

James Joyce and Juan Goytisolo:
Echoes from *Ulysses* in
Reivindicación del conde don Julián

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More than forty years after the publication of Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Juan Goytisolo broke with the traditional forms of the Spanish novel and found a new voice in the trilogy which portrayed the life of his "hero" Álvaro Mendiola, consisting of *Señas de identidad* (1966), *Reivindicación del conde don Julián* (1970) and *Juan sin tierra* (1975). After a period dominated by the social realistic novel, Goytisolo undertook to create a new type of prose fiction and introduced innovative modes of narration which violated the conventional syntax and coherence of narrative language, subverted the standard ways of representing characters and broke up the narrative continuity. All these radical literary experiments in Goytisolo's trilogy immediately remind us of James Joyce and Modernist fiction in general. Focusing our attention on *Don Julián* in particular, we realize that many other striking similarities between this novel and *Ulysses* can be found.

However, literary critics do not usually include the name of the Irish writer among the major sources of *Don Julián*. Matilde Robatto, for instance, in her book entitled *La creación literaria de Juan Goytisolo* has a section in which she thoroughly studied Goytisolo's influences and did not establish a direct relationship between his work and James Joyce.¹ The same could be said about Michael Ugarte's interesting publication on Goytisolo's use of intertextuality.² These critics usually lay special emphasis on some twentieth-century French writers, such as Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Raymond Queneau and the practitioners of the "nouveau roman," together with all the Latin-American fiction writers who have recently created a new type of novel (Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and many others). Moreover, the influence of some contemporary Spanish literary figures is often mentioned too: Luis Martín-Santos's *Tiempo de silencio* (1962) and the poetry of Luis Cernuda. But James Joyce does not appear in the list.

It is undoubtedly true that Goytisolo had read and admired Joyce's works by the time he wrote *Don Julián*. In the 1960s he already includes a reference to Joyce in one of his essays collected in the volume entitled *El furgón de cola*, first published in Paris in 1967.³ A few years later, in another collection of essays called *Disidencias*, Goytisolo firstly discusses the Joycean influence on the Cuban Guillermo Cabrera Infante, he then refers to *Ulysses* as an example of good literature, and finally he states that it is difficult to produce something new after Joyce.⁴ Moreover, in the introduction to the Spanish translation of Blanco White's work Goytisolo presents White's description of some Jesuitical spiritual exercises as a "precedente curioso del célebre capítulo de Joyce."⁵ Nevertheless, we cannot find any direct reference in his essays to the significance of Joyce in relation to the writing of *Don Julián*. Goytisolo particularly alludes to the influence of Malcolm Lowry's *Under the*

Volcano (1947) on the language and structure of his novel.⁶ And at the end of *Don Julián* he includes a long list of names as “acknowledgements,” including those authors who have played an active role in the composition of the text, some of them being the object of his criticism and others being a positive source that he assimilates. But James Joyce does not appear in that list either.

To discuss literary influences on a particular writer is always a difficult and thorny problem, since it tends to be a speculative subject which can seldom be illustrated with reliable and conclusive evidence. However, it is often interesting to show the multiple ways in which a literary text echoes, or is inseparably linked to, another text. The main aim of this article, then, is to show the common elements that can be found in *Ulysses* and *Don Julián* in order to examine the relevance of Joyce’s work with regard to Goytisolo’s famous novel.

To start with, it is worth stating that the external action in *Don Julián* simply consists of the description of one day in the life of the protagonist. As Joyce did with Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, Goytisolo presents Álvaro Mendiola’s routine on a given day of his life, from the moment he gets up to the time he goes to bed. These actions are banal and universal: Álvaro wakes up, leaves his home and walks through the streets of a city, which on this occasion is not Dublin, but Tangier. The reader takes no pleasure in following this character’s tracks and learning that he sits down in a café, comes into a clinic to get an injection of penicillin, goes to a library, meets some American tourists, enters a public toilet, goes to the cinema to see *Operación Trueno*, and then to the Turkish baths, etc., till eventually he returns home at the end of the story. Similarly, it is not compelling to read in *Ulysses* how Leopold Bloom gets up, prepares breakfast, goes to the Turkish baths, then to a funeral, and so on. In both cases, what engages the reader’s attention are the characters’ feelings and what they represent.

