

THE WANT OF SENSE

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hearing roaratorioplacing muoyceii

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releasing the chaos

NOW THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN HAVOC, IRREVERSIBLE CHAOS,
THE TROJANS PENNED IN THE WALLS OF TROY LIKE SHEEP, BUT
THE FATHER OF MEN AND GODS WAS QUICK TO THE MARK. A CRASH
OF THUNDER!

(*ILIAD* 235 FAGLES TRANSLATION)

—THE MUJIC OF THE FOOTURE ON THE BARBARIHAMS OF THE BASHED?
CO CANNILEY?

—DA DONNULEY.

—YET THIS WAR HAS MEED PEACE? *IN VOINA VIRITAS. AB CHAOS LEX,*
NEAT WEHR?

(*FINNEGANS WAKE* 518)

NEW CHAOS AND COMPLEXITIES THAT MAKE ME GURGLE AND
SWALLOW RATHER THAN UTTER AND WHISPER.

(*CAGE CONVERSATION* 1992)

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These pages are about: what we say when we hear the worded text of John Cage's *Roaratorio*. They could have been so named. They are also another in an ongoing series of exercises in nonintentional philosophy—the consequence of others, as the latter is expressed in the ordinary language philosophy of Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell. Pursuits of understanding are reminded to be aligned and threaded with what makes them possible. The current work may rightfully recall its not too distant cousin: *Listening to Cage: Nonintentional Philosophy and Music*. Like *Listening to Cage*, which took its direction from requests in footnotes 3 and 15 of that text, this text does the same with the invitation in footnote 8.

0. Chaos

— *Roaratorio*

he would Jused sit it
 All write down just as
 in hyMns
 ignorancE
 Seeing how heartsilly sorey he was

 was life worth leaving neJ
 thOledoth treetrene
 pumme if Yell
 while itCh ish
 shomE

(II 229-231)

What?

This is text from John Cage's *Roaratorio: An Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake* (1979), specifically from *Writing For the Second Time Through Finnegans Wake* (1977). How are we to read, hear, and understand this? Let us try answering by reading more:

festives and highajinks arid
 nOw
 a tradewinds daY and the o'moyly
 rossies Chaffing
 him bluchfacE and playing him prank

(I 94-95)

 Jests
 jOkes
 interjection buckleY
 musiC
 providEntially arranged by l'archet and laccorde

(II 221-222)

 Jistr to gwen his gwistel
 prAties sweet and irish too
 and Mock
 gurglE
 to whiStle his way through for the swallying

(III 406-407)

round the lodge of fjorn
 gAlla
 taMming
 unclE
 tim'S caubeen

(IV 622-625)

Has this further reading settled our concerns? Seemingly, most certainly, not. The questions of reading, understanding, and hearing still remain. Another question, in fact, arises: "Why?" So, how are we to comprehend or move forward in our talk about the *Roaratorio* text?

More Cage word and page readings do not readily help with our confusions with understanding, hearing, and presentation. Are we asking the right questions? Is there an importance or a condition of possibility we easily forget, regarding *what we say when* we read and hear and understand? Are we in need of a background and a proper placement and setting of the words? Would that not help answer our questions?

An immediate larger context for the words of *Roaratorio* is initially even harder to approach, more unruly, and less helpful for understanding, since the written text generating our questions is deeply interwoven with various confounding slices of taped sounds and music that often completely cover, make unhearable, the out loud reading component. (Cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQUQMbjUXx8>.) Furthermore, these collected sounds, along with the textual words, are found and grounded in the consistently perplexing *Finnegans Wake*, an antecedent text of which our same questions of reading, hearing, and understanding are independently and repeatedly asked. Its first words so challenge and confound us:

riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend
of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to
Howth Castle and Environs.

Sir Tristram, violer d'amores, fr'over the short sea, had passen-
core rearrived from North Armorica on this side the scraggy
isthmus of Europe Minor to wielderfight his penisolate war: nor

(3.1-6)

Not unimportantly, it seems also worth noting that the dancer Merce Cunningham subsequently (1983) broadened and enriched the context and questions of the piece when he choreographed, with Cage's blessing, the whole of *Roaratorio*, and thus a modern dance component was then added to the sounds and words of the composition, thereby increasing the complexity, commotion, and denseness of the work. (Cf., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gu7DAUd5wf8>.)

So our first, pressing difficulties with the reading, disorder, and words of the *Roaratorio* text, given a larger soundsjoycecunningham context for understanding, may now seem rather minor, even if still unmanageable.

Cage said about his composition:

I HOPE THAT *ROARATORIO* WILL ACT TO INTRODUCE PEOPLE TO THE PLEASURES OF *FINNEGANS WAKE* WHEN IT IS STILL ON THE SIDE OF POETRY AND CHAOS RATHER THAN SOMETHING ANALYZED AND KNOWN TO BE SAFE AND LAW-ABIDING.

(Mode *Roaratorio* CD booklet 8)

Whereas a scholarly and analytical understanding of the mysteries of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is a task set by many, Cage encourages, instead, a provocation, awakening, and stirring of the Joyce text and our lives; our having "the courage" to side with, be "on the side of what we could call" the chaos and poetry of *Finnegans Wake*. (Mode *Roaratorio* CD booklet, 38) Being not a poet, but still trying to follow, in

some measure, in the steps of Cage's courage and the path taken by *Roaratorio*, the continued, reflective concentration here will be on chaos, beginning with a limited collection of the linguistic phenomenology of the concept.

**chaos mayhem incompleteness unknown order disruption utter confusion
havoc disorganization pandemonium destroying disarrangement commotion
disarray want void madness unruliness unapproachable upending babel
questions not answers free-for-all incite provoke awaken disorder uproar**

*chaos of about for uncaused chaos managing the chaos total chaos new chaos fears of chaos
laws of chaos saw the chaos resulting chaos expected chaos turned to chaos uncontrolled
chaos arranging the chaos means less chaos limited chaos limit the chaos kind of chaos
grows want of chaos awaiting chaos amid the chaos site escape the chaos ahead creates
chaos power of chaos apparent chaos primal chaos stop the chaos survived the chaos*

This data allows, for better or worse, not a theory (which nonintentional philosophy and music scorn and will not advance) but a generalized description for possible work in progress . . .¹

[gentle, mild] a touch of, checked chaos	[backward]
[moderate, inside] unruly, tolerable chaos	[in medias res]
[radical] overturning, uproarious, compounding chaos	[rewrite]
[severe] sheer, untainted, importance destroying chaos	[raze]

. . . to which we now turn.

¹ Ordinary language philosophy finds value not in theorizing but in collecting linguistic data. By reading, for instance, the dictionary and listing word uses relevant to a topic of concern. (When in doubt include the word.) This is not to seek general understanding but finding possibilities of thought, of talk and action, in the language data and differences and agreements of use.

What is gained or of value in collecting uses and reading the dictionary cover to cover? Immediately, the discovery of how little we know is put before us and reinforced; how little of the linguistic data we actually possess. We further find the inherited experience and acumen of many generations of humans and the often unspoken trust of others that grounds and is given in our lives. It is in the linguistic data and the conditions that make it possible that we can, at least in part, find ourselves. That is where we are.

Collecting dictionary data is an activity that need not be, and likely is not, guided by an end or beacon or a knowing what, if anything, will be accomplished. One sets about the task without knowing exactly what is being done or will be done. Yet, do this until you can do better and you may perhaps find some means to talk of what is important, or interesting, or of some value.

1. Backward

— *Iliad* ← *Odyssey* ← *Ulysses* ← *Finnegans Wake* ← *Roaratorio*

Finnegans Wake ← *Roaratorio*

To address the call of how to hear or understand or read the worded text of *Roaratorio*, we first take a step of gentle, disorderly disorganization, chaos; we work backward from the completed, one hour, magnetic tape; and separate the *Roaratorio* parts, finding its individual inside elements, ending with the *Writing Through Finnegans Wake*, which is where Cage started the composition of the piece, although not knowing it at the time. Here is a rough but sufficient first schema of that recounting.

Texts ← Music

(2) ← List of sounds ← Places mentioned ← Irish music
 placed on tape sounds from places band jig music

The list of sounds mentioned in *Finnegans Wake* produced four to five thousand examples, which by chance operations were reduced in number, to which were added the ambient sounds from the collected list of places mentioned in the text, again chance reduced, and to all of which was added Irish songs and ballads and music. These were all underlaid and entwined with the reading out loud of *Writing For The Second Time Through Finnegans Wake*, which was the successor to *Writing Through Finnegans Wake*. The whole of these parts produced a radio performance composition, for which Cage received the Karl Sczuka Prize in 1979; not to be confused with the Terziis prize with Serni medal.

In tracing the insides and asking questions about the text of *Roaratorio*, we clearly cannot escape some encounter with or a facing of *Finnegans Wake*.

We continue moving backward in search of understanding *Roaratorio* in the direction of the words or the textual matter found in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. The task of a basic understanding of that text is for many a reader its very essence; and is to be the main aspiration when beginning a reading.

"This introduction is aimed in part at those who might open *Finnegans Wake* for the first time and perceive it as a kind of chaos and then, given its reputation for being incomprehensible, put it back on the shelf. It therefore provides anchorage in some basic aspects of the book." (Fordham, *Finnegans Wake* Introduction, viii)

Cage, as we have seen, will assent to the chaos but not the anchor.

Understanding the text is not for him what is primarily exciting or useful about the text. Is it for Joyce?

"The babbblers with their thangas vain have been (confusium hold them!) they were and went; thigging thugs were and houhnhymn songtoms were and comely norgels were and pollyfool fiansees." (*Finnegans Wake* 15.12-15)

Many scholars are tied to understanding the text above all else, and thereby wonder at or deride what Cage does. word games, wasteful, transparent nonsense, anti-intellectual harm
Some find his efforts of worth. challenging, enjoyable, ideas inciting, imaginative soundings While not speaking directly of Cage, Finn Fordham, the editor of Oxford's *Finnegans Wake*, invites the more affirmative approach.

"Any movement in the direction of such [creative] interpretations should be welcomed: they will extend the way we imagine the work, how we visualize it and, above all, how we *hear* it. This aspect has yet to be fully brought into the light: it will provide a renewed *Finnegans Wake*." (Fordham, *Finnegans Wake* Introduction, xxxiv)

The primary text itself gives thought and provocation toward Cage's efforts:

"here keen again and begin again to make soundsense and sensesound kin again" (*Finnegans Wake* 121.15)

We do not reject, it seems, pursuits of understanding but align and thread them with what makes them possible. That is an ordinary language philosophy reminder of how one can read Cage and Joyce, even a way of reading for those critically inclined against them.²

The creative attention to the speaking and reading of texts that has moved, since Homer, back and forth between the senses of writing and the sounds of voices may need, with Cage's encounter of Joyce, to swing again, or, better, interweave the two, bringing new vocal matter to written pages and new reflections on "soundsense" and "singsigns."³

"wanamade singsigns to soundsense an yit he wanna git all his flesch nuemaid motts truly prural and plausible" (*Finnegans Wake* 138.7-9)

Ulysses ← *Finnegans Wake*

Endeavors to understand *Finnegans Wake* have inherent problems beyond the meanings of its content. What is the real book, the *real Wake*, and what are we suppose to be or actually reading and hearing? What text are we trying to understand? There are arguably many *Finnegans Wake* or even none. The errors of printing the text remain immense.

