

Price, Brian L., César A. Salgado and John Pedro Schwartz, eds. *TransLatin Joyce. Global Transmissions in Ibero-American Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Print. 260 pp.

CHRISTINA SOTO VAN DER PLAS
CORNELL UNIVERSITY

It is in the nature of comparative studies to undertake the task not only of finding the similarities or differences between two or more cultural products, but also of constantly redefining the nature of the relationships that bind them together. It can be said that a true comparative study manages to trace a constellation, that is to say, it projects a series of hypothetical links between various elements and thus reshapes the space and orientation of the whole field. What is at stake, then, is the demarcation of the space of a series of fictional connections projected onto the sky of what are seemingly isolated elements. The result is a network of images that function as a compass to orient, in this case, the wanderings of critical thought. The collection of essays *TransLatin Joyce. Global Transmissions in Ibero-American Literature* is a comparative study of literature in this sense—it shapes and retraces the complex set of relations between James Joyce’s work and the literary space of the Iberian Peninsula, Argentina, Cuba and Mexico during key moments in the twentieth century. Beyond the basic ideas of linear influence, translation, reading or adaptation, *TransLatin Joyce* poses a new constellation of metaphors, images, ideas and ways of critically reinventing both Joyce’s oeuvre and of the multiple ways in which it transformed the Iberian and Latin American literary panorama. It charts the map of relationships that have led to a fruitful literary production and, more importantly, it provides an alternative set of critical tools to engrave this map.

The rationale behind the project of *TransLatin Joyce* is that Spanish and Portuguese writers “have transplanted, refashioned, and reinvented Joycean aesthetics within their marginal zones of cultural production in a process revolving around linguistic and critical translation” (xii) and there is much to be said about this ongoing processes “operating perpetually in the progressive tense” (xiii). The main accomplishment of the collection is charting these previously unexplored and unimagined links between literary and cultural projects, while managing to create new critical metaphors to define the multiple forms the reinventions can take. In this sense, the essays position themselves against the background of the so-called field of “Transatlantic Studies,” seeking to displace the often constraining territorial and continental metaphors. Instead of signaling that there are metropolitan

centers and fixed power positions in the global landscape, the editors propose reading the Joycean displacements as if tracing energy in a nonlinear unbound cultural wave system. This opens up a kind of reading that surpasses the classical boundaries of periphery and center and also of the idea of influence or translation from a hegemonic culture towards its peripheral appropriation.

It is precisely in this kind of multidimensional critical readings where both the strength and weakness of *TransLatin Joyce* lies. As I will argue, to a greater or lesser extent the essays of the volume put forward arguments based on prescriptive political and literary categories that thrive under the banner of there being diverse and multiple translations and transmissions according to each case, but in general they do not take a stance regarding the fundamental categories or vocabulary being used in the analyses. In some essays, the connection and engagement of the Iberoamerican authors with Joyce's work and figure is very aptly mapped, but there is no substantial criticism at the level of content that could lead to broader assumptions about the entire "wave system." In other essays, the analysis stays at the level of tracing the material and historical engagement with Joyce's work or the similitudes and differences in a particular aspect of the literary products and artistic trajectories. This is the reason why the book cannot be qualified as *an* intervention in the field amounting up to an original critical reading, but can instead be said to be a series of small incisions that in their own right trace the multiple itineraries of Joyce. At the same time, only through this multiplicity of metaphors, theories and readings and by being the book itself a collection of comparative essays would it be possible to truly reflect and make justice to the endless ways in which Joyce has been read during the twentieth century in the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America.

The Joycean itinerary begins in the Iberian Peninsula with "Recreating *Ulysses* across the Pyrenees: Antonio Marichalar's Spanish-European Critical Project." In this essay, Gayle Rogers traces how Antonio Marichalar—the Spanish critic and essayist often championed as "European ambassador of the Generación of 27"—"re-created" both Joyce's work and the Anglo-European modernism in order to posit the idea of a more complex transnational literary generation. According to Rogers, the process of translation and multiple iterations of Joyce in essays by Marichalar are part of a broader process favoring a modernist praxis, that is, a network of critical ideas that go well beyond specific cultural contexts and point towards the autonomy of art within a transnational conversation. While Rogers's essay is a great diagnosis of a symptomatic moment in Joycean history in Spain and beyond, what is sometimes lacking in the analysis is a more critical stance and engagement with how and why Marichalar was able to dialogue with Joyce's work and use it to construct his idea of a European cultural modernism of "deprovincialized aesthetics" (9).