Joyce and Goytisolo use the wanderings of their characters through the city to take an X-ray photo of the Irish and Spanish souls respectively. Both authors set out to make a revision of the traditional and official values of their native countries; both present what Levine, referring to *Don Julián*, calls a peculiar psychoanalysis of the national reality.⁷ In fact, few will dispute that the result of this exploration is a severe criticism of established culture. If Joyce had called Ireland the old sow that eats her farrow,⁸ Goytisolo refers to Spain as the filthy stepmother, “Madrastra inmunda,” who does not care for her children.⁹ Moreover, it is significant that this censure of Irish and Spanish lifestyles is made from an entirely objective point of view; let us remember that it all results from the integrity and independent stance of two writers living in voluntary exile.

In *Ulysses* and *Don Julián* two similar protagonists are presented. Álvaro Mendiola is portrayed as an outsider, alienated from his society; he is a victim of the repressive Spanish civilization who tries to free himself from the psychological traumas caused by that particular social atmosphere. His problems exemplify the problems and complexes of many other Spaniards at that time, and that is one of the reasons why Goytisolo succeeds in arousing our sympathy for this character. Leopold Bloom is also an alienated human being living in a repressive atmosphere. The fact that he is a Jew in Catholic Ireland makes him a different person, a man who cannot easily integrate into his society. Besides, we should not forget that his grandfather came from Hungary, so his roots are not really Irish. However, though he is not a typical native Irishman, he is meant to be an archetypal figure that represents Everyman—his personal, social, and professional problems and frustrations are like those of most people.

Joyce also achieves the universality of his character through the parallelism he establishes between Leopold Bloom and Homer's mythical figure. The analogy between Bloom's wanderings through Dublin on 16th June 1904 and the adventures of Odysseus (or Ulysses in Latin tradition) on his homeward voyage from Troy has been widely discussed and needs no further attention here. A similar fascination to the one Joyce had for this legendary hero is also held by Goytisolo for the mythical figure of Don Julián, the quintessence of treason, the one who, according to the legend, the Spanish romances and the chronicles of the time,¹⁰ made the Muslim invasion of Spain possible in 711 in order to take revenge on the Visigothic king Don Rodrigo for having raped his daughter Florinda. In *Disidencias* Goytisolo states that he writes about this legendary character because the mythical interpretation that justifies the history of Spain obsessed him for years.¹¹ Indeed, the legend of Count Don Julián serves as a background to Goytisolo's story, and its narrator, as the Medieval count did, launches a blistering attack against Spain. Consequently, Joyce's work as well as Goytisolo's develops a new Ulysses and a new Count Don Julián, names which appear in the title of both books and take us to the kingdom of legend and myth.¹²

This mythical kingdom is at the same time a mirror image of the author's personal world, since there is an autobiographical representation in the protagonists of both texts. Leopold Bloom is often regarded as an ironic self-portrait of the artist as a man of mature years — with problems in his married life, with his liking for pseudo-scientific knowledge, etc. Matthew Hodgart calls *Ulysses* "his autobiography in a thin covering of fiction,"¹³ and, in a sense, this book could be considered as the sequel to *A Portrait*, the same as *Don Julián* is the sequel to *Señas de identidad*. Similarly, the narrator of *Don Julián* could be identified with the author himself due to some autobiographical data included in the story, such as his Catalan origin (both come from Barcelona), his stay in Tangier, his voluntary exile, etc. Apart from that, Goytisolo bears a close resemblance to Don Julián in that the Spanish press in the 60s accused him of being a "traitor" because of his biting criticisms of Spain, projecting this personal obsession onto the protagonist of his work.¹⁴