² Pursuits of understanding are traditional philosophical business and tasks, but that is not usually Cage's concern. In the Cage compositions of discussion here, the want of sense not understanding is dominant and important. As we will see, we are given aural and written chaos as, at least, a call and cause to listen, a turn away from pursuits of understanding. The content often confuses, mystifies, makes us struggle for sense, placing us in a position, finally, to just listen.

In *homerjoyceceage* we are given reminders, place and context, for investigation of the relation of understanding and want of sense. "If this had not been said then there would be no want of sense or questions of understanding." "This makes that possible." Want of sense produces a desire to understand.

³ The threaded character of talk and writing, of sound and sense, is jestingly captured in a lurking watermark of this text: Read Cage Understand Homer. It is found, as well, in the serious main body textual reverberation: Want of Sense elicits Want of Sense.

“That *Finnegans Wake* is not the work Joyce wrote or envisaged has long been known.” . . . “*Finnegans Wake* still remains a work in progress.” (Henkes, Bindervoet, editors, *Finnegan Wake*, xlvii, xlix)

Revisions on revisions were just a way of working for Joyce. Whether writing *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* he would revise typed copy and page proofs and publishers editions. For him revisions were necessary and essential work of writing, and in most every case the revisions were broad and accretive. It is not, therefore, without meaning to ask exactly what particular text are we trying to understand when reading *Finnegans Wake*?

Furthermore, it is immediately a question of not just what to read but how to read. The text challenges our direct ways of reading. How to read the book is unclear. It does not offer itself easily as a linear read of first page to last. Options of reading are opened.

“One can read in the manner of a grasshopper, opening the book at random and jumping around the text to produce a wonderful series of musical phrases, motifs whose interpretations can tell stories of their own.” (Fordham, *Finnegan Wake*, xxix)

The text, itself, does offer some sense of a dance-hopping reading, for better or worse, in the telling of the story of the Ondt and the Gracehopper, which begins:

The Gracehopper was always jiggig ajog, hoppy on akkant of his joyicity

(*Finnegans Wake* 414.22-23)

We might read with such musical jiggig ajog and joyicity, whatever be the consequences.

(May the Graces I hoped for sing your Ondtship song sense!)

(Ibid, 419. 6)

The singing song sense allows that we not forget that one way to read the text is out loud speech, not quiet page turning. Many pleasures of Joyce’s works,

maybe especially *Finnegans Wake*, are best felt through reading them out loud, which allows the many rhythms and voices calmingly to emerge.

So, whatever the text and however we choose to read it, just as Cage is trying to arouse and awaken us to much that we easily ignore or forget, so too does Joyce provoke us.

“‘Finnegan’s Wake’ . . . This was an Irish-American comic song from the 1860s about a builder who is thought to have died but whose corpse, lying still at his own wake, nonetheless stirs when whiskey is spilled and splashes on his face and who then calls out for more. Joyce transformed the title of the song by removing the apostrophe. The title then becomes a sentence in which *Finnegans* (the plural noun) *Wake* (present tense verb).” (Fordham, *Finnegan Wake*, xv)

To what exactly are we being awakened? is a reflective challenge and title-inducing question of the text. To answer we might be helped if we continue retracing, continuing to retrace, the path from which such a difficult or imposing text came.

Joyce’s complex, history of humankind, in *Finnegans Wake*, certainly calls to mind the simpler, single day, rendering of events, in his *Ulysses*. Having written in that earlier text something involving the swirling history of one man venturing forth into Dublin until finally returning to his wife, all of it formatted by the 24 books and uncounted events of Homer’s *Odyssey*, Joyce moves in *Finnegan Wake* to a largely nighttime history of the world and its people as they are patterned cyclically, relying on texts of Giambattista Vico (and perspectives of Giordano Bruno), albeit with a looser connection than the previous *Odyssey* template.

repose, upon the silence of the dead, from pharoph the nextfirst
down to ramescheckles the last bust thing. The Vico road goes
round and round to meet where terms begin. Still onappealed
to by the cycles and unappalled by the recoursers we feel all
serene, never you fret, as regards our dutyful cask. Full of my

(Some have followed the “Vico road” to find understanding in *Finnegans Wake*, not unlike those following the steps of Cunningham to find comprehension in *Roaratorio*. Vico ← *Finnegans Wake Roaratorio* → Cunningham Although both efforts seem caught, maybe unexpectedly, in side thickets of narrowness.)

Finnegans Wake looks backward to Joyce’s previous writings, predominately, *Ulysses*. He followed in its tracks when writing *Finnegans Wake* but enhancing and stretching what he had done there. After the multitude of different styles of his previous works, what was Joyce to do? For more than a dozen years he would, in *Finnegans Wake*, concentrate on the matter of language itself, twisting and turning it into reflective, bewildering, and comical forms that defied understanding at many a turn. This language attention would cause a loss of interest and mutiny among many devoted readers.

But it was not just *Finnegans Wake* that first caused a rebellion among Joyce readers and an outcry against his writing and language, an acidic asking of what and why. These questions had earlier roots in *Ulysses* and how it was to be read and understood.

Odyssey ← *Ulysses*

What does a reader find when opening *Ulysses*? A randomly chosen set of sentences provides a lead.

“What is the age of the soul of man? As she hath the virtue of the chameleon to change her hue at every new approach, to be gay with the merry and mournful with the downcast, so too is her age changeable as her mood. No longer is Leopold, as he sits there, ruminating, chewing the cud of reminiscence, that staid agent of publicity and holder of a modest substance in the funds. He is young Leopold, as in a retrospective arrangement, a mirror within a mirror (hey, presto!), he beholdeth himself. That young figure of then is seen, precociously manly, walking on a nipping morning from

the old house in Clanbrassil street to the high school, his booksatchel on him bandolierwise, and in it a goodly hunk of wheaten loaf, a mother's thought." (*Ulysses*, 392.32ff)

What?

A puzzlement here is likely asking why *Ulysses* is often held to be so difficult to read, this exemplar seems rather muted. Is it really that hard to understand? Arriving here as we have, from *Roaratorio* and *Finnegans Wake*, the passage is quite agreeable and approachable, is it not? Possibly so, but certainly, many readers coming from elsewhere have found the text of *Ulysses*, even if enjoyable, still distressingly unreadable, at least sufficiently so to occasion confusions and the awakening of the further question "why?".

Another randomly extracted and found passage.

"Then?

He kissed the plump mellow yellow smellow melons of her rump, on each plump melonous hemisphere, in their mellow yellow furrow, with obscure prolonged provocative melonsmellonous osculation." (*Ulysses*, 686.24-27)

This seems more to the point of textual wonderment, to be sure. Such sentences are not the exception but much more the norm of the 770+ pages.

"— Antisthenes, pupil of Gorgias, Stephen said, took the palm of beauty from Kyrios Menelaus' brooddam, Argive Helen, the wooden mare of Troy in whom a score of heroes slept, and handed it to poor Penelope. Twenty years he lived in London and, during part of that time, he drew a salary equal to that of the lord chancellor of Ireland. His life was rich. His art, more than the art of feudalism, as Walt Whitman called it, is the art of surfeit. Hot herringpies, green mugs of sack, honeysauces, sugar of roses, marchpane, gooseberried pigeons, ringocandies. Sir Walter Raleigh, when they arrested him, had half a million francs on his back including a pair of fancy stays." (*Ulysses*, 193.5-13)

Like *Finnegans Wake*, some of this difficulty of understanding was not from *Ulysses'* content but from a sense that the text itself was not the clearest of printed materials. It was a text of wholesale revisions and rewritings and redone publication pages. Just as would be the case with the masterwork that followed, *Ulysses* was a

text of revisions and rewritings and at each stage of work there was substantial promise for error and confusion. Joyce, himself, noted this error prone and infested aspect of *Ulysses* when he presumably so punningly referred to it in *Finnegans Wake*.

“Business bred to speak with a stiff upper lip to all men and most occasions the Man we wot of took little short of fighting chances but for all that he or his or his care were subjected to the horrors of the premier terror of Errorland. (perorhaps!)” (*Finnegans Wake*, 62.25)

Like its successor, *Ulysses* is a book beset with error. It interestingly does, in fact, treat the concept of error in its textual content, and it is materially in error in its published forms. Cage took great delight in these facts.

“Isn’t there something of that in *Ulysses*, in the work of Joyce? You can’t find it fixed at any point. And the editors and scholars don’t seem to know what to do with it, what’s the right way to print it—Confusion! ... I think it’s absolutely marvelous how *Ulysses* does that. It’s more obviously done by *Finnegans Wake*. That *Ulysses* does that too is really ... instructive.” (Cage, Retallack 144)

He continued his thought further.

“What I’m thinking of is Joyce’s work itself, *Ulysses* originally, which has been so much studied by so many different people that there seems to be a consensus that it’s a demonstration that Joyce could write any kind of writing that he wanted, hmm? And that *Ulysses* demonstrates this, that it moves ... from one success to the next success! ... it’s success seems to *exist* in imperfection ... One doesn’t know what the perfect *Ulysses* is.” (Cage, Retallack 197)

Jeri Johnson, the Oxford editor of the newly reprinted 1922 edition of *Ulysses* makes the point of *Ulysses* chaos as well, and gives an explanation for it.

“What was it about *Ulysses* that struck Joyce’s contemporaries with such tremendous force? The vast majority of them could make neither head nor tail of the prose: ‘Two-thirds of it is incoherent’; ‘*Ulysses* is a chaos’; ‘inspissated obscurities’. . . . *Ulysses* assaulted propriety.” (Johnson, *Ulysses* xi-xii)

Ulysses embraces impropriety indeed. Few would challenge this, although many would care little about it. But we might also say (in the spirit of the Cage texts that brought us here) that in both *Finnegans Wake* and *Ulysses*, Joyce is not just assaulting propriety, which he most certainly does, but he is also, as importantly, preserving the disordered debris of life which we overlook or have thrown out, the expansive voided materials on which our lives stand and that we often forget

because of our narrowly established and proper arrangements and accommodations.

“A bloated carcass of a dog lay lolled on bladderwrack. Before him the gunwale of a boat, sunk in sand. *Un coche ensable*, Louis Veullot called Gautier’s prose. These heavy sands are language tide and wind have silted here. And there, the stoneheaps of dead builders, a warren of weasel rats. Hide gold there. Try it. You have some. Sands and stones. Heavy of the past.” (*Ulysses* 44.30-34)

In the supposed and discarded dung of our lives is preserved the melting, shifting, oozing chaos of what we were; yet, a chaos still holding exonerations and release of our present. Joyce has an apparent life-changing letter, in *Finnegan Wake*, resting in such unpleasantness.