John Pedro Schwartz's whole essay—"The Geopolitics of Modernist Impersonality: Pessoa's Notes on Joyce"—is intriguingly based on the only four lines that the Portuguese author, Fernando Pessoa, wrote about Joyce. The passing remarks Pessoa makes about Joyce guide Schwartz in his analysis of the author's contending takes on modernism and cultural politics. One of the most significant topics within modernism that is at stake in both authors is the way in which artistic impersonality operates. In Joyce the ego is dissolved in style and languages whereas Pessoa sees this as a step towards his own heteronymic project, which would be the true culmination of prior modernist approaches. The "creation in terms of depersonalization" (40) serves a similar cross-cultural and political purpose to the one Rogers described in Spain, but in this case it is an attempt to resituate both the "Portuguese and Irish margins at the Western cultural center" (27). The difference between Joyce and Pessoa's projects, nonetheless, lies in the means by which they get to the same end of aesthetics of impersonality and a geopolitical shift in culture and politics. Schwartz's careful reading and inferences from Pessoa's brief remarks illuminate the convergences and different strategies of the two parallel projects seeking to give free way to the "interconnectedness of the modern world" (50) through the impersonality of the work of art.

In Argentina, the early reception of Joyce was marked by the readings of the most important and influential writers of the century in the region, including Borges, Marechal and Arlt. Their readings, however, implied more than a mere choice of a certain literary style or form—they were enmeshed in the culturally politicized arena of the time and their aesthetic choice entailed taking a political stance. This is what Norman Cheadle argues in "Between Wandering Rocks: Joyce's *Ulysses* in the Argentine Culture Wars." Cheadle sees Borges's and Marechal's opposite views on Joyce as a reflection of the ideological conflicts or "warring factions." Borges emphasizes Joyce's chaotic style and verbal ability to portray him as a "dehumanized avant-gardist" and Marechal decides to focus on the metaphysical and spiritual conflicts in Joyce to describe the unity of his thought and the primacy of the novel as a genre. This somewhat schematic opposition traced by the author to explain the ideologically charged reception of Joyce can at times turn out to be a reading that constrains the literary richness of Borges and Marechal and instead encloses the opposition in predetermined political schemes. Nonetheless, Cheadle's essay is a good map to orient the reader through the forking paths of Joyce's readings in Argentina.

"The Cracked Lookingglass of the Servants: Joyce, Arlt (and Borges)" by Francine Masiello is one of the most compelling essays of the volume because of the author's very thorough close-readings and inferences about certain strategies to reverse and crack the interaction between Latin

American literature and what influences it. The figure of the “cracked lookingglass” serves as a metaphor of Roberto Arlt’s conception of literature as embodying “a blow to the jaw” as well as Joyce’s understanding of the body as ground of his aesthetic thought. Thus, the essay draws on very subtle points of contact between Joyce and Arlt not to trace a direct line of contact, but rather to discuss the “role of a sentient corporeality in apprehending poetic and political truths” (91) in modernity. “Literature reminds us of the traps of deception upon which modernity is formed” (113) and both Joyce and Arlt conceive “synesthesia” as a strategy to reflect back to the reader a broken image of the whole. The bold yet carefully supported inferences Masiello makes denounce the paradox of a kind of modern literature that takes us from “words to the illusions of bodies” while playing with belief.

As in Argentina, in Cuba Joyce’s translation was bound by a political debate. In this case, the context was the Cuban Revolution and the matter of how “works by hegemonic Anglo-European avant-garde authors such as James Joyce were to be interpreted, translated and disseminated” (121). The essay “Detranslating Joyce for the Cuban Revolution: Edmundo Desnoes’s 1964 Edition of *Retrato del artista adolescente*” by César A. Salgado is a critical analysis of Desnoes’s alteration of an already existing translation of the *Retrato* by the Spaniard Dámaso Alonso. The so-called “detranslation” by Desnoes implied taking a stance on which part of Joyce’s legacy was going to be emphasized and promoted in the radically different context of a nationalist revolution. In order to detranslate the *Retrato*, Desnoes focused on Joyce’s Irish subaltern condition and defended his endeavor to “decolonize the mind” through form. That is how Desnoes holds at the same time a pro avant-garde position and an intellectual compromise in the revolution. Salgado’s essay is in this sense a precise reading of what would otherwise seem an impossible context for the translation of Joyce and how he had been read in his modernist vein.

