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We Can't Change the World, but We Can Change the Subject. James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* on the Polish Stage

Abstract: This article examines how theatrical adaptations of James Joyce's novels, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, during the 1970s became integral to the avant-garde movement in Poland. Other adaptations would evolve in the post-transition period from the 1990s to the present day, which not only explored the themes presented in Joyce's works but also hinted at the universality of personal crises, national grievances, and the yearning for a sense of home and homeland.

Keywords: James Joyce, theatre, avantgarde, adaptation, reception

Abstrakt: Niniejszy artykuł analizuje adaptacje teatralne *Ulyssesa* i *Finnegans Wake* Jamesa Joyce'a z lat 70. XX wieku, które stały się integralną częścią teatralnego ruchu awangardowego w Polsce. Inne adaptacje ewoluowały w okresie posttransformacyjnym: od lat 90. aż do dziś. Nie tylko zgłębiały tematykę przedstawioną w dziełach Joyce'a, ale także odnosiły się do tematu uniwersalności osobistych kryzysów, narodowych żali oraz tęsknoty za ogniskiem domowym i ojczyzną.

Słowa kluczowe: James Joyce, teatr, awangarda, adaptacja, recepcja krytyczna

Introduction

This contribution looks to discuss how theatrical adaptations of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* in the 1970s became very much a part of the story of the avant-garde in Poland. Following on from the communist era, the post-transition adaptations from the 1990s up to recent times will be shown to have explored ideas derived from the spectacles themselves, whilst intimating perhaps that the wanderings, ponderings, simultaneity and phantasmagoria, as featured in the theatrical adaptations of Joyce, charted in a symbolic sense at least the universality of personal crisis, the preponderances of national grievance; the plotting of a return

to sentiments of home and homeland; and the conjoining of another, that being Joyce's Ireland.

1. Think you're escaping and run into yourself

Poland's first theatrical adaptation of James Joyce's *Ulysses* "*Ulisses*" (Keane, 2016: 118–123) had its premiere on 14 February 1970 in Teatr Wybrzeże [The Coastal Theatre] in the city of Gdańsk, a performance which marked the culmination of what had been a period of frenzied interest in Joyce following the publication of Maciej Słomczyński's completed translation of *Ulysses* in the early months of 1969, which could arguably be put down to the fact that there was at the time a perception that Joyce's "bible of modernity", so described by theatre critic Andrzej Wróblewski (1970, 8), had made its arrival in Poland decades later than it should have. The translation itself had been assigned a print-run of forty thousand copies, which ended up selling out within a matter of days. Paralleling this enthusiasm to snap up a title that was fast becoming a collector's item, and either being re-auctioned or resold to second-hand book shops in an equally record number, tickets for the *Ulysses* play would also prove impossible to come by (Wróbel 1970).

Maciej Słomczyński (1920–1998) is a fascinating figure and like Joyce's Leopold Bloom was always something of an outsider, with many aspects of his early life problematic in terms of any substantiation of their veracity (see Słomczyńska-Pierzchalska 2003; Wawrzycka 2003/2004, 43–45). In the 1950s, Słomczyński embarked on a career as a prolific translator of high literature, with Shakespeare, Lewis Carroll, and J. M. Barrie being just a selection of his translational oeuvre. He would also supplement his career by writing crime novels under the pen-name Joe Alex, the proceeds from which would ultimately allow Słomczyński to begin work on his translation of *Ulysses*, which in all probability came about as the result of a commission by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, a *fêted* figure as poet and prose writer of the inter- and post-war years, who in 1955 took the editorial helm of the Warsaw-based literary journal *Twórczość*. As a pertinent aside, Iwaszkiewicz had also translated in the mid-1920s several poems from *Chamber Music*; however, these translations would remain unpublished until 1949, when composer Karol Szymanowski would put them to music. And what is also something of a fascinating titbit is that Iwaszkiewicz met Joyce in person at the 1925 P.E.N. Club gathering in Paris, and had even had published a photograph of the great man to prove it (Iwaszkiewicz 1925). At any rate, it was in the pages of Iwaszkiewicz's journal (1958, 40–56) that Słomczyński published the Telemachus episode; and so Polish readers for the first time would read the declamations of stately plump Buck Mulligan and the remonstrations of Stephen Dedalus atop the Martello Tower. This landmark publication was not only an auspicious opportunity for the translator, but it marked the beginning of what would come to be an epic "translation in progress"; an undertaking that engaged him for the following decade. Słomczyński would publish completed chapters in various literary journals in the period between 1958 and 1968, and the translator generally accompanied these translations

