Joyce Smithy
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The JJQ’s initiative to list works of visual art, performance, and music that reference James Joyce is necessary at a time when artists often view their work as an analytical practice. The ambition is to feature Joyce-related art year by year. In order for a work to make a contribution to the interpretation of Joyce—and Joyce to art/music/performance history—it is necessary to ascertain a level of ambition in the work that at least gestures towards that with which Joyce pursued his practice. We hope to provide Joyce scholars and students with explanatory and interpretive notes on work that they would not normally encounter. We welcome hints and submissions for consideration.

Visual Art

For this issue of the “Joyce Smithy” (as announced last year), I am tempted to turn both to serendipity (where I have encountered Joyce-related artwork by chance) and a socio-political context since the ascension of Donald Trump to the United States American Presidency, while also encompassing the Antwerp Joyce conference with its “artistic” theme in June 2018. Some “catching up” on previously unseen or newly relevant work can disrupt the Smithy’s otherwise all-too-neat expectations of a yearly roundup. Two of these (re-)discoveries, prompted by the works and their manners and places of exhibition, are Mark A. Wollaeger’s important 1995 essay “Stephen/Joyce, Joyce/Haacke: Modernism and the Social Function of Art,” as well as Sarat Maharaj’s presence in Amsterdam for a Visiting Fellowship where he met with my students. Here, at the Stedelijk Museum, the theorist and curator discussed with us a photograph of the Art History room of his alma mater, the University of Durban, a facility for “Blacks of Indian Origin.” We “recreated” (in theory/practice or art research methodology) the place where Maharaj, who observed prisoners through the window, had read the then-censored Joyce—and asked what kind of art history this room and his education represented: how did it serve apartheid? Reading Joyce and studying Marcel Duchamp provided him—and indirectly us—with

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an impressive sense of not just an enabling critique, but a function as an anti-dogmatic compass for what he also called “vegan thought.”

In Amsterdam, it was expected that Mariana Darvas Lanari would be present with art/performance/music work on *Finnegans Wake*—and she was (plus an artist’s publication), but it was another Joycean sound-art experience that prompted the focus of this particular Smithy art installment: under the title “Where Do We Go from Here?” Amsterdam’s leading commercial (!) galleries, calling themselves Nieuw Amsterdams Peil, made a concerted effort to research and exhibit together. They also re-opened temporarily the former Stedelijk Museum Bureau (SMBA, which had served the Museum as a branch or project space with an emphasis on bringing Dutch colonial issues to the forefront, while keeping the Museum itself at a distance from them). The galleries jointly claimed that unusual institutional steps were needed: “reckless speech has rarely had such disturbing consequences. The recent US Presidential election, the British Brexit vote, the upcoming Dutch national elections—what better time to question the role of speech and gesture, who speaks, who acts.” It was in this context that viewers encountered a record player in a gallery and heard Susan Phillipsz singing the “Lass of Aughrim” with her untrained, beautiful voice. It is a work, entitled *The Dead*, on which the artist has also elaborated in a radio recording, revealing considerable Joyce-related research. Phillipsz, a Turner Prize winner, has also paid attention to Lucia Joyce (and Santa Lucia) in her sound installation, *I See a Darkness*, which appeared at Tate Modern, London in 2008. Her ephemeral practice of making “sound sculptures” in specific settings establishes her as a contemporary artist, who sensitively responds to Joyce’s own time-based medium (reading aloud ideally), while performing institutional critique by eschewing the museumized object as much as possible.

In early 2017, the same Amsterdam context saw an exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum by the “social activist artist” Nalini Malani, who repeatedly responds to literature in her work. The artist, who was made a refugee by India’s independence, reacted to Joyce (and acknowledged this context) in a video work showing a drawing during its creation, as well as (played backwards) in its unravelling. Penelope’s night-time work is apparently the common denominator, but Joyce was mentioned on the gallery label. Across town, a discussion about Joyce, Alfred Jarry, and Duchamp was held at The Merchant House that included William Anastasi, his wife Dove Bradshaw, and me. The Merchant House, through personal connections with Jean-Michel Rabaté in Philadelphia, participates in what one could call Joycean art networks—and these appear to come with an attitude that prioritizes both intellectual engagement and community-forming in challenging times for both art and humanities research.
Ph.D. research through art in a Joycean context can take many forms, ranging from Maharaj to Tine Melzer, who, in her doctoral investigation of “language animals,” introduces Louis Lüthi’s 2008 work *Basic Anna Livia Plurabelle*. This is an extension of a project on the Bible, “translated” into “Basic English” (after Charles K. Ogden): *Holy Babel*, 2003. The Joycean work features lines and circles highlighting elements from the *Wake’s* page 215 within Ogden’s chart—to visual art (or at least conceptual writing) effect. Clinton Barry Cahill, who completed his practice-based Ph.D., researched it through responding for many years to the *Wake* through multi-layered, page-by-page drawing, annotating, and illustrating.

