Review Essay


*Vigorous Joyce* is, undoubtedly, a publication that will bring new perspectives and a renewed awareness of the complex world of James Joyce. It is true that Joyce received a lot of media attention for many years after his death, and he has also been the subject of much scholarly attention. But a new contribution, and, above all, a quality contribution like this one here under review, always helps to analyze new and surprising aspects of the great Irish writer's work. As noted by the editors of *Vigorous Joyce*, María Teresa Caneda Cabrera, Vanessa Silva Fernández and Martín Urdiales Shaw, the title of this volume, so full of energy and positive intentions, becomes a tribute to the first readers of Joyce on this side of the Atlantic: the Galician pioneer revivalists of the 20s, as it has been repeated many times, always thought in Ireland and Joyce, and thus demonstrated in some publications as emblematic as the magazine *Nós*. Furthermore, one should recall, once again, the translation of some pages of *Ulysses* into Galician, undertaken by Otero Pedrayo. No doubt, Galicia and Joyce have always shared ties, emotional or literary, though the author, as is well known, never visited Spain. *Vigorous Joyce* is, in our opinion, a beautiful and very precise title, which demonstrates the energy released in its wonderful pages. The fifteen contributions contained in the present volume undoubtedly will provide new light on the already very radiant and delightful Joycean labyrinth.
The first section of the book, entitled “Contexts, Discourses and Affiliations,” begins with an essay that examines the reception of Joyce immediately after his death in Ireland, between 1941 and 1943. Although Joyce has greatly influenced many writers, and in particular Irish culture during the second half of the twentieth century, the prospect that John McCourt offers in his enriching essay, “Joyce’s Irish Post Mortem, 1941-1943” is limited to a specific time, and attempts to explore the immediate reaction to the death of the author, as it was reflected in the media during those years.

Maria McGarrity, in an article entitled “Joyce, Irish Modernism and the Primitive Other,” elaborates on the discourse of the so-called Joyce’s primitivism. This is an important issue that is directly connected to the colonial question and independence. McGarrity, in her long and suggestive contribution, begins by stating that, while for Conrad the primitive past of Europe is discerned by means of a trip to Africa, the Irish only have to look within themselves. The rest of this article is entirely devoted to exploring two examples of “primitivist rhetoric” in Joyce. These materials are used by Joyce, from the romantic primitivism of Portrait to the modern primitivism of Ulysses “based on corruption, sexuality and brutality.” (35)

Katherine Mullin, in her essay entitled “Ulysses and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man through the Little Magazines” explores the relationship Joyce had with the so-called “little magazines.” The article explains that these magazines “were crucial to Joyce’s position at the heart of international literary modernism” (45-46). Joyce, who experienced many problems with censorship, found in the “little magazines” the only means of publishing his work, for example, in the United States. Mullin discusses two cases in this article: one, the magazine The Egoist (formerly known as The New Freewoman), which serialized A Portrait from 1914 to 1915, including excerpts of Ulysses in 1919. Another, called
The Little Review, which, despite the difficulties, began to publish Ulysses from March 1918. In 1920 the publication was prosecuted for obscenity.

The second part of this volume, entitled “Textual and Cultural Negotiations,” emphasizes the linguistic aspects of the work of James Joyce, which, arguably, have caused difficulties for both readers and translators. Both, language and content, and signifier and signified, are profoundly linked in Joyce’s work. This seems to be the main theme of the opening article of this second part, “The Translator’s Net: The World as Word in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,” written by María Teresa Caneda Cabrera. Joyce’s language, admittedly, is characterized by its complexity, its difficulty, often based on a variety of registers, puns, and heterogeneous forms, which, according to Caneda Cabrera, cannot be seen as a simple aesthetic gesture, but which “function as frames for the outward reality” (65). The use of language in A Portrait is revealing: Stephen negotiates its relationship with the outside world through language, which shows that Joyce believed in the merger between language, history and politics. Setephen wants to know the words that “define and shape his reality” (67). As Joyce himself, Caneda admits that “language constitutes reality” (68), or in other words, stresses the blending of content and form.” (69)

