Joyce is well-explained by Hugh Kenner, who writes that “Joyce transferred Dodgeson’s ambivalent relations with Isa to the *Wake* almost unaltered, as HCE’s incestuous infatuation with his daughter Iseult. It was in fact, a relationship of symbolic incest: Dodgeson saw in Isa an incarnation of Alice, and Alice was his creation” (Kenner 1956:288).

The reader comes across Isa Bowman in *Finnegans Wake* quite in many passages. In many cases her name takes the form of Isolde or Isabelle, like “Hasaboobrawbees isabeabel” (FW 146:17), where “Hasaboobrawbees” unites in itself Hushabye baby, in the tree top- a nursery rhyme; bawbee in Scottish means halfpenny and the pronunciation will definitely remind us of Hammurabi the sixth king of Babylon. But out of these various possibilities, if we are talking about the child-

friend of Lewis Carroll the nursery rhyme seems the most appropriate one. It seems possible to argue that Joyce had read *The Story of Lewis Carroll* by Isa Bowman, because several episodes relate to what Isa wrote about Lewis in the book. For example, in Chapter 1 of Book II of *Finnegans Wake* Joyce wrote “Poor Isa sits a glooming so gleaming in the gloaming” (FW 226:04), but there is a definite reason for Isa’s gloominess and that can be seen after several sentences we read “Her beauman's gone of a cool. Be good enough to symperise”. In his notebooks dating from 1931 Joyce had pointed out 'be good enough to tremble'. If we look at Isa’s book on Lewis Carroll there we read 'Oh, you naughty, naughty, bad wicked little girl! You forgot to put a stamp on your letter, and your poor old uncle had to pay TWOPENCE! His last Twopence! Think of that. I shall punish you severely for this when once I get you here. So tremble! Do you hear? Be good enough to tremble!' (Bowman 2004:31). Another extract from Isa’s book can be found on the next page as well “But vice reversing there out from those palms of perfection” at a glance “vice reversing” gives one the impression of vice versa, but what attracts the reader is “reversing”-part of “vice reversing”. In Isa’s diary we read that during to one of her visits to Oxford in the evening she with Carroll played “Riversi” - a game in which captured units are turned upside down to show the captor's colour. One of the most interesting sources for research lies in the notebooks of James Joyce, because Joyce outlined several item, which he omitted afterwards; For example, on page 232 while writing “the end of my stays in the languish of Tintangle” (FW 232:21), in his 1931 notebooks Joyce mentions “one of my stays ay Oxford” a direct outcry from Isa’s Diary “one of my stays at Oxford” (Bowman 2004: 36). There are numerous extracts that Joyce took from Isa’s and Carroll’s relationship and incorporated into *Finnegans Wake* all serving one and the same purpose to show how an elderly, decent man was trying to seduce a young woman “Onzel grootvatter Lodewijk is onangonamed before the bridge of primerose and his twy Isas Boldmans is met the bluey-bells near Dandeliond. We think its a gorsedd shame, these godoms” (FW 361.21:24). This section is a rather interesting one for the reader, and Joyce’s suggestion that “we think its a gorsedd shame” suggests that he thought the contrary. Joyce was not definitely a moralist trying to preach what was wrong or right, for him most important was not the relations Carroll had with his child friends, but the outcome of it – and the result was three masterpieces – *Alice in Wonderland*, *Through the Wonderland* and *Sylvie and Bruno*, which inspired lots of writers including Joyce himself. The aim of Joyce was definitely not standing up in the name of morality therefore his allusions about Lewis Carroll and Isa Bowman finish by the following words “Yet had they laughtered, one on other, undo the end and enjoyed their laughings merry was the times when so grant it High Hilarion us may too!” (FW 361.29:31), suggesting that if they enjoyed their times and were happy, it is not our business to put our noses in the case and criticize them.

## CONCLUSIONS

- One of the challenges of *Finnegans Wake* is its multilayered intertextuality when the reader is never sure whether the image or a pun alludes to this or that text. However, it is these allusions that make the text suggestive and open to interpretation.
- Joyce was particularly interested in Lewis Carroll both as a writer and a person. Carroll’s innovative writing techniques intrigued Joyce as much as his personality. One of the themes of *Finnegans Wake* is an attempt of the father-figure to tempt the daughter and Lewis Carroll and his child-friends seemed to Joyce to fit in with the paradigm.
- James Joyce was particularly interested in Lewis Carroll’s innovative writing techniques, such as “wordplay”,

“reading words backwards”, “portmanteau words”; Joyce experimented with many of these devices in his *Finnegans Wake*.

- James Joyce was not a moralist, thus by writing about Lewis Carroll and his relationship with young girls he wants to make the reader aware that such “immoral” actions maybe a catalyzer for creating literary masterpieces.

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