with introductions wherein he proclaimed the accessibility of *Ulysses*, the novel. A flavour of his casualness can be seen in his pronouncement given at an international Joyce Symposium in the 1966: 'I never found *Ulysses* to be a difficult book, "Oxen of the Sun" and "Sirens" gave me some headaches, but the Polish language is very rich and has great elasticity. Once you get used to *Ulysses* there is nothing mysterious or enigmatic about it (Słomczyński 1967, 236). (Many Joyceans would agree with him wholeheartedly; although the uninitiated, or rather the unconvinced, would not). Słomczyński offered this same sentiment to his own Polish readership when he asserted in the introduction to the "Circe" episode in the theatre journal *Dialog* (1964, 20) that *Ulysses* was neither impenetrable nor difficult, and that it only required of readers that they concentrate on the material so as to be able to cope with the constructional traps that the author had set. Indeed it was the publication of the "Circe" episode that perhaps first suggested to Polish readers the possibility of staging *Ulysses* in a theatrical form, particularly as it had been the stated aim of *Dialog*'s editor, Adam Tarn, to bring Western plays to Poland by first introducing them in translation (see Czerwiński 1968, 387–389).

Słomczyński's inevitably close identification with Joyce must have fed into his own creative ambitions. And he was surely justified in wanting to capitalize monetarily and reputationally from a project in which he had invested so much time. Once Słomczyński had made the decision to adapt the novel, he must have reconnoitred Joycean adaptations like Marjorie Barkentin's *Ulysses in Nighttown*, which had run on off-Broadway in 1958, and which had offered episodic snatches of the work, with its primary focus being again on the "Circe" episode. Significant for Słomczyński could also have been Barkentin's self-assigned description of her work as a dramatization and transposition. In other words, the play had been hers alone, and she had been ready to place her efforts in an authorial space that many would say should best be retained by the Joyce estate. Indeed, in the theatre programme Słomczyński contended that his adaptation was a "demonstration of Joyce's mind with the help of living people," (1970, 6)¹ which was another way of saying that he had provided a flavour of the novel's characters and the unfolding day; further stating that his goal had been to create a communicative piece whereby *Ulysses*, when presented as theatre, would help readers to achieve a fuller understanding of the novel. And once again, like Barkentin, Słomczyński angled in the programme to claim that *Ulysses* the spectacle was his own autonomous conception, because

the entire mechanism of this play is my own property and the fruits of my imaginings and creativity [...] I allowed myself to put my name to the work – as based on James Joyce's novel, only so as to avoid any misunderstanding. Any other approach would have represented a disservice to the author of *Ulysses*.²

¹ "...o zademonstrowaniu myśli Joyce'a przy pomocy żywych ludzi."

² "...cały mechanizm tej sztuki jest moją prywatną własnością i wynikiem moich rozmyślań [...] pozwoliłem ją sobie podpisać moim nazwiskiem – na podstawie powieści Jamesa Joyce'a – po prostu dlatego, aby uniknąć nieporozumień; gdyż jakkolwiek inna moja postawa wydawałaby mi się nieprzyzwoitością wobec autora *Ulissesa*."

We can also see in the poster that the theatrical adaptation of *Ulysses* was “based on” – “według” James Joyce, but “written” – “napisał” by Słomczyński. Given the importance of the theme of usurpation to the novel itself, it would be hard not to see Słomczyński’s assertion of authorial ownership as being this very same kind of act (Keane 2020, 92).

In order to bring his grand idea to the stage, Słomczyński sought out the collaboration of theatre director, Zygmunt Hübner, who in 1955 had directed for Teatr Współczesny [The Contemporary Theatre] in Warsaw what would be hailed as a celebrated production of Sean O’Casey’s *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), “*Cień bohatera*”, which for theatregoers and critics had delivered echoes of the Nazi occupation of Poland; and in particular the events of the Warsaw Uprising, “we know everything only too well from occupied Warsaw” (Szydłowski 1955).³ This being Hübner’s directorial debut, it would mark the beginning of a long and distinguished career; one that would interact with Irish drama, albeit often with mixed results.