Another important fact is that *Ulysses* and *Don Julián* display a very similar narrative technique. Both of them sacrifice the conventional plot for an eccentric and irrational discourse imposed by the use of the interior monologue, which lets the reader explore the various levels of consciousness and the psychic content of the characters. While Joyce, in order to achieve this stream of consciousness, uses various techniques such as the direct and indirect interior monologue or the traditional third-person narrator,¹⁵ Goytisolo brings into play almost exclusively the second-person interior monologue, which the narrator himself refers to as "perturbador soliloquio" (135). After the first lines written in the first person (direct interior monologue) there comes a dialogue between the "I" narrator and the "you" protagonist, who in fact are the same person that splits to talk to himself. In spite of the differences, the two authors follow the propositions of modern psychology and offer the reader some monologues which develop by free association, break the logical order characteristic of the traditional monologue, and entail the fusion of present and past in the character's mind.

Apart from these, there are other narrative resources in these works that also produce a great ambiguity of time and place, sinking the reader in a sea of difficulties. Among other techniques we could mention the collage, with its combination of bits and pieces apparently unrelated to produce a

particular effect, the numerous quotations and references to all sort of works, the oneiric vision where the real and the imaginary are mixed, or the ellipsis typical of a beginning in medias res. Joyce and Goytisolo are convinced that whatever is easy to assimilate is also easily forgotten, whereas what is difficult to understand and requires some effort remains much longer. Both writers demand that the reader rereads once and again, acquiring new meanings and new perspectives in each reading. They write, then, for those who accept the challenge of entering an utterly different world which has the magic of singularity.

However, it is not only the narrative techniques that distinguish *Ulysses* and *Don Julián* from other more traditional contemporary novels, but also the use of what is nowadays known as intertextuality, that is to say, the presence of previous texts in another literary work.¹⁶ We seldom come across books with so many elements from other texts, as in those by Joyce and Goytisolo. In an interview with Claude Couffon, the Spanish writer stated that *Don Julián* is a text that feeds on living matter from other texts.¹⁷ In his practice of intertextuality Goytisolo incorporates passages by Alfonso X the Wise, Berceo, Fernando de Rojas, Ortega y Gasset, Unamuno, Lope de Vega, and many other names which make up the list given by Goytisolo himself at the end of his book; he even uses newspaper articles, television programmes, pieces of music by Frédéric Chopin or the Rolling Stones.¹⁸ Similarly, Joyce's *Ulysses* includes, not only the constant Homeric correspondences, but also allusions to Dante, Shakespeare, the Bible, the Celtic epic, newspaper articles, and compositions by Richard Wagner or Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Together with this intertextual relationships found in Joyce and Goytisolo, there is another important feature shared by these authors, something that might be called the "intratextual" relationships, in other words, those associations that stand in the work itself. In *Ulysses* we have the well-known symbols and leitmotifs present in different parts of the story that show the reader how each episode deals with a particular art or science, suggests an organ of the body, or insists on one colour. Added to that, in "Circe" there is a series of internal keys which had previously appeared and are now recapitulated in dramatic form.¹⁹ In like manner, the fourth part of *Don Julián* gathers various verbal keys which had been insinuated in the previous chapters, such as the allusions to the whip as an instrument of torture, the flute as an instrument of liberation, insects as a weapon for the destruction of Spanish culture, syphilis, the various acts of matricide, etc. These symbols and leitmotifs scattered in *Ulysses* and *Don Julián* provide a sense of unity and coherence in the narrative structure, which otherwise is presented as something disorganized, chaotic, and even rather anarchic.

