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How Do We Read *Finnegans Wake* in Silence?

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1. Introduction

"To fully experience *Finnegans Wake*," James Steven Sauceda claims, "requires an elemental and dramatic shift away from silent reading."[1] Joyce's text, Sauceda continues, is "unprecedented in its aurality and therefore requires oral utterance to be realized (125). In fact, it "must be viewed as a script to be performed on stage" (125). The last of these clearly hyperbolic claims raises the question of why Joyce did not simply write a stage play. Sauceda's is an extreme case of a tendency among commentators to stress the desirability of reading the *Wake* out loud and, even better, in a group, if one is to grasp something of the rich pleasures within.[2] The value of Sauceda's formulation lies in the way it makes explicit a concern one might read into all such exhortations: that silent reading will not bring the book to life. If correct, this is curious, given that *Finnegans Wake* seems far more likely to be read in solitude and silence than in chorus. Is the book simply not being heard?

How do we read *Finnegans Wake* in silence? Does Joyce's text draw us into a form of vocal recital and audiation even as we read it in our heads, without making a sound? The essay to follow argues that it does. It begins with a brief mention of the relation between clear syntax, intonation, and sight-readability, suggesting that the *Wake* is given to performative uptake on these grounds. It then turns to the science of silent reading to show that the *Wake's* variously alliterative, metrical, and homophonic properties are of the sorts that have been shown to elicit subvocalization in silent reading; so too has the mimesis of accent and voice, in which it so frequently engages. Commentators have made much in recent years of the impediments Joyce's last book puts in the path of any smooth reading experience and the way it repeatedly causes one's reading to become self-conscious in the process.[3] This essay will show that at least some of those impediments actually disappear when one reads in silence. Yet while *Finnegans Wake* seems in all these ways given to eliciting that familiar "impression that, even during silent reading, a voice is speaking inside our heads" at a sub-sentence level, it clearly frustrates over larger passages.[4] In a final section, the essay suggests that silent

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readings of Joyce's last book are characterized by spurts of thought-like immediacy, disturbingly intimate because of the way occasional snatches of language seem suddenly to come to mind. Reading out loud obscures this phenomenon.

2. Initial Bearings

A useful way into the *Wake's* function as a sort of vocal score is provided by the numerous commentators who attest to the clarity and even predictability of the work's syntax. As David Greetham points out, Joyce wrote "swerve of shore," not "swerve shore of."[5] One could cite many concurring authorities here from Clive Hart's assertion that "[b]eneath the massive superstructure of interwoven motifs there is a fundamental syntactical clarity and simplicity" through to Jean-Michel Rabaté's reference to the work's language as "a new lingua franca based on English grammar and the grafting of a few other lexicons onto this syntactical and narratological grid."[6] Such observations of its syntactic clarity are useful because of the way they help link the *Wake*'s albeit often confounding sentences to a principle that will take on importance as this essay proceeds: if the syntax of a given sentence is clear, we tend to know how to say that sentence *as if we mean it*.

This is the case, even with sentences we do not fully understand. Syntactic clarity and performable cadence go hand-in-hand. So it is with the following string from the *Wake*: whatever a "strandlooper" is, whatever "keepy" means, however one might distinguish "a strate" from "a street," one quickly grasps what cadence this memorable run of words requires: "What child of a strandlooper but keepy little Kevin in the despondful surrounding of such sneezing cold would ever have trouved up on a strate that was called strete a motive for future saintity by euchring the finding of the Ardagh chalice" (*FW* 110.31-35). We can sight-read the words with ease, swiftly working out how to say them *as if we mean them*.

I have just intimated that a fruitful initial way to think about the score-like qualities of *Finnegans Wake* has to do with the sight-readability of its syntax. Our readerly desires to make sense of words we are reading may even bolster the performativity of our responses to this feature of the *Wake*—a further implication of the argument below: I will assert that sense-making and sonification are far more closely related than we tend to allow. Yet a reading of the following passage, also from *FW* I.5, underlines the fact that clear syntactic relations are by no means the only linguistic properties that draw us into confident vocal patterning:

> Here, Ohere, insult the fair! Traitor, bad hearer, brave! The lightning

> look, the birding cry, awe from the grave, everflowing on the times. Feueragusaria iordenwater; now godsun shine on menday's daughter; a good clap, a fore marriage, a bad wake, tell hell's well; such is manowife's lot of lose and win again, like he's gruen quhiskers on who's chin again, she plucketed them out but they grown in again. So what are you going to do about it? O dear! (*FW* 117.02-09)

Chief among the properties of this passage that seduce us to sound out its contents are the incipient metrical effects apparent from the third sentence on ("[t]he lightning look, the birding cry, awe from the grave"), amplified as these are by rhythmic punctuation and eventual rhyme ("iordenwater . . . menday's daughter . . . win again . . . chin again . . . in again"), effects that can be felt even as we read the passage in silence.

But at this point, the question of how one might claim to know the manner in which any passage from Joyce's "famously and inescapably rich auditory text" is likely to sound in silence may well have started to niggle.[7] Take the passage above. The reader might allow that we cannot help becoming somewhat metrical in our vocalization of the run of clauses from "such is manowife's lot of lose and win again" when we read them aloud. It might also be true, as Vincent J. Cheng has argued, that there are many such instances of "intentional, self-conscious, and careful use of strict poetic prosody and meter" in Joyce's prose works and especially in *Finnegans Wake*.[8] I would add to Cheng's analysis that, in the *Wake*, it is Joyce's placement of commas that often serves to segment already rhythmic clauses into something like verse lines in ballad meter. But who is to say that we engage in the sort of rhythmic, vocal sway these tend to elicit from us out loud, when the reading is taking place in the privacy of our own heads? Who is to say that we even observe commas there?

