

PAPERS ON JOYCE

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 46. Gaskell *From Writer* 235.

Review

Joyce en España (II). Ed. Francisco García Tortosa and Antonio Raúl de Toro Santos. La Coruña: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidade da Coruña, 1997.

Joyce en España (II) is a collection of essays which constitutes one of the earliest indications in Spain of what was yet to become a growing interest in the writings of James Joyce. The book, edited by Francisco García Tortosa and Antonio Raúl de Toro Santos, is the second volume in a series of critical works devoted to the study of the reception of Joycean aesthetics in the Hispanic world. Aimed at complementing the former *Joyce en España (I)*, which started from the assumption that the Irish writer had played an enormous role in the renewal of the Spanish modern prose narrative, in *Joyce en España (II)* the editors have successfully brought together a coherent selection of previously published essays, between the twenties and the eighties, which were either dispersed or out of print. The compilation comprises sixteen contributions, arranged chronologically, which examine the assimilation of Joyce's literary canon in Spain from the perspective of writers and non-specialists, who offer personal rather than scholarly responses to the Irish writer. In their introduction, the editors explain that although Joyce's works have received extensive critical attention, their purpose with this edition is twofold. Firstly, they highlight the fact that in Spain there was a significant interest in an Irish author who was still striving to have his work published and who was surrounded by controversy regarding the apparent obscenity and indecency of his work. And secondly, they examine the effect that early—and in some cases premature—attempts at interpreting Joyce's works had on the evolution of his reception in Spain. The concept of the "transcultural," they suggest, best describes this process of assimilation with regard to the creation of a Hispanic Joyce.

The collection opens with Marichalar's pioneering interpretation of Joyce's writings who, already in the early twenties, manages to foresee the significance of his narrative innovation and extreme originality. Although his commentaries were not without fault and at times appear simplistic, his essay became a seminal work which encouraged the publication of newer commentaries on the subject and opened up a continuous forum for discussion. Marichalar's aim, as well as that of other critics of his generation, was to diffuse the work of Joyce in Spain with the intention of incorporating mainstream European writing into the Spanish literary tradition. It is not surprising, therefore, that he signed the letter against the piracy of *Ulysses* in America along with other Spanish writers like Azorín, Juan Ramón Jiménez and Unamuno, among others.

The two articles by the editor of Galician journal *Nós*, Vicente Risco, start by considering issues concerning the relationship between Galicia and Ireland in terms of their common adoption of the language of the oppressor and their emerging literary Renaissance. His first essay offers a sensible evaluation of each of Joyce's works at a time when *Ulysses* had not yet been translated into Spanish and, significantly enough, he expands on the different layers of interpretation of the novel by relating each of the chapters to its corresponding symbol, colour, hour, technique and Homeric parallel. In his second essay, originally written in the fifties, he, nevertheless, admits that *Ulysses* is not only an inaccessible novel but that he was never able to read it in its entirety, and that he doubts whether anyone could do it. Otero Pedrayo's essay on "Anna Livia Plurabelle" is a cogent example of the assimilation of Joyce's production in Spanish culture with his ingenious use of the title, "Ana Livia Plurabela," a hispanized version of the original. Otero Pedrayo's essay successful combines personal and literary critical approaches, particularly because he was the first to translate some fragments of *Ulysses* into a peninsular language, Galician. Finally, Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, a Galician and Joycean writer as he likes to call himself, comments on the difficulties of getting a copy of *Ulysses* during the forties and fifties while, at the same time, he emphasises his extraordinary discovery and reading of *A Portrait*.

Along with Galicia, Catalan writers were also early in their acknowledgement of the new narrative production with which Joyce was experimenting. Accordingly, in his article about the innovations of *Ulysses*, Lluís Montanyà focuses on the *avant-garde* qualities of the work although he admits his disappointment when he read it for the first time. Judging it both "monstrous" but "wonderful," he assures that he is incapable of offering a sensible interpretation of the novel on grounds of its inexhaustibility, and he also maintains that readers will still have to wait for some centuries before they can grasp the underlying implications of this inexplicable novel.

Other approaches include Ramón Pérez de Ayala's three contributions which explore the nature of Joyce's genius only to recognise his own failure to appreciate the richness of his production. As a matter of fact, a negative reception of the first waves of Joycean criticism in Spain was also embodied in Manuel Machado's inaugural lecture delivered when entering the Royal Academy the Language. In his eyes, Joyce's work was incoherent, chaotic, and impossible to come to grips with in rational terms. He even considered *Ulysses* a piece of writing by the devil, a satanic work produced by a mad man. He was not alone in his interpretation, however, because Juan Benet would also fail to understand the implications of Joycean aesthetics in his essay which originally prefaced the Spanish version of Stuart Gilbert's classical text *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Study*. Conversely, Juan Ramón Jiménez's early interest in Joyce's work reveals a personal attraction for a similar method of composition which pursued the musical quality of the

language and the quest for a personal voice in spite of the fact that his major concern is with difficulties encountered when reading Joyce.

This coherent collection of essays which were not put together before form a neat book which will be of much benefit for those who share an interest in Joyce. *Joyce en España (II)* is suitable for those who are not familiar with Spanish literature and wish to acquire some knowledge about the placement of Joyce's literary canon in other cultures and also for Joycean scholars who wish to add to what they already know. Its main achievement lies in that it both compliments and contests previous appreciation of the place of Joycean aesthetics in Spanish literature. If *Joyce en España (I)* succeeded at presenting an overview of the state of criticism on Joyce in Hispanic literature, *Joyce en España (II)* focuses on the views held by non specialists and writers. The two perspectives, that of academics and scholars, on the one hand, and of writers and non specialist critics, on the other, can only contribute to a broader and richer vision of the historical evolution of Joyce's writings in Spanish letters. This second volume, together with the first one, succeeds at offering a comprehensive view of the reception of Joyce's writings in the Hispanic world which, given the amount of recent publications on the subject and the apparently growing interest, can only stimulate further research to be collected, hopefully, in a third volume.

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