The precise division of artistic input could only ever be blurred, but between Słomczyński and Hübner they would conceive their two-hour Joycean spectacle as a “lyrical drama of human loneliness” (Gerould 1992, xi). In the opening scene, the entire cast stood on a dimly lit stage and then retreated backwards into the darkness, leaving Leopold Bloom (Stanisław Igar) in the kitchen frying kidneys for his wife Molly (Halina Winiarska). Then there was Mulligan (Stanisław Michalski) shaving in the Martello Tower, followed by Mulligan’s condemnation of Stephen for not kneeling and praying by the bed of his dying mother. From this moment onwards, the cast went through a series of seamless scene changes, which accompanied Bloom as he made his way forth on his day in the city: and which would take him to the circus-like phantasmagorical finale of Nighttown. The play was peppered also by fragments of the soliloquy of Molly Bloom, whose bed along with Paddy Dignam’s coffin (Dignam was played by Stanisław Dąbrowski) remained on stage for the entirety of the play, offering symbolic allusions to life and death (Gerould, Lewicki 1971, 99–116).

Overall, it could be said that the success of the theatrical *Ulysses* was due in part to the fact that the play had emulated the more recent modernist dramatic and universalist traditions of Tadeusz Różewicz and Sławomir Mrożek; and had indeed traipsed the inroads furrowed in Poland’s theatrical world by the plays of Samuel Beckett. The play had also matched the visual and spatial explorations and happenings being pioneered at the time by Polish theatrical innovators like Tadeusz Kantor. Though most significantly perhaps, critics would commend both Słomczyński and Hübner for having inspired audiences to actually read a book that so many people had gone to great lengths and expense to acquire but had hitherto anecdotally been only content to have it sitting proudly and conspicuously on their bookshelves (Wysińska 1970, 19–20).

Three years later, with the Coastal Theatre’s production never having been re-performed elsewhere in Poland, the same enquiry after the universal themes

³ “[...] wszystko to znamy aż nadto dobrze z okupacyjnej Warszawy.”

and theatrical possibilities afforded by *Ulysses* was further pursued in what could be regarded as a sequel adaptation with a singular twist. The title of this production was *Bloomusalem* and its premiere was intended to inaugurate a late-night season for Warsaw's Ateneum Theatre, which had been planned as a forum for the presentation of more risqué artistic ventures. The play's director, Jerzy Grzegorzewski, had opted to focus on the "Circe" episode, but proceeded with rehearsals without ever having made contact with Słomczyński, who may have not only been offended at the slight, but also concerned about the integrity of his work, especially given that it had found itself in the hands of a young director considered to be a vanguard figure of the avant-garde, and not known for being reverential with theatre manuscripts. The divide was perhaps best described by critic Marta Fik (1974), who adjudged that,

Słomczyński is a writer himself, and by creating a play that is autonomous for the theatre, he represents, to put it in plain terms, "the writer's interests". Grzegorzewski is a stage designer and director and he is mainly involved in theatre (not necessarily Joyce's "theatre", or "the interests of the theatre" in general) [...] he wants to create a spectacle that is "theatre, a piece of music, a painting, and a sculptural exposition."⁴

Słomczyński's proprietorial attitude to the work, as both its conduit and gatekeeper, took a somewhat unedifying turn when Słomczyński addressed Grzegorzewski in an open letter, published in a Warsaw newspaper, where Słomczyński set out his misgivings about the potential staging of the episode in his translation (see Kydryński 1974). This truculent public declaration presumably allowed Słomczyński, at least in his own mind, to potentially wash his hands of the entire business in the event that the production proved to be a flop. Little could he know it at the time, but he was distancing himself from what would soon be hailed as the theatrical event of the season. The play's hallucinatory opening act would feature the visions of Leopold Bloom (Marek Walczewski) played out on the stage in a darkened space; to be followed in the second act by vignettes of the Nighttown episode taking place simultaneously throughout the theatre's foyer and in its various nooks and crannies, with the abysmally attired Bella Cohen (Hanna Skarżanka) holding court in the cloakroom sitting atop a grand piano and speaking through a flaring horn (Sienkiewicz 1974; Bułhak 1974). As this scene was acted out, which was also performed to the accompaniment of orchestral music, audience members could follow in Bloom's footsteps and enter into the reality of Nighttown. The same could wander through the phantasmagorical setting, mingling with the actors who would recite snippets of text which they repeated whenever a new clutch of onlookers approached. A singular challenge for the actors must have involved them negotiating their way through the onlookers when it was their cue elsewhere. At some point Stephen Dedalus (Andrzej Seweryn) could be observed in a high state of irritation, itching for a quarrel, providing the cue for

