

## From Chaos To Cosmos:

the genesis of *Sylvie and Bruno*  
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For the newcomer to *Sylvie and Bruno*, one of the book's most striking features is the curious literary structure imposed by the author. It is so unorthodox that at first sight it seems altogether lacking, as if Carroll had thrown diverse, unconnected themes and ideas together with no thought to their arrangement. Attempts have been made to find connecting themes; Jean Gattegno, the French critic responsible for introducing Carroll studies to France, noted that both of the parallel stories contain the figure of the Hero, who 'encounters an obstacle and triumphs over it': the Warden in one case, Arthur in the other (Gattegno, *Sylvie and Bruno* or the Inside and the Outside, in Giuliano 1982, 171-2). But in both cases this theme is imperfectly resolved. As for the 'serious topics' alluded to in Carroll's prefaces, all point to a philosophy which some (myself included) have seen as descended from that line whose principal Victorian representative was Frederick Denison Maurice, and before him Coleridge; but they are too disparate to lead the reader to a satisfactory closure. Closure there is, certainly, but rather in the form of a super-resolution which does not resolve any of the internal stories in its particular form. The interest, then, lies elsewhere, in the manner of joining these diverse elements, in the seemingly fragile balance which holds them together; for if everything appears to be on the point of explosion, it is an implosion which concludes the novel, as one after the other each of the worlds described disappears into a strange mystical light.

### Rules of the Game

The writing proper, as the author makes clear from the opening of the preface to the first volume, was not the first stage of composition. It was in 1874, he says, that he had the idea of using the two stories 'Fairy Sylvie' and 'Bruno's Revenge', written for Aunt Judy's Magazine, for the kernel of a new novel. In the second preface he goes on to specify that the idea of using 'Bruno's Revenge' probably occurred to him in 1873.

**As the years went on, I jotted down, at odd moments, all sorts of odd ideas, and fragments of dialogue, that occurred to me – who knows how? -- with a transitory suddenness that left me no choice but either to record them then and there, or to abandon them to oblivion. [...] Thus it came to pass that I found myself at last in possession of a huge unwieldy mass of literature – if the reader will kindly excuse the spelling – which only needed stringing together, upon the thread of a consecutive story, to constitute the book I hoped to write. Only! The task, at first, seemed absolutely hopeless, and gave me a far clearer idea, than I ever had before, of the meaning of the word 'chaos': and I think it must have been ten years, or more, before I had succeeded in classifying these odds-and-ends sufficiently to see what sort of a story they indicated: for the story had to grow out of the incidents, not the incidents out of the story. (*Complete Works* 255-6)**

Here Carroll sketches the chronological evolution of his labour, a labour of progressive composition and not of linear creation: first, the realisation that the two little stories could be reused (we know that Carroll frequently recycled his writings: 'Jabberwocky', for example, was a youthful poem which he later expanded and incorporated into *Looking-Glass*, while the song 'Matilda Jane' which supplies the title of Chapter Five of *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* was written for a doll belonging to Charles Dodgson's little cousin Menella Wilcox - see *Letters*, vol. 1, 279); then the accumulation of 'all sorts of odd ideas, and fragments of dialogue', of 'random flashes of thought' arising out of daily life or in dreams; then the classification of this accumulated chaos, which took him at least ten years, and finally the lineal organisation of this still 'unwieldy' material into an integrated whole. One pointer to the physical process of assembling the material, its

remarkable polysemy emphasized by the use of inverted commas, is given in the phrase, 'while arranging the "slips" into pages', a little further on in the preface (*Complete Works* 255). The obvious meaning (of strips of paper joined together to make pages) does not obscure the multiple meanings swarming around the term, evoking not only such concepts as inconspicuous movement or change, escape, sliding, dragging, wandering, loss of balance, but also *faux pas*, mistake, moral lapse, failing of memory or articulation, or even a boat's launching-way or the wings of a theatre. [Or indeed a close-to-the-wicket fielding position or a female undergarment - *translator*]. With false candour, Carroll is playing with his reader.

