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Introduction: Joycean Avant-Gardes

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Introduction: Joycean Avant-Gardes

Catherine Flynn (bio) and Richard Brown (bio)

It seems extraordinary that the time period between the first publication of *Dubliners* in 1914 and the appearance of the first published

section of "Work in Progress" alongside Tristan Tzara in Ford Madox Ford's *transatlantic review* in 1924 was only ten years, a remarkable fact because of the long intellectual journey traveled by Joyce in that time.¹ The apparently large gap between the scrupulously disciplined naturalism of those early stories and the extravagantly polysemantic play of *Finnegans Wake* has led us to read him in very different ways. Yet though the early and late Joyce might appear to be quite distinct, they might just as readily be seen as part of an ongoing project of radical literary innovation. However distant Joyce's professional relationships with and attitudes toward particular avant-garde movements and personalities might have been, and however downplayed they were by the first generations of his defenders, Joyce now appears more to readers as an avant-garde writer. If his works did not prompt riots, as did, for example, performances staged by Alfred Jarry and by the Zurich Dadaists, they nonetheless provoked outrage, bans, and obscenity trials; like those performances, Joyce's output, initially so challenging, gradually found fuller recognition both in the canonical mainstream and through the responses of writers and artists. This special issue of the *James Joyce Quarterly* proposes to add a set of voices to his critical reception by considering his achievement alongside and through that of his avant-garde contemporaries and successors across the arts, rather than despite them or in preference over them.

Associations between Joyce's work and that of contemporaneous avant-garde movements are intrinsic to his story, especially if we think of the cosmopolitan contexts in which he lived and wrote and of his work's appearance in periodical publications throughout his career beside that of avowedly avant-garde texts. We have only to think of his first adopted home in Trieste and the influence there of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Futurism, of the huge importance of the advocacy of Ezra Pound for his gradual dissemination to an international audience, of his important dialogue with Wyndham Lewis, of the juxtaposition of *A Portrait in The Egoist* with a translation of the Comte de Lautréamont's (Isidore-Lucien Ducasse's) *Maldoror*, and with Lewis's *Tarr*,² of his residence in wartime Zurich when it **[End Page 265]** was also home to

Tzara and the Cabaret Voltaire, of his attendance at the Dada trials in Paris with Pound, and of his close proximity to the members of various avant-garde movements through his associations with Sylvia Beach, Adrienne Monnier, and Eugène Jolas. Joyce's correspondence admits evidence of these connections: his interest in the avant-garde classicism of Guillaume Apollinaire's play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, for example, is indicated in the letter he wrote to his brother Stanislaus shortly after his arrival in Paris in 1920 (*Letters III* 10);³ his sense of his public association with the avant-garde is indicated by the letter he wrote to Stanislaus in 1921 claiming that the Irish press were reporting "[t]hat I founded in Zurich the dadaist movement which is now exciting Paris" (*Letters III* 22). Even if Joyce had never left Dublin, he would have been directly or indirectly in contact with a number of artists known for their association with the early avant-garde. In December 1896, W. B. Yeats attended the first production of Jarry's *Ubu Roi* at Aurélien Lugné-Poe's theater in Paris and declared in his reminiscence of it the new epoch that was to become modernism: "After Stéphane Mallarmé, after Paul Verlaine, after Gustave Moreau, after Puvis de Chavannes, after our own verse, after all our subtle colour and nervous rhythm, after the faint mixed tints of Conder, what more is possible? After us the Savage God."⁴ For Yeats at times, that "Savage God" must have seemed especially embodied by Joyce.

An avant-garde turn in internationalist Joyce and modernist studies has arguably been underway for some time, perhaps as a necessary accompaniment or corrective to...



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