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"A Pineapple Revolution": The North American James Joyce  
Symposium "Joyce Without Borders," Mexico City, Mexico,  
12-16 June 2019

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Universidad Panamericana, set to audio from a Spanish translation of *Ulysses*.

In closing, the Symposium organizer James Ramey echoed the thoughts of many of us who felt that this was simply one of the best conferences in recent memory:

I'd like to say that I and my collaborators here in Mexico are extremely grateful to the International James Joyce Foundation and the James Joyce community for putting their trust in us to make this conference happen and for supporting us with scholarships for grad students to attend. In these times of stiffening physical borders, we felt a great sense of community with the wide world of Joyce scholars and artists who interpret his work; the boundary-bursting essence of "Joyce Without Borders" was a dream made real by all those who gathered in Mexico, and we are forever in your debt.

Tiffany L. Fajardo  
*University of Miami*

**"A Pineapple Revolution": The North American  
James Joyce Symposium "Joyce Without Borders,"  
Mexico City, Mexico, 12-16 June 2019**

**Emma-Louise Silva: Antwerp-Mexico City**

After sixteen hours of sitting in cars and planes, Mexico City beckoned, and although my suitcase had not arrived, each layer of my exquisite bowl of *Sopa Azteca*, from the rich broth to the silky sour cream, smooth avocado, and chile pasilla, swiftly enticed me to forget other chapters of my journey. Reassured by the fact that I had packed my beloved copy of *Ulysses* in my hand luggage, nothing could get in the way of the sun-goldened Casa Universitaria del Libro (CASUL), the nineteenth-century mansion in Colonia Roma Norte where James Ramey, Aurora Piñeiro, Argentina Rodríguez, and Mario Murguía were to host the "first annual gathering of Joyceans in the global south."

**Layne Farnen: Tulsa-Mexico City**

"Be aware that sporadic demonstrations are common and often result in roadway disruptions. Clients are recommended to bypass any encountered protest action in order to mitigate delays to itineraries."

Though in the past I have only attended conferences underfunded and alone, in 2019 I arrived in Mexico with five family members and a much more responsibly managed credit line (thanks TU!) Overall they did the sight-seeing while I attended the conference, but before the Joycean fun began I was able to stand in awe before Diego Rivera's murals in the Palacio Nacional de México and walk through the hallowed home of Frida Kahlo, where art and politics operate without borders. As my section heading attests, while this artistic pilgrimage filled my spirit, my e-mail was also bursting with ominous words of warning from University travel services. The repeated cautions about political demonstrations intrigued me, to the extent that I was excited when I heard a megaphoned loud voice in the streets during my first day in the city. As we walked, my trilingual brother-in-law informed me that what we were hearing was in fact the spirited advertisement of a fruit salesman, the rallying cry of "piña fresca." I was justifiably mocked for the duration of the trip, me and my "pineapple revolution."

### Emma-Louise

"Por su seguridad y confort, le sugerimos usar los taxis del Hotel"/"For your own safety and comfort, take the authorized car-service from this Hotel."

Whereas Joyce condensed a day in Dublin into *Ulysses* and put "[a]llspace in a [n]otshall" into *Finnegans Wake* (FW 455.29), Rivera's aim was to present Mexico's rich historical and cultural heritage in grandiose works of art: carrying *Ulysses* in one's backpack while trekking to Rivera's murals takes sightseeing in Mexico City to a Santiago de Compostela level. Despite the cautionary vibes felt in many hotels (as exemplified by the subtitle above), my "trek" to Rivera's "Historia de México a través de los siglos" (1929-1935) involved dismissing the taxi drivers and taking the plunge into the CDMX subway that was championed by many participants en route to the symposium. Ostensible "be careful" warnings were brushed aside by the Joyceans in "el DF," in terms of travel, food, walking the streets at night, and talking to "strangers." Perhaps this was due to CASUL, its courtyard butterflies, and its open windows that allowed for a borderless co-existence between Joycean exchanges and the mariachi bands, ice-cream vans, and "pineapple revolutions" passing by outside.