3. How Do We Read in Silence?

To turn to the science of silent reading at this juncture is illuminating. The findings of its experimental investigations indicate that features of Joyce's writing in the *Wake* have a genuine affinity for being sounded out even when encountered in a silent reading. Take the tongue-twister embedded in the following: "'Tis as human a little story as paper could well carry, in affect, as singsing so Salaman susuing to swittvitles while as unbluffingly blurtubruskblunt as an Esra, the cat, the cat's meeter, the meeter's cat's wife, the meeter's cat's wife's half better" (*FW* 115.36–116.03). A 1991 study of "the tongue-twister effect" found that when adult test subjects read in silence sentences "containing several words with the same initial phonemes" (for instance, "[t]he detective discovered the danger and decided to

dig for details") they took considerably longer than when reading semantically similar control sentences (for instance, "[t]he investigator knew the hazard and chose to hunt for answers").[9] To experience a comparative delay with the tongue-twisters makes little sense unless they are in some fashion being sounded out silently. Consider, too, a 2011 study by Mara Breen and Charles Clifton Jr. that had subjects read limericks in silence in front of an Eyelink 1000 eyetracker and found evidence of disruption to eye-fixation rates whenever the limerick featured an inconsistent stress pattern: for instance, "[t]here once was a clever young gent/who gave to his girl a present" (155, 156). Again, the subjects must, on some level, have heard the limericks for such a glitch to occur. The eye-rhyme is, after all, perfect. The reading specialists spend much time on heterographic homophony (different spelling, same sound), mainly because it allows them to set up experiments luring subjects into misrecognitions that would only occur if the words they are reading were indeed being internally voiced. A much-cited 1987 study found, for instance, that test subjects were more likely to identify the silently read word "rows" as a member of the category "flower" than the orthographically similar "robs," indicating, again, that inner hearing must have played a part in the test subjects' silent reading.[10] This is a finding of no little relevance to the *Wake*, which is obviously rife with homophony (for instance, "godsun") and, more frequently, quasi-homophony ("menday's," "who's," "gruen," "quhiskers") throughout. One might, on the basis of this much-corroborated finding, suggest that every single portmanteau word in *Finnegans Wake* is likely to sound out in our silent reading.

But it is also a fact that the rigor of scientific studies predisposes them to selective citation. The three studies discussed above are entries in a debate. Beginning in the nineteenth century, that debate has concerned whether the default mode of silent reading always involves hearing the words in one's head or whether our default is not, rather, a form of direct passage "from a visual representation to an entry in the mental lexicon," speed-reading being one vivid instance of how one might thus read without any apparent "phonological coding" at all.[11] Homophone studies like the one I have just cited are, for instance, countered by other reading scientists on the grounds that such evidence is generated in response to specific, laboratory-based tasks (indicate by pressing a button on the screen which of the following are valid sentences: *A beech has sand*, *A bench has sand, A bunch has sand*[12]) and so cannot be generalized as relevant to what is described as "normal, fluent reading."[13] Reviewing the history of the debate in 2005, Guy Van Orden and Heidi Kloos characterize it as inherently circular, with scientists on both sides relying on "findings from idiosyncratic task conditions" to generalize the ones

in favor of their position and diminish as idiosyncratic those against. Van Orden and Kloos ultimately blame this circular outcome on the idea that there *is* such a thing as "normal, fluent reading," such that its silent version might always be achieved in one fashion or the other, when the reality would seem to be that elements of both modes are variously normatively present in a complex and shifting interaction depending on context.[14]

What is more, even when it comes to the experience of hearing a voice in one's head, there are variant modes. On the one hand—and this is closest to acting—there is the subvocal rehearsal of a text on the articulatory apparatus. An electromyograph study in 1970 demonstrated that test subjects silently reading a literary text were activating the muscles of the larynx.[15] It is also quite demonstrable that the "pulses (literally stresses) of muscular energy" in the chest wall that serve to articulate stressed syllables in English, and so to marshal our poetic rhythms, are engaged in the silent reading of our verse as well.[16] More recently, a study using magnetic resonance imaging has demonstrated increased activity in voice-selective areas in the auditory cortex, when test subjects read passages of direct speech in short stories.[17] All of these findings indicate a far more performative and embodied dimension in silent, literary reading than one might have expected. But there is also a more subdued mode of silent reading. As Alan Baddeley and his colleagues point out, it is quite possible to hear a voice when we are reading, without engaging the muscles of the articulatory apparatus at all; we must, in these instances, be dealing with

> some form of auditory image. The fact that such an image can withstand articulatory suppression is easy to demonstrate. Simply try reading the next few lines while subvocalizing the word "the." Most people report that they can still "hear" the text they are reading, although they are presumably not articulating it. (443)

The complexities multiply the more one learns about these studies. Bringing such findings back to *Finnegans Wake* leads, all the same, to some relatively direct conclusions.

However much they disagree on the relevance of this finding for less demanding texts, both sides of the debate I have just referred to have consistently agreed that poetic and homophonous language of the sort we find on every page of Joyce's last book will, when read silently, tend to be heard as voiced in the reader's head. Furthermore, such language will tend to be subvocalized as well, with nerve pulses going out to activate the throat, chest, and tongue as we read it.

In sum, we can infer that the *Wake*'s tongue-twisting, incipiently metrical and homophonic properties are likely to be subvocally and auditorially experienced by readers approaching the book in silence.

Actually, one can take the matter further. For a start, these properties are felt as elements of a confluence, much more than as the isolable phenomena that experimental science prefers.[18] Their effects compound as we read, nor are they the only elements in the *Wake* with an affinity for sonification. Observing that 122 of the 124 songs in Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies* are quoted in modified forms in the text, Willi Erzgräber suggests that such refrains allow "the reader to feel the pulse-beat of the spoken and musical literature of the Irish people."[19] He points to the ghosting of children's verses like "Michael Finnegan" in Joyce's last book as well. There is also the fact that nobody approaches a text as notorious as the *Wake* without, as Tim Conley reminds us, being in some ways primed for the experience by the discourses that swirl around it (77). One of the chief of these is that Joyce's text must be sounded out if its full impact is to be felt. We come expecting to find something auditory in it.