A series of thorough readings and suggestive etymological associations in both the *Ulysses* and in *Gestos* by Severo Sarduy are the main features of the essay by Paula Park titled “Replaying Joyce: Echoes from *Ulysses* in Severo Sarduy’s Auditory Imagination.” In *Gestos*, Sarduy uses linguistic and sonic techniques akin to those Joyce employed in the *Ulysses* and thus this essay argues that these techniques can be read as parallel sonic resemblances constantly resignifying themselves. Even though Park’s textual analysis at the thematic level—such as the very well traced connection between remembrance and recording—are illustrative, the intuitions do not form a broader suggestion on how both works might be re-imagined through their sonic and musical allusions and echoes.

The book ends with three very different ways in which Joyce has been read in Mexico by Salvador Elizondo, Gustavo Sainz and Carlos Fuentes in the mid and later part of the twentieth Century. Going beyond the Latin American Boom's appropriation of Joyce which included totalizing narratives, myths and urban landscapes, Brian L. Price argues in "A Portrait of the Mexican Artist as a Young Man: Salvador Elizondo's Dedalean Poetics" for another way of "being Joycean" in this case with the literary trajectory of Elizondo. For Price, the "theory of artistic representation rooted in the poetic thought of Stephen Dedalus" (182) can be read as one of the main ingredients in Elizondo's literary experiments progressively moving towards a "pure metafictional abstraction" (182). This means that Elizondo's work moved from short ironic pieces to a prism-like novel about the contemplation of a single image towards brief hyper-reflexive texts on pure art and its inner mechanisms. In this way, Price digs into Elizondo's peculiar aesthetic choices at symptomatic moments of his work when the early works by Joyce serve him as the fertile ground on which to root his literary and fictional constructions. This essay by Price is also one of the better crafted of the collection and provides an over-arching reading not only of the Mexican author but also of an alternative way of "being Joycean."

The traditional modernist debate between the notions of wholeness and fragmentation in the *Ulysses* is relevant for one of Sainz's novels. "Mexican Antimodernism: *Ulysses* in Gustavo Sainz's *Obsesivos días circulares*" by José Luis Venegas shows how it is possible for Sainz to grasp the contradiction of modernist art aspiring to "restore a sense of unity for the individual and the community" (217). Not only does *Obsesivos días circulares* references the *Ulysses* and uses some of its practices, but it also exposes the limits of the "totalizing novel." As such, both texts have a literary and political potential to be both modern and antimodern in their contradictory structures.

The last essay of *TransLatin Joyce* is "Crediting the Subject, Incorporating the Sheep: *Cristóbal Nonato* as the New Creole *Ulysses*?" by Wendy B. Faris. According to the author, there are more than mere playful references to Joyce in Fuentes's novel that make it function as an active respondent to the *Ulysses*. This amounts to reading this particular Mexican novel like a "postcolonial writing back" (246). Faris provides a gloss of some of the textual correspondences between Joyce and Fuentes as well as how there is an active use of the text in the play with language. However, there seems to be no concrete argument in the essay or a single thread to weave together the suggestions by the author. There is no critical stance, there are only a series of potential readings that can be traced from the provided close readings and different theories mentioned in the essay.

As with any collection of essays—though the edition of this volume is carefully done—*TransLatin Joyce* has texts of different quality and that come from various backgrounds and disciplines. Every one of the essays in the collection seems to be reading a different Joyce or one of its multiple lines of flight through the Ibero-American cultural panorama. This multiplicity, as said before, is both a unique virtue and a critical constraint. It truly renders visible the waves through which literary networks are assembled and how texts travel and are seen through ideological, political, stylistic or historical prisms. In fact, it shows how there cannot be an “original” or “originary” work of art, but rather that there is multiplicity at the core of both literature and its criticism. The downside is the difficulty to grasp this multiplicity in a constellation of critical thought with a clear-cut line of demarcation and object. Overall, *TransLatin Joyce* is a valuable book due to its critical contributions to trace the map of Joycean waves in Ibero-America and one that I hope will also be part of the ongoing redefinition of comparative studies of literature today.