As Jean Gattegno observes,

**What is essential and new is to be found in the author's assertion that a work of literature is fundamentally heterogenous – not a whole that has been fragmented and subsequently reconstituted, but an aggregate of fragments that may never make a whole. In this respect, what Carroll wrote about some species of literature containing 'padding' (none in *Sylvie and Bruno*, he avowed) gives food for thought. When he wrote those lines, the memory of Fielding and Sterne and their debunking of the organic novel had faded away; Victorian novels would never dream of describing themselves in this ironic and even sacrilegious way. Carroll's remarks about the literary mode of production (topical remarks coming after scores of novels published in serial form) strike home less than his few sentences hitting out at the myth of the artist-writer and preventing the sacrosanct relation between the reader and the work. (Giuliano 1982, 168)**

The attempt to destabilise the relationship with the reader is, then, deliberate. In *Sylvie and Bruno* Carroll testifies to applying a technique of composition rather than of writing. He stresses the apparent oddity of this technique, which he contrasts with more classical methods, pitying those in thrall to the latter. His method brings an undefined and endlessly surprising diversity, theirs brings rigour and toil; his opens up a collection of conflicting materials, they have a (once again, pleasingly polysemic) 'tale of bricks', he has freedom of composition, they have Cosmos, he has Chaos awaiting order. It is, in brief, a schematized opposition of Classical and Baroque; the one a teleologically ordered, harmonious whole, the other joyously proliferating. Carroll apparently has no interest in the exact provenance of the assembled fragments. He is not concerned to retrace the long walk through his subconscious which engendered them; he contents himself with acknowledging its existence and has no wish to unravel the complexity which gave rise to them, even if their intrinsic meaning needs to be preserved. What actually concerns him is what he can make of this jumble, the composition which will take shape out of chaos, the narrative which he can enforce on this heap of fragments which by their very nature are essentially narrative-less. The significant associations and correlations are no longer the product of inspiration, they are links which enable the construction of a story; not blazing inspiration, but labour. The writer is no longer required to recollect emotion in tranquillity, but to build an alternate reality out of disparate elements. Carroll takes an hermeneutical approach to his material, interpreting a fragmented reality which he deliberately cuts loose from its origin and extracts from it signifiers with which to create a global work, a living organism. He brings into the world something which was in its original state radically opposed to the ordered world: fragment, chaos, disordered, disconnected multiplicity.

Carroll arranges the meaning of the collected signifiers. The preliminary task of organising chaos obeys one simple rule: to use up all the collected material. Everything points to Carroll's desire to utilise the original chaotic mass in its entirety, the encyclopedic, deliberately absurd index is one of the markers – it is absurd because it is deceptive: demonstrating the desire for comprehensiveness, it takes us back to the work's fragmentary origins. When, later in the preface, Carroll describes his practice of padding in order to position an illustration correctly on the page, he mentions adding lines but not taking any away, as if the material were to be respected absolutely. It is permissible to add, but not to subtract: it is an attempt at exhaustiveness, permitting Carroll to set his readers a malicious puzzle: where is the padding? This attempt is still more evident in the preface to the second volume:

**And it was not until March 1889 that, having calculated the number of pages the story would occupy, I decided on dividing it into two portions, and publishing it half at a time. This necessitated the writing of a sort of conclusion to the first volume: and most of my readers, I fancy, regarded this as the actual conclusion, when that volume appeared in December 1889. (*Complete Works* 463)**

What rules did he follow in order to bring order to chaos? What, in other words, are the rules of the game of the composition of *Sylvie and Bruno*?

It is possible to view Carroll as a naïve genius out of touch with his own creativity, as Roger Lancelyn Green does with regard to the *Alice* books when he comments that the two books were built on episodes which made sense to the Liddell girls, and which he reconstituted into a coherent whole:

**It must not be thought that either of the *Alice* books is derivative; they are both original and with the absolute originality of sheer genius. All the various 'originals' and suggestions served as so many sparks to touch off the sleeping gunpowder of Dodgson's imagination. (Roger Lancelyn Green, 'Alice', in Phillips (ed.), 28.)**

But Carroll himself disclaims this alleged way of genius in the preface to the first volume. He deprecates his own supposed genius when he stresses the wordplay of 'litterature'. He is in control of his art: perspiration, not inspiration, is the key.