Peter Wüthrich’s 2017 Basel exhibition “Guten Morgen Mr. Bloom” featured *Ulysses* quotations on maps, a board, a ladder, and other objects. He also used covers of Joyce’s works on bottles and cigarette boxes. The artist often employs books as material, as in an installation, where they are perched on strings as though they were birds lined up on electric cables. This time, he has painted a series entitled *Mr. Bloom’s Landscapes* on cloth hardbacks. They may allude to the Slieve Bloom Mountains, but as art-historical objects, they seem to have more to do with Paul Chan’s better-known “book-works” than providing a commentary on Joyce. Borrowing large quantities of text from Joyce’s *oeuvre* has often been practiced (by Gereon Inger et al.) but would demand a separate, comparative investigation. It is sufficient here to inform readers that the Verbal Arts Centre, Derry, closed its café and has unfortunately overpainted several of the walls on which Colin Darke had painstakingly written all of *Ulysses* in 1904. A very short Joycean text in art, a *Ulysses* “tag” was created by Lin Tarczynski in 2017.

Following a *tour de force* of Joyce-related artwork at the 2017 Toronto Joyce conference, Geert Lernout’s interest in art, perseverance, and Antwerp connections led to the June 2018 Joyce conference under the title “The Art of James Joyce”; it was a feast for those interested in artistic responses to the writer. The conference venue itself featured exhibitions, including, for instance, that of Peter O’Brien—“The One the Pictor of the Other,” a part of his larger annotative or customizing investigation of pages in *Finnegans Wake*. He solicits his viewers/buyers to collaborate with him. Heather Ryan Kelley, with her long-standing investment in the *Wake*, has turned from a mainly painting-based practice to exhibiting collages and prints. She installed at the Academy in Antwerp various harmonica-shaped collage-books, prints, slipcases, and the like. Many of them belong to her epic 2017 *The Middenheap Project*. The works largely build on found visual material, including the artist’s earlier Joycean paintings, and are commentaries on clearly identified pages or sections in the *Wake*, meant to be appreciated alongside a reading of the text. One
can imagine the artworks becoming a stand-in for reading group members and enabling exchanges of interpretations. Nico Dockx created or “curated” the conference dinner—and there was a publication of the menu featuring a text by Sarat Maharaj—and the following day’s proceedings (see the Smithy’s performance section next year) will remain a memorable exploration of the interstices between art, scholarship, and enjoyment of the special Joycean community for all who attended.

My own “Joyce in Art” exhibition at the Antwerp Museum of Contemporary Art (M HKA) assembled around forty works with a focus on conceptual and engaged art practices from the 1960s onwards (but it also featured Man Ray’s portrait and the Fluviana Joyce placed in transition in 1929). The exhibition functioned as an update of the 2004 Dublin show of the same title, which also makes it interesting here. It provided as much of a circular path to be followed through the exhibition as was possible: Dora García, an artist who has been discussed in a previous Joyce Smithy, provided the connection. Her 2013 The Joycean Society film was accompanied here by one of 12 Attempts to Forge a Letter from Joyce to Ibsen, 2014. As a recent work pretending to be over a hundred years old, the piece functioned beautifully beside Walker Evans’s 1925 photographs of toilets and wash bowls (they were evidently created in response to reading Ulysses), as the juxtaposition provided a “commodious vicus of recirculation” (FW 03.02) for the visitor: a Wakean exhibition itinerary.

A work that had been missing (presumed lost) in 2004, Joseph Beuys’s 1961 programmatic cardboard sign reading “JOYCE” was shown as a local Antwerp loan (from Annie de Dekker), alongside Beuys’s last multiple from 1985, Joyce With Sled, as well as photographic documentation of his 1957-1962 “Ulysses” Extension, all forming a bracket around this Joyce-obsessed social practitioner’s oeuvre. Apart from the pieces by Anastasi, Phillipsz, and Kelley, there were new works, including that of Nick Thurston, who made packing-paper-colored book sleeves to hide forbidden spines. The covers read: “Drag-Nets by Arthur West/Satyr Press/Boston/1916.” They are replicas of the sleeves in which Ulysses was shipped to the United States prior to Judge John M. Woolsey’s release of the book to be distributed in this country. Thurston, a member of the conceptual writing group “Information as Material” (“iam”), participated in the 2001 Extreme Reading, a conversation between “iam” founder Simon Morris and Pavel Büchler about the also-exhibited 2001 book Soliloquy by Kenneth Goldsmith, a transcript of all that Goldsmith said in a week. Anastasi and Brian O’Doherty provided two seismographic pieces, including a subway drawing by Anastasi (earlier ones were represented by the shaking carriages on the artist’s daily
journey through New York to play chess with John Cage, who relied on Anastasi once Duchamp had died). The other one was a “portrait” of Duchamp in the shape of an ECG recording of his heartbeat, executed by O’Doherty who is both an artist and a physician. O’Doherty and Anastasi, as Joyce readers with connections to each other in New York, both sensed their context’s socio-political heartbeat, as well as acting in it. Pages from Anastasi’s research notes on Jarry, Joyce, and Duchamp (me innerman monophone, 1983) and a number of more direct Joycean pieces by O’Doherty set the scene for similarly conceptual and engaged but more poetic work by Zbigniew Gostomski (Pascal’s Triangle, 1973), which uses a Joyce quotation to overcome Cold-War feelings of isolation, and by Zagreb’s Vlado Martek’s 1970s and 1980s wheat-pasted recommendations to “Read Joyce or Pound.” Miroslaw Balka, who contributed a video work in 2001, Holding Falling, shared with these artists the sense of formative urgency with which one read Joyce in certain contexts: either behind the Iron Curtain or in Durban or India. Martha Rosler, who published on Ulysses as an undergraduate, was present with a recent addition (2008) to her series House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home—collages juxtaposing images from good-housekeeping magazines with photos of war atrocities. She began these as a protest against the Vietnam War: plus ça change is the message, whether in comparing Homeric times with the years 1904-1922 or juxtaposing the years 1955-1975 with the “War on Terror.”