“merest of bantlings observed a cold fowl behaviourising strangely on that fatal midden or chip factory or comicalbottomed copsjute (dump for short) afterwards changed into the orangery when in the course of deeper demolition unexpectedly one bushman’s holiday its limon threw up a few spontaneous fragments of orangepeel, the last remains of an outdoor meal by some unknown sunseeker or placehider *illico* way back in his mistridden past.” (*Finnegans Wake* 110.24-31)

He continues a few lines later:

“The bird in the case was Belinda of the Dorans, a more than quinquegintarian (Terziis prize with Serni medal, Cheepalizzy’s Hane Exposition) and what she was scratching at the hour of klokking twelve looked for all this zogzag world like a goodish-sized sheet of letterpaper originating by transhpt from Boston (Mass.) of the last of the first to Dear whom it proceeded to mention Maggy” (*Finnegans Wake* 111.5-11)

Whether a instance of comic impropriety or a different, awakening assault on our lives and understandings hardly matters, we are confronted by that we throwaway.

(Rereaders of *Ulysses* will hear the echo of the mystery of “Throwaway” in this discussion of last remains and heavy sands.

“I was just going to throw it away, Mr. Bloom said.” (*Ulysses* 82.26) Twenty to one, says Lenehan. Such is life in an outhouse. *Throwaway*, says he. Takes the biscuit and talking about bunions. (*Ulysses* 312.16-17)

As important as the letter in *Finnegans Wake*, the temptations of the Sirens in *Ulysses* is roughly equally so. Found in the nonintentional debris and carnage of

shipwrecks, sand, and rubble are sound-enticements that offer a life diversions, everlasting pleasures, and recreations. Joyce provides such soundings in his last texts, as Cage will later in his own; and Joyce will set the stage for Cage's more extensive release of chaos:

"Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons, steelyringing.
 Imperthnthn thnthnthn.
 Chips, picking chips off rocky thumbnail, chips.
 Horrid! And gold flushed more.
 A husky fifenote blew.
 Blew. Blue bloom is on the
 Gold pinnacled hair.
 A jumping rose on satiny breasts of satin, rose of Castile.
 Trilling, trilling: Idolores.
 Peep! Who's in the... peepofgold?
 Tink cried to bronze in pity."

(*Ulysses* 245.1-11)

These are the opening lines of chapter 11, *Sirens*. In her explanatory notes on *Ulysses*, Johnson usefully writes:

"The governing rules here are acoustic, not linguistic. . . . The aural logic of the episode—passages spawn other passages through similarities of sound; words arrange themselves into alliterative, mellifluous, cacophonous, rhythmic, assonantal, rhyming patterns; the acoustic voice (as sound) nudges out the graphic mark (as sense)—produces a noisy static profoundly disruptive of narrative coherence. But *Sirens* remains this side of (mere graphic transcriptions of) insensible sound, whatever its challenges to the matter/form divide. That is, narrative prevails beneath the dissonant hiss. . . . For *Ulysses* (and no less *Ulysses*) resists the Sirens' song." (Johnson, *Ulysses*, notes, 875-876)

We are not given content for understanding but aural chaos as cause to listen. We are given that required for understanding to have a context of use, questions that allow understanding to be the topic of concern. (If this had not been said we would not have asked how to understand that.)

In each case of our current backward movement this is what we wish to do: to hear in our text of concern what we have not heard before, prompted through new ideas carried by a line of succession of texts. We are asking a reader of these

texts to reread and rehear them again with the sense of a text brought into side-by-side, reflective connections with a compelling ancestor.

We must now plunge further backward in our talk to understand *Ulysses*.

Joyce says as much when responding to his Aunt Josephine:

"You say there is a lot of it you don't understand. I told you to read the *Odyssey* first." (Joyce, explanatory note *Ulysses*, Johnson, 764)

And within the text itself he reminds us:

"And there he is too. Now that's really a coincidence: secondtime. Coming events cast their shadows before." (*Ulysses* 158.1-2)

We are trying to call to mind the conditions that ground or provide possibilities for the texts of concern, of the asking what we say when. A movement backward is a rather tame awakening but it can elicit new thoughts. Whether it be *Odyssey* to *Iliad* or *Finnegans Wake* to *Ulysses* or *Roaratorio* to *Finnegans Wake* or *Muoyce* to *Roaratorio*, these grounding reflections are investigations of the sense of the texts we might helpfully gain and regain in moving backward.

It has been noted regularly, that the backward connection from *Ulysses* to *Odyssey* is almost impossible to grasp from Joyce's text alone.

"... it had another, more discomfiting side, and that was its relation to its epic precursor, *The Odyssey*. It is hard to imagine any reader stumbling on to this relation on her or his own. True, there is that title. A little cogitation might take one as far as Homer's hero (by way of his Roman descendant), but had Joyce left only the title, chances are that that is where one would come to a halt." (Johnson, *Ulysses*, introduction, xiv)

Without Joyce's help, it is said, the links further back would be virtually unknowable. The family resemblances of *Ulysses* to *The Odyssey* are notable, yet they are both like and definitely not like each other. Joyce will exploit this balance and imbalance in the texts in order to place the reader in a position of uncertainty and

frustration. It is a way, seemingly, of bringing disorder and reflection with plotted words.

This suggestion of an intentionally challenging or confusion writing requires care, if not correction, since it is maybe, or very likely, an underestimation of readers, even if it does allow significant questions of content and form to emerge. Richard Kostelanetz, the always rewarding, prolific Cage author, says that in Cage's work the textual sense of anarchy, chance, or incomprehension indicates not intentional efforts primarily to befuddle or confound, but a condition of trust in the audience.

"Rather than permit everything, he followed rules and trusted performers to do likewise. Over the years I've found myself repeatedly reminding some misguided admirers that chance is really about trust." (Kostelanetz, *John Cage's Greatest Hits*, last page)

It is a conviction that others can make decisions for themselves, can acknowledge and move along in a text, gaining whatever may come. It is a confidence that readers can on their own accept reject challenge abide. Trust in others is required to write and compose as Joyce and Cage do.⁴

Joyce routinely expects and trusts readers to find their own way in *Ulysses*, with whatever first guiding help they may find in *The Odyssey* and from him.

⁴ The same sense of trust of others, author and reader, will be found in Homer's writings as well; the pages that follow exemplify this.

Ordinary language philosophy begins not by criticizing the author or the reader for confusions found, but asking "how have I misunderstood what is being said and meant?" From the "what?" of hearing and reading we may recognize a want of sense and accept it, ground it, or abandon it. But it is trust, agreement and harmony, not criticism that provides a proper scope and finitude of a relation to others. "It is fundamental in talking (as in other matters) that we are entitled to trust others, except in so far as there is some concrete reason to distrust them. Believing persons, accepting testimony, is the, or one main, point of talking." (Austin, *Philosophical Papers, Other Minds*, 82) We begin, not end, with what others say and do. Doubt comes after belief.

Iliad ← *Odyssey*

We are then, in our craving for understanding, pushed from Joyce to Homer and to specific textual templates for Joyce, who uses the general structure of *The Odyssey* for the telling of *Ulysses*; the following of an ordinary, not heroic, man's single day, not ten year, Dublin, not Greek, wanderings before returning safely, not precariously, to his wife.

Turning to reading and hearing *The Odyssey* and its traditional companion and predecessor, its grounding text, *The Iliad*, we rather naturally may ask about their similarities and differences. To concentrate just on narrative, what do we first say? A protagonist in each sets the stage of the story telling, both are composed of similarly numbered individual books filled with the suffering and violence of the world, and each relates various confrontations the heroes encounter with others in that difficult world. Yet, for all the general narrative similarities, these constantly-allied epic texts are written relatively differently. Listen to their openings.

The Odyssey

Tell me about a complicated man.
 Muse, tell me how he wandered and was lost
 when he had wrecked the holy town of Troy,
 and where he went, and who he met, the pain
 he suffered on the sea, and how he worked
 to save his life and bring his men back home.
 He failed, and for their own mistakes, they died.
 They ate the Sun God's cattle, and the god
 kept them from home. Now goddess, child of Zeus,
 tell the old story for our modern times.
 Find the beginning.

(1.1-11, Wilson)

The Iliad

Rage—Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles,
 murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless losses,
 hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls,
 great fighters' souls, but made their bodies carrion,
 feasts for the dogs and birds,
 and the will of Zeus was moving toward its end.
 Begin, Muse, when the two first broke and clashed,
 Agamemnon lord of men and brilliant Achilles.

(1. 1-8, Fagles)

One text has a designated beginning, one that produces a seemingly simple linear presentation, while the other does not, the absence of which creates complex wanderings of time-lines and story-lines. The two texts may quickly stand apart.

Aristotle, in the *Poetics*, suggests, however, that both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are similarly unified texts.

“But Homer is different. . . .When he composed *The Odyssey*, he did not include everything that happened to the protagonist...Instead, we say *The Odyssey* is composed as a unified action and so is *The Iliad*. Just as in other representations, the unified representation is of a single thing, so also in storytelling, when it’s a representation of an action, that action must be single and complete.” (*Poetics* 1451a24-30, Bywater translation)

While composed of “unified action,” *The Odyssey*, nevertheless, stands against good principle as it shows for Aristotle more and different complications and thus less structural harmony than *The Iliad*. But, interestingly, in spite of that increased complexity it is often the text, says Aristotle, preferred by readers.

“The second best structure is the one some people think is the best, that which has a double structure, like *The Odyssey*, and ends in opposite ways for the better and worse character.” (*Poetics* 1453a30-32, Wilson translation)

Judgments regarding which narrative and telling is better or worse and which is a preferred exemplar of writing are questions, Aristotle notwithstanding, without definitive answers; and are still subject matter to be found in the arguments of the caring general practitioners who read with the goal of such understanding. But, regardless of the struggles to understand, the complications of *The Odyssey* over *The Iliad* are, as Aristotle suggests, apparently easily marked. *The Iliad* is action largely restricted to Troy and the Trojan steppes, involving but a few weeks of concern; whereas *The Odyssey* covers vast spaces of sea and land over ten years of time. The literary and learned struggles with *The Odyssey* become, for many, much more involved than those of *The Iliad*.

“Why is the narrative structure of the *Odyssey* so complicated? Although the plot of the poem is perfectly straightforward ... nevertheless the ordering of its narrative is elaborately nonlinear. The *Iliad* gets under way with a question from which ensues a linear, chronological account of the events the poem presents. ... The *Iliad* demarcates its subject—the wrath of Achilles—at the outset and organizes its story from the onset of the wrath to Achilles’ renunciation of it in Book 19 and the consequent episodes of the death and ransoming of Hector, according to the literal order in which those events take place.

The *Odyssey*, by contrast ... begins in the poem with a proleptic reference to Odysseus’ loss of his companions and to the specific episode of the eating of the cattle of Helios, then appeals to the Muse to begin ‘from somewhere’; and the response is to locate Odysseus on Kalypso’s island, where we will not actually meet him until Book 5.” (Slatkin, *Odyssey*, Norton Critical Edition, 361)

Much of *The Odyssey*’s narrative moves backward, and then occasionally forward for a while before twisting and turning the events of linear time. Many time-frames and complex structures of expression confront the reader leaving a basic invitation to stop and to reflect on the very process (conditions) of the storytelling (what Cage’s and Joyce’s occasions of a lack of sense give).⁵

The question of the complex structure of *The Odyssey* resounds the first questions (what, why) of this text, and the self-reflection of how we talk and tell our stories foreshadows the last section discussion (clearing) of these pages. We may begin to feel lost in the narrative there and here. But we can, at least, however we are turned, hear the text and take pleasure in that and wait for whatever may come, rather than reductively pressing to understand it. So what does come?