Susana Pérez Pico, in her essay entitled “The Paradox of ‘The Dead’: from Modernist Narrative to Classical Film,” examines the transformation of the Joycean text into a filmic text: specifically, the film directed by John Huston on the well-known story included in Dubliners. The evaluation of Huston’s film as an artistic text, which received much critical attention since its release in 1987, seems to be the main purpose of the author here. For her, some aspects, such as Huston’s unquestionable devotion to Joyce, have been more studied than formal and creative aspects of the film over the years. Susana Pérez discusses in great detail the techniques deployed by
Huston, from the economy in editing the film to the position of the camera. Her findings, after such a thorough analysis, are expressed clearly in this sentence: “Reading the short story and watching the film does not amount to the same experience, for it can never be, but Huston’s cinematography is unmistakably geared towards the last ten minutes of the film discourse.” (88)

The last article in this section provides an interesting and enlightening comparison between Molly Bloom, and her monologue in the last chapter of *Ulysses*, and contemporary poetry written by women. In fact, Vanessa Siva, in her article “Double-edged Words: James Joyce and Contemporary Irish Women Poets,” offers a very revealing analysis of the language of Molly Bloom. It is, she points out, a new form of language, much advanced for its time, and with which Joyce intended to convey to the reader the female experience. Arguably, language becomes once again decisive in understanding James Joyce’s literature. Vanessa Silva finds in Molly’s monologue sufficient influence and subversive elements to compare her, despite being a fictional character, with the lives of contemporary Irish women poets.

The third section of *Vigorous Joyce*, entitled “Reading as Decoding” begins with an article on the paralysis in Joyce’s original production, written by Eduardo Barros Grela. The essay, entitled “Reconceptualización de la espacialidad y de la parálisis en ‘The Sisters’: una aproximación culturalista” (“Reconceptualizing Spatiality and Paralysis in ‘The Sisters’: a Cultural Approach”), discusses in clear detail the different levels of reading to be found in Joyce, and in this case, the representation of the term paralysis not only in “The Sisters,” but in *Dubliners* in general. Paralysis, says Eduardo Barros, is not only a term that is opposed to “dynamic,” but a concept which dominates the internal narrative structure of the story and the action capacity of the protagonist.

Benigno del Río Molina, in “El misterioso hombre de la playa: claves homéricas de la ocultación de la identidad de
Bloom en ‘Nausicaa’” (“The Mysterious Man on the Beach: Keys for the Homeric Concealment of the Identity of Bloom in ‘Nausicaa’”), makes an insightful reading of this chapter of *Ulysses*, perhaps the one that shows more similarities with the original story by Homer. Del Rio explains in detail how the encounter between princess Nausicaa and Odysseus took place, and the factors that influenced the concealment of his identity, among them his return to the world after seven years of absence. The author explains that Joyce converts Leopold Bloom into a character who also loses his name and identity on the beach, in the encounter with Gerty MacDowell. The important thing is, without doubt, the Homeric parallels found in “Nausicaa” where the name of Bloom is not revealed, showing his progressive loss of identity. In the author’s opinion, he “seems to have been castrated by the visit of Boylan.” (127)

In “Hermeneutic Views of the Modernist J” Jefferey Simons proposes an analysis of James Joyce’s pivotal role in the development of Modernism and a close reading of “The Dead,” using for both the same theoretical background. Understanding a text is a continuous circular process, says the author, and that makes the movement itself cause several additional movements. Simons also studies the works of Joyce, especially “The Dead” in the light of two transatlantic works, Wilson’s *Axel Castle: A Study of the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930* and, especially, Kenner’s *The Pound Era*. Simons considers Pound as “the émigré bee who pollinated modernism” (145). The term ‘vortex,’ as it appears in the book, seems to be crucial in this study. Simons says, following Kenner, that the vortex reveals “a patterned energy made visible” (146) on the surface of the language (146). This “patterned principle” implies that a static center attracts all that falls in its field, as the lamplight explains the description of the snow made by Gabriel Conroy in “The Dead.”
The fourth section of this volume, entitled “Language and Myth” opens with an interesting and enlightening article written by Magarita Estévez Saá, “The voices of Shaun, voice of the Irish, Voise from afar.” Here we return to the essence and magic contained in *Finnegans Wake*, possibly the most complex book written by James Joyce, of which the author of this article is one of the most renowned specialists, as is well known. Margarita Estevez Saá has contributed numerous articles around the polyhedral nature of *Finnegans Wake*, and about James Joyce’s work in general. Now she offers the reader a review of Shaun, one of those characters that “emanate” (152) of the Joycean work, which gains relevance not only in *Finnegans Wake*, but through other previous characters, as it is clearly exposed in the text.