For Carroll, self-imposed restraint is the tool for shaping a mass which is already in existence but as yet formless and chaotic, to which he must give life and therefore structure. He is already acquainted with limitation as the impetus for inexhaustible invention, as witness the numerous letter-games which adorn his output, and witness again his fondness for acrostics or his letters to his 'child-friends', bristling with verbal invention based on linguistic or structural limitation – writing a letter in one long PS, for example – but other considerations apply here.

How is it in Carroll's interest to expose in this way what he calls the details of his novel's genesis? Why lay such stress on them, if the limitations he reveals do not depend on a genuine encyclopedic vision, of which the index is a primary indication? We must ask ourselves, then, what the concept of encyclopedia meant for Carroll. Should we see no more than an innocent game, a gentle joke aimed at readers who he hopes will not be too preoccupied to pass over the references to which his attempt at encyclopedism points? Or rather – absolute knowledge, the sum of human awareness or the instrument which gives access to it, a spiritual vade-mecum to which the sketching of the 'serious' passages already gives us a hint? If that were the case, then a theological option, quite simply, would be central to the principles of creation of *Sylvie and Bruno*. Carroll is in no way a slave to the chaos which confronts him; he is the servant of God. "Work for God" is how he described *Symbolic Logic* in a letter to his sister (*Letters*, vol.II, 1100); does the same description apply to his final novel? One might suspect it, if only from the conclusion of the first preface, where Carroll insists at some length on man's need to turn to spiritual reflection before it is too late. Immersion in the text should confirm this hypothesis. In indicating this possibility I have no wish to close the process of interpretation, rather to give it fresh impetus by examining Carroll's use of this option, and to inform and revitalize the reading of *Sylvie and Bruno*.

This theological option, if indeed it is Carroll's, presents a problem. In effect, Carroll's restrictions force him to construct a closed system in order to assign each of the fragments he uses a given place in the overall structure. In a closed system, how can there be transcendence or intervention? What kind of transcendence can the writer devise that can be incorporated into a fundamentally immutable structure? He has done it, in the first place, by integrating religious and political discourses. But is the structure itself permeable to transcendence?

Elizabeth Sewall notes that the Nonsense genre operates as a closed system from which all emotion is banished:

excluded also, needless to say, are all synthesizing tendencies such as those of imagination, dreams, sympathy, poetry—remember how effectively Carroll sterilizes metaphor in his parodies of poetry—and, further, excluded also are all great issues that make us human, experiences such as sorrow and beauty and God and so on. How essential these exdusions are to Nonsense can be seen in the horrid mishmash of *Sylvie and Bruno* where Carroll attempted a different kind of Nonsense that could accommodate them, and failed. (*Elizabeth Sewell, 'The Nonsense System in Lewis Carroll's Work and in Today's World', in Giuliano 1976, 61*).

It is true that, if *Sylvie and Bruno* has retained certain aspects proper to the Nonsense genre, among them the importance given to play (the principle of dichotomy in Chapter XIII of *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* is a good example of a form of play taken to its logical, but absurd, conclusion), the novel as a whole diverges from the genre, particularly in its overflowing emotionality.

If one may reproach Carroll with anything, it is his failure to renew his inspiration in the genre he did so much to validate. But he is quite clear on this point: He had no intention of following the path he himself mapped out. He denies himself the use of the same 'pattern', but takes the trouble to explain in the second preface, since his readers appear not to have understood it, the new plan he has chosen to explore.

## The Construction

According to Collingwood, the origins of *Sylvie and Bruno* owe much to the New Year holidays Carroll spent with the Cecil (Salisbury) family in the 1870s (Lord Salisbury was to become leader of the Conservative Party on the death of Disraeli in 1881).