The Odyssey (if we include book xxiv) does not provide us with closure or a calming to our questioning. Odysseus, for instance, does not easily resolve or settle his desire to fight and kill his fellow men or even his thirst to wander and be somewhere else. Only the strict interference of the goddess Athena slows him down.

⁵ We are given an invitation to reflect on forms and conditions of expression, through the specific instance of the swerving narration of the *Odyssey*. The want of sense does not only present itself as a condition of chaos for absorption in listening, but it is also an opening (an invitation) for a possible pursuit of the conditions for understanding. Want of sense can elicit questions of conditions of possibility (philosophy) as well as immersion in sound (music). Neither course of action is individually, separately fixed nor inseparably connected to the other.

“Ithacan!
Stop this destructive war; shed no more blood,
and go your separate ways at once!”

Her voice
struck them with pale green fear and made them drop
their weapons. They were desperate to save
their lives, and they turned back towards the city.
Unwavering Odysseus let out
a dreadful roar, then crouched and swooped upon them,
just like an eagle flying from above.”

(24.530-539, Wilson)

The text then ends with apparent acquiescence from Odysseus to Athena and Zeus. But we are given no clear sense of what is beyond or to come; and importantly are left with his war-cry and dreadful roaratorio bursting in our ears.

The Iliad, in contrast, finishes with a more straight-forward, although still open-ended, story-telling of a funeral and burial and the simple, quieting words:

And so the Trojans buried Hector breaker of horses.

(24.944, Fagles)

In *The Odyssey* we have a complex structure that is linked and reflects backward to a simpler genesis. Our hearing of *The Odyssey* requires and is based on the condition of possibilities antecedent to it, *The Iliad*. The alliance and linking of the two texts is heard again and again.

“For in the Odyssean world of audiences, every new song must presuppose the existence of songs, about Troy—of an *Iliad*—whose prestige is the narrative ideal.” (Slatkin, *Odyssey*, Norton Critical Edition 364)

The *Odyssey*'s sphere of story-telling expands the songs of *The Iliad* beyond the single sea and coast of Troy, to the surrounding seas and continents, with ships no longer aground but sailing treacherous waters; and the stories importantly expand the readers imagination beyond the egos of battlefields, to include the travel

tales of the wonder and fantasy of the disguised, and polytonal, polychromatic, polytlas Odysseus.

Looking to character, away from narrative, the complicated Odysseus is an important part of both texts. But, what begins with some simplicity becomes rather complex and a challenge to the imagination and understanding.

“... in the *Odyssey* he is no longer one of many heroes fighting between the beached ships and the walls of Troy. He is on his own, first as admiral of a small fleet, then as captain of an isolated ship, and finally as a shipwrecked sailor clinging to a piece of wreckage. (Fagles *Odyssey*, 24)

This shift in reader attention to character development reminds that in *The Iliad*, Odysseus appears on the Trojan battlefield overshadowed by the choices and struggles of Achilles, in marked contrast to *The Odyssey* where he largely takes much of the center stage. In *The Iliad*, he appears as one of many independent warriors, with talent and powers of rhetoric and language (rallying the Greek Armies 2.194-394, embassy to Achilles 9.269-371) and as an enforcer of class segregation and unwavering obligation, enslavement to social authorities and higher orders (belittlement of Thersites 2.282-324). Yet in *The Odyssey* he is imprisoned, *the* one rebelliously enslaved, segregated, seeking throughout the text a release and a final journeying home, doing so by means of talented linguistic and physical trickery and scheming.

The contrast of Achilles and Odysseus leads to discussions about which of the champions is superior or better, and, thereby, which book captures our moral sense best. Quite intriguingly, Socrates, in Plato's *Hippias Minor*, suggests that there are complicated aspects to both Achilles and Odysseus, but, interestingly, he does open the question of which is preferable or better than the other.

SOCRATES:

Eudicus, I used to hear your father, Apemantus, say that Homer's *Iliad* is a better poem than his *Odyssey*, and as much better as Achilles is better than Odysseus, for he said that the one poem was made with Odysseus as protagonist, the other with Achilles. If Hippias is willing, I would like to ask him about that. (363b)

Hippias, in difference and in answer to Socrates, finds Odysseus the more complicated, which for him principally means the more deceiving and false character.

SOCRATES:

Come on, tell me, so I can maybe understand better. Isn't Achilles complicated in Homer?

HIPPIAS:

Not at all, Socrates, he's the most straightforward of all, for in the Embassy, when he depicts them talking to each other, he has Achilles say to Odysseus,

Chief under Zeus, Odysseus, son of Laertes, cunning, scheming hero, I must speak frankly what is in my mind and what will happen, so you don't all sit here and keep on blabbing to me, one by one. I hate like Hades' gates the man who says one thing and hides another in his heart.

In these lines, he reveals the character of each man: that Achilles is true and simple, and Odysseus is complicated and false, since he has Achilles say these words to Odysseus.

SOCRATES:

So, Hippias, I'm finally maybe understanding what you mean. You mean that the 'complicated' person is a liar, is false apparently.

HIPPIAS:

Of course, Socrates. Homer represents Odysseus that way many times, both in *The Iliad* and in *The Odyssey*.

SOCRATES:

Homer, then, seems to have believed that a true and a false man are different, not the same.

(364e-365c) (Wilson, Norton 314)

However one may read or hear this mesmerizingly subtle interchange, the complicating of a later text from an earlier one, by means of comparison questions of good and bad and true and false, faces us. Many readers, following Hippias, have found Odysseus, in comparison to Achilles, the more problematical and least morally acceptable of the two protagonists. But it may just be, if we follow Socrates,

that Achilles is less understandable than we thought and not a man of a true or better character (what human, after all, fully has those attributes?). The Plato scholar Jeffrey Turner suggests that “the whole business of asking Hippias ‘Which one is better . . .?’ is a kind of ruse.” (personal communication) The moral understanding and truth-pressing thoughts of Hippias are not for Socrates, says Turner, to be “the main or first point of interest of the dialogue or of our readings” of the two texts, for the very asking of Hippias’ question is “misleading or misdirecting” (ibid) with regard to what is important for Socrates—how we measure and fall short as moral beings. We seem to be back, reading the Plato text *Hippias Minor*, to our first pages of Cage concern, returning, that is, to reflections on limits and finitude (on what is less or not immediately understandable).

Earlier, in the Joyce *Ulysses* discussion, it was said that sound and music may not be firmly tied to understanding and knowledge, but to limits and confusions. There is further reflection on this to be found in *The Odyssey*. Specifically the temptation of the Sirens is as much about knowledge as it is about enticement, listening, persistence, and an ego-inflating telling of a story.

“Odysseus! Come here! You are well-known
from many stories! Glory of the Greeks!
Now stop your ship and listen to our voices.
All those who pass this way hear honeyed song,
poured from our mouths. The music brings them joy,
and they go on their way with greater knowledge,
since we know everything the Greeks and Trojans
suffered in Troy, by gods’ will; and we know
whatever happens anywhere on earth.”

(12.183-191, Wilson)

The temptation of sound and knowledge is resisted not accepted, albeit with great difficulty, by Odysseus. His rejection of the Sirens’ temptation is his tacit

acknowledgement that he will have to go on living and struggling to get home without understanding what the war was about, why the Greeks and Trojans did as they did, what Achilles is truthfully, what the *Iliad* offers. Having to live without understanding and knowledge is a factual plight of both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, and follows the similar concerns in the work of Joyce and Cage.

← Iliad

The Iliad was created and was written by whom? Was there a single author (Homer) or a gathering of authors (Homers)? Is it primarily an oral or written text? How was it sung? How performed? Questions like these abound and plague efforts to understand. It can at least be said that, like *The Odyssey*, *The Iliad* is a written text that is based on oral traditions. While that is not the same as an oral composition it means we are to give some importance to hearing the text.

“... Homeric poetry was composed to be *heard*, and that hearing it more or less aright is a precondition of *understanding* it, in a way that does not depend on gross distortions of sound and language at the most basic levels.” (Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, volume I, 24)

“*Homer* makes us Hearers. ... Homer’s work is a performance, even in part a musical event.” (Fagles, *Iliad*, ix)

The hearing qualities and musical nature of the text should give a (our) reading a heightened sense of listening and attention to sound. Many a reader has so read and heard the text. Cage, in a variety of ways, not surprisingly, did so.

“I love just hearing Homer.” (Cage conversation)

“For instance Homer’s *Iliad* could be turned into a piece of music.” (Cage, *Roaratorio* CD booklet 42)

In fact, *Roaratorio* is comparable to and not unlike, even if not like, Homer and the ancient poets singing their poetry. Cage sensed the reading text connections.

“... more and more I began to feel, that it should be somewhat sung, not sung as a musical song, but a speech, which was moving toward singing. That’s what I tried to do.” (Cage, *Roaratorio* CD Booklet 39)

The association of *The Iliad* and *Roaratorio* may run deeper than musical or voicing qualities, viz., to the release and development of a flexible chaos, and to the wonder and questioning of what makes understanding, and anything else, possible.

“The oral bard ... every time he sings the poem, he does it differently. The outline remains the same but the text, the oral text is flexible. The poem is new every time it is performed.” (Fagles, *Iliad* 17)

Trying to find the oral ground or conditions of possibility of *The Iliad* often leads to a seemingly weightless story about surface beauty and arrogance and self-absorbed prattling, namely to the “Judgment of Paris” and “Seduction of Helen.” But it is surely felt by many readers that this seemingly inane competition of physical attractiveness can hardly be the real or founding reason or cause for the horrific Trojan War. Can it? This is to say that the “beauty contest of the goddesses is too frivolous a motif for the high tragedy of the poem.” (Fagles, *Iliad* 41)

They clung to their deathless hate of sacred Troy,
Priam and Priam's people, just as they had at first
when Paris in all his madness launched the war.
He offended Athena and Hera—both goddesses.
When they came to his shepherd's fold he favored Love
who dangled before his eyes the lust that loosed disaster.

(*Iliad* 24.31-36, Fagles)

The Iliad, in fact, seldom so directly recalls such a beginning—although we do not forget confined Helen hastening to the Scaean gate (Book 3), or Paris reasserting he will not “give up the woman” (Book 7), or The beginning more properly and clearly is to be seen, for a supposed thoughtful reader, in actions (e.g., trade route clashes) based importantly “within the disordered space” created by conflict of old and new regimes; the text “dramatizes a heroic order that is no longer able to quell the strife that is intrinsic to it.” (King, *Iliad*, Barnes-Noble Books, xxvi-xxvii) What was once important and

heroic becomes trivial and disposable. A thin, surface story of beauty must give way to important, revelatory historical and social depth. Yes. No.