But perhaps most pertinent among the forces drawing us to hear *Finnegans Wake* when silently reading it is the way that its soundscape helps to bridge frustrations about the text's meaning. Consider the fourth sentence in the long passage cited at the head of this section: "Feueragusaria iordenwater; now godsun shine on menday's daughter; a good clap, a fore marriage, a bad wake, *tell hell's well*; such is manowife's lot of lose and win again, like he's gruen quhiskers on who's chin again, she plucketed them out but they grown in again" (my italics). What part of speech does "tell" represent? Is it a verb in the indicative, having the three previous noun phrases as its subject ("all three of these things tell")? The indicative clauses that precede it ("now godsun shine on menday's daughter") and follow it ("such is manowife's lot of lose and win again") might draw one to such a conclusion. But if "a bad wake" is, therefore, the subject of "tell," why would there be a comma between them? Or is "tell," as the comma seems to indicate and in spite of the pattern suggested by those surrounding indicative clauses, an imperative? One would have a slight difference in intonation either way. Neither reading is particularly compelling. In a passage of expository prose, such grammatical ambiguity could cause genuine barriers to one's reading. Notice how in this case, in contrast, the rhythmic run of the passage serves to carry us over the *aporia*, and perhaps even to give it a certain zing. I think we have to conclude that the passage's musicality allows a different sonic principle to override the syntactic one indicated above. That is to say, it acts to override our tendency to determine and perform the cadence of a forthcoming string of words in terms of the syntactic relations we see there.

Note, too, the pleasure in such release, which has elements ("tell hell's well") of childhood about it. And who would not grasp any possible enjoyment, given the demands the book otherwise makes?

Hart reminds us of them:

> The reader who attempts to follow the mercurial arrangement of *Finnegans Wake* through more than one or two consecutive paragraphs finds the greatest difficulty in keeping, from one moment to the next, a stable foothold on his chosen interpretive vantage point. This is an even more serious problem than the many teasing obscurities of language, for, as his understanding of individual words increases, the vast accumulation of functional detail tends to overwhelm the reader, clog his mental processes and cause him to lose his bearings. I know of no other book that demands such diversity of response or puts so constant a strain on its reader's powers of concentration. (13)

For an insight into the rhetorical power of Hart's prose, consider the second sentence here ("[t]his is an even more serious problem than the many teasing obscurities of language"), and, in particular, consider the way the comma after "the reader" causes us to pause slightly before moving on to the clause beginning "clog his mental processes" for an insight into the rhetorical power of Hart's prose. The sentence itself almost clogs, tempting the danger that we might lose the rhythm and with that our steady grasp of the syntax driving it, and is just as swiftly released into comprehension as we read on and Hart's actual construction reveals its innate order. I am not belittling the acute intelligence of Hart's observations by mentioning his artful prosody. I am, however, suggesting that there is something of a vocal competition between Joyce and Hart occurring in this very sentence and that the two performative principles I have articulated form a key part of what is at stake.

4. Syntactically Difficult Prose

The other exceptional writing style that has been shown to elicit active subvocalization during silent reading is what Baddeley and his colleagues refer to as "syntactically difficult prose" (453). They offer one likely cause for this phenomenon by referring to the well-known fact that vocal articulation plays a strong assistive role in committing strings of words to memory (441). That is to say, subvocally reciting a dense sentence of theoretical prose helps us to hold its parts in working memory, while we parse the remaining elements of the sentence and in the process attempt to put it together into a whole.

A second, closely related, reason we often sound scholarly sentences out, even as we invariably read them in silence, is based on the fact that "intonation contours and sentence rhythms provide patterns which group words into phrases and highlight new and important information."[20] That so relatively little of our sonic grammar is actually marked on the page is pertinent here. It leads readers to stumble

over sentences like "[t]he old man the boats." In speech, one will lengthen the duration of "old" and rise in pitch on "man" to indicate a boundary between the two, and so avoid any ambiguity. But none of that information is codified in our writing system. What we try to do, in turning to subvocalize a confusing sentence like this, is to make that additional sonic information appear, albeit at the price of a little acting and guesswork. The same strategy drives us to subvocalize the elongated intonation patterns of the much longer sentences we encounter in theoretical, scholarly prose, not to mention the "focus marking."[21] In these cases too, what we effectively do is amplify through guesswork the information at our disposal with which to grasp the meaning of an author's "syntactically difficult prose." The need to find a way to "say" highly theoretical sentences if their meaning is to become clear could be what Ludwig Wittgenstein is getting at as well in his remark that "[s]ometimes a sentence can be understood only if it is read *at the right tempo*. My sentences are all supposed to be read *slowly*."[22]

If the idea that we, as quasi-improvisational actors, performatively recite scholarly and, for that matter, philosophical writings to ourselves seems counter-intuitive, that could well be because we allow our critical faculties to play such a strong and supervening role. I have in mind the curious sort of disavowed empathy whereby we at once try, through various subvocal attempts, to guess at "the prosodic structure" of an author's difficult prose, and then, having suddenly worked out what Hart is saying by dint of having ourselves finally "said" it, just as swiftly switch from actor to critic to assess his claims as right or wrong. Performative empathy flips in a millisecond into critical distance. And it is our possession by the latter, I suspect, that renders so counterintuitive Wittgenstein's further suggestion that if one is to talk about "the locality where thinking takes place," it might well be that "this locality is the paper on which we write or the mouth that speaks."[23]

Note, to this end, what happens if we conduct the curious experiment of stripping all the italics from the first of these Wittgenstein quotations ("Sometimes a sentence can be understood only if it is read *at the right tempo*. My sentences are all supposed to be read *slowly*"), to see how the resulting words come across. Is Wittgenstein not, in the original, italicized version, coaxing our mouths to read him the right way? One might suspect that to be the task of intellectual authors more generally.