In spite of this incessant symbolism which often leads us into a world of fantasy and dreams, both works allow for a painstaking realism which gives the reader the illusion of actual and ordinary experience. This realism is mainly created by the topographical and chronological minuteness. The wanderings of the characters through the city are rendered in detail and the actual geography of Dublin in Joyce and Tangier in Goytisolo pervades these stories. At one point, for instance, Alvaro Mendiola's walk is described in the following way:

. . . torcerás por Tuajín: a lo largo de los talleres de joyería, dejando atrás la pensión Liliáne y el hotel Regina, la callejuela de la sinagoga, el almacén de muebles . . . continuando, pues, por Tuajín hasta Alejandro Dumas y la silenciosa calle de América. . . (124-25)

In a footnote Levine explains that before writing his novel, Goytisolo drew several diagrams and maps of the city of Tangiers which are now being kept in his archive at Boston University.²⁰ All this reminds us of Joyce's precision when describing Dublin, as in "Wandering Rocks," where we are presented with the real topography of the streets the characters walk in, as if Joyce had a map of the city in front of him while writing. In fact, several critics include in their books a map of Dublin at that time, which helps to follow the character's steps.²¹

Another characteristic that associates *Don Julián* with *Ulysses* is the inclusion of linguistic experiments which break with the standard use of language. Among some instances of linguistic distortion we could mention unusual and arbitrary punctuation (as in *Don Julián*, where there are only commas and colons, or in Molly's final monologue, in which there are no punctuation marks at all), lack of conventional paragraphs and spelling, twisted syntax, a series of strange items without apparent connection, a constant mixture of styles (as when in the third part Goytisolo introduces colloquial language from Argentina, Cuba and Mexico in a parody of the unity of the Spanish language, or when in Joyce's "Oxen of the Sun" the language goes through every stage in the development of English prose from Anglo-Saxon to the present day to symbolize the growth of a fetus), not to mention an indiscriminate use of different languages.²² We soon realize that we are dealing with two authors that belong to a literary world utterly different to the one we are used to within traditional English and Spanish literature.

If these works by Joyce and Goytisolo imply a new concept of literary language, they also assume an attitude of defiance towards the rules laid down by the strict traditional division of literary genres. Both *Don Julián* and *Ulysses* are something more than mere novels. Firstly, they are to some extent poetic works that abound with images, metaphors, symbolism, special rhythms, dramatic monologues, etc.; some phrases could even be arranged one under the other as poetic lines, and they would be similar to free verse. Secondly, both texts are also closely connected with drama sometimes, as can be seen in the theatrical disposition of Joyce's "Circe" or in Álvaro Mendiola's first words, which announce that the curtain is being rung up: "silencio, caballeros, se alza el telón: la representación empieza" (85-86). Thirdly, some of their passages remind us of critical essays where literary opinions are advanced. Goytisolo's use of intertextuality has very often the aim to censure canonical writers, genres, and theories of Spanish literary historiography, such as Azorín, Unamuno, Calderón, Tirso de Molina, the type of sonnet written by Enrique López Alarcón, and so on. On the other hand, he celebrates the work of Fernando de Rojas, Cervantes, Fray Luis de León, and Góngora among others.²³ In *Ulysses* James Joyce also introduces Stephen's theories about the modern writer and Shakespeare when he is in the National Library with George Russell and the librarian Lyster in the episode of "Scylla and Charybdis." In an interview with Julio Ortega published in *Disidencias* Goytisolo states:

En mi opinión, las obras literarias más significativas del siglo XX son las que se sustraen a la tiranía conceptual de los géneros: son a la vez poesía, crítica, narrativa, teatro, etc.²⁴

Joyce shares this opinion, and refuses to call *Ulysses* a novel; he prefers to use other names such as "epic" or "encyclopaedia."²⁵ In fact, both texts are a sort of hybrid made of elements from the classical epic, the autobiographical piece, modern fiction, poetic drama, the picaresque tradition, and the critical essay.