Frivolous? Weightless? Inconsequential origins? Maybe? But so, it would seem, was finding an exonerating letter in a trash dump, or writing texts nonintentionally with spine words. There is a different constructive sense to be considered in the proposed reflective conditions on the so-called unimportant origins. If we continue to follow our line of texts further backward from *The Iliad*, we find increasing simplicity and directness, a more silent, empty space than we have found before in the particular struggles with the various embedded texts. All the efforts finally end in the greatest of backward simplicity and silence: a *tabula rasa*, voided debris, the insignificant, the nonintentional.⁶

Working backwards has allowed us to ask whether the simpler or unimportant event can cause great events even against and in spite of our sense of importance. We may need to change that sense. Great events as we so judge them are possibly an expression of the apparent insignificant or nonintentional? *The Iliad* pushes backward to that question or at least opens us to consider the chaos or void on which our judged importance stands.

⁶ The reaching of a contextual simplicity follows the idea of increasing chaos or complexity when moving from Homer to Joyce to Cage.

Identifying the reached simplicity with other concepts, while expansive and provocative, can be complicated and misleading. Debris as a simple state, for instance, can pose a problem, since debris might be used as messy complexes. Yet when used as diffused fragments, unorganized piles and scatterings, it can properly suffice. Of course, finding a ground or contextual place in apparent trifles and voided debris may easily sever the human subject's wants and hopes for a resultant product that was to be a culmination of a significant, weighty, and important work and effort. This reminder and discovery, however, does open a link to the nonintentional.

So, we have moved constantly further backward in our efforts to read and understand Cage's *Roaratorio*. In each textual case we found talk of work in progress, of the incomplete, of wanderings and voice and listening; we confronted difficulties to our understanding, and decreasing and increasing complexity, letting the chaos out. We have traversed from *Roaratorio* to *Finnegans Wake* to *Ulysses* to *Odyssey* to *Iliad*, and, thereby, have moved from a radical chaos to a gentle, checked voiding chaos. Can this movement backward be of much use? What have we accomplished? At least this: whether due to historical distance and dark mysteries, or clear intentions and textual content, or many voices and authors, or editorial decisions and mistakes, or nonintentional and chance efforts, *want of sense* riddles the texts.⁷

This remote and proximate textual search is itself a mild, havoc provocative inciting, chaos allowing us to explore cagejoycehomer without a great loss of sense

⁷ Lack of sense brings desire for sense. Want provokes want. To pursue the desire is to try to finish the effort with sense largely intact. To return to the lack and sounds themselves is principally to try to abandon sense.

Want offers a collection of possibilities:

**want desire lack wish need without fall short of sought hope aspire yearn
hanker yen missing bereft deficiency poverty craving fancy covet miss require
call for demand shortage dearth scarcity nonexistence unavailability chaos absence
indigence destitution privation appetite hunger thirst longing yearning insufficiency**

want to out me for of for want of better conditions be in want more coffee want different rules want to be more careful want for nothing time of want all the want met want of vigilance her want of him want out of this want of repair I want you an expression of want they want greasing want to stop

The want of sense is largely the reason many readers cannot read or stay with Joyce's later works, especially *Finnegan's Wake*. ("I just cannot read Joyce anymore.") Such difficulties do not keep them from reading *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, but they are stopped cold in reading the *Wake* and almost as often *Ulysses*. The "what?" is what stops many in reading and hearing Cage's texts and music as well. ("I think I am utterly incapable of understanding Cage. I obviously lack a genuinely deep sense of his project.") And similarly, although more simply or less so, the same occurs with Homer's texts and songs. ("I have to admit to skipping freely many books and sections when reading either of Homer's texts. Why are they there?")

or place; and maybe most significantly we have found a need and usefulness to read *The Iliad* in an effort to hear, read, and understand *Roaratorio*. *Iliad* ← *Odyssey* ← *Ulysses* ← *Finnegans Wake* ← *Roaratorio* (You say there is a lot of *Roaratorio* you don't understand. I told you to read *The Iliad* first.) How trivial or important is that?

We need not rest with this narrowing, single sense of phrasing chaos. That concept, as discovered in our beginnings, involves a multiplicity of uses. To some of the others we now turn.

2. In medias res

— Textual Matters Inside Out

Reading and hearing Cage or Joyce or Homer often provokes wonder about where one is and what is being said. Remember, for instance, the early lines of *The Odyssey*.

All the other Greeks
who had survived the brutal sack of Troy
sailed safely home to their own wives—except
this man alone. Calypso, a great goddess,
had trapped him in her cave; she wanted him
to be her husband. When the year rolled round
in which the gods decreed he should go home
to Ithaca, his troubles still went on.

(1.9-18, Wilson)

We are pulled in at least two general directions. One involving memory of what *The Iliad* has recounted and another regarding the prolonged anticipation and frustration of sailing safely home. We are placed without obvious direction “in between”, in a state of unclear connections and waiting.

“The story begins in an unexpected place, *in medias res* (‘in the middle of things’—the proper starting point for an epic, according to Horace). It is not the start of the Trojan War, which began with the Judgment of Paris and the Abduction of Helen and was fought for ten years. Nor does the poem start at the beginning of Odysseus’ journey home, which has been in progress for almost as many years as the war. Instead, it begins when nothing much seems to be happening at all; Odysseus, his son, and his wife are all stuck in a state of frustration and paralysis that has been continuing for years and is becoming unbearable.” Wilson, *Odyssey*, 3

Perhaps the unbearable frustration and immobility of *The Odyssey’s* opening worlds and words need a catalysis or thunderclap of energy and turmoil for the lived restraint, void, and daily, tiring rituals to release a waiting, latent chaos and liberating action. What could be the source and incitement of that crash and clang of new life intensity? How is beginning “in the middle of things” to be judged or given perspective?

Thoreau tells us, in *Walden*, that ornaments have a core of truth or necessity only when they are a part of a whole and are not independent, special, or outside attachments. The essential actualities of life are not to be independently created or thought of as outside or added fixtures, but rather are natural growth expressions of the whole of existence. It is the groundwork, inside, structure of a building or text that creates or gives life to the natural cornice or word strings that produce uses of meaning and which allows us to emphasize the contrast of essential and hollow ornaments or words.

Complications and chaos are grown gradually outward from the middle of things, and it is the life of a textual building, the life of the inhabitants of a building, that make it meaningful and alive, and not the attached, abstract, outward surfaces or embellishments. There is no spirit or life in death, a tautological reminder, so when a house or a literature or text has lost its spirit it is naturally lifeless as well. Despair and indifference toward creating or building a substantive work produce a

deadening of life, and arise from a static, narrow, non-threaded or segregated perspective; not from an intricate, life-affirming sense of our selves.

Similar to Homer's *The Odyssey*, *Finnegans Wake* starts in the middle of a sentence or plot line and ends again in the middle of one.

riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend
of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to
Howth Castle and Environs.

then. Finn, again! Take. Bussofthee, memormee! Till thous-
endsthee. Lps. The keys to. Given! A way a lone a last a loved a
long the

(3, 628)

This beginning perplexity for many readers was one of the intriguing aspects of the text for Cage. He found it representative of the inexhaustible and unapproachable character of the book, which partly explains his *five* times writing through it. "Everything about it is endless and attractive", says Cage. (Mode *Roaratorio* CD booklet 2)

(We might feel a strong pull to the side here to listen and talk of two other *Finnegans Wake* text-based songs by Cage, one before and one after *Roaratorio*. Page 556 provides the text for both the 1942 *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs* and the 1984 *Nowth Upon Nacht*. The swing of voice and text is quite evident in contrasting the two compositions with the first performed in a relatively standard singing voice while the second involves a not unpleasant yelling bordering on screaming voice, with *Roaratorio* standing silently between.)

Such a sentiment of finding oneself, in Homer and Joyce, in the middle of endless words and worlds washes through the silence and emptiness of Cage's texts as well.

Wroth with twone nathandJoe
 A
 Malt
 jhEm
 Shen

 pftJschute
 sOlid man
 that the humptYhillhead of humself
 is at the knoCk out
 in thE park

(*Roaratorio* opening lines)

Efforts at reading, hearing, understanding *Roaratorio* seem most certainly stuck in a middle, inside, something we know not what. Questions and not answers are what give us life in our whirling surroundings. “How are we to comprehend or move forward from this?”

With the texts of Cage, Homer, and Joyce there is often a moderate, incomplete unknown unruly disarray, chaos; a provocation for locating a place and present. We face, in each case, texts presented from inside, in the commotions of middles. Let us collect some inner textual data relying on this sense of being *in medias res*.

Working from inside out, from in the midst of, in the middle of things we land and stumble, sometimes with accountable reason other times not, on textual content and generalized subject matters.

Roaratorio

Rejoyceous Sound Festival

dejectedly
 in the diapered windOw margin
 basque of baYleaves all aflutter
 Curious
 protoparEnt's *ipsissima verba*

Jims
 sAhib
 pipless as threadworMs
 innocEnt
 exhibitioniSm

(I 121)

Finnegans Wake Circulating Reverberations

gaunt, stands dejectedly in the diapered window margin, with its basque of bayleaves all aflutter about its forksfrogs, paces with a frown, jerking to and fro, flinging phrases here, there, or returns inhibited, with some half-halted suggestion, l, dragging its shoestring; the curious warning sign before our protoparent's *ipsissima verba* (a very pure nondescript, by the way, sometimes a palmtailed otter, more often the arbutus fruitflowerleaf of the cainapple) which paleographers call *a leak in the thatch or the aranman ingperwhis through the hole of his hat*, indicating that the words which follow may be taken in any order desired, hole of Aran man the hat through the whispering his ho (here keen again and begin again to make soundsense and sensesound kin again); those haughtypitched disdotted aiches easily of the rariest inasdrroll as most of the jaywalking eyes we do plough into halve, unconnected, principial, medial or final, always jims in the jam, sahib, as pipless as threadworms: the innocent exhibitionism of those frank yet capricious underlinings: that strange exotic

(121.4-21)

Ulysses Wandering Affirmations

What visible luminous sign attracted Bloom's, who attracted Stephen's gaze?
 In the second storey (rere) of his (Bloom's) house the light of a paraffin oil lamp with oblique shade projected on a screen of roller blind supplied by Frank O'Hara, window blind, curtain pole and revolving shutter manufacturer, 16 Augier street.

How did he elucidate the mystery of an invisible person, his wife Marion (Molly) Bloom, denoted by a visible splendid sign, a lamp?

With indirect and direct verbal allusions or affirmations: with subdued affection and admiration: with description: with impediment: with suggestion.

(655. 1-10, 1922 edition)

Odyssey Patient Endurance

She is a human: you are deathless, ageless.
 But even so, I want to go back home,
 and every day I hope that day will come.
 If some god strikes me on the wine-dark sea,
 I will endure it. By now I am used
 to suffering—I have gone through so much,
 at sea and in the war. Let this come too.

(5.218-224, Wilson)

Iliad

Foreboding Dismissals

And fate? No one alive has ever escaped it,
 neither brave man nor coward, I tell you—
 it's born with us the day that we are born.
 So please go home and tend to your own tasks,
 the distaff and the loom, and keep the women
 working hard as well.