**There is evidence that *Sylvie and Bruno* took shape in the giving of New Year's Day recitals to the annual children's party assembled at Hatfield by the Marchioness of Salisbury. ('Lewis Carroll : An Interview with his Biographer', *Westminster Budget*, 9 December 1898; reproduced, *Interviews and Recollections* 11).**

Carroll's diary bears witness to scenes of his relating passages from *Sylvie and Bruno* to the children gathered around him, even if in the end he wearied of apparently being invited just to play the storyteller. (See the diary (vol. 6) entry for 30 December 1875; Hatfield is not mentioned again until 1884). These are the stories he refers to in the preface to the first volume. At this stage he is merely refining stories intended specifically for children; there is no sign as yet that he is planning a narrative on a more epic scale, even if it was in this period that the intention occurred to him. Other fragments were told to other children, such as Enid Stevens (to whom *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* was dedicated, the third letters of each line of the introductory poem spelling out her name); as she recalls in the 1953 edition of Carroll's *Diaries*:

**I was his very last child-friend, and during all our many long afternoons together [the stories] continued to bubble up – fresh, original and inimitable as ever. Two or three times a week he would come and 'borrow' me, and we would go off together, wholly content with each other's company, for afternoons which I shall never forget. I have, alas, forgotten the stories, because he never told the same one twice, but the Mad Gardener and the Spherical Proctor (in *Sylvie and Bruno*) originated on those walks, and there were a great many more of the Mad Gardener's songs ('He thought he saw...') than those which appeared in the book. If one seemed to him worth perpetuating, he would write it down when he got back to Christ Church, and I – great joy – would be allowed to type it. (Green (ed.) xxiv-xxvi; reproduced, *Interviews and Recollections* 123).**

Here once again it is a case of collecting fragments bearing no relation to each other, 'odds-and-ends' or 'nodules' which, alongside the 'serious topics' and various other details which Carroll lists in the second preface, still need to be organized into a story. Other 'nodules' are the poems, some of which were to be interspersed with the text,

others simply inserted as they stand. When seeking the collaboration of Harry Furniss in 1885, Carroll proposed that he should illustrate the long poem 'Peter and Paul' which he had completed in March 1882 (see diary entry of 15 March 1882), and gives precise instructions on his requirements (see, for example, Carroll's sketches as reproduced in Edward Giuliano's article, 'Lewis Carroll as Artist: Fifteen Unpublished Articles for the Sylvie and Bruno Books' in Giuliano 1976, 145-160, especially the two sketches of Peter on pp. 149-150). In the preface to the second volume, Carroll notes that the illustrations to 'The Little Man Who Had a Little Gun' were finished in November 1886, those to 'The Pig-Tale' in January 1887; up to this point the novel is still largely fragmentary and cannot even be described as a novel other than in the mind of its author. We do not know when he decided to organize the material into two volumes, but the literally physical construction of the novel dates from 1888. In the summer of that year he mounted the slips that were already printed to combine them with the handwritten sections:

**I spent a good deal of yesterday in mounting 'slip' of Sylvie and Bruno on sheets of paper. My idea is to make up the whole book in that way, partly in print and partly in MS. before troubling the printers again. (MS Diary, 29 July 1888)**

The process is chaotic, but oddly liberating as he is not a slave to linear development. On 4 August he announces that he has finished mounting the slips for himself and Furniss, and is progressing daily with the editing. He has abandoned the provisional title of 'Four Seasons' and settled definitely for 'Sylvie and Bruno'.

It seems clear that for Carroll, certain passages could not be incorporated just as they were. The poems which Furniss had illustrated before the novel was even written are good examples. But how did he organize the rest in such a way as to end up with a structured whole? Here we must resort to speculation and examine the most logical of the solutions available to Carroll.

The best metaphor would appear to be that of a chemical reaction. Confronted with a shapeless mass, he needed to crystallize this mass through the medium of precipitation. The first stage is one of decanting, to allow what will become, little by little, the incidents of the story to emerge: 'the story had to grow out of the incidents, not the incidents out of the story', Carroll tells us (*Complete Works* 256). We will call these ingredients 'events', by which term we mean not only incidents and plot development, but also spoken sections; the 'topics' are likewise events, subsequently put into the mouth of this or that character as are the snatches of dialogue. The events are base molecules, carriers of meaning.

These events can then crystallise around the hard cores of the characters, who give them form and who can in turn be assembled to form a plot – two plots side by side in this case, set in several different worlds. Here there is no multiplication of characters and incidents as the plot develops; rather the initial chaotic matter is evaporated off through successive precipitations; the narration proper does not begin until this process is complete, as the author constantly reminds us.