Rafael García León, in his essay “Antanaclasis Joyceana en *Ulysses*,” develops the importance of rhetoric in Joyce, and, in particular, the influence of the rhetorical figures of repetition. The repetition of words in Joyce, for example, in *Ulysses*, proves very revealing, and certainly captures the reader’s attention (especially those repetitions separated by many pages, which are linked to specific characters).

Francisco García Tortosa’s Joycean scholarship is highlighted once more in the article that opens this section, entitled “Vico y Vigo en *Finnegans Wake*: confluencias y ramificaciones” (“Vico and Vigo in *Finnegans Wake*: Confluences and Ramifications”). To start with, the essay uses the city of Vigo (which does not appear, at least directly, in Joyce), where the 19th Annual Conference of the Spanish James Joyce Association was held in April 2008 and, of course, the name of Vico, and his work *Principii di una scienza nuova*, “eje y fundamento del desarrollo de *Finnegans Wake.*” (177) García Tortosa considers the genetic relationship between Vigo and Vico to deploy a complete tour of *Finnegans Wake* in pursuit of the etymological roots that can be linked with such name, starting with the protagonist, Earwicker, and taking into
account, for example, the meanings of *vicus* and other related words, from “home” to “place,” to “family,” “people,” “race,” and several other ramifications. García Tortosa explains in detail the importance of those references related to Earwicker, who is identified with an insect (earwig) in the first chapter, and all cases in which “wick” is associated with Vico and Vigo, which, according to the author, is by far the most frequent meaning of this word in *Finnegans Wake*. Without doubt, this is a relevant article for its thoroughness and the peculiarity and accuracy of its analysis.

*Vigorous Joyce* closes with a fifth section, entitled “Influences and Convergences.” This last part contains three articles, all related to the presence of James Joyce’s work in other writers and cultures. Jose Manuel Estévez Saá, in his article “Más que ecos joyceanos en ‘Two More Gallants’ de William Trevor (“More than Joycean echoes in ‘Two More Gallants’ by William Trevor”) continues, as he says in the opening paragraphs, in their relentless pursuit of authors influenced by the work of James Joyce. Estévez Saá recalls that, seeking Joyce’s shadow, he has already analyzed stories by authors such as Dermot Bolger and Joseph O’Connor, but this time he set his eyes in the author William Trevor, and in particular in his story “Two More Gallants” based, from its very title, in “Two Gallants” by James Joyce. Estévez Saá has already developed, without any doubt, an exceptional capacity to establish comparative parameters between Joyce and his potential followers, parameters that are clearly evident here, in his suggestive analysis of “Two More Gallants.”

Anne MacCarthy explores in “James Joyce and James Clarence Mangan” the admiration that the author of *Ulysses* had for the poet Mangan, who represented for him the most important figure of contemporary Celtic culture. MacCarthy, who has devoted much research to James Clarence Mangan and knows his work well, discusses on this occasion some issues that James Joyce and the poet of the nineteenth century
had in common. Anne McCarthy makes a detailed study of “An Extraordinary Adventure in the Shades,” where Mangan describes a night of heavy drinking in The Shades, a pub in Dublin. For McCarthy this story is comparable to “Circe” in *Ulysses*, a chapter that she also analyzes in detail in the last part of the essay. The author demonstrates that undoubtedly Joyce admired Mangan and that his main themes have become major themes in *Ulysses*.

The last article of the current volume, entitled “Carlos Eduardo Zabaleta y la traducción peruana de *Pomes Penyeach*” (“Carlos Eduardo Zabaleta and the Peruvian Translation of *Pomes Penyeach*”), written by José Ruiz Mas, presents the translation of Joyce’s poetry into Spanish published by the Peruvian intellectual. Although Zabaleta compiled in *Poesía Completa* the thirty poems of *Chamber Music* and the thirteen poems of *Pomes Penyeach* (with the addition of “Ecce Puer”), the author offers in this article a study of just the last ones. Ruiz Mas analyzes each translation, poem by poem, finally reaching the conclusion that most versions closely follow the original, although there are numerous occasions in which he openly disagrees with the choice of words made by the Peruvian.

As a whole, *Vigorous Joyce* is a great example of the many possibilities that Joyce gives the reader, the researcher and the critic, to the extent that as an author he seems inexhaustible. The texts gathered here will undoubtedly help to renew the interest in Joycean studies, and will demonstrate that Joyce is ever appealing because he is always ready to surprise us.

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