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JOYCE STUDIES IN ITALY

22

JOYSPACE
JAMES JOYCE AND SPACE

Edited by
Roberto Baronti Marchiò

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JOYCERADAMUS: FORETELLING THE AGE OF TRUMP
IN *FINNEGANS WAKE*

Abstract: In the following essay I will research the topic of *Finnegans Wake*'s apparent ability to predict future events almost as if it were a divination book. The text largely discusses the reading approaches which one may use to investigate this seemingly mystical phenomenon specifically by using an "unintentionalist" means of interpretation. This is an experimental reading approach that allows self-knowingly "incorrect" or impossible references to be found in the novel. Taken as a whole, the essay aims to illustrate using this "unintentionalist" method how *Finnegans Wake* can be read in a wild and liberated manner within a controlled analytical environment. This opens up possibilities for interpreting the novel that would otherwise be closed off to all but the "lunatic fringe" reader demographic. This "unintentionalist" study chooses to focus upon the "appearances" of President Donald J. Trump in *Finnegans Wake* and it determines that by using this reading approach one may locate detailed references to Trump rallies, Twitter, the 2020 Presidential election and the Capitol siege within Joyce's novel. Within this in depth and highly illogical study I intend to demonstrate that the possibilities of interpretation in *Finnegans Wake* are inherently extreme and are especially drawn to the bending of time itself. The "unintentionalist" reading method assists in providing these radical theories with a more structured means of exposition allowing for these previously intellectually side-lined ideas to receive discussion within a more academic setting.

Keywords: *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce, Trump, Intentionalism, Bibliomancy, Divination

In this essay, I plan to analyse the phenomenon whereupon *Finnegans Wake* demonstrates the apparent ability to "foretell" future events outside of the book's compositional timeframe. This is research prompted by contemporary online interest by Joyce scholars upon how references to

contemporary events seem to appear throughout the book in a rather “spooky” manner. This firstly requires analysis of how different approaches to reading *Finnegans Wake* facilitate such interpretations. This text is, therefore, a study of attitudes regarding what may be considered a “right” or “wrong” way of reading the novel within the wider Joycean community. The reading approaches are categorised into “types” which each have idiosyncratic characteristics and even subtypes that split them up even further. It is important to note the distinctions between all of these if we are to evaluate successfully the multiple ways in which readers may search for “prophecies” in *Finnegans Wake*. Information will be gathered from the respective reading “types” and the “prophetic” findings which they have collectively made ranging from interpretations that are actually considered “true”—by conspiracy theorists, for instance—to those that are knowingly “false” but are enjoyed and employed by their readers for multiple reasons and purposes. The figure of Donald J. Trump is used throughout this essay since in recent years he has attained focused, collective attention by the “prophetic” readers of *Finnegans Wake* throughout his term as U.S President. This phenomenon of “Trump watching” in *Finnegans Wake* reached its apex in November 2020 when readers, who mainly congregated online, began finding remarkable “allusions” to Trump and the Presidential election which were added to on a daily basis as the events played out, all the way through to his eventual defeat and subsequent efforts to fight the results in court. The COVID-19 outbreak, the spread of fake news through social media, and the growing mistrust of science were 2020-centered topics that “prophetic” readers also detected throughout this year, demonstrating that *Finnegans Wake* has a continually renewing list of so-called “references” within it to fit the timeframe of whatever is current.

For the purposes of this essay, I will use a term which I have coined titled “unintentionalism” which is an approach to reading *Finnegans Wake* that is self-knowingly “incorrect” or impossible. It derives from the implication that the interpretations are *unintentional* and are not intended to be taken seriously. Unintentionalism differs from “anti-intentionalism” because it isn’t “anti” or against “intentionalism” in principle. Foretelling or predicting the future is, by and large, a practice carried out by unintentionalist readers of *Finnegans Wake*. In order to locate references to present day events you must be prepared to leave aside all chronological logic. In principle,

unintentionalist readers capture meaning that is transient and coincidental. These are constant, shifting interpretations, which pass through history and are certain to change in the future, rather than being fixed and “intentional”. Reading *Finnegans Wake* in this way is also popular because it feels as if Joyce joins us in the present day, and it is as if he provides us with his own thoughts about modern-day politics and the turmoil-filled year 2020 in general¹. Peter Quadrino states in his *Finnegans Wake* podcast:

Commentators like J.S. Atherton and George C. Gibson have asserted that Joyce saw himself as an Irish prophet; a poet seer in the Druidic tradition. Right after the publication of the *Wake*, Joyce marvelled at the book’s prophetic powers in foretelling world events. As funny and silly as the *Wake* is, its propensity for prophecy was no joke. (Quadrino 2021: 29:59-30:25)

He further adds that “Joyce’s purpose was to bring forth a living oracle” and that it is “through the language of the book that its magic is enacted”. (ibid.)

According to Roland McHugh, in the *Finnegans Wake Experience*, two general camps of *Finnegans Wake* reader exist, titled “Maximisers” and “Minimalisers”. These interpretive stances start from two contrary points of view, as he explains: “At an early stage, Matthew Hodgart underlined a distinction: the maximisers, such as himself, were delighted at every additional level that could be envisioned. [...]. On the other hand minimisers such as myself tried to cut the allusions to the smallest number which would account for all the letters in the word” (McHugh 1981: 67). Maximalist readers build up allusions in ever growing layers, with usually an open attitude towards interpretation. Minimalists attempt to locate precise, singular meaning, usually backed up by an assertion that “correct” interpretations exist that outweigh, or even eliminate, the significance of other possibilities. McHugh additionally uses the terms “Intentionalism” and “Anti-intentionalism” in connection to how readers approach *Finnegans Wake*. Collectively they have associations and shared interpretive elements with Maximalisation and Minimalisation. Intentionalism and Minimalisation, of course, essentially dictate that one should only read

¹ The Australian novelist Gabrielle Carey, who leads two *Finnegans Wake* reading groups, one in Sydney and one in Canberra, discusses “prophetic” findings in the novel in a fascinating article for the *Sydney Review of Books* (Carey 2021).

Finnegans Wake according to Joyce's "intentions". This concept contrasts heavily with Anti-intentionalism, which McHugh equates with the "lunatic fringe" of *Wake* studies (74). Anti-intentionalism was apparently so popular in the 1960's that it caused a considerable hindrance to *Wake* scholarship in terms of building up its interpretive accuracy. There are also a select number of readers who attribute genuine mystical meaning to *Finnegans Wake*, for instance the Youtuber Rob Appelton whose channel *History Maze* has devoted videos to the numerological significance of "1132", HCE's sacred number, to the universe at large. It is, in one particular video, associated with the circumference of planets in the solar system, the distances between them, the transcendental number π , pyramidology, the Fibonacci sequence, the Vesica Piscis and the overall concept of "cosmic key" numbers and patterning (Appleton 2019). At a level of extremity far in advance of anyone is the conspiracy theorist and author of the *Lennon Prophecy* Joseph Niezgoda, whose *Finnegans Wake* interpretations neatly insert the book into the often nutty tradition of "hidden message" searching in songs by the Beatles². In one of his blogs he identifies a "clue" in a passage of *Finnegans Wake* which (allegedly) proves that John Lennon was assassinated because he sold his soul to the devil (Niezgoda 2012: "The Author"). The "clue" is from Book 2 chapter 3: "1) he had to die it, the beet le 2) he didhithim self" (*FW* 358.36; Niezgoda 2012: "Clue 4"). Lennon's murder, by Mark Chapman, was according to Niezgoda "Satan collecting his due" (Niezgoda 2012: "The Author"), so *Finnegans Wake* foreseeing this would be a very spooky prediction if it were indeed proven. To Niezgoda, "The Ballad of Persse O'Reilly" is also packed full of John Lennon death clues but to interpret this he figuratively transports the novel forward in time and location to New York in 1980. He incorporates into the text both Lennon and Chapman and indicates step by step how the song reveals the conspiracy behind the murder. Firstly, since Lennon was the "eggman" in the lyrics for *I am the Walrus* he is logically the figure of "Humpty Dumpty" (*FW* 45.1), and when he "fell with a roll and a rumble" (*FW* 45.2) this describes his being shot and murdered. The day of his death was that of the "Immaculate Conception" (the 8th of December), and this relates to the line "and