The characters, formed into specific entities by the crystallization of chaos, are thus, originally, precipitations of identity, meant to give shape to events; they are functions for the conveyance of meaning. Three characters have a special status, as they are known to pre-date this stage of crystallisation. We here refer to the Narrator, to Sylvie and to Bruno, all three of them established in the little stories which gave Carroll the idea of writing the novel. They have an especially important place in the unfolding of the narrative.

The cast of *Sylvie and Bruno* are barely characterised; where they are, it is through the intermediary of other characters and often through cliché, as in Chapter VI of <em>Sylvie and Bruno where Arthur and the Narrator define Muriel as 'all that is good and sweet, and pure, and self-denying, and true-hearted...' (303). It is the Narrator's (often ironic) descriptions of events which principally define their personalities. The rest of the characterisation is achieved largely through the illustrations, where Carroll showed

himself to be most exacting with regard to his hero's physical appearance. The slightness of his characters' psychological depth further permits Carroll to draw them together and to weave correspondences between them.

The psychological facts emerging from the decantation of chaos are treated as objective facts, permitting entities of disparate origin to coexist objectively and at times be made to touch. Criticism which aims to reveal the face of the author amongst the cast is doomed to frustration, for Carroll's whole art consists of utilising the fragments emerging from his thought, from his reading or from unsuspected layers of his own subconscious to generate autonomous personages: if there is any indication of their ancestry, it has passed through so many filters that it is impossible to unravel their origins, something which even the author declines to do.

Multi-faced characters had formed a part of English literature long before Carroll undertook to write *Sylvie and Bruno*. In his dedicatory epistle to *The Faerie Queene*, while describing his intent to write an allegory on the model of the great Classical poets, Edmund Spenser explained that his characters had, under the same name, many faces. Thus Gloriana is at the same time Queen of the fairies, the personification of Glory and Queen Elizabeth, while Arthur is at once King Arthur, the personification of Magnificence and the Earl of Leicester. Carroll reverses this procedure by giving multiple names to characters who have, at times, the same face; their parallel narrative functions intertwine to the point of likeness. Many critics have attempted to identify the matched pairs of characters, without always being in agreement with each other. The criterion we have just described as that of functional affinity seems the only one likely to furnish any certainty regarding these pairings. This criterion shows us groups of characters united by their function, whether or not they belong to the same world. Bruno and Arthur, in their differing degrees, are the champions of metaphysical reflection: Bruno perpetually questions authority but recognises the authority of love which binds him to Sylvie, Arthur seeks to ground authority in reason and demonstrates that it is founded on divine love. Sylvie and Muriel have the role of giving these two the opportunity to develop their reflections through question and answer. The Professor, the Other Professor and Mein Herr are fallen savants whose bizarre meditations (often induced by Bruno) serve to remind the reader of the absurdity of his customary habits of thought and language.

In precipitating the formless and more or less narrative-less mass of his original chaos, Carroll subjects it to a qualitative transformation. Chaos is transformed into multiplicity (events, characters), and multiplicity is usable for narrative purposes.

## Multiplicity

The multiplicity from which *Sylvie and Bruno* emerges is ever-present in the text. As we have seen, the constituent molecules of meaning retain their piecemeal character – properly speaking, there is no stylistic unity as genres joyously intermingle – and the people who convey these meanings are themselves dependent on multiplicity. Often this appears as doubt and questioning on the nature of the self, on the one-ness of sensual experience. Bruno, in particular, frequently plays on his interlocutors' surprise when confronted by his commentaries on the impossibility of splitting oneself up or of forming a community with others, commentaries which are often founded on his misunderstanding of what is said to him. The first example occurs in Chapter X of *Sylvie and Bruno* and relates to an absurd excursus by the Professor. He explains that all extremes are bad, and gives as an example sobriety, which also has its disadvantages when practised to extremes:

**When a man is tipsy (that's one extreme, you know), he sees one thing as two. But, when he's extremely sober (that's the other extreme), he sees two things as one. It's equally inconvenient, whichever happens. (*Complete Works* 329)**