5. Considerations of Accent, Register, and Emotion

> Let us now, weather, health, dangers, public orders and other circumstances permitting, of perfectly convenient, if you police, after you,

> policepolice, pardoning mein, ich beam so fresch, bey? drop this jiggerypokery and talk straight turkey meet to mate, for while the ear, be we mikealls or nicholists, may sometimes be inclined to believe others the eye, whether browned or nolensed, find it devilish hard now and again even to believe itself. *Habes aures et num videbis? Habes oculos ac mannepalpabuat?* Tip! Drawing nearer to take our slant at it (since after all it has met with misfortune while all underground), let us see all there may remain to be seen. (*FW* 113.23–33)

The passage seems riddled with typos. Robert-Jan Henkes and Erik Bindervoet offer four emendations: "if perfectly," "hey?" "finds," and "*mannepalpabunt*."[24] The most obstructive of the typos seems to me to be "bey?" Is the word Turkish, German, or English? Am I addressing this Turkish governor in the vocative or querying whether I have just noticed his presence on the street? What is the grammar of the word and, therefore, the intonation pattern needed to carry the cadence of the sentence over it? For readers familiar with Latin, "*mannepalpabuat*" is equally difficult to try to construe, given the way its deformed inflexions mangle conjugation, tense, person, number—and, perhaps, mood as well, depending on which garden path you pursue.

What is more significant, however, is that this often-quoted paragraph is really quite readable, for all its grammatical *aporia*. One might go further and suggest there is something quite appealing about it. This seems largely attributable to the way the officious-sounding "[l]et us now, weather, health, dangers" morphs ("if you police") into the evocation of a plummy sort of accent, of the sort that people who say "please" but really mean "I'm calling the police on you" often possess. The effect of encountering such vivid cues here is to shunt our reading into a dramatic mode, where it becomes less a matter of working out the parts of speech, and more about conveying the emotions. The forthright and colloquial "drop this jiggerypokery" seems to work in a similar way and to help us over the hump of the "bey?" in the process. It seems reasonable to postulate a third principle here, overriding our drive to intone sentences in terms of either their syntactic or lyrical relations. This principle concerns the words' actability and is predicated on the clarity of affect in them.

One of the virtues of Peter Myers's *The Sound of "Finnegans Wake"* is that it helps us see that what is going on in such passages is musical in its own right—for the fact that "meaning is entangled in a code which involves sound" is nowhere more apparent than in the case of emotional meaning.[25] As Myers explains and, indeed, graphs:

> the more attitudes, feelings and tones of voice there are in a person's speech the more it tends to be musical. Whether solicitous or rebuking, ironic or affectionate, the tones give rise to tunes. If there is no attitude or tone expressed—"John Smith was born in 1924"—there is no tune. It is

the attitude of exasperation that might give the melody of, for example,

will
that?
saying
stop
you please
O (xii)

In other words, if we find ourselves sight-reading Joyce's "drop this jiggerypokery" paragraph with sudden energy, much of this is attributable to the way the paragraph's clear emotional markers indicate an equally clear sequence of changes in vocal pitch. But there is more here, for the emotions a passage evokes may be clear, but the way they achieve that clarity is through our attempts to perform them (the reader should speed-read an emotive text to see what I mean). This is to say, in terms of our overall concern with how the *Wake* is read in silence, the mimetic dimensions of Joyce's writing seem as likely—if for no other reason than our desire to understand what is going on there—to elicit audiation and even outright subvocalization as the syntactical and the lyrical ones.

It is worth noting, in terms of that same overarching argument, that Myers has a position on silent reading too. He thinks that the *Wake* will sound out "in the mind's ear" when read silently (xiii), but he devotes no more than a sentence to this claim, which he presents more in the way of a baseline assumption than an argument. What Myers takes as his main task is a little different. I will comment on it briefly now, as a way to round out the claims I have advanced above concerning how vivid representations of accent, register, and emotion can draw us into sounding out a passage's contents, even as we read it in silence.

Myers's purpose in *The Sound of "Finnegans Wake"* is to "substantiate" through "phonetic terminology" the "more subjective language" of earlier discussions of the *Wake's* sonic properties (xvi). Phonetic terminology gives him the tools to indicate with some precision the sounds that are being scored for our reading, such as when we encounter what he describes as "the reverence of the hymnal opening" at *FW* 235.09-10 ("Xanthos! Xanthos! Xanthos! We thank to thine, mighty innocent") or "the formality of civil servant correspondence" (2) in the lines immediately thereafter ("Should in ofter years it became about you will after desk jobduty"—*FW* 235.10-11). So when it is a matter of Shem "blinking down the barrel of an irregular revolver" in the hand of the hood who has been instructed "to shade and shoot shy Shem should the shit show his shiny shnout out awhile" (*FW* 179.03, 05-07), Myers notes that "it is the initial phoneme

of Shem's name that is naggingly insisted upon, while the palatalisation of /s/ to /ʃ/ in 'schnout' recalls the voice of a New York gangster" (52). This focus on the actual phonetic instructions Joyce posts in his writing lends a certain rigor to Myers's discussion of the way the tones of that same gangster can be detected on the following page, nestled "amid the appraisals of Shem's singing" (52).

As Conley suggests, no performance can ever be fully scored in advance (87).[26] I wonder, reflecting on Myers's analysis—"An indignant Englishman is heard in 'egad, sir'" (52—*FW* 180.04)—if it is not the case that attempts to mimic ethnic speech patterns in writing tend to be accompanied by clear indications of emotion. Could it be that these put us into a performative mode, where leaping at the accentual markers feels like a small extension of the acting performance we are already engaged in? In suggesting that elements of improvisational plasticity and even abandon might be integral to the reader's experience of such passages, I am at once responding to Myers's comments and also marking a certain distance from the conclusion of Margot Norris's 2009 article, "The Music of Joyce's Vernacular Voices," which discusses these mimetic properties as well. I will end this section on that note, prior to turning, in the next one, to the overall implications of the claims I have advanced thus far.