² Most notably, and tragically, were the "Helter Skelter" race war beliefs held by the Manson Family which were inspired by the lyrics from the 1968 album *The Beatles*, otherwise known as the *White Album* (Bugliosi and Gentry 1974: 311-316).

immaculate contraceptives for the populace” (*FW* 45.14). “And from Green Street he’ll be sent for by order of His Worship” (*FW* 45.9) tells us that Mark Chapman, his killer, was born on Green Forest Drive in Dacatur, Georgia, and of course “[He’ll be sent] To the penal jail of Mountjoy” (*FW* 45.10) represents Chapman’s eventual prison sentence (Niezgoda 2016: “May 4th 1939”).

Unintentionalism leads to creative artistic reinterpretations of *Finnegans Wake* to the present age. For example, one can reimagine the annotations in Book II chapter 2 as being words typed into the thread of an internet chatroom. This is a contextual shift on to the internet into a social network like Twitch or Youtube. The entire page becomes a figurative computer screen as a consequence and the centralised narrative of II.2 is the streamed content that the “viewers” are commenting upon in the chat. Furthermore, continuing this visual interpretation, Shaun and Shem predictably enter into an online fight, with the venom of modern day trolls, with the former typing exclusively in block capitals which imitates the emphatic writing style that Donald Trump uses on Twitter³. Individuals who create new “alternate” versions of *Finnegans Wake* are also unintentionalists. One such example is the *Star Wars* rewrite of the first page of the novel which incorporates words from the science fiction saga seamlessly into the narrative, replacing those relating to the Earwicker family with those of the Skywalkers et. Al. and Chapelizod with the so-called “Galaxy far far away...” . Its opening line being: “movierun, past new and hopes, from strike of back to bend of jeday, brings us by a commodious lucas of recirculation back to forestmoon and endor” (Neilan 2018).

For an unintentionalist allusion to “fit” into *Finnegans Wake* one’s interpretation must chime harmoniously within the “rules” of the book’s stylistic narrative patterns, or else its complex phonological sound network. The “prophecy” must, after all, be *plausible* in accordance to the rules of the linguistic game. Since *Finnegans Wake* is an extremely musical work even the slightest amount of aural discord normally rules out a word being “correct” or understandable within the overall context of the book. If it fails to create the right series of sounds it won’t match the timbre of

³ Shaun’s “chat room comment” “THE MONGREL UNDER THE DUNG MOUND. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INFRALIMINAL INTELLIGENCE. OFFRANDES”. (276 L1-10) has the style of an all-caps Trump tweet.

the original textual music. If one's new interpretation involves the reimagining of a *Finnegans Wake* character then this hypothetical figure must already possess a certain number of his or her key personality or physiological traits. If he or she deviates significantly from the set character "model" then one's idea must be discarded⁴. In any case, social media sites such as Facebook liberate the reader from the restraints of academia, and "unintentionalist" interpretations normally take the form of short, witty posts on an individual's feed⁵. It is, after all, outside the realms of academic publication and in a sense, for most readers, seriousness.

This collective analysis, focusing on "allusions" to Trump, is intended to deeper demonstrate how readers practically *realise* or achieve their interpretations. Because of his strikingly long list of similarities to HCE, in terms of his physical appearance (with his large "hump"), family ties (his dutiful wife Melania, two older sons Eric and Donald Jr., and the Issy-like incestuously desired Ivanka), and his unsavoury associations with rumour, sin and scandal, Trump seems to appear all over *Finnegans Wake*, whether it is by name or other precise, associative references. Perhaps the most well-known section is from "The Ballad of Persse O'Reilly":

So snug he was in his hotel premises sumptuous
But soon we'll bonfire all his trash, tricks and trumpery
And 'tis short till sheriff Clancy'll be winding up his unlimited company
With the bailiff's bom at the door,
(Chorus) Bimbam at the door.
Then he'll bum no more. (*FW* 46.5-10)

This section name checks Trump in the word "trumpery" (*FW* 46.6) which in English means an item that is "trash[y]" (*FW* 46.6) and ostentatious, which perfectly describes the expensive yet tacky aesthetics of his brand. In French, "tromper" means to lie, deceive or "trick" (*FW* 46.6), so this can be said to reference Trump's compulsive and habitual telling of falsehoods during his

⁴ This is a process that *Wake* readers carry out repeatedly during textual analysis and is close to unconsciously done.