### Layne

"This is an automated email to advise a 'level 3' incident has occurred potentially affecting your travel."

The university library at CASUL was an intimate and warm venue that felt open and connected to the surrounding city and simultaneously compact in order to facilitate conversation and collaboration. It was entirely possible to spend a moment to myself on the upstairs balcony and then immediately be involved in a sort of Joycean mosh pit downstairs (the biggest being at the opening reception, where the wine seemed never ending).

In a Friday panel entitled “Joyce’s Idiolecturing,” Paige Miller expanded upon her exciting research into linguistic plurality and Molly Bloom’s “translanguaging” in *Ulysses*, discussing Molly’s internal language and code-switching in order to express taboos and Bloom’s form of enlightened monolingualism. This was the first multilingual conference I have ever attended, and it seemed that at least one panel per session was conducted entirely in Spanish. I sat in one entitled “Joyce y las Artes: Música, Cine, Plástica” featuring Susana González Aktories, Jorge Terrones, and Lauro Zavala, who crossed disciplinary borders to discuss the music of John Cage, the *Finnegans-Wake* inspired visual art of Francisco Ledesma, and the various cinematic adaptations of Joyce’s work respectively. In the middle of the session, a joyous chorus of horns erupted from outside, seemingly summoned by the Joycean “Roaratorio” happening within.

### **Emma-Louise**

“Mexico: Demonstrations and Events planned in Mexico City on 13 June; Category: Demonstration, Protest; Latitude, Longitude: (19.432600, -99.133200)”

Taking Ezra Pound’s “Make it New” motto to its extremes, Rita Duffy discussed how she upcycled the sour fragments of the past into sweet “Free State Jam,” for example, by boldly juxtaposing light with dark in her artwork. In a similar fashion, Michael Wood’s keynote talk contrasted an array of Joycean mockeries, jokes, and puns with the often disturbing yet “melodic” reality hidden behind them. Sweet-and-sour Mexican flavors were dished up in the form of a three-course meal during the “Telemachus” reading group as well, while Austin Briggs and Michael Groden invited conference delegates to rewind by considering the first ninety lines of *Ulysses* in the imagination of a first-time reader. Needless to say, participants left the cantina both “stately” and “plump” (*U* 1.01).

## Layne

"I am here not as a Joycean," began César A. Salgado, boldly beginning his plenary talk "Bearing Joycean Gifts in Cuba's *Grupo Orígenes*," which comprised a narrative, a report, and an appeal. Salgado's ambition was admirable and inspiring: to use the "Joyce Industry" (a term Salgado used halfway facetiously) as a model for studying the work of Cuban writer and poet José Lezama Lima: in short, to answer each Joycean quotation with a corresponding "Lezamistan." Salgado discussed his work over the past two decades and his findings on the many parallels between Joyce and Lezama, who "transferred and refashioned themes" from Joyce's work but was also responsible in part, along with the other contributors to the Cuban literary journal *Orígenes*, for the introduction of Joyce to Cuban and Latin-American literature. Salgado's goal is to "help liquidate the vestiges of the Cold War by Joycean means" through the international collaboration of scholars working together on Lezama's writing, an objective that has been stopped in its tracks multiple times by the United States embargo and the Trump administration. "Bringing Joyce-study standards and resources to enhance Lezama studies should not be considered an act of academic charity or a neo-colonial imposition" Salgado commented; "It is merely justice. It is an historical absolution. Plain and simple, es lo justo."