(6.582-585, Fagles)

Unfolding these texts from the inside out, investigating their surroundings by moving simultaneously right and left, up and down is the architectural task awaiting a reader, so inclined and so tolerant, in efforts to read, listen, and understand. Here are the beginnings of two such explorations.

for his son—but the boy recoiled,
 cringing against his nurse's full breast,
 screaming out at the sight of his own father,
 terrified by the flashing bronze, the horsehair crest,
 the great ridge of the helmet nodding, bristling terror—
 so it struck his eyes. And his loving father laughed,
 his mother laughed as well, and glorious Hector,

(6.557-563, Fagles)

And fate? No one alive has ever escaped it,
 neither brave man nor coward, I tell you—
 it's born with us the day that we are born.
 So please go home and tend to your own tasks,
 the distaff and the loom, and keep the women
 working hard as well.

(6.582-585, Fagles)

And his wife went home, turning, glancing
 back again and again and weeping live warm tears.
 She quickly reached the sturdy house of Hector,
 man-killing Hector,
 and found her women gathered there inside
 and stirred them all to a high pitch of mourning.

(6.591-596, Fagles)

three Jeers
 for the grApe vine and brew
 ruM
 smElt
 hiS end for him and he dined

(I 117)

dejectedly
 in the diapered windOw margin
 basque of baYleaves all aflutter
 Curious
 protoparEnt's *ipsissima verba*

Jims
 sAhib
 pipless as threadworMs
 innocEnt
 exhibitioniSm

(I 121)

quatrain of rubyJets
 withOut
 loYal
 lobster loCks
 you'rE another he hasn't

(I 122)

Investigations from the middle, $\leftarrow \rightarrow$, beyond finding the living threads of the whole, now and again allow a tentative, limited, descriptive generalization of the text of concern; and by this means a judgment and comparison of other such suggestions made after, before, or independent of such an effort. (E.g., war friendship honor, foreboding dismissals, jumbled words and noises, dense acoustic mixes, rejoyceous sound festival.)

3. Rewrite

— Mesostics

Cage introduced the writing of mesostics into his own radical, upending babel mayhem uproar, chaos efforts. Specifically, he begins, some twenty years or so

after his infamous silent composition, composing texts with a new nonintentional yet chance-free effort. He did this by the concept and creation of a poetic, read-aloud text he came to call, thanks to Norman O. Brown, mesostic.

Originally Cage created mesostics as gifts for others. He would take a person's name as the textual spine and then he would add words around that spine. Slowly he started following rules and using specific texts that he would rewrite by those rules into the evolving, invasive, thunderbolt, mesostic form.

"In the 1970s Cage began using mesostics as a way of rearranging an existing text ... The first such use was in his *Writings Through Finnegans Wake* (1977). He included not just the words necessary to spell out the key, but also a certain amount of their original context, the exact amount chosen according to his tastes, but within the restrictions of the mesostic form." (Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, 177-178)

The difficulty or confusions that many people find in talking and writing about Cage's mesostics is due, one would guess, mainly to not learning or knowing how his use of mesostics grew and developed. Simply put: the principal rule is to create a spine of letters based on a name or chosen word. One adds words around the spine words. The spine runs down the ordered middle. This is the first, the zero, and we might say the simplest, of mesostic forms.

Just
 On course
 we all were Held
 thaNkfully
 beCause
 Anger was destructive
 and he tauGht
 humor and silEnce

This writing then gave way to more structured methods and gradations of specific textual recomposition. Below are three forms of such methods. The source text for the examples is the three-quotation-set (p.3) that overlay this *homerjoyceceage* text, with the spine word being johncage.

Basic mesostic: read a text with an eye on finding the key letters that make up the selected spine of the mesostic. Capitalize the first instance one comes across of each key letter, and proceed in order. Add or not any of the words surrounding the spine letters, these are the wing words.

```

havoc irreversible the troJans penned
                        Of
                        like sHeap
but the father of meN gods was
                        quicK
                        the mArk a crash
ab chaos neat wehr new that make me Gurple
                        swallow rathEr utter whisper

```

50% mesostic: proceed as with basic, but here the second spine letter cannot appear between spine letters. The original key spine letter can occur any number of times before the next key letter but the second cannot.

```

chaos walls of the muJic
                        Of
                        tHe
footure oN barbarihams of the
                        bashed Co
                        cAnniley peace that swallow and
now penned in troy the Gods quick
                        to thE mark donnuley wehr complexities

```


100% mesostic: proceed as with the 50% but now neither spine letter can appear between spine letters.

father was the mark of muJic
 Of
 tHe
 footure oN
 barbarihams of the bashed Co
 dA yet this meed in lex wehr new
 been penned of troy but the of men Gods was
 thE viritas that

So the rewriting and rearranging of texts found its way and development into Cage's writings and musical compositions.

Applying any of these rules to an average sized text could produce many hundreds of mesostics. To constrain any textual collection of mesostics one can prohibit, in any of the methods, the using of the same syllable again before the next key letter. This is what Cage did in *Writing For The Second Time Through Finnegans Wake*, the spoken text of *Roaratorio*. Here is a reminder from the opening mesostic examples in the first, Chaos, section.

he would Jused sit it
 All write down just as
 in hyMns
 ignorancE
 Seeing how heartsilly sorey he was
 was life worth leaving neJ
 thOledoth treetrene
 pumme if Yell
 while itCh ish
 shomE

Cage's first *Writing Through Finnegans Wake* was 124 pages, roughly 862 mesostics, which his publisher said was too long and boring; while the second writing, using the syllable rule, resulted in a text of 40 pages, around 290 mesostics; this was deemed publishable. (Both texts were later published together under the title of *Writings Through Finnegans Wake* in a marvelous 1978 limited edition. That edition was used to make these calculations. —The activity of mesostic counting calls to mind a collecting or cataloguing of words or numbers or errata or ships.—The page and mesostic totals are open to small discrepancies depending on whether one counts pages between sections and how one identifies the breaks between mesostics.)

James Pritchett, in his instructive book *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge 1993, 214), clarifies and adds to Cage's mesostic writing development, noting that while in the "Writing for the Second Time Through *Finnegans Wake*" "the same syllable was not to be used twice to set the same key letter", Cage shifted his continuing work so that in "the third 'writing through' (1980) 100% mesostics were used, while in the fourth 'writing through' (1980), 100% mesostics were used without allowing syllable repetition."

With some sense now of the rules and structures of Cagian rewriting of texts, we take our *homerjoyceceage* inside texts of section 2, *in medias res*, and welcome and embrace the uproarious, disarrangement, question awakening, chaos of mesostics. We awaken hesitations, murmurs, and uncertainties, rather than seek answers or the pursuit of understanding that opened our first textual investigations of the *Roaratorio* writings.

homerjoyceage

dejectedly
in windOw margin
saHib as
iNnocent

dejeCtedly
the diApered

baylEaves aflutter

Jims
sAhib
pipless as threadworMs
innocEnt
exhibitioniSm

dejectedly
in the diapered windOw margin
basque of baYleaves all aflutter
Curious
protoparEnt's *ipsissima verba*

oblique shade projected
A screen of roller blind
his wife Marion
dEnoted by
viSible splendid sign

Have
gOne through
Much
at sEa
waR

sHe a human
yOu are
I aM
usEd
to suffeRing

no one alive Has ever escaped
brave man nOr coward
distaff and looM
kEep
woRking hard

This resulting mesostic, apart from the pleasures and interests of its sounds, and arousal of new ideas and reminders of the conditions for sense, suggests, as well, the complexity and chaotic uproars of the primary *homerjoyce* texts, which we have struggled to use clearly in confronting and acknowledging our first questions.

4. Raze

— *Muoyce*

In his later work, Cage reintroduced chance procedures into his textual compositions, and thereby took the radical chaos of *Roaratorio* even further, to a broadened and demilitarized sense of rewriting text. Specifically, he created *Muoyce*, *Writing For The Fifth Time Through Finnegans Wake* (1982). Here spine words and mesostic rules no longer guide him or us. We find ourselves situated anywhere in the chosen source text, in the middle of, on any page moving to any point in the text. In *Muoyce*, says Cage, we do not move linearly through the text, page by next page, but we land on a page “through chance operations here and then there, or on a letter, or a syllable, or a word, or a phrase.” (Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage*, 151) We now have a razing of texts, sentences, words, and syllables, including punctuation. (Punctuation “as we know it commonly, is on the side of what we could call ‘law and order’” not chaos. (Mode *Roaratorio* CD booklet p. 38)) Here is the last section of the first part, of four parts, of the *Muoyce* text (at least as best it can be reproduced here).

of that hammerfastvikingLet us overthe
wholethathe’s arrahbejibbersDurban for
Taff de Taffwhathough tillCatotheamok-
hold*Inglo-Andeanas* fatherMonkish hears
registeredto an imaginary swellaw this

unitarian ladyR.DubsINA PRIMITIVE SEPT
alb savedsydthetheraughtn onteml sunk
honllbmyWh forheresyshalli *Opunny*I of
with h dw forcy umMUTUOMORPHOMUTATION-
s comfortableLaurathe ntea *Bar* ring up
of dose innocent dirly dirls old cling
*The hoisted*Column *Down*himDumbil's With
a taste from a Yourishman laden you'll
araganhergayBesidemavain souserthe not
CONSTITUTIONALFarety *Flash* bankers le-
andros by upthimblesof too ways by ter
aTonsmoasby *knew* ham withthem in forand
ci *brage*for bey twangtyand theyin the-
astdyessbsyid them

(Cage X, 178)

Severe, disrupting madness unapproachable, chaos has opened with the new composition. Of *Muoyce* Cage said: "I think it is certainly the most difficult text to read [aloud] that I have ever encountered." (Kostelanetz, *Conversing With Cage*, 151) Cage may certainly be right about this for all of us. Even the title itself, *Muoyce*, causes a speaker or out-loud reader to trip and repeatedly fall. The difficulty of preparing a reading aloud of a performance of the piece left Cage stymied and stopped in his tracks. No form or stress of reading was immediately useful and satisfying. How to read this?

scrapedmarbleviceregalin bagPeeterkeen
Volapuckybowls pologgeesehassolbingand
struckinpanseyingand of go wasperform-
ance wordsthoseyoupampipeandusthe His-
freehammering and a Histhoultecapable

(Cage X, *Muoyce*, last five lines, 187)

(Homer's texts, of course, provide extensive, systematic repetition of lines and phrases—a "formular style" (Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, volume I, passim, e.g., 24f, 119f): "owl-eyed Athene" "swift-footed Achilles" "much-enduring Odysseus" "rosy-fingered

Dawn". "Dawn appears some twenty times in *The Odyssey*, and the poem repeats the same line, word for word, each time. (Wilson *The Odyssey*, 5) This reiteration helps make the singer's memory task somewhat manageable. No such formulaic repetition, or much else, (e.g., Joycean plot and character lines) assisted Cage in a reading of *Muoyce*.)

"When I first wrote the text, I had great trouble pronouncing it. I didn't know what the sound of it should be, or could be. I tried everything I could think of, and among the things I tried was whispering. When I whispered it, and voiced the italicized syllables, it clicked for me." (Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage*, 151) The shifting of voice, Cage discovered, allowed a freedom for a productive and revealing performance. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2k8E3rYK0I>. However, even those more satisfying, voice-distinguishing choices still made the recital a demanding athletic effort and an incomplete (pleasantly so) accomplishment. Cage found that each presentation was different in form, whispering here singing there mumbling now and again slurring together, whatever allowed his voice to move.