⁵ In May 2020, moving online tributes were expressed to John Bishop in this manner who sadly passed away due to complications connected to the Coronavirus. The line "with tears for the coronaichon, such as engines weep. Was life worth leaving?" (230.24-5) in particular became instantly endowed with a new passionate meaning, full of sadness and grief. It was circulated throughout Facebook frequently coupled with tributes to the great *Wake* critic and academic.

presidency which the Washington Post calculates as numbering over 20,000 in total. (Kessler 2020). The line about his “hotel premises sumptuous” (*FW* 46.5) relates to his extravagant hotel properties including Doral and Mar-a-Lago, but the “bailiff’s bom at the door” (*FW* 46.8) may well allude to his eventual arrest and imprisonment for crimes such as tax evasion and fraud in the New York City courts⁶. The post “Finnegans Wake on the Trump-Ukraine Affair and Impeachment” on the blog *Finnegans, Wake!* Is a detailed unintentionalist reading of “The Ballad of Persse O’Reilly” which was written during Trump’s 1st impeachment trial and it details a long list of Trump references (Quadrino 2019). In the commentary, a Trump supporter responds to the article in a politically charged way that gives a very “Trump era” perspective to proceedings. It is a tense exchange that demonstrates how unintentionalist readings can actually be taken *seriously*, that they are by their very nature politically subjective, and that they can generate genuine anger and trigger antagonistic partisanship:

Your political views trash your Wake perspective. I remind Wake readers that the corpus is on one archaeological level a Rorschach test. Are you pro HCE or anti HCE? If one of your eyes I’s [sic] are fixed on Trump’s “guilt” you can be sure the other eye is die I [sic] jesting his innocence. Unfortunately the entrails of that repression are not risible to Trump haters. It is the everyday deplorable commoner who has the “eyes” to see what the eye lit elite cannot. Wake up lefties! (Ibid.)

Since most readers believe that Trump is, of course, not actually part of *Finnegans Wake* it often takes a lot of imagination and even investigation to get him to “fit” into the narrative which is, unsurprisingly, a very satisfying occurrence when it happens. It is for this reason that many “prophetic” readers put in such efforts to do so and why they are happy to put basic logic aside in exchange for indulging in surreal, time-bending humour. It is, of course, a reading method enabled by *Finnegans Wake*’s own cyclical representation of history and its general narrative existence outside of any common notion of space of time. To quote Ruben Borg, in connection to how time in *Finnegans Wake* functions, he states: “From its opening word,

⁶ Unintentionalist readings of this line in 2017 viewed this as a prediction that Trump would be found guilty of collusion with Russia during the 2016 presidential campaign. The American-sounding “sheriff Clancy” (*FW* 37.7) would therefore become the personification of Special Counsel Robert Mueller.

the *Wake* would have us construe Time's unity – which is to say, Time's continued existence in the present – in terms of the mechanics of eternal self-reproduction” (Borg 2005: 81). It equally exists within a continuous past as well as a continuous future. Furthermore, time moves simultaneously forwards and backwards from the perspective of the reader, which constantly disrupts the chronological direction of the narrative.