Joyce’s Homeric allusions only recently formed an important reference point in “The Mythic Method” exhibition, an attempt to make the world appear stable and classical through art. It is with the works mentioned above and their/our current context in mind, however, that I discovered Wollaeger’s highly relevant essay. It tells a more interesting story about Joyce’s currency in art by sharply outlining “male modernism” as a problem posed by and through Stephen Dedalus, especially in “Wandering Rocks,” where certain allusions also “work toward the unraveling of what Joyce presents as a specifically male fantasy of autonomy” (697, 698). By way of making institutional critical practices in visual art, especially Hans Haacke’s not directly Joyce-related work, operational in relation to the question of Joyce’s oeuvre’s social function, Wollaeger arrives at social reading as furthering a sense of inevitable embeddedness, while acknowledging—in fact, positing in heretofore unknown differentiation—that there will not be any facile answers or all-encompassing solutions. Facing what Wollaeger calls “the dubiety of the avant-garde’s own capacity to dismantle” (700), it seems that artists and curators have recently found that Joyce provides what they need for those grappling with dissidence and the inevitability of learning to live with both decreasing democracy and increasing trauma. In addition, I agree—and the “Smithy” agrees—that “[t]o recover and redeploy the
avant-garde energies of Joyce’s texts . . . criticism must exploit critical
and pedagogical opportunities opened up by interdisciplinary meth-
ods. . . . [It] requires an extra-literary vantage,” as Wollaeger puts it
(692)—through turning to art. Wollaeger elaborates:

An accurate assessment of avant-garde potential requires that one step
outside the Joycean labyrinth in order to undertake historically con-
ceived interdisciplinary work: in a given historical moment, how is spec-
tatorship constituted in relation to reading? . . . What kind of political
effects can be achieved in different media? Does the increasingly visual
nature of culture and society . . . render literature more subversive yet
less effective? Or more effective by virtue of its marginality? (702-03)

In turning to Joyce, visual artists are variously answering these ques-
tions today.

Music

Through viewing artists in their current, historical, and political
contexts, we may also encounter what is likely important data for
some as-of-yet unformulated theories about the nature of Joycean
culture and cultural studies. At present, we note that the geographi-
cally dispersed appearances of James Joyce across many disparate
musical genres and subcultures continued in 2017. In the world of
contemporary classical music, composer Rebecca Saunders and the
ensemble Musikfabrik premiered Yes, a Spatialised Performance for
Soprano, 19 Soloists and Conductor. Incorporating Molly Bloom’s
soliloquy as sometimes inaudible monologue—a subconscious cur-
rent running throughout the piece—Yes cascades layers of meaning
(and music) behind and within the stream of words. Though a singer
appears onstage, the piece nonetheless lacks a focal center, because
musicians are literally scattered everywhere, even into the audience
to perform “[t]wenty-five separately composed soli, chamber-music
works, and ensemble pieces,” as Saunders notes in the program for
the Berliner Philharmonie’s Musikfest premiere, and she continues,
“The music implies, suggests, formulates, and defines ways of per-
ceiving the words.” While performed in the arenas of German and
European “high art,” such dispersal of performers and sounds may
also undermine the high/low function of “center stage” by subvert-
ing any notions of a central hub or guiding force—although in the
Saunders piece, as in Joyce’s work, this is a deliberate decision made
by one (central) composer, albeit executed with the collaboration of
many musicians.

When relying on musical de-centralization to explore Joyce, con-
temporary classical pieces find themselves under the inevitable
shadow of John Cage. But in the twenty-first century, Joyce emerges in a new era of de-centralization, heralded by the participatory and digital, where even the composer (or author) might somehow disappear. Yet composers and authors still reign in more traditional arenas—in Ireland last year, the Joycean limelight continued with two large musical productions: operatic adaptations of “Counterparts” and “The Boarding House” for the Wexford Festival Opera, and Brian Byrne’s Goldenhair album. Working with librettist Arthur Riordan and director Annabelle Comyn, the composer Andrew Synnott reveals how well Dubliners lends itself to opera. In this form, the two stories remain affectively true to their texts, realistically depicting the tragedies and injustices of everyday life while simultaneously sabotaging characters like Farrington by highlighting his melodramatic self-importance. The deep irony is a reality where individual and societal failings are revealed as laughably minor fancies of exaggerated self-importance, yet with dreadfully large consequences. In the operas, these dual readings are developed and exemplified through skillful deployments of counterpoint, which underscore and undermine the subtle layers of narrative tension while also offering self-aware criticism of that very tension.