In Chapter XII the Other Professor remarks that Bruno should go to bed 'at once', explaining that he cannot go 'at twice'. The Professor exclaims, 'Why, of course he ca'n't

go at twice! It would hurt him to be divided!', and the Other Professor undertakes to demonstrate it diagrammatically (337-8). In Chapter XVIII the Professor wakes up and asks the Narrator, 'whereabouts we are just now and who we are, beginning with me?' (390). In Chapter X of *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, in conversation with a young lady, Bruno uses the phrase 'a mile or three', remarking that it would be usual if we said it often enough. When the lady says 'you're not more than seven', he replies 'I'm not so many as that, I'm one. Sylvie's one. Sylvie and me is two' (548). In Chapter XIX, the Earl remarks that bees might have a form of collective intelligence (621)- the only passage in the 'real' world where the question of multiplicity and unity is discussed. At the Professor's lecture in Chapter XXI, he announces that he will divide his subject into three parts, which alarms Bruno: 'I think I'll get down! It aren't nice to be divided! (641). In Chapter XXII the Other Professor stumbles and remarks, 'it wouldn't be me, if I didn't trip » , much to the distress of the Professor who whispers to Bruno, 'almost anything would be better than that! It never does to be anybody else, does it?' (647). Later, Bruno asks Sylvie to explain the expression 'what a singular boy': 'it means one boy. And plural means two or three'. Bruno replies 'then I's welly glad I is a singular boy ! It would be horrid to be two or three boys ! P'raps they wouldn't play with me', involving the Other Professor in an absurd conversation (*Complete Works* 650-1). In the next chapter, Bruno reacts with horror when, at the banquet, the Other Professor asks him, 'and I hope you're enjoying yourself, little Man?'; a few lines further on, when the Other Professor offers him a glass of liqueur with the words 'drink this, my dear, and you'll be quite another man!', Bruno asks who he will be (658). At last, in the final chapter, Bruno asks a question, which his father does not hear, on the principle of identity applied to the jewel: 'Then you choosed it from itself. Father, could Sylvie choose a thing from itself?' (674)

In all these passages Carroll is playing, far more subtly, with the prolix and ultimately paradoxical concept introduced in chapter 9 of *Alice in Wonderland*:

**"I quite agree with you", said the Duchess ; "and the moral of that is - 'Be what you would seem to be' - or, if you'd like it put more simply - 'Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise'."**

The answer to the question 'Who am I?' is anguished and ambiguous. Identity dissolves in multiplicity, the multiplicity of views and comments on oneself (whether by oneself or others), the multiplicity of experience which can not be entirely contained within the senses. A character in Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia*, Raphael Ben-Ezra, a former pupil of Hypatia who leaves Alexandria to seek another spiritual path, glosses the axiom 'I am I', giving expression to all the disquiet aroused by the impossibility of an answer:

**'I am I' an axiom, indeed! What right have I to say that I am not any one else? How do I know it? How do I know that there is any one else for me not to be? I, or rather something, feels a number of sensations, longings, thoughts, fancies - the great devil take them all - fresh ones every moment, and each at war tooth and nail with all the rest; and then on the strength of this infinite multiplicity and contradiction, of which alone I am aware, I am to be illogical enough to stand up, and say, 'I by myself I;' and swear stoutly that I am one thing, when all I am conscious of is the devil only knows how many things. Of all quaint deductions from experience, this is the quaintest! Would it not be more philosophical to conclude that I, who never saw or felt or heard this which I call myself, am what I have seen, and heard, and felt - and no more and no less - that sensation which I call that horse, that dead man, that jackass, those forty thousand two-legged jackasses who appear to be running for their lives below there, having got hold of this same notion of their being one thing each - as I choose to fancy in my foolish habit of imputing to them the same disease of thought which I find in myself - crucify the word! - The folly of my ancestors - if I ever had any - prevents my having any better expression. ... Why should I not be all I feel - that sky, those clouds - the whole universe? Hercules! what a creative genius my sensorium must be! [...] Oh, would to heaven that the said whole disagreeable universe were annihilated, if it were only just to settle by fair experiment whether any of master 'I'**