Once the unintentionalist reader has his/her sights set upon interpreting Trump as an HCE avatar a process begins whereupon newly found “allusions” to him are found as part of this literary game of sorts. At a certain point, to such readers, he will drift enough into *Finnegans Wake* that he will literally take over HCE's entire persona, which completely skews and transforms the book's narrative. It creates an overall time shift within *Finnegans Wake* to the present day and relocates its action, of course, altering the Irish landmarks used within HCE's Dublin to Trump's Washington D.C.⁷ The majority of Trump references in *Finnegans Wake* occur in Book I chapter 2, specifically pages 32 to 37 and several verses of “The Ballad of Persse O'Reilly”. HCE is fittingly a figure of high political standing in Dublin who matches up with Donald Trump's own high rank as the Commander in Chief of the United States of America. Like Trump, HCE has a very strong political “base” among the populace who hold him to an unrealistic level of admiration and demonstrate total loyalty. The passionate supporters shown on page 32, cheering on HCE, and the accompanying public spectacle they take part in brings to mind the aesthetics and atmosphere of a “Trump Rally”. Here, HCE stands before them “above floats and footlights” (*FW* 32.26-7) and there is an “ambitious interval band selection” (*FW* 32.34-5) playing which is reminiscent of the bombastic all-American soundtrack that accompanies Trump's entrance and exit during events, such as “God Bless the U.S.A” by Lee Greenwood. HCE/Trump's high status as a wildly successful business man with “nation wide hotel and creamery establishments” (*FW* 36.22) belies the claim that he is an “imposing everybody” (*FW* 32.19) who is “magnificently well worthy of any and all such universalisation” (*FW* 32.20-21). But, in fact, to his base he has dual appeal since he is both a billionaire who constantly makes “big deals” as well as an all-American “everyman” who is in touch with the

⁷ In this case, the “duc de Fer's overgrown milestone” (*FW* 36.18), or the Wellington Monument, transforms into the similarly shaped obelisk, the Washington Monument.

culture and sensibilities of the average Joe⁸. Trump's exclusive diet of fast food and love of professional wrestling, which is snobbishly considered to be "low culture", endears him to a demographic of previously politically uninterested voters who would subsequently begin to support him in their millions. They would figuratively take on Washington D.C. together and "Drain the Swamp" of its so-called corrupt career politicians and diplomats. The sentence "The Christlikeness of the big cleanminded giant" (*FW* 33.29) is one that reflects Trump's personification as a great Christian in the eyes of many of his voters⁹. The majority of Trump's supporters have faith that God chose him to be President so that religious rights would be protected in the United States and that conservative laws would be created concerning the limiting of abortion in certain states and the reduction of rights within the LGBTQ community. Trump's regularly expressed desire to sire a dynasty of presidents, in the order of the birth of his children, can be read into the line "A veritable Napoleon the Nth" (*FW* 33.2). A revised version would be "A veritable Trump the Nth" which indicates that he would be the first in an infinite dynasty of presidents. The Napoleon allusion also calls up his perceived despotic behaviour in office by his detractors and references his narcissistic personality.

Similarly, both HCE and Trump have enemies in society who seek to topple him through the spreading of salacious rumours which may or may not have factual merit. These may be collectively defined as "unfacts" (*FW* 57.16) or in today's terminology "fake news". These "detractors" (*FW* 33.21) harbour so much hatred for him that they "apparently conceive him as a great white caterpillar capable of any and every enormity in the calendar" (*FW* 33.22-24)¹⁰. To his opponents, he is the "worldstage's

⁸ To his detractors, this self-styled image is a nonsense that is difficult to fathom, especially if one is familiar with the gaudy gold panelled rooms of his penthouse in New York's Trump Tower.

⁹ Utah based artist Jon McNaughton has created many religious Trump works including "Legacy of Hope" and "National Emergency" which depict the President deep in prayer. Paintings by other Christian artists showing Trump together with Jesus in the Oval Office predictably went viral internet due to their unintentional hilarity.

¹⁰ In 2017 Trump defined this unending level of animosity "Trump Derangement Syndrome", however, by the time his term ended the title was seized upon by his opponents to label the radical insurrectional behaviour which Trump himself provoked in many of his supporters, such as during the storming of the Capitol building in Washington D.C on the 6th January 2021.