Harkening to Joyce’s first published work, Byrne’s Goldenhair addresses itself with all the grandeur found within Joyce’s poems. Released as a CD and celebrated with a handful of live performances across the island, both the record and concerts featured a rotating cast of special guest readers and singers. The default style is jazzy vocalist-driven music with lush ornamentation, but there are enough departures from this to keep listeners curious and open to surprise.

The composer Liam Wade also drew inspiration from Chamber Music in 2017, debuting his eight-song cycle for tenor and piano at Denison University’s TUTTI festival. Elsewhere, another university-based piece, Wake—Lucia: A Joycean Operatic Rite, was an American Southern dance-opera, choreographed by the Polish-based dancer Kathy Lawson and featuring the University of North Carolina, Charlotte’s music faculty. In Brooklyn, New York, Alan Theisen debuted an instrumental homage to Joyce’s poem “Sleep Now, O Sleep,” performed by the clarinetist Christopher Grymes and pianist Molly Morkoski. Theisen’s piece was showcased at an artist-led space, the National Sawdust, as part of its Late Night series.

The singer Donna Greenberg’s Love Songs of James Joyce is another recent song cycle based on Chamber Music, which was performed live at the 2017 Joyce symposium in Toronto. Greenberg’s pieces are tender yet jazzy, with some compelling extended musical breaks. For the album, she collaborated with pianist Mark Kieswetter, whose career includes work as musical director for Vocalstraâ, an ensemble led by vocalese vocalist Jon Hendricks, the “James Joyce of jazz.”
In 2017, the Pomes Penyeach Project released *Old Heart’s Wisdom*, an hour-long adaptation of Joyce’s poems for a classical ensemble; a collaborative project from the Dutch interdisciplinary arts group Facetten van de Kunst, and under the artistic direction of composer Julia Barnes, the *Pomes* debuted as part of a two-day exhibition at Het Weefhuis, “Tussen Woord en Beeld.” In keeping with Facetten’s creative ethos, the exhibition included an interdisciplinary collaboration among a range of artists, both established and emerging, whose productions are visual, musical, and literary. Erik Bindervoet and Robbert-Jan Henkes provided Dutch translations of the *Pomes*, which were interspersed with the original text in the live and recorded performance. The suites drawn from *Old Heart’s Wisdom* provided a beautiful entry into Joyce’s poems, with strings that rollicked, shifted to tenderness, and re-emerged as drones, serving up masterful vocals accentuated by Yung-Tuan Ku and Che-Sheng Wu’s meticulously executed percussion performances.

In Warsaw, Poland, the Argentinian-born artist Pictorial Candi released the music video “Got Things to Do,” subtitled “Portrait of an Artist as an Insurance Salesman.” A synth pop exploration of Joycean proportions, the video juxtaposes a simple beat and the plain day-job office setting of Mr. Jeevan Singh Venkatesh with his daydreams and nightmares, wherein objects turn into giant pieces of meat while our everyday hero fantasizes about bigger and better vacations.

Regarding Poland, we have come to anticipate new and unexpected creations from Krzysztof Bartnicki each year, and in 2017 he did not disappoint. Gathering a host of adventurous musicians, Bartnicki produced the compilation album -Y?, featuring twelve original compositions described as “Polish multi-genre sound reactions to James Joyce, his *Finnegans Wake* in particular.” The opening track, “mummum” from the group Brda features a driving yet organic drum beat while the *Wake* is read in Polish, Hebrew, Russian, and Turkish translations. The second track, from Korine Sky Riot, begins with eerie whispering of the first thunderword before noodling its way through a space-scape, complete with one musician, Piotr Calus, playing something called the “thunder tube.” Other pieces are less experimental in style, yet without a loss of originality. The track “James Joints” is driven by a polished bass groove, complemented by samples and Polish hype-man refrains, plus rapping so laid back it makes Snoop Dogg look like a jackrabbit. But for those wondering about the Joycean significance of the “James Joints” track, you may be looking for a long time—as local legend has it, in the naturally relaxed mood that is reggae and dub, the band simply forgot to recite their one Joycean lyric.
The CD of –Y? also contains two bonus tracks. The first is an excerpt from the 2017 piece “Bouchons d’oreilles” (with Wojtek Kurek and featuring Bartnicki) recorded for Waywords and Meansigns. The second bonus track is “Helpless Corpse Enactment,” the ultimate metal adaptation of Finnegans Wake, from the American band Sleepytime Gorilla Museum. Taken as a whole, -Y? is not only a fascinating exploration of Joyce, but further serves as a memorable testament to the wonders of Polish underground and experimental music.