Norris considers the extent to which Joyce's prose gives sonic image to "class, gender and regionality" (378). She charts a number of instances throughout Joyce's works prior to culminating, with substantial references to Myers, in an analysis of the regional and otherwise marked accents featured in the *Wake*, and particularly in its last book. Having discussed these matters in terms of the "graphological representation of written accent on the page," Norris shifts in a final paragraph to note "a problem dramatized when any of us read Joyce's *ALP* speeches out loud" (381). She comments that her own reading of such passages "in a female, non-Irish accent . . . clearly violates the sonic quality that the words are intended to convey" (381). But actually, she adds, even the celebrated 1929 recording of Joyce reciting the dialogue of the washerwomen in I.8 "necessarily fails to do sonic justice to his written vernacular text," among other reasons, because of the simple fact that his voice is "male" (381). Reflecting on the inevitable shortcomings of vocal performances of Joyce's work, whoever the reciter, leads Norris to wonder whether, for all the "layering of minority inflections into his English text," the sound of Joyce's "vernacular writing is audible at all" (381). As she puts it in conclusion:

> We can imagine the trials and pains of the washerwomen's lives as conveyed in their speech, but our empathy is reduced to a crude mimicry when we try to embody it with our voice. In the end the music of Joyce's

> vernacular voices reminds us that throughout *Finnegans Wake* what we hear is the voice of the other. (381)

This strikes me as incisive, as far as reading out loud goes, and that is, of course, the topic of Norris's comment. But I want to add that silent readers have no such qualms.

The novelist Stephanie Bishop's reflections on the voice "we hear . . . when we read in silence" are pertinent here; of particular relevance is her comment that "the voice I hear when I read lacks the capacity to make a judgement upon me."[27] In the context of her essay, Bishop's comment serves to distinguish the reader's inner voice from the alien, persecutory one often heard in psychosis. In relation to Norris's study, Bishop's comment on the nonjudgmental nature of the reader's inner voice provides a useful reminder that performative anxiety is not a feature of silent reading. It might become one, if a person were called upon to report on the experience afterwards for a potentially punitive interlocutor. But the inner voice itself is not the audience. The whole phenomenon is more akin, Bishop suggests, to "audiation" than psychotic hallucination, in effect, more akin to the experience of a musician reading "a musical score . . . and inwardly hearing the notes." Obviously we are not worried about those notes casting judgment on us.

But this is not to imply that the reader's inner voice feels in any way inanimate. After all, it is the very voice in which we produce our thoughts, as Bishop notes:

> it is not a fictional voice that I hear when I read but a new and adapted experience of my own inner voice. This inner voice is the medium of my consciousness. It is also the medium of my silent reading. Thus, when I read I am hearing the sounds through which I normally identify myself—the sounds through which I possess self-consciousness—suspended and reformed.

It is somewhat disturbing to realize that our thinking can be invaded in this fashion. Bishop reminds us, however, that we are far from feeling anxiety about how the voice of the other comes to inhabit our thoughts while reading: "I often desire to prolong it, to listen to it attentively and with pleasure." Her concluding metaphor is of a sort of willed possession: in the silent reading of literature, "I become complicit in the process of my being ventriloquized: the words are animated by my participation, and my inner voice is thus enlivened by a strange heartbeat."

I have argued here that an utterance rich in dramatic character is likely to induce a certain performative freedom in its silent readers. Bishop's reflections remind us that this somewhat ecstatic experi-

ence—becoming the performer in one's head of another human being's utterance ("my inner voice . . . enlivened by a strange heartbeat")—is at the same time a thoroughly everyday experience. "It is hard," as Anthony James Ridgway comments in his own discussion of silent reading, "to imagine hearing the voice of Huckleberry Finn in an English accent while reading the book."[28] We expect to perform when reading literature to ourselves, and we do so with abandon, whatever self-consciousness and even anxiety an out-loud recital of the very same words might cause us.

6. Inundating Choruses

The arguments marshaled above beg an obvious question. If the scoring properties of Joyce's text are such that they incline us to proclaim, recite, and dramatize the text in all these ways, even (or even especially!) in silence, why have commentators found it repeatedly necessary to point to the desirability of our saying and hearing the work?

Already in 1924, Joyce, the first such commentator, described the "stupefaction" his new work was occasioning to Harriet Shaw Weaver, and he explained to her, in relation to phrases like "my soamheis brother" (*FW* 425.22-23), that "[t]hese are the words the reader will see, but not those he will hear" (*LettersI* 216). But why, we might ask, did he feel the need to explain that to her? Surely Weaver was herself an instance of "the reader." In a letter to her the following year, Joyce again described the incomprehension his new writing was eliciting—including from a Mrs. Nutting, who responded with a "charming!" (*LettersI* 236). Joyce added, though, that Mrs. Nutting's confusion was dissipated "after she heard me read it and indeed suggested my voice should be dished [disced]" (*LettersI* 236). Why did Joyce feel the need to demonstrate that the *Wake* comes to life when one hears it, and why have numerous commentators felt that same need since? Surely any reading would demonstrate that fact, whether the reading be aloud or, as I have been at pains to point out here, in silence.

Or would it?