practical jokepiece” (*FW* 33.3) which recalls the embarrassing incident in September 2018 when Trump delivered a speech at the United Nations which unexpectedly, and unintentionally, made the attendees erupt into laughter, owing to his lies and apparent detachment from reality (Waldman 2019)¹¹. In a potential piece of “fake news”, his detractors have deliberately spread a vicious rumour that he suffers from a “vile disease” (*FW* 33.17-18) and this is perhaps a reference to his apparent urophilic desires. Both HCE and Trump are alleged to have taken part in lurid sex acts involving urination (Quadrino 2019) with the former being caught naked behind a bush in Phoenix Park by three soldiers while he was seemingly watching two young girls piddling. Trump, on the other hand, was accused of engaging in urophilic sex acts with two prostitutes in Moscow. This scandalous liaison was, according to former British spy Christopher Steele, secretly videotaped and used as a kompromat by the Kremlin to blackmail Trump (Steele 2016). This would, theoretically, explain his consistent pro-Russia support and deference to Vladimir Putin throughout his presidency¹². *The Mueller Report* defines Steele’s unlikely claims as unverifiable (Mueller 2019: 289-290) yet nevertheless Trump’s rumoured association with Russian prostitutes will never escape him as it has become part of his biography as far as most of his detractors are concerned. Like with HCE, those who despise him are willing to believe even the most improbable of lies just because they assume that he is capable of any sin or debauchery. Simple common sense would dismiss the idea that Trump is an urophiliac because he is a renowned germaphobe who is repulsed by bad hygiene and terrified of infection and poisoning. In continuation of this theme of scandals, Trump also has an eternally forgiving wife, Melania, who has stood by him loyally despite the 20 or so sexual harassment cases brought against him and his high profile affair with pornstar Stormy Daniels (Stephanie Clifford) in 2006—who subsequently received \$130,000 in hush-money payments from Trump campaign funds to keep quiet (Mueller 2019: 688). Even in the aftermath of the Capitol siege

¹¹ Waldman proves once again that there is a Trump tweet for every occasion when he quotes Trump in 2014: “We need a President who isn’t a laughing stock to the entire World” (Trump 2014).

¹² The “Jinnies” in the “Museyroom” section of Book I chapter 1 are unintentionalist avatars for the Russian prostitutes in Steele’s Dossier. They are urinating (*FW* 9.33-4) blackmailers who attempt to strong arm Willingdone, (an obnoxious Trump-like figure), into doing their bidding.

Melania would continue to support him such as when she blamed the media for unfairly blaming him for the insurrection (Bennett and Klein 2021), This echoes ALP's rebuttal in public at the end of Book I chapter 4, when she declares the innocence of her husband against all scandalous charges (*FW* 101-3). It is also a pleasing co-incidence that ALP's acronym can be incorporated into her name. When written as "meLAnia 171uici" the unintentionalist reading becomes clearer. This, as is demonstrated throughout *Finnegans Wake*, increases the "ALP-ness" of any given character and it is usually an indicator given to the reader by Joyce that this is one of her personas.

Perhaps the most identifiable section in Book I chapter 2 concerning Trump relates to the social media platform Twitter which he wielded as a powerful political tool during his tenure until the permanent suspension of his account on January 8th 2021. Prior to this moment, with a single tweet Trump could crash the stock market, ruin political careers, or even plunge his country into an international war. His hold over the Republican party was absolute since politicians feared his online wrath if they stepped out of line and his supporters rallied behind his fiery rhetoric which spread "Big Lies" on a viral scale. This included how the 2020 presidential elections were rigged due to voter fraud and that he in fact won by a "landslide". According to an unintentionalist reading, Twitter, in connection to Donald Trump, is alluded to in the following section:

I have met with you, bird, too late, or if not, too worm and early: and with tag for ildiotrepeated in his secondmouth language as many of the bigtimer's verbaten words which he could balbly call to memory that same kveldeve, ere the hour of the twattering of bards in the twitterlitter between Druidia and the Deepsleep Sea" (*FW* 37.13-18)

Trump's tweets pile up upon one another like trash and hence become "twitterlitter" (*FW* 37.17). The "bird" (*FW* 37.13) we meet, and the twittering it makes, represent the happy mascot of the platform and the description of the "Deepsleep Sea" (*FW* 37.18) echoes its blue colour scheme. "The bigtimer's verbaten words" (*FW* 37.15-16), first of all, define HCE/Trump's tweets which he wants to circulate throughout the internet to his base. The phrase "tag for ildiotrepeated in his secondmouth language" (*FW* 37.14-15) describes his process of using hashtags (#) on Twitter to create trends. Hashtags, here, function to spread around