**remained when they were gone! Buzzard and dogmatist! And how do you know that that would settle it? And if it did - why need it be settled? (Kingsley 231-2)**

Self-knowledge is unattainable, whether through the discourse of others, or through one's own discourse, or through the perceptions of one's senses. The self is indeed an axiom; it cannot be proved. Kingsley's demonstration must have touched Carroll, for Raphael finds peace only through a mental journey which ends in his conversion to Christianity. Self-knowledge becomes the knowledge of a divine gift and of a duty to God and man. Muriel offers Arthur to God, and to the poor beloved of God, a duty which will lead him to almost certain death. Carroll, in the first preface and the introductory poem to *Sylvie and Bruno*, warns his reader that no human being can escape death, and that this perspective should lead to a spiritual path - towards God. Bruno's innocent reflections are innocent for him, for he is a fairy and nearer to God than mortals; men, though, and this is Carroll's aim, should take these reflections seriously and question themselves on the meaning of self-knowledge.

The reason for disquiet, a disquiet which sensual perceptions of the world around can never appease, is the interpenetration of the self and the non-self, the inside and the outside. Might the multiplicity of *Sylvie and Bruno* be an expression of the multiplicity of the Narrator's inner world (or the author's)? In other words, are we dealing with an experiment in psychological syncretism, an insularisation of the psyche, making it possible to express the harmony of the inner multitudes with the outer?

This was my first hypothesis. At first I believed that the arrangement of the characters arose from a voluntary process of multiplying personalities; that from the primitive unity of formless chaos, Carroll created a multiplicity of characters, first placing the Narrator at the centre as an embodiment of the unity of chaos, then fragmenting the Narrator's personality into independent entities. On this reading the Narrator would be exploring his own inner world.

But this does not hold if we consider, as I have here, that the original chaos was viewed by Carroll as a soup from which he drew out, and then crystallised, multiplicity. The characters, in this view, arise out of a first stage of the concentration of chaos; they are not multiples arising from chaos itself. Multiplicity resides in the events, not specifically in the characters. The characters by contrast are part of the process of unification: they are conveyers of events, and hence of multiplicity, but in themselves they are the means for Carroll to express his idea of unity, and, structurally, for him to implement the progressive unification of the narrative. They are intermediaries between multiplicity and unity. We can see the paradox they carry with them, and the Narrator is a still more paradoxical character, for reasons we will explore later.

In the last instance, to see the characters as emanations of the Narrator, or even the author, would be a mistake for which there is no textual justification. The author makes use of the question of personality and debates its unity, but he does so in the light of a moral demonstration. To suppose the characters to be emanations of a single personality, presented as unique, would be in contradiction of what he says in the text. In Chapter IV of *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, the Narrator muses on a remark of Bruno's:

**'Bruno's World!' I pondered. 'Yes, I suppose every child has a world of his own - and every man, too, for the matter of that. I wonder if that's the cause for all the misunderstanding there is in Life? (Complete Works > 501)**

For Carroll, then, the moral argument leads on from the argument which makes falling back on oneself a danger. Here, once again, he is in accord with the teachings of Maurice, who preached that evil lay in

**the inclination of every man to set up himself, to become his own law and his own centre, and so to throw all society into discord and disorder (Frederick Denison Maurice, *Theological Essays* (1871), p. 45, cited in Cohen, 355).**



This considered, it is doubtful whether Carroll would have wished to limit his literary experiment to the depiction of an inner world.

The multiplicity maintained throughout the final text is an exploration of the multiplicity of the tangible world, of the multifarious means of access to this world and the multiplicity of experience which man can draw from it. Comprehending this multiplicity can lead man to the comprehension of the infinity of creation. He has been given the tools which enable him to comprehend it; now he has to put them to use, before he can claim his place in the world.

In *Sylvie and Bruno*, then, Carroll explores the composition of a world passing from chaos to cosmos, where cosmos consists of a multiplicity ordered by a higher will. How he chose to order it, in the present state of this analysis, remains a mystery. This may be the subject of a later article, looking to explore the next level of composition; the ordering of multiplicity by the superimposition of a narrative structure.

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