Finnegans Wake offers us a rich, brilliantly cued vocal score, as is apparent the moment striking passages are considered in carefully curated isolation. But the confluence of the features noted above (along with myriad other ones not discussed here, from the graphic to the narratival), when encountered through the pages of the book, is overwhelming. We have seen Hart's comment about the difficulty of holding even just a few paragraphs in mental focus. *Finnegans Wake* at any larger level is exhausting. The more one reads it in silence, the harder it becomes to retain one's focus. Shifting to

some relatively unperformative mode of silent reading becomes hard to resist. I have in mind the attenuated mode described by Baddeley and his colleagues (audiation), where we read slowly enough for the text to sound forth in our heads but make no attempt subvocally to "say it to ourselves." At times, one's thoughts drift from the page altogether. There are simply too much performativity and too many voices—too much muchness—to entertain. As Derek Attridge puts it, in his lengthy unpacking of the multiple vocal possibilities scored for us within the celebrated Nightingale Song at *FW* 359.31-360.06, a mere seven lines of text,

> there is no way of holding the various possibilities together in an organic whole. No subtle tone of voice, no imagined human situation, could make all these meanings valid at the same time: *Finnegans Wake* explodes the belief that language, to be meaningful, must be subservient to a singleness of intention and subjectivity. (12)

Hart's attack upon "the usual statement that the *Wake* is primarily intended to work on the auditory imagination" is motivated by a similar observation: there is an excessive quantity of voices in Joyce's sentences (36). "In most cases," he comments, "a variety of pronunciations is necessary for each word" (36).

Hart's negative reading of the *Wake's* scoring properties, vis-à-vis the pronunciation of its *hapax legomena* vocabulary, is paralleled in his discussion of the text's syntax. Syntax, as I have been at pains to point out, is a vocal-scoring device in its own right. The impediments the *Wake* puts in the way of its smooth performance become apparent over any longer quotation. Take the first quotation in this essay, now extended out beyond "the finding of the Ardagh chalice" phrase and continued right up to the full stop:

> What child of a strandlooper but keepy little Kevin in the despondful surrounding of such sneezing cold would ever have trouved up on a strate that was called strete a motive for future saintity by euchring the finding of the Ardagh chalice by another heily innocent and beachwalker whilst trying with pious clamour to wheedle Tipperaw raw raw reeraw puteters out of Now Sealand in spignt of the patchpurple of the massacre, a dual a duel to die to day, goddam and biggod, sticks and stanks, of most of the Jacobiters. (*FW* 110.31–111.04)

Should there not be a question mark at the end? Actually, from the moment we come to the second "by" phrase ("by another heily innocent and beachwalker whilst trying with pious clamour"), are we still even asking a question? Have we not fused the words into a statement? How then to read it? A hesitant tone hardly seems right. For Hart, the global incoherence of such a sentence is a feature of Wakean sentences in general:

> These longer sentences are broken up into Chinese puzzles of small parentheses which twist and turn and digress to such an extent that, although their logical meanings are usually as straightforward as the huge encrustations of modifiers will allow, it is nearly always impossible to contemplate the whole structure at once. (40-41)

This seems correct, but does it not contradict the equally forthright claim quoted at the start of this article, Hart's assertion that the *Wake* possesses a "fundamental syntactical clarity and simplicity"? I do not think so. Central to Hart's point regarding the work's "underlying conservatism" when it comes to syntax is that Joyce—unlike his contemporaries Gertrude Stein, Eugene Jolas, or the Dadaists—"makes no attempt . . .to dispense with clause structure" (31). What is radical in the *Wake*, Hart notes, is not Joyce's clause structure but rather the fact that those "brief qualifying and elaborating phrases have become Joyce's fundamental units" (41). He refers to the effect that results from this clausal focus as the "break-down of the sentence" (38). His diagnosis sheds a bright light on the performance-eliciting power of the *Wake's* syntax, lyricism, and vivid ventriloquism. All of these features exist, in full, which is why it has been possible to analyze them here—but they do not necessarily take the sentence as their frame. This, surely, is why it is so frequently impossible to keep an entire Wakean sentence in mind. There are too many individual performances occurring. Joyce's grammar is essentially normative. It is just that each of the *Wake's* sentences has more than one speaker using it in them.[29]

It is no wonder readers need to be reminded of their ears. We close them in exhaustion, or, at least, that is how I read the dispiriting picture Hart offers of the effect of deep engagement with the text. After "a few hundred pages," he writes, the polyvocal punning "comes to be accepted, just as the ordinary reader of an ordinary book accepts the usual conventions of language. . . . [N]othing surprises, nothing shocks" (34). I diagnose this as indicating a shift to some relatively un-performative mode of silent reading. It might involve a conversion to the sort of relatively passive audiation Baddeley and his colleagues describe. Certainly that is my experience. I often find myself speed-reading as well or even forgetting I am reading as various other thoughts float into my mind. Readers will have their own experiences. But I think they will concur that Joyce's polyphonic score is simply too shape-shifting and multiple for any individual silent readers ever to feel they have actually entirely "heard" it.

By the same token, we should not ignore those scholars who contradict Hart and Attridge on this point. Consider in this regard Myers's rejoinder to Hart's insistence that "highly controlled choral speaking by a small group would be the only satisfactory solution

to the problem of how to read *Finnegans Wake* aloud, each speaker adhering to one 'voice' of the counter-point and using the appropriate accent and stress" (36). Myers quotes the comment in the course of his discussion of a sentence from early in Book 2: "And, jessies, push the pumkik round" (*FW* 236.17). This sentence, Myers explains, evokes two different and distinct popular tunes at the same time. He notes that it could be produced in multi-personed chorus, as Hart suggests. But, actually, Myers asserts, "even with one reader we have the evocation of two tunes simultaneously" (19). At this point he adds, coyly: "I make no claim for a successful musical achievement here; but simultaneity is essential to the imitation of the dream state" (19). This seems to suggest a certain multiplication of the reader's subjective possibilities. From such a perspective, one might conclude that the advice to read *Finnegans Wake* aloud in chorus with others, in fact, serves to mask one of the book's prime effects on its typically silent readers. It makes us choral in our own right (perhaps).

What if Hart and Myers were both right? Might we, on the one hand, argue that the *Wake* is individually un-performable at any length and thereby productive of a certain reduction in readerly attention and, on the other, that the book induces a dazed state whereby extra voices start speaking vividly through one? That suggests that the ennui Hart describes is actually the necessary platform for our experience of the dreamy, polyphonic transport attested to by Myers. Drifting through the *Wake*, and its many, inscrutable passages—and we drift, because it is too exhausting to read for long periods otherwise—one experiences sudden transports of involuntary performativity at instants of "cristalclear" diction, lyricism, and/or character work.[30] Myers refers to "the imitation of the dream state" and seems to imply that it is something we try consciously to practice. It strikes me, however, that, actually, the imitation feels much more like something done to us as silent readers by *Finnegans Wake* in irruptive fashion and out of our very inattention.