HCE/Trump's tweets as if they are behaving as his "secondmouth". The word "ildiotrepeated" in connection to hashtags and "secondmouth language" indicate the unavoidably repetitive and parrot-like nature of his supporters' speech on Twitter. Their opinions, according to their opponents, are totally "ildiot[ic]" since they unconditionally believe the lies that they are fed. "Kveldeve" (*FW* 37.16) fittingly references "covfefe", Trump's most infamous typo which he made on 31st May 2017.

Following Trump's projected election defeat on the 7th of November 2020 a new wave of unintentionalist interpretations were made online. Most notably the line "trump adieu atout atous" (*FW* 286.13) was circulated on Facebook with entire threads of commentary being devoted to its analysis¹³. The sentence incorporates "à tout" for "atout" and "atous" meaning "to everybody" in French, so this could signify the world's collective farewell to the Trumps upon leaving the White House on January 20th 2021. "A tout a tous" additionally sounds like onomatopoeia for "Achoo! Achoo!", or sneezing, which could reference *Ring a Ring a Rosie* and plague sickness. This links up the Coronavirus with Trump, who received nationwide condemnation for his alleged botching of the crisis and who suffered politically at the ballot box as a consequence. Furthermore, following Trump's announcement on November 8th that he was launching legal action to investigate fraud in the Pennsylvania state vote counts¹⁴, the passage "The litigants, he said, local congsmen and donalds" (*FW* 87.25) was wittily posted on to Facebook¹⁵ which captured the amusing sentiment that Trump (addressed disrespectfully by his first name) was now sending an army of political loyalists (or "litigants") into court to fight his battle to have the election recounted and to overturn its result. The "local congsmen" who were going to take part in Trump's litigation could be, for example, an array of figures including GOP congressmen, (with the "k" spelling on "Congress" implying a connection to King Kong, with his brutishness and incivility). "Congsmen" also has an echo of "klansmen" which can be used to poke fun at Trump's strenuous

¹³ I first received knowledge of it in a post by Enrico Terrinoni on the 8th of November.

¹⁴ Pennsylvania's pivotal role in the 2020 presidential election, and its high voter turnout, can be read into "Pencylmania" (228.19), with voters furiously scribbling down their choice on ballot papers.

¹⁵ This quote originated on the Facebook feed of Barry McCrae, whose 2005 novel *The First Verse* uses bibliomania extensively in its plot.

denials that he was ever supported by David Duke, (the leader of the Ku Klux Klan), or his disastrous August 2017 statement in Charlottesville when he said there were “very fine people, on both sides” indicating support for those holding the “Unite the Right” rally, who flew Nazi flags and burned torches. Finally, a disturbing prediction of the Capitol siege on January 6th 2021 can be read into the following quote from Book III chapter 3: “fortiffed by my right as man of capitol, I did umgyrdle her about, my vermin celly vinagerette, with all loving kindness as far as in man’s might it lay and enfranchised her to liberties of fringes” (*FW* 548.16-19). The politically themed passage addresses the right-wing “fringes” (*FW* 548.19), viz. the Qanon conspiracy theorists and white supremacists who broke into the “capitol” (*FW* 548.17) to stop by force the Electoral College results from being ratified. This was for the sake of protecting their American “liberties” (*FW* 548.19). “Enfranchis[ment]” (*FW* 548.19) is used ironically here since the domestic terrorists were, and continue to be, convinced that Trump lost the election because of a grand conspiracy of voter fraud. Their democratic right to have their vote counted legitimately was, in their eyes, taken from them so they invaded the building to figuratively gain their own enfranchisement. The description of the insurrection is, itself, suitably upsetting and incorporates rape imagery. The “fortiffed” (*FW* 548.16) or fortified “capitol” is entered into as if it is being assaulted and “ungyrdle[d]” (*FW* 548.17), or rather ungirdled, by a pitiless rapist with a “man’s might” (*FW* 548.18-19). Once metaphorically in the process of rape, the Capitol becomes packed full of “vermin celly vinagerette” (*FW* 548.17-18) which figuratively represents the hundreds of Trump supporters who once inside ransacked offices, terrified occupants, beat police officers (causing one fatality), stole laptops, defiled the hallways by flying right-wing flags and desecrated numerous sacred symbols of American democracy. It is almost as if Joyce *unintentionally* captured the full horror of the historically shameful incident, which is quite remarkable bearing in mind the number of moving parts it requires for this interpretation to work and the overall improbability of it happening.

