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Playing, Play, and Players: The Function of 'Play' in *The Children's Hour*

An Introduction to Book 2, Chapter 1
of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*

In November 1930, in a letter to Harriet Weaver, Joyce wrote:

"The scheme of the piece I sent you is the game we used to call Angels and Devils or colours. The Angels, girls, are grouped behind the Angel, Shawn, and the Devil has to come over three times and ask for a colour, if the colour he asks for has been chosen by any girl she has to run and he tries to catch her. As far as I have written he has come twice and been twice baffled. The piece is full of rhythms taken from English singing games. When first baffled vindictively he thinks of publishing blackmail stuff about his father, mother etc etc etc. The second time he maunders off into sentimental poetry of what I actually wrote at the age of nine [...] This is interrupted by a violent pang of tooth ache after which he throws a fit. When he is baffled a second time the girl angels sing a hymn of liberation around Shawn. The page enclosed is still another version of a beautiful sentence from Edgard Quinet [...] E.Q. says that the wild flowers on the ruins of Carthage Numancia etc. have survived the political rises and downfall of Empires. In this case the wild flowers are the lits of children."

-Selected Letters to James Joyce, pp. 355-6

Brief Summary of the Events of 2.1

Chapter takes place around twilight, or 8:30pm.

Glugg is playing a game of "Angels and Devils" (or Colours) with The Floras (school-aged girls) while Chuff (Shaun) watches. Glugg takes on the role of the Devil in the game, Chuff does not participate.

Instead of a random colour, Glugg is trying to guess the colour of his sister Issy's underwear.

Glugg guesses three different times, and loses the game. Disappointed Issy cries.

He contemplates writing a revenging "Jeremiad," under a "nom de plume." Instead of confessing his own sins, he ends up discussing the lives of his father and mother.

Their father (HCE) slams a door (represented by the appearance of the 'thunderword') signifying that the children must stop playing and instead prepare for their school lessons the following day. ALP herds them inside (like a mother hen and her chicks), and brings them to bed.

Jean Piaget – Play Theory

"emerg[ing] from the desire to make sense of one's lived experience. Once the child goes through an experience of adaptation, she puts the experience under her own voluntary control with the purpose of re-living it."

-The Oxford Handbook of the Development of Play, p. 49

The 3 Functions of "Play" in 2.1: *The Children's Hour*

1. Playing (Games)
2. Play (Drama Performance)
3. Reader as Player

1. Playing in 2.1: Children's Games & Songs

Angels and Devils/Colours game

"Ring Around the Rosy": "Ring we round, Chuff!" (225.30),
"gyrogyrororondo" (239.27), "ring gayed rund rorosily" (239.36)

"London's Bridge is Falling Down": "playfair lady" (233.13), "Lonedom's breach lay foulend up" (239.34-5)

"Pop Goes the Weasel": "pop from her whistle" (223.10-1)

"Polly Wolly Doodle All the Day": "you've jollywelly dawdled all the day" (250.13)

"Ta Ra Ra Boom De Yay": "Tarara boom decay" (247.28)

"Johnny So Long at the Fair": "Yet, ah tears, who can her mater be? She's promised he'd eye her. To try up her pretty, But now it's so longed and so fare and so forth. Jerry for jauntings. Alabye! Fled" (225.32-4)

Playing - Continued

“apple, bacchante, custard, dove, eskimo, feldgrau, hematite, isingglass, jet, kipper, lucile, mimosa, nut, oysterette, prune, quasimodo, royal, sago, tango, umber, vanilla, wisteria, xray, yesplease, zaza, philomel, theerose.” (247.35-248.2)

“Lel lols for libelman libling his lore. Lolo Lolo liebermann you loved to be leaving Libnius. Lift your right to your Liber Lord. Link your left to your lass of liberty. Lala Lala, Leapermann, your lep’s but a loop to lee.” (250.19-22)

2. Play as Dramatic Performance

Title: “*The Mime of Mick, Nick, and the Maggies*” (219.18-19)

When/Where: “Every evening at lighting o’ clock sharp and until further notice in Feenichts Playhouse” (219.1-2), “Newly billed for each wickeday perfumance” (219.4-5)

Cost: “Entrancings: gads, a scrab; the quality, one large shilling” (219.3-4)

Time of play: “the pressant” (221.17)

Paparazzi/Press: “In four tubbloids” (219.17-8), “with his phature in the papers for cutting moutonlegs” (233.2)

Continued...

Dramatis Personnae: “GLUGG (Mr Seumas McQuillad, hear the riddles...” (219.22-221.16)

Actors and Stage Crew: (221.18-220.20), “With nightly redistribution of parts and players by the puppetry producer” (219.6-7), “this bountiful actress” (227.7)

Stage Conventions: “Her boy friend or theirs [...] cometh up as a trapadour” (224.25-6), “Lights, pageboy, lights! Brights we’ll be brights.” (245.4-5), “The play thou schouwburgst, Game, here endeth. The curtain drops by deep request.” (257.31-2), “the show must go on” (221.16)

Other: “playfair, lady!” (233.12), “letting punplays pass to earnest” (233.19-20), “Isa” (p. 226.4)

3. Reader as Player: Literary Allusions

Nursery Rhymes: “All run-away sheep bound back bopeep”: (227.11-2), “I’m Flo, shy of peeps” (248.17), “Pull the boughpee to see how we sleep. Bee Peep! Peepette!” (248.18-9), “Mirrylamb” (223.1)

Fairy Tales: “from the wiles of willy wooly woolf!” (223.3), “Warewolff! Olff!” (225.8), “where the wild worewolf’s abroad” (244.10-11), “song of a witch” (251.11), “a young sorceress” (251.12), “fiery goosemother” (242.25), “Cinderynelly angled her slipper” (224.20)

Fable: “Talk with a hare and you wake of a tartars” (238.22)

Reader as Player

Witness of the Angels and Devils/Colours game

Participant of the Alphabet Song and Joycean Tongue Twister games

Member of the Audience of *The Mime of Mick, Nick, and the Maggies*

Reader and Riddle-Solver of the parodic literary allusions to children’s literature

HCE’s Suspicious Incident in Phoenix Park

Adventure Novels: “donkey shot at” (234.4), “Sin Showpanza” (234.6), “dulsy nayer” (234.24); “twinglings of twitchbells” (222.34); “Ani Mama and her fiery bustles” (243.4), “Ulo Bubo selling foulty treepees” (243.24) “arubyat knychts” (247.3); “Rabbinsohn Crucis” (243.31); “Quasimodo” (248.1); “marian maid-cap” (257.6-7); “round the world in forty mails” (237.14), “The flossies all and mossies all” (225.35).

Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass: “after humpteen dumpteen revivals. Before all the King’s Hoarsers with all the Queen’s Mum” (219.15-6), “For always down in Carolinas lovely Dinahs vaunt their view” (226.2-3), “Hey, lass” (226.6), “It’s game, ma chere, be offwith your shepherdress on!” (239.9-10), “eggspilled him out of his homety demetry” (230.5), “Hump for humbleness, dump for dirts” (242.22), “tweedledeedums down to twiddledeedees” (258.25).

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