⁴ "Słomczyński sam jest pisarzem i tworząc sztukę autonomiczną dla teatru, reprezentuje jednak, mówiąc brzydko, „interesy pisarza”. Grzegorzewski jest scenografem i reżyserem i zajmuje go głównie teatr (niekoniecznie „teatr” Joyce’a, w ogóle „interesy teatru”) [...] pragnie stworzyć widowisko będące zarówno teatrem, utworem muzycznym, jak i ekspozycją malarsko-rzeźbiarską."

Bloom to escort his worse-for-wear spiritual son out of the brothel, through both the audience and the taunting drunken cast, and towards the open main doors of the theatre. A car then drove through the exit with its headlights glaring; and subsequently took Bloom and Stephen away into the night.

This production was deemed to have proposed new boundaries within which theatre may understand and manipulate spatial and real-time experimentation. In this regard, actorly nous, music, and movement proved to be the dominant notes and features; with the text relegated to a second-tier status, which meant that the actualities of Słomczyński's considerable translatory achievements had ended up dispersed in pockets and snippets throughout the foyer (not even on the stage!), not always audible, and certainly not appreciably linear. Indeed, just as *Ulysses* the play had demanded a great deal from Polish theatregoers, *Bloomusalem* would also prove to be a challenging experience, particularly as the spectacle proposed that the audience be as modern as the proceedings purported to be (Keane, 2021, 94).

2. "...haloed be her eve, her singtime sung, her rill be run"

The creative possibilities afforded by Joyce on a Polish stage would be further explored in 1976 in an avant-garde adaptation of the "Anna Livia Plurabelle" episode from *Finnegans Wake* (1939) for Wrocław's Teatr Współczesny [Contemporary Theatre]. The play *Anna Livia*, representing the completion of what could be regarded as a Joycean trilogy of sorts, was composed of static recitals of extracts from Słomczyński's "translation in progress" on the "Anna Livia Plurabelle" episode (the only section of the novel which he would complete); and was in turn peppered with snippets from Joyce's *Chamber Music* (1907), featuring fragments of poems such as XIV "My dove, my beautiful one", and XXIX "Dear heart, why will you use me so?", which had also been translated by Słomczyński and published in the theatre programme (1976: 6). In a less hostile tone, but in a similar vein to his dealings with Grzegorzewski, Słomczyński penned a meditation on the persona of Anna Livia Plurabelle to the director of the play, Kazimierz Braun. This missive, according to the translator, was intended to serve as an insightful starting point for the director's exploration of the embodiment of womanhood and the Eternal Mother, wherein refined words and river symbols marked and paralleled dream-like confessional flow, and where expressive acting was foregrounded (1976, 3–5). Słomczyński's article also revealed that, as with his adaptation of *Ulysses*, he was anxious to make his mark on the performable material.

The play, one of opposites and identicalities, interwove ideas of femininity and reincarnation; and eroticism was a dominant theme. Oxymoronic probing extended to the figures of Shaun (Paweł Nowisz; Zdzisław Kozieln) and Shem (Zbigniew Górski); while Shaun was played as a portly Bloom figure, Shem assumed the features and backstory of Stephen Dedalus. Anna Livia Plurabelle (Teresa Sawicka) was in turn more of an Anna-Livia-Molly, residing both in bed and the waterspring from which she had emerged like a Venus figure. Just one example of the achievement of the sense of this fluidity of identity could be discerned

where Stephen-Shem forms a part of Anna-Livia-Molly's dream. It is safe to surmise that the audience must have been either very knowing or very confused... or simply happy to go along with the 'river-run' flow, and enjoy the impression of being fully attuned to the performance.