7. *Finnegans Wake* as Thought with the Mouth

It would be folly to dis-esteem the practice of reading the *Wake* out loud and/or in a group. The gains in understanding and pleasure are too obvious, but there are strong reasons to read the *Wake* in silence as well. Foremost among them is that, in doing so, one comes closer to sensing that these irruptions of verbal performativity have the very texture of our thoughts.

In the introductory vignette to *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Sigmund Freud observes that the initial words that came to his mind (first "Boticelli," then "Boltraffio") when he attempted to grasp one on the tip of his tongue ("Signorelli"), contained traces of other, more

disturbing thoughts, in effect, "Trafoi," a place where a patient of his had recently committed suicide.[31] It was not that Freud could *hear* the "Trafoi" in "Boltraffio" at the time (6-8). Something of that order of self-encryption seems to be on the surface of Joyce's portmanteau formations as well: "Everywhair!" (*FW* 108.23). Jacques Derrida's comment is apposite: "despite this book's appeal for reading out loud, for song and for timbre, something essential in it passes the understanding as well as the hearing, a graphic or literal dimension, a muteness which one should never pass over in silence."[32] This is the case, but there is also another, and quite distinct, way the *Wake* embodies our cognitive processes.

It challenges us to realize we think with the mouth. That is to say, when we have thoughts, and are conscious of having them, they overwhelmingly take the form of a saying. This is, of course, not always the case, but the comparative aptitude of verbal utterance for conveying abstract concepts like "tomorrow," when compared to the images, actions, and crafted objects that we also think through, has to be acknowledged.[33] Consider, in this light, Wittgenstein's challenge to "say and mean a sentence, e.g. 'it will probably rain tomorrow.' Now think the same thought again, mean what you just meant, but without saying anything (either aloud or to yourself)" (*Studies* 42). As well as pointing to the tendency of conscious thinking to take the form of a saying, particularly when it is a matter of thinking about abstract properties, this passage from Wittgenstein's "Blue Book" acts as corrective to what he calls our philosophical "temptation to look for a peculiar act of thinking, independent of the act of expressing our thoughts, and stowed away in some peculiar medium" (*Studies* 43). The expressing of the thought *is* the thinking of it—which is why one can think out loud.

Similarly, the conviction one places in a thought is not housed in some mental realm additional to the thought but, rather, is there in the very way one "utters" it—as an auditory image, subvocally, out loud, or however. Wittgenstein observes, "A process accompanying our words which one might call the 'process of meaning them' is the modulation of the voice in which we speak the words; or one of the processes similar to this, like the play of facial expression" (*Studies* 35). The clarity with which the fragmented voices in *Finnegans Wake* have been scored, and the performativity in which they thereby engage when irrupting through a silent reading, takes readers to a suddenly similar place. It is like someone else is thinking with conviction through you.

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NOTES

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers at the *JJQ* for their acute comments on an earlier version of this article.

[1] James Steven Sauceda, "The 'Wordloosed Soundscript': Performing James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*," *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 10 (April 1990), 125. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[2] These are a few examples of this tendency: in *The Role of Thunder in "Finnegans Wake"* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 15–16, Eric McLuhan is prescriptive about "the necessity for reading aloud," stating as "one of the ground rules for reading the book, one that has been assimilated into the mystique surrounding it, that it must be read aloud, preferably *to* someone." Maud Ellmann is less prescriptive in her passing reference to the way the *Wake* is "difficult to read alone, and by demanding group reading the novel resurrects. . . . [t]he familiar image of a 1930s family gathered around a massive radio"—see "Joyce's Noises," *Modernism/modernity*, 16 (April 2009), 389. In "Reading Joyce," in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), p. 10, Derek Attridge eschews any suggestion that there is a right way to read the *Wake*, simply offering that the book "responds superbly to group readings" and on that basis proceeding over nine pages to describe an imagined out-loud recital and group exploration of the seven lines from *FW* 359.31-360.06. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text. Other exhortations and suggestions to read the *Wake* aloud could be cited here, but this is an indicative range.

[3] For instance, see Zack Bowen and Alan Roughley, "Parsing Persse: The Codology of Hosty's Song," *Bronze by Gold: The Music of Joyce*, ed. Sebastian D. G. Knowles (New York: Garland Publishers, 1999), pp. 504-20; Tim Conley, "Performance Anxieties: On Failing to Read *Finnegans Wake*," *Papers on Language and Literature*, 39 (January 2003), 71-90; Margot Norris, "The Music of Joyce's Vernacular Voices," *Modernism/modernity*, 16 (April 2009), 377-82; and Frederico Sabatini, "Fullstoppers and Fools Tops: The 'Compunction' of Punctuation and Geometry in *Finnegans Wake*," *Doubtful Points: Joyce and Punctuation*, *European Joyce Studies*, 23, ed. Elizabeth M. Bonapfel and Conley (Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, 2014), 153-66. Further references to the Conley and Norris essays will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[4] Mara Breen and Charles Clifton Jr., "Stress Matters: Effects of Anticipated Lexical Stress on Silent Reading," *Journal of Memory and Language*, 64 (February 2011), 153. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[5] David Greetham, "Introduction: 'Begin again . . . Stop!'" *Finnegans Wake*, ed. Danis Rose and John O'Hanlon (Cornwall: Houyhnhnm Press, 2010), p. 18 of the accompanying booklet.

[6] Clive Hart, *Structure and Motif in "Finnegans Wake"* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 31, and Jean-Michel Rabaté, *James Joyce and the Politics of Egoism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), p. 105. Further references to the Hart work will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[7] See John Lurz, "Literal Darkness: *Finnegans Wake* and the Limits of Print," *JJQ*, 50 (Spring 2013), 676.