## Emma-Louise

Terence Killeen's keynote presentation emphasized the idea that Joyce's reservoirs of inspiration were borderless: the fact that the *Freeman's Journal* 1923 snippet entitled "Novel Way of Opening a Bottle of Stout" made it into *Finnegans Wake* marks the democratic nature of such localized sources.<sup>1</sup> Amidst reports on "Cattle Plague," "A Fatal Dose," and "Irish Fairs," Joyce's attention veered to the hilarious tale of three thieves who claimed in court that they were hammering a bottle of stout against the gate of Pickford's Store in order to uncork it, whereas they were actually trying to break into the store "with intent to steal goods."<sup>2</sup> Joyce requested an array of similarly eclectic reading items from one of his sources of Dublin *couleur locale*, his aunt Josephine Murray: "Send me any news you like, programmes, pawntickets, press cuttings, handbills. I like reading them."<sup>3</sup> Many Joyceans like reading *Finnegans Wake*, and Gavan Kennedy has bravely linked Wakean aficionados during his travels from "Burning Man" to Dublin, Antwerp, Trieste, and the symposium in Mexico, urging listeners to leave the out-of-joint world and lose themselves in the *Wake*. If they lose themselves too thoroughly,

participants could get their fortune told by the enigmatic Madame Penelope K. Wade.

## Layne

Later in the conference, Emma-Louise Silva spoke on the “mind trajectories” of Joyce’s characters (not the “stream-of-consciousness,” which now seems a thankfully played-out term). Mexico City seemed the perfect locale for this really to connect, as the abundant stimuli of the city offered an overwhelming feast for the imagination: music and dancing in the streets, countless food stands, street art, and a plurality of noise everywhere. Emphasizing the triggering of “mind trajectories” by bodily and worldly surroundings, Silva pushed away from interiority to break down the binary sometimes established between body and mind and catalogued much of the stimulus that leads Joyce’s characters one way or the next. I was convinced of this point in a rather visceral way; on more than one occasion after a panel, I would follow my nose to the nearest Lestrygonian destination, allowing me to sample such delicacies as octopus and cactus for the first time.

## Emma-Louise

All of the Very Important Joycean People attending the closing banquet were treated to a guided tour of the Museo Nacional de Antropología. Located in the sprawling Bosque de Chapultepec (the second largest urban park in Latin America), the museum not only boasts the phenomenal “El Paraguas” fountain, but it also holds the Aztec Stone of the Sun, many Mayan treasures, and a replica of Montezuma II’s feather headdress, which our guide announced was “a fake!” Although there is no consensus, it is thought that the Aztec emperor gave the headdress to the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés, who may have passed it on to an Austrian envoy at the Spanish court. In times when processes of “mechanical reproduction” can easily recreate “works of art,” Walter Benjamin’s view of the “aura” of the original is, most unfortunately, not crucial for the Austrian authorities: the Museum of Ethnology in Vienna refuses to send the feather headdress to Mexico.

## Emma-Louise: Homecoming

As if a Viconian *ricorso* was called for to propel me back to the start of “Joyce Without Borders,” I was ecstatic that the *Sopa Azteca*

featured on the banquet menu was better than the version that had welcomed me on arrival.

### Layne: Mexico City-Tulsa

There is really something special about a roomful of Joyceans singing together at the closing of the traditional banquet, led this year by Patrick Reilly and Timothy Martin. Even more meaningful this time was the response, as the Mexican scholars, conference hosts, and museum staff then came together and led the room in a rousing rendition of "Cielito Lindo." I was incredibly moved by all of the voices swelling around me, but perhaps the fishbowl-sized wineglasses had something to do with it.

### Emma-Louise: Mexico City-Antwerp

Plates of tacos and *chicken mole* were followed by a dessert based on *elotes*, or sweetcorn, which was nothing short of sublime: Mexico gave corn to the world—and also the first Joycean gathering in the global south. *Sin fronteras*.

Layne Farmen and Emma-Louise Silva  
*University of Tulsa and University of Antwerp*

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "This battering babel allow the door and sideposts, he always said, was not in the very remotest like the belzey babble of a bottle of boose which would not rouse him out o' slumber deep but reminded him loads more of the martiallawsey marse of foreign musikants' instrumongs or the overthrewer to the third last days of Pompery, if anything" (FW 64.09-15).

<sup>2</sup> "'The 'Explanation': Novel Way of Opening a Bottle of Stout," *Freeman's Journal* (21 November 1923), British Newspaper Archive, <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000056/19231121/217/0009>> (accessed 31 July 2019).

<sup>3</sup> See *Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Viking Press, 1957) 1:194.