As such works not only come into existence but also receive recognition in forums like the JJQ, it is worth considering the changing nature of Joyce’s audience. The author is increasingly encountered in a myriad of digital contexts, and if one is paying particular attention to Finnegans Wake, one notices that the book is entering a heyday of attention and (digital) adaptation/re-appropriation, with at least some journalists proclaiming it “the book the web was invented for.” Yet it is not only Joyce’s audience that is (potentially) changing—perhaps there is also a change in what it means to be Joyce’s contemporaries. That is, who are the people who view their own work to be a direct response or even continuation of Joyce?

The “semi-global” community’s participation, as well as interest, in the Waywords and Meansigns project may provide clues, but as director of the project, I cannot judge objectively enough to report this. It seems worth noting, however, some of our parameters. Participation in our project grew exponentially in 2016, and on 4 May 2017, we released 123 new recordings totaling nineteen hours and twenty-three minutes in length, created by as many artists and musicians from fifteen countries. As in previous years, contributors’ only requirements were that the words should be unabridged, audible, and more or less in their original order; the result is work that functions simultaneously as musical adaptation and audiobook. With experimental and avant-garde strains of every genre as our staple, the individual tracks range in style from folk and spoken word to industrial sounds and noise. Over three hundred people have worked directly on the audio, all of which is given away freely on the Waywords and Meansigns website, and over 125,000 people have listened to the project since 2015. The Waywords and Meansigns contributor biographies also provide an interesting map of worldwide Wake-heads, while our project’s success may be in part attributed to current hip media’s semi-ironic fascination with “the weird”—a fascination that includes, of course, Joyce’s final work. New and popular articles are written about Joyce and his “weird” works everyday.

In 2017, at least one recording from the Waywords and Meansigns project was later included on a commercial release: Leo Records’s Oriental Orbit, from John Wolf Brennan’s jazz trio Pilgrims. Brennan’s track is a joyful mixture of Tin Pan Alley meets cabaret in a Fantômas
murder mystery. Waywords and Measigns was also present at the Toronto Joyce Symposium with a weeklong audio installation, curated by Lucia Smyth and myself. On Friday night, the musician Hinson Calabrese and I organized a participatory hybrid of open mic/karaoke, where spontaneous readers (and interpretative dancers) were accompanied by an improvising house band, featuring Calabrese, Shawn Clarke, and special guests.44 Highlights included Father Arnell’s wrathful sermon, delivered by Donal O’Sullivan of the Here Comes Everybody Players, and a moving dance piece about Lucia Joyce from Smyth and Kim Simons with narration from Jennifer Levine.

Also in Toronto, Adam Harvey’s audiovisual adaptation of “Shem the Penman” was enthusiastically received by many Joyceans.45 The audio—taken from Harvey and Mike Watt’s original contribution to the Waywords and Measigns project—pairs with Harvey’s novel method of visualizing the text in real time to create a wonderfully accessible, as well as enjoyable, way of entering the text.

We pause these in-depth reviews of musical moments in order to recognize that they are only a small sample of the Joycean music created in 2017—the vast majority of which exists far from the purview of traditional academics and “high art” venues alike. Perhaps a more panoramic tour is in order.

Invited to an artist residency during the re-opening of Manchester’s Central Library, Kiran Leonard’s resulting album is a celebration of five authors and their works. The album borrows its title, Derevaun Seraun, from Joyce’s “Eveline,” and the story is also the inspiration behind the opening track, “Could She Still Draw Back?”46 Meanwhile, the Canadian rockers Japandroids reference A Portrait in their 2017 album title, Near to the Wild Heart of Life,47 and the Welsh-born singer-songwriter Jack Harris included an original song “Molly Bloom” on his album The Wide Afternoon.48 Axel Bloom, from Hamburg, Germany, released Ein Tag mit Joyce, a well-polished indie album inspired by Ulysses,49 and Joyce emerged alongside J. S. Bach in Colombo, Sri Lanka.50 Under the artistic direction of Lakshman Joseph de Saram and including the Chamber Music Society of Colombo—which performs a variety of Sri Lankan and South Asian, as well as European, works—the latter event may be one of the few truly global Joyce performances of the year (rather than merely Euro/American).

Elsewhere, Joyce may appear alongside black metal and the devilish incantations of Zeal & Ardor’s Devil Is Fine;51 and the album What’s It All About? from the Bogota-based musician Matt Battle concludes with a joyfully loose indie polka track “Ulysses,”52 while the United States Pacific Northwest noise outfit ego arcadia released riverrun.53 “Literally shit” is one of the self-proclaimed genre descriptions for riverrun, and those accustomed to hearing Joyceana through
traditional ballads and classical music are sure to agree. It is called “noise” for a reason!