The difficulty of a reading performance of *Muoyce* did not prevent Cage from composing ever increasing textual complexities. He continued, quite tirelessly, the leveling process in *Muoyce II: Writing Through Ulysses*.

on eyes was keep abath towel up pier English-
man also Roman them reached love in And gras-
shalm's the with Buck some last at mobile woman
he want of could with cliffs He the be talk-
ing Kinch said We'll dead skin God to smartly

(*Muoyce II* opening five lines)

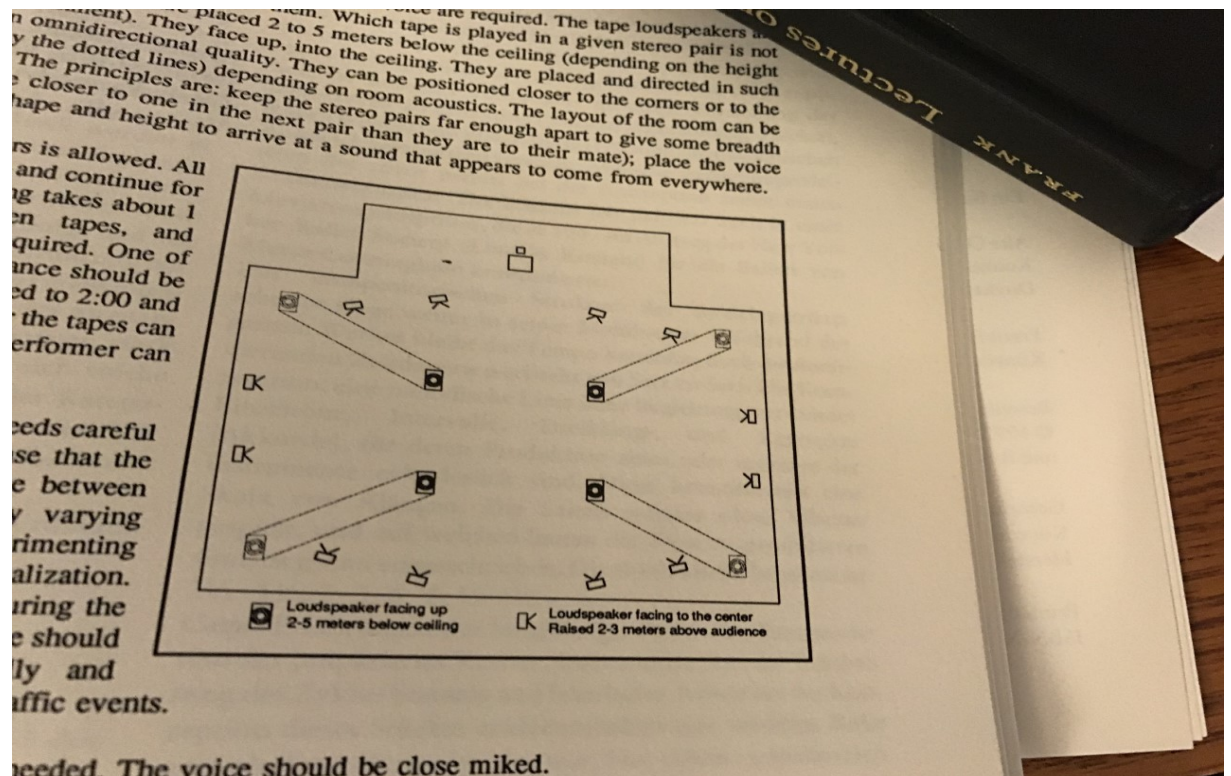
This is a composition, following Joyce, of eighteen sections that enhances, develops, and expands the line of thinking of *Muoyce* and its fifth writing through

Finnegans Wake; it is written for solo speaker and six pre-recorded audio tapes.⁸ It introduces new possibilities of textual and sound recreation and pleasures that make us falter and withhold anew our shifting, singing, speaking, and whispering voices—regardless of what we learned in *Muoyce*, we struggle again to utter and roar in *Muoyce II*, uttering oratorio chaos.

Regrettably, *Muoyce II: Writing Through Ulysses* is unfinished and basically remains unfamiliar and unknown to many. Unlike its immediate predecessors, we have no taped Cage performance instance of it. As he worked toward a late-1992 concert date (September 20th) for the piece, Cage was still discovering the ways of reading the text; and was working to finalize the adding of “six tapes of traffic sounds recorded in different cities” (*Muoyce II* performance notes) that would accompany the reading. While listening to the text the audience “will be in a vortex of traffic noises.” (*Muoyce II* introductory text) (Not unlike Odysseus, Cage instructed that the audience find themselves in a maelstrom of sound—unceasing “traffic events”, 7th avenue sirens—and a text-reading that “appears to come from everywhere.” (*Muoyce II* performance notes))

With the creative assistance of Andrew Culver, Cage provides not just written notes but a specific diagram for the performance setting for *Muoyce II*, with instructions on the relatively precise placement of the array of loud speakers and structure of the reading space.

⁸ “I find myself continuing to fly over Joyce, landing every now and then, but now not in the *Wake*. New chaos and complexities that make me gurgle and swallow rather than utter and whisper. This could be placed...hmm?” What was shown and discussed were unidentified pages of handwritten and typed word chains. (Early-1992 Cage meeting) [I would now and then drive to a bus station in eastern Pennsylvania and then take an hour-plus bus ride to NYC and a cab to Cage’s apartment on West 18th. On the return trip I often filled the bus ride with a writing of notes and thoughts from the visit. This quotation, concerning (I knew not then) *Muoyce II: Writing Through Ulysses*, was one of the bus notes, one that I did not fully place or have a place for ... until now.]



Cage expected to give a first complete performance of it all, reading and taped sounds, at an 80th birthday happening in Frankfurt, Germany; he died a few weeks prior to the celebration.

Being largely uncirculated, as well as unsung and uncelebrated to a great many listeners and readers, makes important an illustrative example and content reference for the text, especially while being somewhat hard to come by and find in print. (There is an 80th birthday concert program book, titled *Anarchic Harmony*, that includes the “first published” (p.7), complete worded text; also the John Cage Trust does possess a full copy; neither, however, is readily at hand.) Fortunately, Joan Retallack reprints, makes public and easily accessible, sections of *Muoyce II* in appendices C and F of her valuable book *Musicage*—a wonderful set of recorded conversations with the late-in-life

Cage. Her appendix C selection is the basis for this instance of about two-thirds of part 17 of *Muoyce II*.

Muoyce II: Writing Through Ulysses

(*Ulysses*, Ithaca, episode 17)

entity families by What and this woman?

of cubicle O - 16- 6inevitablebroke externally jew's passage lilacgarden to on from the STEPHEN STEPHEN Tweedy Bloom crepuscular house forward bankrupt time.

deliberate an accepted?

there and trespassers of university.

day postsatisfaction?

of the indisputable Their Sailor years intestation.

irreducible Example?

message between none with pair feat feminineopposite the version Breslin's reflect famous O - 16 - 6 an thethought KernanPulbrook ofthe consecutivebicycles 1 one tooth congruousThefive That sexual church To violator proximate somnambulism.

development see now so his reminiscence of narrated sentiments With the Where?

the 46such F. his bowl comedian insea hebdomadarysolicitous significant moon recess of intestation.atBenjamin corporal mutable and subjectsQueen's failurephiaecclesiasticalquinquecostate semiluminousright cigarettemotionlessthe (the certifiedmem)back in varying incessant selfprolonging nought

The continuing razing of texts and expressions of radical and severe chaos, in the shift by Cage from *Finnegans Wake* to *Ulysses*, presents itself rather fully here.

“And I had to write the penultimate chapter of *Muoyce II* as Joyce had written the penultimate chapter of *Ulysses*—to write it in two ways, one as questions and the other as answers. In other words, I didn’t use questions by chance that would fall into answers. I let the questions fall into questions and the answers fall into answers.” (Cage, Retallack, 196)

While still being guided by the text he rewrites, *Ulysses*, Cage investigates further ways to clear the ground of the text but with always some sense of limits.

“And I look backward with excitement (laughs) to the time in language when there wasn’t any punctuation. ... When they all ran together. And that’s the way I’m writing now, with *Ulysses* [*Writing through Ulysses (Muoyce II)*]. But with “Nighttown” in *Ulysses* what am I going to do—with question marks and exclamation points? Certainly in ‘Nighttown’ [and ‘Ithaca’].” But in the ‘Nighttown’ I have to use exclamation points and question marks. In other words, I’m using punctuation—periods, and commas, and the whole business. I don’t know if I’m doing it well. But Joyce, in *Ulysses* in particular, is teaching me that I must use it, punctuation.” (Cage, Retallack, 155)

Cage continued to embrace the act and pleasures of *letting the chaos out*.⁹

Here is another example from *Muoyce II*, part 5. Lotus Eaters, first five lines (Retallack,

appendix F)

flower inthaaanNorefuge instanthair trans-
ferredbrightthesoap The you liketoabout it
goesI andtoand dotheat it bighis hisbehind
the thickfirmly keepwithblatant Potted the
Sweethowidea laved limbs to Marthaon teeth

As mentioned, Cage did not live to give the first performance of *Muoyce II*, with its 18 episodes of *Ulysses* condensed into one hour, interwoven with recorded traffic sounds from locations of the tours by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. While the composition remains unfinished or in progress, there have been a few efforts to present and perform the piece, most notably twenty years after Cage’s death in the place of his birth, Los Angeles, at the Southwest Chamber Music festival.

⁹ *Muoyce II* and its various kin produce occasions (philosophical and musical occasions) where want of sense produces want of sense—where lack produces desire. Cage often would ask that we accept the lack and stop the desire—where we listen without purpose or need or result. “Later”-Cage compositions often do involve flying over and landing now and then in a text, releasing not understanding but joyful (joyceful) chaos and pleasure from the text. **Yet**, they also provide, as Cage well knew, reminders and investigations of the want and conditions of sense—what ordinary language philosophy will call the grammar and depth of agreement of our lives, the conditions of possibility for what is said and done. The efforts of either chaos or sense give place to the other.

Here is an excerpt of a review of that effort, by the notable classical and new music critic Mark Swed, from February 2013.

Review: Encounter with postwar giants at Southwest Chamber Music festival
By Mark Swed, Los Angeles Times Music Critic

“*Muoyce II*” is for a solo reader. Cage went through Joyce’s “*Ulysses*,” and by using arcane procedures distilled a version of the novel’s 18 chapters to 22 typescript pages, which make no sense. Here is a line, chosen at random: “about FlynntheheatMayNoseypriest iswe same.”

Cage had meant to read the text as part of a festival in Frankfurt, Germany, that celebrated his 80th birthday, but he died five weeks before and hadn’t yet decided exactly how he would proceed, other than including recordings of traffic sounds from different places — what a modern-day *Ulysses* might encounter — as background. It is now left to others to decide what to do, and so far few have dared and none, it seems, succeeded.