Like Grzegorzewski, Braun had made his reputation as a practitioner of the concept of the New Theatre (Tymicki, Niezgodna 1986, 15–22), which posited the co-participation of actors and audiences; and galvanized notions of performativity and the visual arts over reality emerging from a purely literary interpretation. However, critics had expected to see the surprises presented in Grzegorzewski's *Bloomusalem* rehashed and reimagined; and indeed, given the fact that queues for the premiere had begun to form at 3 o'clock in the morning, the prospective audience members must have assumed that they would be playing some performative part in the proceedings. However, this was to be an evening which foregrounded a traditional theatrical setting, one where theatregoers were expected to remain politely in their seats. This same fact did not go unnoticed, nor un-protested, and one critic, Marek Jodłowski (1976), went so far as to describe the play as an ostentatious contradiction of the aesthetics of the New Theatre. To make matters worse, for Jodłowski the whole performance had passed off without the slightest hint of improvisation. *No one had even left the stage!* As a result of this rude treatment of avant-garde principles, the attainment of a new reality – the foremost subversive artistic goal of the era – had been lost and replaced by performances where pretence, play, and illusion were the recognizable components.

3. Every life is in many days, day after day

The last hurrah for Słomczyński's *Ulysses* came in 1983, with Wanda Lasowska's paradoxically forgotten adaptation for the Szczecin National Theatre in 1983; where the emphasis was placed on the notion of the multi-role and the theme of usurpation, wherein Boylan (Aleksander Gierczak), the Paris Alexander of all usurpers, was Mulligan in alternation. This meant that much was made of Mulligan taking from Stephen (Mieczysław Franaszek) the key to the Martello Tower; and also of Boylan undressing in Bloom's bedroom, an act by which Boylan became effectively the master of Eccles Street. However, for all the production's raucous explorations, and with its probing of the desirous nature of Molly (Janina Bocheńska); an indication of which can be discerned in the provocative art work on the front cover of the theatre programme, which saw Molly's body in a state of bondage, the play had a modest performative legacy. Indeed, it seems that for the time being at least, the crest of the wave upon which Joyce had coasted since the publication of Słomczyński's translation of *Ulysses* had begun to ebb. As one reviewer of this particular theatrical production mused, there had been a dawning recognition that Joyce in Poland had had his moment in the sun in the 1970s, and that *Ulysses* in particular was neither *de rigueur* nor any longer a part of the general literary discourse. In fact, the novel barely appealed to the fastidious few.

It has not been 15 years since the first Polish edition of James Joyce's famous novel became the real dream. [...] From my friends, I know that most of them did not get through it and ended up putting the book on the shelf. I persevered until the end, but to be honest, I didn't get any pleasure or satisfaction from it. I have not met anyone since then who would admit that *Ulysses* gave them a deeper experience [...] this book is probably in a prominent place in many home libraries, but no one ever takes it off the shelf to read it.⁵ (Wrzos 1983)

4. He is gone from mortal haunts

In the post-transitional era of the 1990s, theatrical productions of Joyce's works in Poland aligned themselves with the kind of minor spectacles and actorly readings that today are more readily associated with performances to be found at Joycean symposia or transnational Bloomsday events, where like-minded people convene to celebrate their shared tastes and enthusiasms. A number of these spectacles, though short-lived, would achieve critical acclaim and be remembered. One such example was a production from 1996 of the play titled *Finnegans Make*, which was produced by Kraków's Zenkasi Theatre, spearheaded by the husband-and-wife team of Zenon Fajfer and Katarzyna Bazarnik, who, in thrall, as they admitted, to Kantor, looked to explore amalgams of the human condition by way of 'stripped bare' material relinquishments' (see Biela 2022).

Being a bi-lingual production, *Finnegans Make* had the novelty of premiering in the James Joyce Centre in Dublin before making its debut in Kraków. The play itself represented a theatrical collage which traversed all of Joyce's prose works. Like Grzegorzewski's *Bloomusalem*, the play began in a prolonged darkness "not for the faint hearted" (O'Reilly 1996), which was intended to indicate the internal workings of a stream of consciousness. A lit candle then revealed a coffin, around which characters prayed. Molly Bloom (Katarzyna Bazarnik), sitting amongst the audience, recalled episodes from her life, and then the same Father Arnall (Jacek Sokołowski) of *A Portrait* delivered a sermon on death, judgement, heaven and hell; addressing audience members directly; the suggestion being that they too should reflect on their lives... and repent if necessary. Levels of disquiet were only amplified by the arrival of a drunken James Joyce-Stephen Dedalus (Sławomir Rożnawski) figure looking to share his whiskey with the audience. The big reveal came when the coffin's resident was shown not to be Paddy Dignam in repose, but rather a paedophile priest waiting to leap out and lunge at an unsuspecting victim; an act by which the play figuratively located itself in the maelstrom of outrage at the abuses of the Catholic Church; an outrage that was really only beginning to find its articulation (see O'Doherty 1996). *Finnegans Make* would be widely