All these characteristics that Joyce and Goytisolo have in common, together with other features that could be added—the leading role that sexuality plays in *Ulysses* and *Don Julián*, or their inclination for the scatological and excremental—go to show that the presence of Joyce in *Don Julián* is more noteworthy than has been suggested till now. Echoes from Joyce ring clearly in Goytisolo's work, and though they may sometimes reach their destination indirectly through Latin-American novelists, French experimental writers, Malcolm Lowry or Luis Martín-Santos, we should not ignore them. It would appear, then, that *Ulysses* is an unquestionable literary source of *Don Julián*, one of the essential roots from which Goytisolo's novel grows, and many things are still to be said about the links that join them together. In his interview with Julio Ortega, Goytisolo affirms that the list of “plagiarisms” that is included at the end of *Don Julián* can solve the problem of the sources to the erudite.²⁶ It cannot be denied that this statement may be true to a certain extent, but it could be claimed that there are also some other names which have been left out, and one of the most remarkable omissions is precisely that of James Joyce.

Notes

1. See Matilde Albert Robatto, *La creación literaria de Juan Goytisolo* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1977) 100-22.
2. Michael Ugarte, *Trilogy of Treason: An Intertextual Study of Juan Goytisolo* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1982).
3. See *El furgón de cola*, 2nd ed. (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1982) 70.
4. *Disidencias* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1977) 208, 223, 318.
5. *Obra inglesa de Blanco White*, 3rd ed. (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1982) 18.
6. *Disidencias* 315.
7. Linda Gould Levine, “Introducción,” *Reivindicación del conde don Julián*, by Juan Goytisolo (Madrid: Cátedra, 1985) 41.
8. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916; rpt. New York: The Viking Press and Penguin Books, 1982) 203.
9. Juan Goytisolo, *Reivindicación del conde don Julián*, ed. Linda Gould Levine (1970; rpt. Madrid: Cátedra, 1985) 88. Subsequent citations to this edition are given parenthetically in the text.
10. See *Crónicas visigodas*, *Crónica general* by Alfonso X the Wise, *Poema de Fernán González* and *Romancero*.
11. *Disidencias* 292.
12. In *Don Julián* we also find many references to classical mythology (the same as in *Ulysses*) which might make us see Alvaro Mendiola as the reincarnation of Virgil's Aeneas.
13. *James Joyce: A Student's Guide* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) 69. Sydney Bolt also deals with these autobiographical features in *A Preface to James Joyce* (London: Longman, 1981).
14. Levine 18.
15. For a thorough study on the stream-of-consciousness novel see Robert Humphrey's *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1974).
16. See the definition of “intertextuality” presented by Julia Kristeva in *Desire in Language*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (1977; Oxford: Blackwell, 1981); or by Roland Barthes in *S/Z: An Essay*, trans. Richard Miller (1970; New York: Hill and Wang, 1974).
17. “Una reivindicación temeraria,” *Marcha* 19 March 1971: 31.
18. See Michael Ugarte's *Trilogy of Treason: An Intertextual Study of Juan Goytisolo* quoted above.
19. In the last paragraph of “The Dead” Joyce did something similar, since every line of this paragraph is related to the whole story, echoing Gabriel's experiences during that evening.
20. Levine 124.

21. See, for example, Sydney Bolt's *A Preface to James Joyce*, or Harry Blamires's *Studying James Joyce* (London: Longman/York Press, 1987). Clive Hart and Leo Knuth also wrote a book entitled *A Topographical Guide to James Joyce's Ulysses* (Colchester: A Wake Newslitter Press, 1975).

22. In *Don Julián* the protagonist narrates everything he sees and hears. Therefore, when people of different origins speak, the narrator offers the original words, whether in English, French, Italian, or Arabic.

23. See Gonzalo Sobejano, "Don Julián, iconoclasta de la literatura patria," *Camp de l'Arpa* 43-44 (1977): 7-14.

24. *Disidencias* 292.

25. See A. Walton Litz, "The Genre of *Ulysses*," *The Theory of the Novel: New Essays*, ed. John Halperin (New York: Oxford UP, 1974) 110.

26. *Disidencias* 292.