[8] Vincent J. Cheng, "'The Twining Stresses, Two by Two': The Prosody of Joyce's Prose," *Modernism/modernity*, 16 (April 2009), 394.

[9] See Deborah McCutchen, Laura C. Bell, Ilene M. France, and Charles A. Perfetti, "Phoneme-Specific Interference in Reading: The Tongue-Twister Effect Revisited," *Reading Research Quarterly*, 26 (Winter 1991), 88. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[10] Guy C. Van Orden, "A ROWS is a ROSE: Spelling, Sound and Reading," *Memory & Cognition*, 15 (May 1987), 181-98.

[11] Van Orden and Heidi Kloos, "The Question of Phonology and Reading," *The Science of Reading: A Handbook*, ed. Margaret J. Snowling and Charles Hulme (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2005), <DOI:10.1111 /b.9781405114882.2005.00007.x>. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text to this website.

[12] The first two of these sentences are from an experiment by Rebecca Treiman, Jennifer J. Freyd, and Jonathan Baron, "Phonological Recoding and Use of Spelling-Sound Rules in Reading of Sentences," *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 22 (December 1983), 691.

[13] Alan Baddeley, Marge Eldridge, and Vivien Lewis, "The Role of Subvocalization in Reading," *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, Section A: Human Experimental Psychology*, 33 (11 June 1981), 439. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[14] For a recent corroboration of this position, from the perspective of an fMRI study, see Marcela Perrone-Bertolotti et al., "How Silent is Silent Reading? Intracerebral Evidence for Top-Down Activation of Temporal Voice Areas during Reading," *The Journal of Neuroscience*, 32 (5 December 2012), 17554-62.

[15] Curtis D. Hardyck and Lewis F. Petrinovich, "Subvocal Speech and Comprehension Level as a Function of the Difficulty Level of Reading Material," *Journal of Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 9 (December 1970), 647-52.

[16] John Leonard, "Rhythm, Form, and Metre," *Seven Centuries of Poetry in English*, ed. Leonard (Melbourne: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), p. 568.

[17] Bo Yao, Pascal Belin, and Christoph Scheepers, "Silent Reading of Direct Versus Indirect Speech Activates Voice-Selective Areas in the Auditory Cortex," *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 23 (October 2011), 3146-52.

[18] See Wallace Chafe's recent comments on the desire to achieve "control" over experimental phenomena in *Towards a Thought-Based Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2018), p. 9.

[19] Willi Erzgräber, "The Narrative Presentation of Orality in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*," *Oral Tradition*, 7 (March 1992), 154, and see Thomas Moore, *Moore's Irish Melodies*, arr. Michael William Balfe (London: Novello, Ewer, and Company, 1859).

[20] Maria L. Slowiaczek and Clifton, "Subvocalization and Reading for Meaning," *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behaviour*, 19 (October 1980), 581. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[21] In addition to observing the usual lexical stress when speaking languages like English or German, we put stress on the syllables of key words to indicate new or important information.

[22] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, amended 2nd ed., ed. G. H. Von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 57e. Here is the original text in German: "Manchmal kann ein Satz nur verstanden werden, wenn man ihn im *richtigen Tempo* liest. Meine Sätze sind alle *langsam* zu lesen" (p. 57). Note how Wittgenstein uses

italics to indicate focus marking, as reflected in our equivalently italicized translation.

[23] Wittgenstein, *Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations" Generally Known as the Blue and Brown Books*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper Publishers, 1965), p. 7. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text as *Studies*.

[24] Robert-Jan Henkes and Erik Bindervoet, "Selected Variants," *Finnegans Wake*, by James Joyce, ed. Henkes and Bindervoet (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012), p. 634.

[25] Peter Myers, *The Sound of "Finnegans Wake"* (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1992), p. 28. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[26] See Naomi Cumming's discussion of the essential role that risk plays in the concert recital in *The Sonic Self: Musical Subjectivity and Signification* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2000), pp. 20-41.

[27] Stephanie Bishop, "Silent Reading: The Read Voice," *TEXT*, 17 (April 2013), <http://www.textjournal.com.au/april13/bishop.htm>. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text to this website.

[28] Anthony James Ridgway, "The Inner Voice," *International Journal of English Studies*, 9 (December 2009), 46.

[29] Note, in this regard, F. G. Ansenjo's characterization of the individual Wakean sentences as a "chain . . . formed by identifiable parts (words or groups of words), each one in turn playing the role of subject with respect to the rest of the sentence" in "The General Problem of Sentence Structure: An Analysis Prompted by the Loss of Subject in 'Finnegans Wake,'" *The Centennial Review*, 8 (Fall 1964), 402.

[30] See Henkes and Bindervoet, "*Finnegans Wake,* the Corrected Text," *Genetic Joyce Studies*, 4 (Spring 2004), <http://www.geneticjoycestudies.org/articles/GJS4/GJS4_RJE_Corrected_Text>.

[31] Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth Press, 1901), 6:6-8.

[32] Jacques Derrida, "Two Words for Joyce," trans. Geoff Bennington, *Post-Structuralist Joyce,* ed. Attridge and Daniel Ferrer (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), p. 156.

[33] See further V. N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 9-15, and especially pp. 13-15, 28-29. See also this author's discussion of thinking as "inner speech" (pp. 38-39). The book is widely attributed to Mikhail Bakhtin. That there is nothing *essential* to Voloshinov/Bakhtin's equation between "inner speech" and abstraction is implicit in his account. For a rich illustration of the fact that abstract concepts do not have to take verbal form, see the various discussions of thinking, dreaming, hallucinating, and composing poetry in sign language in Oliver Sacks, *Seeing Voices* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000). Significant to Voloshinov/Bakhtin's argument would be the fact that it takes a culture—in this latter case, a community of the deaf—to produce the language in which thought proceeds, thought being in this respect an inherently public phenomenon.