As is clear from this review, much of the year’s Joycean music occurred “off-the-map” of mainstream music markets, and one joy of independent/non-commercial/underground music is the unexpected physical spaces where performances take place. Last fall in Providence, Rhode Island, a vintage store turned venue called POP featured the band Arc Iris performing the entirety of Joni Mitchell’s album *Blue* while surrounded by 310 latex cleaning gloves. Written onto the gloves by artist Jessica Deane Rosner was the entire text of *Ulysses*. Such a pairing of Joyce and Mitchell may seem unusual, but it is not a first: Mitchell is rumored to have read *A Portrait* for BBC radio in the 1970s—if anyone has more information on this, let us know!

**Performance**

As with musical homages, each year there are countless live readings of Joyce’s work. Some readings are short tributes, while others are durational, often participatory, performance pieces, lasting twelve hours or more. Considering the supposed dichotomy between “performance art” and “popular tributes,” it is interesting to consider some of these readings as a hybrid between the two forms—a merging as well as a breaking down of cultures, perhaps parallel to the way *Ulysses* incorporates and enshrines otherwise forgotten advertisements, popular songs, and elements of cultural marginalia into the canon of twentieth-century literature and intellectualism.

Often occurring in June and typically organized by artists, universities, and museums, recent examples of these reading/performances include, in Ohio, the Toledo Museum of Art’s three-part, thirty-two hour participatory reading of *Ulysses* in June 2017, and Zoran Kuzmanovich’s all-night student reading of the book in September 2017. Another notable set of readings occurs continuously, throughout the year, at Sweny’s Pharmacy in Dublin, where daily-reading groups make their way through Joyce’s novels, with attendees from around the world taking turns reading the text sans discussion or analysis.

In the annals of last year’s unexpected and delightfully campy Joyce readings, one notable selection is the “Lip-Sync of James Joyce’s ‘She Weeps Over Rahoon,’ read by Aidan Gillen” from the drag queen Tootight Lautrec’s web series *This Be The Verse*. Another recent Joycean incorporation was found in *Hit The Body Alarm*, from the celebrated New York performer Winsome Brown, which located monologues from *Paradise Lost* and *A Portrait of the Artist* in a one-woman show about choice and imprisonment, with music by John
Zorn and sound design by Sean Hagerty. In Melbourne, the 2017 *Getting Up James Joyce’s Nose* from director Wayne Pearn also promised a unique rendering of the book, appropriating the novel into steampunk, vaudeville, and circus themes—including the performer Christina Costigan as Molly Bloom the aerial artist—while focused on re-creating the book’s original olfactory world, through smell.61

Probably the most popular event discussed in this year’s Joyce Smithy is the production of *Ulysses* at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, which ran throughout October 2017 and returned to the Abbey for another six weeks in the summer of 2018.62 Adapted by Dermot Bolger and directed by Graham McLaren, the production drew on a number of adventurous, even experimental, elements: the striking appearance of Rudy’s ghost in the first act, and the second act’s beginnings as a BBC/televangelical radio play. The entire production could actually be described as a rollicking radio play adapted for stage.

Molly Bloom, played by the remarkable Janet Moran, was center-stage throughout the play, and for good reason: her performance was incredible. Music was also central to the production, which, under the skillful leadership of Jon Beales, mixed elements of early-twentieth-century Irish, English, and American cultures with modern moments of electric razors and tracksuit bottoms—the latter serving to highlight an interesting commentary on the local cultures of politics, gossip, camaraderie, and song in Dublin’s “old man pubs” of past and present.

Less compelling, however, were the artistic decisions concerning depictions of the sexuality of Bloom and others. Bloom’s fantasized encounter with Gerty MacDowell and the entire “Nighttown” episode were displayed as bawdy misadventures, made easy for cheap laughs but missing the more radical implications of *Ulysses*, which dares to approach sexuality in all its delightful, confusing, compelling, and cynical dangers.

Shifting (temporarily) to the realms of academia, the 2017 North American Joyce conference, organized by Garry Leonard and Jennifer Levine, felt like a watershed moment in the future of Joyce/modernist studies in the United States and Canada. As discussed throughout this edition of the Joyce Smithy, the artists and performers in residence showcased a leveling of distinctions between traditional scholarship and artistic activity, with both emerging as equally valid modes of textual analysis, interpretation, and exegesis.63 One particularly enjoyable and illustrative example of this was the semi-impromptu performance delivered by the Here Comes Everybody Players, Sebastian Knowles, and Michelle Witen, which included Knowles at the piano performing Bach’s fugues while lecturing on the structural (and contrapuntal) role of the fugue in the “Sirens” episode of *Ulysses*.64
A remarkable display representative of the future came from Joe Nugent and his students. “JoyceStick,” a virtual reality re-creation of the Martello Tower, is a new kind of reading as well as performance—under the influence of vizor, headphones, and handpads, one “performs” twentieth-century reality within an extended recreation of *Ulysses*. While Nugent served as the visionary behind JoyceStick, the project is made all the more astonishing given that it was executed almost entirely by students—not professors—from Boston, Massachusetts. These kinds of collaborative, youth-led, “digital-humanities” projects offer modernism a bright future.