⁵ "Jeszcze nie minęło 15 lat od chwili, kiedy prawdziwą sensacją stało się pierwsze polskie wydanie głośnej powieści Jamesa Joyce'a. [...] Z rozeznania wśród znajomych wiem, że większość z nich nie przełknęła tego w całości i w pierwszym lepszym momencie odkładała książkę na półkę. Sam wytrwałem do końca, ale szczerze mówiąc nie wyniosłem z tego żadnej przyjemności, ani satysfakcji. Nie spotkałem też od tego czasu nikogo, kto by przyznał, że *Ulysses* dostarczył mu głębszych przeżyć. [...] ta książka leży pewnie na widocznym miejscu w wielu domowych bibliotekach, ale chyba nikt do niej nie zagląda."

reviewed in Ireland, with one critic, Eugene Moloney writing that the audience could only 'hold on and enjoy the ride'; with Moloney's ultimate judgement being that "cosy and traditional theatre this is not" (O'Doherty 1996, 14).

5. Hold to the now, the here...

In the late 1990s, emergent voices in Irish drama, such as Martin McDonagh, Conor McPherson, Mark O'Rowe, Marina Carr and Enda Walsh, captured the élan of an optimistic era for Ireland that was riding the crest of a wave of what would prove to be an unsustainable property boom. However, Polish audiences would welcome the plays of these writers as principally universal works that reflected Poland's more pronounced international outlook in the expectant years just prior to EU membership. In particular, this cultural alterity would be evidenced with Conor McPherson's banter-filled play *The Weir* (1997), when it was staged by Agnieszka Lipiec-Wróblewska in November of the same year in Warsaw's Studio Theatre, which was based on a translation by Klaudyna Rozhin. Set in the closed world of a rural bar, regulars trade stories, the telling of which reveal personal sadnesses and tragedies. Indeed, it was the play's tender treatment of its hollowed-out characters that led reviewers to praise McPherson for speaking to the human condition. Perhaps Jacek Wakar (1999) put it best when he wrote: 'After fifteen minutes we feel as if we know them well. We treat them like friends, and we'd like to buy the next round of drinks.'⁶ This observation represented an inkling that Polish people were becoming part of the unfolding story of modern Ireland; and the shared world of Joyce would certainly play its part in this invigoration with new, and celebrated, translations of his works. The year 2012 would see the publication of the first full translation of *Finnegans Wake*, rendered by Krzysztof Bartnicki, and titled "Finneganów Tren," whereas the *Ulysses* centenary that was the year 2022 saw a new translation of *Ulysses*, penned by Maciej Świerkocki.

Like Słomczyński, both Bartnicki and Świerkocki spent an Odyssean length of time on the completion of their tasks; and both accomplishments would later intersect with theatre in some shape or form. Bartnicki would be involved, for example, in an advisory capacity with the filming of a 12-minute short featuring excerpts from *Finnegans Wake* relating to the Irish pirate Grace O'Malley.⁷ One of seven international works commissioned to mark the 75th anniversary of the publication of *Finnegans Wake*, the director of this particular piece, author and playwright, Michał Buszewicz, chose to convey a transposition of place by filming a part of the short in Kraków's Wawel Cathedral, and also in location at some of the city's well-known landmarks. The result would be a remarkably visual piece that was also parsimonious in its use of text. With Bartnicki not even listed as a co-author of the screenplay, it seems that neither the short nor the translation

⁶ "Po kwadransie wydaje się, że ich dobrze znamy, traktujemy ich jak przyjaciół, wszystkim chcielibyśmy postawić następną kolejkę."

⁷ <http://miastoliteratury.pl/program/finneganow-tren/>.

had any correlation other than the declaration on the part of Buszewicz that one had been based on the other.