Allowing a perplexing word choice or two (“arcane procedures”, “traffic sounds...as background”), it is worth repeating the single line instance of *Muoyce II* given by Swed. While he gives it unreferenced, it is from *Lestrygonians*, Chapter 8.

about FlynntheheatMayNoseypriest iswe same

What success, as Swed asks, or what gurgles and swallows, will there be or might we dare expect in performing, voicing, such a textual string? And similarly we must ask the same of the whole chapter (25 lines) of which this line is but a middle part.

*While*this MillerNoseydidpocket are Gleam-
ingUnderfed stout Handelleapyear bay Agen-
dathcold chapfeed someone metwoJamescursed
about FlynntheheatMayNoseypriest iswe same
NoSixme glasseyedPolygamyMy Watch eatwhata
like alast offellowsongMolly isshirt Bring
withbrain such fromhavethat I are answered

(*Muoyce II*, Chapter 8 lines 6-12)

How are we to read and speak this; and what of the 18 sections of the whole text?

Where and how is *Muoyce II* properly placed and said? (You say there is a lot of it you

don't understand. I told you to read Homer and Joyce first.) Our endless work with texts in progress (yet always complete), *homerjoyceceage*, now reaches a decided stopping point with these questions.

he again yes melt in bed or 27th it and get
 hes got Friday Saturday not a me what had
 youre and oblige the Greeks so simple when
 Milly old a account of shirt they suppose
 he like an what was hotchapotch of could I
 Yes.

(*Muoyce II*, Chapter 18 last 6 lines)

5. Clearing

— Hearing *Roaratorio* Placing *Muoyce II*

Where does this investigation get its importance from, given that it seems only to destroy everything interesting: that is, all that is great and important? (As it were, all the buildings, leaving behind only bits of stone and rubble.) But what we are destroying are only houses of cards [Luftgebaude—structures of air] and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stood.

(Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* #118)

In these reticent, closing pages we respond to the opening concerns with the text of *Roaratorio*, as well as to considerations of the place of *Muoyce II*. We further thread middles, beginnings, and ends.

Roaratorio presents the opportunity to listen with pleasure to the content of *Finnegans Wake*, (something many could not do before—or even after—*Roaratorio*). We are asked by Cage to hear *Finnegans Wake* with an accepting sense of confusion and finitude; not with distress or interrupting questioning. Hearing qua hearing, silently hearing *Finnegans Wake* for its own sake is Cage's offering and his present of *Roaratorio* to us.

Muoyce II is a text at the end of a chain of texts that steadily increase and release chaos rather than trying, only or ever, to offer content restrictions and thereby understanding of themselves. *Muoyce II* provides a direct expression of a line of enhancing chaos and in that way a substantial need to listen without an advancing purpose or concern.

homerjoycecage investigates a clearing of the ground of language on which we stand, and a consideration and revelation of conditions of possibility. What are the conditions that make our very questions of understanding, reading, and hearing meaningful and possible? What makes that particular and those various questions and claims of understanding possible? *What* must be the case in order for *that* to be or not be meaningful? This is what *Roaratorio* and its surrounding texts encourage us to ask.¹⁰ Those texts come from ideas but are not about those ideas yet they produce new ideas.

¹⁰ We are encouraged, invited, prompted by *homerjoycecage* to listen silently *and* to reflect on conditions of possibility. The want of sense can ground either philosophical investigations (conditions of possibility) or musical attention (listening). The lack opens the desire. We may pursue it or forsake it. "I must understand this." "Accept, enjoy stillness." The philosophical and musical occasions of Cage's work can be severed and a narrow attention to what Cage does promoted. But they can also be interwoven (*the want of sense*) and open a breath of understanding and listening otherwise likely ignored or missed.

(Cage may very well be read and heard as emphasizing sound and music and nothing else (musical occasions); but even if he said and stressed that (he sometimes did and didn't), the texts themselves often do something else, viz., induce, allow, prompt, invite philosophical occasions. "I left the first lecture (Cage's Norton Lectures, *I-VI*) with an immense craving for sense." (Cavell conversation) "*I-VI* continues an ongoing series . . . to explore a way of writing which though coming from ideas is not about them, or is not about ideas but produces them." (Cage, *I-VI*, p. 2) Sounds and music can generate philosophical reminders. Ordinary language philosophy asks us to acknowledge both the listening for its own sake and the craving for ideas and understanding, but not forget, be reminded of, the entwined conditions that make both possible—e.g., the want of sense, the nonintentional. The Cageian musician will listen (all the sounds we don't intend) while the Wittgensteinian philosopher will self-reflect and remind (conditions of possibility). But, neither one, in a proper spirit, will self-indulge.)

Listening to *Roaratorio* awakens us from the tired standards and forced routines in which we find ourselves. It releases and embraces the chaos of our lives and in so doing agitates and reorients our sense of importance. It empties our prevailing and regulating textual space and ground enabling reflections anew on our reading and hearing. *Roaratorio* comes from words and ideas but is not about them or attempting to understand them; “rather than trying to find out what the book’s about, this opens up the possibility of doing many things with the book. Bringing it to life in other forms.” (Mode *Roaratorio* CD booklet 37)

Following the listening to *Roaratorio*, how then and again to place *Muoyce II*? It is a stirring and releasing of new thoughts and reflections by the razing of the understanding of a text. It is the result of nonintentional efforts of musical and textual creation, and compositional activity continued from *Roaratorio* and *Muoyce*, from radical to severe chaos. More fully, *Muoyce II* is an espousal of a relentless chaos that follows a line of performances that begin with Homer: *Iliad* → *Odyssey* → *Ulysses* → *Finnegans Wake* → *Roaratorio* → *Muoyce* → *Muoyce II*; each text increasing the complexity of its predecessor or, better, given the multiple perspectives of chaos encountered in the writings, releasing more fully the chaos of its grounding ancestors. (Listen to Cage to hear anew Joyce and Homer.)

The maturing line of texts, *iliadodysseyulyssesfinneganswakeroaratoriomuoycemuoyceii*, moves from gentle to severe challenges of expression, but with the continual thread and reminder that from *The Iliad* to *Muoyce II* there is in the growing chaos a constant effort of creation and song (an affirmation of the oral nature of what is primary and original; the world is our word sung) and a reflective wonder of how we are able to say anything meaningful at all. Like the ancient poets, rather than

devotion solely to a derivative sense of language, of reading or speaking, we embrace the judgment that texts (can be considered) are to be measured as sung, and thereby each letter, syllable, and word holds or gains another or new hearing and importance in itself. Releasing the chaos gives song and hearing prominence, an intensified attention to each element of language use (a logic to each word we speak), to the question of what we say when. From the void (the want of sense) we awaken and stir to remind how words and texts are to be sung and heard.

“Yes I thought of this too, when I came to this notion, that a text needs to be sung.” (Cage, *Mode Roaratorio* CD booklet 39) “... I’m going to write the score for this, so that someone else could either make a different realization than the one I’ve made ... or he could do the same kind of thing with another book. For instance Homer’s *Iliad* could be turned into a piece of music. [The score is like a model.] That’s what I’d like.” (Ibid, 42)

(The *Iliad* as “a piece of music”? What might that be in Cage’s hands and voice? It is hardly personal arrogance, at least here and now, to suggest the marking *Muomer: Writing Through The Iliad*. (See Appendix I) The title reminds that there is still more chaos, beyond Cage’s texts, to elicit pleasures and wonders of reading, hearing, creating, and finding possibilities.)

homerjoycecage faces a world that seems often to move perniciously *backward*, one in which we feel desperately caught in a swirling *middle*, a world of social orders and authorities insistent on trying to control and *rewrite* language—make words mean whatever one wants, a world outwardly altogether intent on destroying and *razing* what is meaningful in our lives. *homerjoycecage* reminds that these particular, factual horrors of our lives misdirect attention from the multitude of enriching possibilities, pleasures, and affirmations capable of release; not all razing, middle, rewriting, backward efforts are unwanted or to be rejected. While

likely unnoticed under the immediate pressures of chaos and the despairs of limits, different talk and actions are at our hand, to be courageously exposed and used, allowed escape from the narrow destructions of backwardmiddleschooler. How does one talk or find their voice in the midst of chaos? This is Cage's performance question in his last *Muoyce* texts. *homerjoyce* prompts us to reflect on what must be the case to be distressed and despairing, to feel and say and act as we do. It encourages us to broaden and reassess our sense of speaking, reading, and importance.

Rather than struggling to understand and eliminate the growing, destructive chaos in the fleeting, narrow moments of our overwhelming, repressive world, *homerjoyce* opens the possibility of living with such daily facts (lack of sense), yet still creating (desire of sense) in the face of that world, as it chaotically is, not as we wish to change and solve it. *homerjoyce* recreates song out of ruin. It clears the ground (want of sense) on which we stand. Our obstacles become opportunities as we release new ways of talking and acting through recognizing and acknowledging attention to grounding conditions of possibility, rather than remaining confined by the constricted problems and singular efforts of the need for solution, control, and the last word. Such is the moral of *homerjoyce*.

Appendix I

Muomer: Writing Through The Iliad

Cage offers his *Iliad* suggestion from the standpoint of the mesostic method in *Roaratorio*, where he provides a seven-step process for the “means for translating a book into a performance.” (Mode *Roaratorio* CD booklet 59) He titles the score: _____, _____ circus on _____ (e.g., *Roaratorio, an Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake*). Here we embrace the suggestion but instead answer the questions by following his last set of chance determined textual creations; flying over and landing now and then in a text, releasing, as before, not understanding but joyful (joyceful) chaos and pleasure from the text. Using chance procedures for identifying book, page, line, word, spacing, text order we create: *Muomer, Writing Through The Iliad*, for solo reader. Here are four excerpts, (Fagles translation), the opening four sections:

Book 9: The Embassy to Achilles

Kinghegoodatgodsdeephuggingillustrious treasure
 strolling if Achilles havehimselfpray their sohis
 PhoenixforroundCleopatraescort in NestorIfet
 well-built paid battlewhenverthanAgamemnonall what
 same their day what pinnedArgives heartsOdysseus I

Book 1: The Rage of Achilles

Patroclusall from throne why hand hipwillAgamemnon
 if so that at winning oftouchedarmiesme
 godshim Oldthetohe Achaeansmother for
 theirNowAtreusdrivewarmswithexalt that ridge
 anywherebecause halls andclearnever deathless headon

Book 24: Achilles and Priam

Troy temptingand and myrushyouhergrieves
 thedownas theyside in nowdecreedordered
 himso had Pity and weepingcountered doomedmy
 layrecklesstheyyoua sothatflowingin
 traveler in comradesreturnAchilles'dutyPolites And noble

Book 7: Ajax duels with Hector

yourselves eyeswailTrojans our furyoverjoyedbarrow them
 mightpanicbesidehimAchaeans down and But you
 inI'mseemengatewaystomorrowthehimself to
 theirground bigButneverand shiftgoeshenchman
 Andaslong atlinesyears untilCome they

Textual Notes and Acknowledgments

Primary texts used: *The Iliad*, Penguin Books 1998, Fagles translation
The Odyssey, Penguin Books 1997, Fagles translation
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Ulysses, The 1922 text, Oxford University Press 2008
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 1992
Finnegans Wake, Oxford University Press 2012
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Roaratorio, mode records 1992
Writings Through Finnegans Wake, Printed Editions 1978
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twolinethanks

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