With the previous section’s discussion of Wollaeger in the background, it is also interesting to note that these movements take place amid an increasingly strained job market for academic-career aspirants; for many, perhaps a better future lies in collaboratively creating new niches—making one’s own jobs, rather than endlessly waiting to be anointed as tenure-track-worthy. Within such possibilities are new potentials for academic and artistic praxis—and this is what the Toronto conference seemed to welcome.

In November 2017, the University at Buffalo’s Techne Institute organized a durational and participatory reading of *Finnegans Waves: A Reading Machine*. Led by the French artist and director Christian Giriat, along with Buffalo professor and artist Franck Bauchard and visiting professor Nikolaus Wasmoen, the twelve-hour event took place at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center and the Ninth Ward at Babeville, two art spaces sharing the basement of a former Methodist church in downtown Buffalo, New York. (The event and venue harkened back to one of Bauchard and Giriat’s previous collaborations in 2011: a nonstop, thirty-six-hour reading of *Finnegans Wake*, staged in a medieval monastery in France.)

On the Hallwalls stage, there were nonstop readings of *Finnegans Wake*, as delivered by three simultaneous readers. After signing up for a fifteen-minute reading slot, presenters were able to choose their version of the text from a selection of *Wake* language variations. A contingent of ethnically Chinese Buffalo students assured a near-continuous stream of readings from Congrong Dai’s translation of the text, while other variations such as Marcelo Zabaloy’s and Philippe Lavergne’s Spanish and French translations also appeared alongside Joyce’s original words. As a listener, it was often difficult to discern any essence of the three simultaneous texts, but perhaps the intended listener/viewer effect was more of a gestalt—the Babel-like experience as well as Herculean achievement of completing the entire book in a single day. Meanwhile, for the participant/reader, the experience was incredibly joyous—these kind of participatory readings expose as false the opinion that *Finnegans Wake* is unapproachable. People love reading the *Wake*! One does not need to take a university course...
to understand each sentence; simply give people a reason to read the book aloud, and they delight at the opportunity.

Throughout the day in Buffalo, there were lectures and performances at the Ninth Ward in the “Recirculation Café.” Highlights included Vincent O’Neill’s staged reading from *Ulysses* and a performance from Didier Aschour based on John Cage’s *Roaratorio*. Aschour was the organizer of the experimental “Festival riverrun” in Albi, France, and is the artistic director of the Dedalus Ensemble, so his performance in Buffalo explored the intertextuality of *Roaratorio* (and *Finnegans Wake*) through a live remixing of the piece at West German Radio. Incorporating extra-textual samples of music, interviews with Cage, and more. Entitled “John Cage’s ‘Wake’—Writing Through the Music of John Cage—A Critical Interpretation of ‘Roaratorio,’” Aschour’s performance exemplified the role of artistic interpretation as textual exegesis and provided a musical counterpoint to the performative landscape created by the live readings.

Continuing to trace participatory and popular readings of Joyce from the so-called “minor works,” every year the most popular tributes—as one might suspect—are from the dirty letters, included last year in pieces like *Your Sexts Are S***: Older Better Letters*, a show from Rachel Mars, Brian Lobel, Season Butler, and Naomi Woddis, featured in *Hotbed: A Festival of Sex* at the Camden’s People Theatre in London. Another imagining of Joyce’s and Nora’s letters—a piece based on Nora’s imagined responses to Joyce’s written accusations of infidelity, Gerry Smyth’s *Nora & Jim*—traveled to the Edinburgh Fringe this year. Meanwhile, there is a highly publicized forthcoming production entitled *James and Lucia*, with Home Box Office star Aidan Gillen set to play the author (not lip-synced this time), while 2017 saw many new female-directed pieces exploring the inner and outer worlds of the fictional and historical women of Joyce; recent performances included director Sarah Baxter and writer Katie O’Kelly’s “Dubliners” Women and Eamon Grennan’s *Noramollyannalivialucia: The Muse & Mister Joyce*. Actress and producer Aedin Moloney enlisted her father Paddy Moloney (of the Chieftains) in the production of *Reflections of Molly Bloom*, a recorded rendering of Molly’s soliloquy.

While we do not typically cover such tributes and adaptations, in part because it is quite difficult to ascertain or represent the annual occurrence as well as the increasingly popular prevalence of small-scale general audience productions about Joyce and his works, we may yet note a potential trend, a rise in popular pieces based the lives of Nora, Molly, Lucia, and others. Alongside recent movements like #MeToo and Ireland’s “Waking The Feminists,” we see a renewed interest in the women in Joyce’s life—for women, not content to leave these and other productions in the hands of male directors, adaptors,
producers, or artists, are creating new pieces about these figures, who may serve as an important symbols of reclamation.

On the other hand, we see other pieces continue the male imaginnings of Joyce and “his” women. How a man (Joyce or one of his characters) views a woman—and whether such views are repressive or liberating—is a central tension in *Exiles*, and perhaps it is no coincidence that Joyce’s play was recently revived in a remarkable production by the Dutch group De Erfgenamen. The critical question—also alive within Joyce’s text and subsequently in Hélène Cixous’s theory of “écriture féminine”—of whether a man (the present author included) can or should represent women’s narratives may depart from the (male) literary critic’s taboo against analyzing authorial biography/intent. Yet in Hollywood, and at the Abbey Theatre, women are heralding a new era in what academics might call a new cultural emphasis on “authorial intent”: is the author a chauvinist or a sexual predator? How Joyce (and Joyceans) will fare remains to be seen, but we anticipate hearing from the female and non-gender-conforming artists taking up these questions.