Some reclaiming of the textual tradition would be achieved by Świerkocki's translation, which would inspire, or rather underpin, one of the theatrical events of the year. As a part of the centenary celebrations marking the publication of *Ulysses*, the Polish Theatre of Poznań conceived its own unique Bloomsday theatrical production; one that would be based on Świerkocki's new translation. It would also be accompanied by a great deal of fanfare around the presence in Poznań that day of Świerkocki himself. The director of the production, Maja Kleczewska, celebrated for her productions of both Shakespeare's works and contemporary plays, had achieved considerable notoriety in recent times as a result of her highly politicised production of Adam Mickiewicz's *Dziady* (*Forefather's Eve*; 1823–1832), which had placed her in the crosshairs of Poland's ruling establishment, less than pleased at the production's swipes at contemporary Polish society. With the promotional video for the *Ulysses* play both vibrant and frenetic, promising late-night slivers of liver with beers for all those who attended,⁸ the interior of the theatre did not disappoint, transformed as it was into a café called Syrenka (Mermaid), and boasting a certain 1970s' décor with round tables, and with attendant waiting staff serving cocktails and snacks. There was also an Irish Bar (one of the sponsors of the evening was Guinness), where audience members could buy Guinness and wine, and which remained open for the entire performance of the show. Somewhere nearby, a chef was also to be found frying the promised liver slices to order. Indeed, so intoxicating was the smell of meat and cooked vegetables that critic, Izabella Adamczewska (2022), wrote in rueful tones, "It is a pity that theatre uses scent so rarely". Like Buszewicz's short, the play itself challenged notions of alterity by having Bloom (Piotr Jankowski) greet the day on the morning of June 16, 2022... in Poznań! And throughout this fragmented day, Bloom would wander the streets of his city, hanging out in pubs, meeting friends, and passing the time of day with strangers. However, the play was also brim-full of disparaging allusions to contemporary Poland, and in particular the Catholic Church's continued stranglehold on Poland's political and social discourse, with Krystyna Duniec (2022) writing:

Kleczewska also makes recourse to theatrical journalism, exposing the hypocrisy of the Church in Poland, even though this king has long had no clothes. [...] Politics is a cesspool in which we are drowning [...] And then we have Polish anti-Semitism in a country where no Jew is said to have been hurt, provided that they assimilated ...⁹

Enhanced by choral and orchestral accompaniment, stream of consciousness snippets were often delivered as an off-screen voice, and on such occasions the other characters froze, as if they themselves were a frozen film frame. Molly (Alona Szostak) wandered around the tables, sitting down at a table on occasion,

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bmI2Vy3xZo>.

⁹ "Kleczewska ucieka się również do teatralnej publicystyki, obnaża hipokryzję Kościoła w Polsce, choć ten król już od tak dawna jest nagi. [...] Polityka jest kloaką, w której toniemy [...] A i jeszcze polski antysemityzm w kraju, w którym ponoć nie skrzywdzono żadnego Żyda, pod warunkiem że się zasymiluje..."

coquettishly teasing individuals and delivering her stories, but adopting onerous tones in the final portion of her monologue; where she lamentingly observes that “a world of women would be a world without wars” “świat kobiet byłby światem bez wojen” (Adamczewska, 2022). In this instance, it seems that with the beating drums of a Troy under siege resounding in Ukraine, Molly was not only goading the age with her outrage, but was simply showing (like Kleczewska, indeed) that she was incapable of keeping silent.

Conclusion

Joyce's legacy in Poland rests a great deal on the translations and transpositions of his works, and the spectacles that they gave rise to. As we have seen, the visualised Ithacas of place and dreamscape, as represented by the Polish theatrical adaptations of Joyce, harnessed a thematic obscurity that proved to be the most pointed articulation of an interpretative freedom, one that conferred an infinity of possibilities; and one that no single performance could ever achieve an exclusive purchase on. In other words, for theatre Joyce offered the broadest of canvases; affording as he did ineluctable modalities and visualities, not to mention deep offerings of musical and textual extracts. Indeed, it may be said in some kind of summation that Polish theatrical exponents and practitioners found a strong dialogic link between the Irish writer's work and the ideological intensities of their times. Indeed, through their interpretations of Joyce, performative endeavours could grapple with national and personal traumas and embrace the unknowings; refracted, as they could only be, through the dreams and mind-wanderings of characters... characters who were, and are, after all, so often tinged with a melancholia that is eminently relatable.

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