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JOYCE STUDIES IN ITALY

22

JOYSPACE
JAMES JOYCE AND SPACE

Edited by
Roberto Baronti Marchiò

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protagonist as himself”, who may metamorphose into “Nilotpal the protagonist as Nilotpal the author”, or a vast array of literary and historical characters, the most resonating transformations definitely being those into “Nilotpal the protagonist as Leopold Bloom”, “Nilotpal the protagonist as Shem the Penman”, “Nilotpal the protagonist as Ulysses”, “Nilotpal the protagonist as James Joyce and Manjari as Nora Barnacle”, “Nilotpal the protagonist as Leopold Bloom and Manjari as Gerty MacDowell” and “Nilotpal the protagonist as Leopold Bloom as Dante and Manjari as Molly Bloom as Beatrice”. The narrator, “Nilotpal the author as himself”, may also impersonate, to name but a few, Moses, Dante, William Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, George Orwell, Herman Hesse, Eugene Jolas and Richard Ellmann. When the narrator is “Nilotpal the author as James Joyce”, it is interesting to remark that the schema lists, as context for the narrative, “*Ulysses*”, “*Exiles*” and “*Finnegans Wake*”.

Regardless of its merits, *Pastiche of Angst* undoubtedly attempts to reproduce the most challenging aspects of Joyce’s *oeuvre*, and it will also represent a challenge for the Quinns, Linatis, Larbauds, Gilberts or Ellmanns of the twenty-first century who will venture to decipher it.

Annalisa Federici

John McCourt, *Ulisse di James Joyce. Guida alla lettura*
(Roma, Carocci – 2021, pp.198, Euro 19)

Many commentaries and reading guides to *Ulysses* are available nowadays, from Stuart Gilbert’s classic *James Joyce’s Ulysses. A Study*, written under Joyce’s supervision and published in 1930, to more recent ones such as Terence Killeen’s *Ulysses Unbound: A Reader’s Companion to James Joyce’s Ulysses* (The Florida James Joyce Series, 2017) and Harry Blamires’s *A Guide Through Ulysses* (New Bloomsday Book, 1996)—a page-by-page, line-by-line running commentary on the plot. There is also Bernard McKenna’s *James Joyce’s Ulysses: A Reference Guide* and Sean Sheehan’s *Joyce’s Ulysses: A Reader’s Guide* (Bloomsbury, 2009), which also includes a chapter-by-chapter examination of the plot and stylistic

aspects of the novel¹. Other more specific guides—centered on Dublin—include *The Ulysses Guide* by Robert Nicholson (a sort of tour guide through the Dublin settings) and *James Joyce's Odyssey: Guide to the Dublin of "Ulysses"*, by Frank Delaney and Jorge Lewinski (Henry Holt & Co 1984 and Paladin 1982).

As for Italian readers, the first translation edited by Mondadori in 1960 included a booklet by Giulio De Angelis with an introduction by Giorgio Melchiori (*Guida alla lettura dell'Ulisse di James Joyce*), which also functioned as a reader's guide. In 2014, Enrico Terrinoni published *Attraverso uno specchio oscuro. Irlanda e Inghilterra nell'Ulisse di James Joyce* (Universitas Studiorum), which is not a traditional guidebook as such: Terrinoni defines it “una controguida ragionata”, that is to say, a “reasoned counter-guide” (implying a re-reading of *Ulysses*). Starting from the final episode, Terrinoni examines *Ulysses* by focussing on its context, seen as a contraposition between Irishness and Britishness². Terrinoni also wrote an extremely detailed essay “*Ulysses, l'Odissea del moderno*” that is included in his *James Joyce e la fine del romanzo* (Carocci 2015). Finally, there is Giuliana Bendelli's *Leggere l'«Ulisse» di Joyce* (VT: Vita e Pensiero 2017), which is not intended as a reader's guide, but as an ‘introduction’ to the novel (in that it comprises various thematic sections and an appendix with other essays).

John McCourt's *Ulisse di James Joyce. Guida alla lettura* (Carocci 2021) is a practical guide for both students and readers who are approaching *Ulysses* for the first time. Its structure is extremely simple: a general introduction followed by eighteen chapters, one for each episode of the novel. Each chapter opens with a table showing the place and time of the episode, and references to the parallels provided in the Linati and Gilbert schemes. A detailed plot summary immediately follows, and each section ends with a short commentary on the episode described. While this

¹ This is not an exhaustive list. Furthermore, I have not included the many online resources like the Joyce Project (www.joyceproject.com), Frank Delaney's podcast's [re:joyce](https://blog.frankdelaney.com/re-joyce/) (<https://blog.frankdelaney.com/re-joyce/>) and websites such as www.ulyssesguide.com or <https://matthuculak.com/ulysses/>, which provide a list of useful online resources for teaching *Ulysses*. I have not included here Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman's *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses*, which is a reference book rather than a guide.