In conclusion, unintentionalism is a reading approach that allows for a free and liberated means of interpretation without the ever over-hanging pressure of having to justify the plausibility of every point made. In fact, because incorrectness and impossibility are baked so inherently into every

single unintentionalist reading it often becomes unnoticeable. This allows the reader to further investigate experimental modes of analysis using interpretative tools that would otherwise not be available. Unintentionalist tools include the ability to research theories that would be otherwise closed off to all but the “lunatic fringe” reading demographic. Positively, however, since it is required that one remain academically grounded at *all* times when interpreting in an unintentionalist way it creates a playful illusion that prevents the reading from becoming ludicrous. Unintentionalism furthermore facilitates an open discussion of the “predictive” qualities of *Finnegans Wake* from an objective perspective that can be appreciated by either believers or unbelievers of its divinatory “powers”. This is because the reading approach does not set a fixed judgement of “right” or “wrong” to its findings of contemporary references in the novel. In its spirit of interpretive liberation unintentionalism allows for *Finnegans Wake* to be read as a predictive text without any built-in scepticism about the unscientific nature of divination. Whether or not Joyce really was “Joyceradamus” or if everything is just occasionally (near improbable) coincidence is left up to the reader. It is, after all, a purely subjective issue and Joyce himself was a believer of the predictive power of the work himself, being somewhat superstitious in nature and easily “spooked” by strange occurrences. In his case, the anachronistic appearance of events happening in Finland in 1941 was what unnerved him in *Finnegans Wake* (Chrisp 2019). With all of this in mind, we can use an unintentionalist reading approach to increase the number of our interpretive options which, in this specific case, allows us to become wild and liberated within a controlled environment. For instance, it is within an unintentionalist interpretation that an *unbeliever* of the predictive power of *Finnegans Wake* can investigate the intriguing possibilities of the phenomenon of bibliomancy with the utmost seriousness of one who practices the mystical art. This is useful if we want to understand Wakean time from a radically new perspective and how it functions in a non-linear manner. After, the novel is, as stated in III.3, “as modern as tomorrow afternoon and in appearance up to the minute” (*FW* 309.14-15). To put it another way, *Finnegans Wake* ‘refuses’ to become dated as if it has ever renewing powers or an ability to “live” in a constant future. Finally, unintentionalist readings, as a means for pure enjoyment, allow us to make

Joyce an intimate part of our pop culture fluent world. It is valuable to keep Joyce in a continuous future so that he is figuratively always with us, for instance we can imagine him posting on Facebook (or “faceback” (*FW* 23.31)) or creating his own internet memes. What could, after all, be a greater part of early 2021 pop culture than having Joyce make a version of the famous Bernie Sanders meme taken from Joe Biden’s presidential inauguration, placing the following quote under the amusing image of the evidently freezing Vermont senator wearing thick mittens: “whugamore, tradertory, socianist, communiser, made a summer assault on our shores and begiddy got his sands full” (*FW* 132.19-21)?¹⁶ Joyce therefore becomes, no less, at one with us on our smart phones as we idly travel to work, joining in on our collective global humour in very difficult times.

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¹⁶ By having his “sands full” (*FW* 132.21), Sanders’s oversized gloves are cheekily mocked. His political stance as a Democratic socialist, or “socianist” (*FW* 132.19) is referenced together with “communiser” (*FW* 132.19-20), or Communist, which is how he is unfavourably viewed in the eyes of Republicans. The reference to Sanders making a “summer assault” (*FW* 132.20) on the shores of Washington D.C is ironic in this case.

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