NOTES


2 Please send material and information relating to visual art to Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes (c.m.lermhayes@uva.nl) and relating to music and performance to Derek Pyle (waywordandmeanings@gmail.com).


4 Visiting Fellow Sarat Maharaj was at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. The announcement was made in May 2018: <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/events/visiting-fellow-sarat-maharaj> (accessed July 2018).

5 Mariana Darvas Lanari, Sjoerd Leijten, and Katinka de Jonge, *A way a lone a lost a last a loved a long the: An Audiovisual Narration of “Finnegans Wake” by James Joyce* (Amsterdam: Jupiter Neon, 5 April 2017).


9 This collaboration also led to a lecture of mine: “Joycean Constellations in Art and Beyond,” The Merchant House, Amsterdam (1 April 2017).
15 At “Diasporic Joyce,” in June 2017, the Toronto Joyce conference website featured a specific site on art with links to exhibiting artists: <https://diasporicjoyce.wordpress.com/the-artists/> (accessed July 2018).
19 Fluviana was the title given to four images of driftwood by the photographer Adolph Fischer, published “courtesy James Joyce,” in transition, 16-17 (June 1929), between 16-17.
24 See “The Mythic Method: Classicism in British Art 1920-50,” Pallant House Gallery (22 October-19 February 2017), and see Charlotte Higgins,

25 Rebecca Saunders, *Yes, a Spatialised Performance for Soprano, 19 Soloists and Conductor*, Berliner Philharmonie, Berlin, Germany (9 September 2017).


30 Liam Wade, composer, *Chamber Music* (song cycle), Denison University, Granville, Ohio (9 February 2017).


34 Jon Hendricks was long referred to as the “James Joyce of jazz”—see his obituary at <https://www.latimes.com/local/obituaries/la-me-jon-hendricks-snap-story.html> (accessed August 2018).


See the Waywords and Meansigns track credits for personnel details of contributing artists, musicians, readers, producers, and so forth. Listener data has been collected from this website: <https://archive.org/search.php?query=waywords%20and%20meansigns> (accessed August 2018).

For instance, in writing for the popular Spanish publication *Playground Mag*, Alberto del Castillo referred to Waywords and Meansigns as “uno de los audiolibros más raros del mundo” (“one of the most unique audiobooks in the world”), and the article featured a Venn diagram detailing the mixture of genius, madness, and snobbery required to create such a thing—see del Castillo, “Un centenar de personas ha creado uno de los audiolibros más locos de la historia,” *Playground Mag* (7 April 2017). <https://www.playground-mag.net/lit/centenar-personas-creado-audiolibros-historia_22655173.html> (accessed August 2018).


*Japandroids*, *Near to the Wild Heart of Life* (Los Angeles: Anti/Epitaph, 2017), compact disc.


Write to Derek Pyle at <waywordsandmeasigns@gmail.com>.


See Lucas Weals, “A Day in Dublin: Dispatches from a Non-Stop Reading

58 Sweny’s Pharmacy is located at 1 Lincoln Place, Dublin 2, Ireland. For a list of daily and weekly readings, see <http://sweny.ie/site/readings/>.


64 *An Evening of Words and Songs,* with the Here Comes Everybody Players and Michelle Witen and Company, Victoria College, University of Toronto (22 June 2017). Pianist Jared Dunn was originally scheduled to perform on 22 June but canceled due to medical reasons. See <https://diasporicjoyce.wordpress.com/jarred-dunn/> (accessed August 2018).


68 John Cage, *Roaratorio* (1979), created for Klaus Schöning at West German Radio.


73 Katie O’Kelly, writer, and Sarah Baxter, dir., “Dubliners” *Women,* Mill
Theatre, Dundrum, Dublin (7 October 2017).


76 “Waking the Feminists” is a grassroots campaign focused on gender inequality in Irish theater and arts. Led by Lian Bell, a large part of the campaign’s popular support is derived through social media. The movement has had a substantial impact on Irish arts in 2017 and 2018—see, for instance, Helen Meany, “Waking the Feminists: The Campaign that Revolutionised Irish Theatre,” The Guardian (5 January 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/jan/05/feminist-irish-theatre-selina-cartmell-gate-theatre> (accessed August 2017).

77 De Erfgenamen’s first performance of Exiles appears to have been at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Antwerpen, in Antwerp, Belgium (25-27 October 2017). The group also performed Exiles as part of the 2018 Antwerp Joyce conference, during day 2 of the So Prettly Pratly Pollylogue event, curated by Nico Dockx, at Witte Zaal, Kunstcampus deSingel Antwerpen, Antwerp, Belgium (16 June 2018).