² Thus following in the footsteps of Declan Kiberd and many other postcolonial / semi-colonial critics (i.e. Derek Attridge, Vincent Cheng, Gregory Castle etc.).

guide essentially follows De Angelis's (and Melchiori's) booklet, it is not just a modern and up-to-date version of the latter. Indeed, McCourt's book exists independently from any specific edition or translation of *Ulysses*. It does not contain a glossary or notes to specific passages, though in his detailed (though contained) summaries and plot analysis, it does provide, where necessary, relevant quotes from the text. It is clear in style and is easy and enjoyable to read.

Clearly, this guide is not an encyclopaedic reference book and its main aim is to provide students (and the ordinary reader) with the tools needed to tackle *Ulysses*. The main quality of McCourt's book is that of being clear and functional to its purpose. Furthermore, unlike reference books and glossaries, it is also entertaining; one can read it from beginning to end without needing to go back repeatedly to the text itself.

McCourt focusses on this specific purpose from the general introduction: he does not beat about the bush sorting through with biographical references (readers are supposed to possess the basic notions) and he does not simply state what *Ulysses* is like (structurally and thematically), but immediately warns his readers: "No one is really prepared enough to read Joyce's *Ulysses*" (9). Though this guide is not in dialogic form, McCourt seems to be talking to his reader like a speaker to an audience (or as an entertaining scholar to his students): he seems to be there to give advice, and in so doing he engages the ordinary reader. Though *Ulysses* is not easy, and certainly cannot be considered popular, perhaps many readers do not enjoy it (or leave it aside) simply because they do not know how to deal with it. Unlike other novels, *Ulysses* requires a different reading approach: McCourt's guide immediately makes this clear and provides a key to reading the text. Once you follow specific tips (given as if in a modern tutorial), and get to know Joyce's tricks of the trade, you can start this new adventure. McCourt also follows this pattern in his introduction: he first provides preliminary advice, such as recommending "starting from the fourth episode", "avoiding looking up all the words in the dictionary", "just accepting that we cannot understand everything", "going back to read the *Odyssey*" and "keeping a map of Dublin" to hand. He then comments on what a reader might expect from *Ulysses*, explaining how, where and when the novel was conceived and

published³, showing its structure, focussing on its humorous aspects, on its use of language and its style, introducing its characters and main themes, and describing the settings⁴. There is a smooth passage from preliminary advice to the information the reader needs in order to commence Joyce's *maledettissimo romanizzazione* without getting lost and frustrated. At the end of the introduction, McCourt also indicates which English editions and Italian translations of *Ulysses* are available, and recommends some.

A useful and enjoyable guide for beginner readers, McCourt's book also provides a series of bibliographical references from which he quotes when necessary. These can prove useful for Italian readers who would like to continue with further study and preliminary research. McCourt quotes from letters and memoirs, from both Italian (Melchiori, Ruggieri, Eco, Amalfitano, Vaglio, Terrinoni) and international critics (Ellmann, Budgen, Kiberd). As befits such a book, he does not follow the pedantic academic habit of overquoting from secondary sources: his references are concise and to the point.

This publication fills a definite gap in existing Italian academic literature on the topic, being aimed particularly at students and the ordinary reader. It is a comprehensive guide for beginners and will also prove an extremely useful practical tool for teachers, who might want to add this title to their courses not only to introduce *Ulysses* to their students, but also to provide them with continual support that they can rely on before and while reading the text.

Fabio Luppi

Brian Moloney, *Friends in Exile: Italo Svevo & James Joyce*
(Leicester: Troubador – 2018, pp. 256, £ 13.95)

Brian Moloney, Emeritus Professor of Italian at the University of Hull and expert on Svevo's work, analyzes in his book, *Friends in Exile*, the friendship between Italo Svevo (alias Ettore Schmitz) and James Joyce. Indeed, as is underlined in the introduction, it is "the first book in English to look at the full impact of the friendship that sprang up between these

³ Academics will realize that McCourt is implicitly referencing genetic criticism here.

⁴ Again, without going into a detailed discussion, McCourt alludes to postcolonial theories.