

RANDALL J. POGORZELSKI, *Virgil and Joyce: nationalism and imperialism in the Aeneid and Ulysses*, Madison; London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2016, x+78 pp., ISBN 978-0-299-30800-1.

Presumably an elaboration of his PhD dissertation, Pogorzelski's *Virgil and Joyce: nationalism and imperialism in the Aeneid and Ulysses* fills an important gap in Joyce Criticism. Robert Schork, the undisputed authority on *Latin and Roman Culture in Joyce* (UP of Florida, 1997), affirmed that "Latin was Joyce's first second language"(2) and verified that Virgil's work was part of his library in Trieste. With his initial help, Pogorzelski starts by tracing direct references to Virgil in *Ulysses*, goes on to read Virgil through Joycean lenses, and brings in "Nationalism" as *tertium comparationis*. He contends that Joyce uses Virgil to construct "a cultural history of Ireland through the European classical tradition" (11), and, in turn, Pogorzelski himself uses Joyce to discover a new Virgil, the Virgil of Nationalism.

Readers of e-books and similar digital formats often read more than one at the same time. This is obviously not the end of the book bounds. It is only one more step towards non-linear reading. "Could a historiographer," asked Sterne in *Tristram Shandy* long ago, "drive on his history, as a muleteer drives on his mule,—straight forward. . . without ever once turning his head aside, either to the right hand or to the left?" (Penguin 2003, XIV). Books have the capacity to talk to other books. Our attentive reading may easily stop at any given point and take us through a maze of hyperlinks. Every paragraph, every sentence, any word is --or may seem to us-- linked to others. While reading we often hop from book to book at a pace directly proportional to our degree of obsession and inversely proportional to our concentration. It is no news to start this review noting that we generally read James Joyce in this way.

As he wrote *Ulysses*, he also reordered the ways in which we were to see the connection between his words and those in other works."I believe I told you;" said Joyce to his friend Frank Budgen, "that my book is a modern *Odyssey*. Every episode in it corresponds to an adventure of *Ulysses*" (*James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses*, OUP, 1989, 20). Joyce's friend Stuart Gilbert, himself a graduate in Classics at Oxford, did a lot to promote the idea that we were to read *Ulysses* keeping an eye on the *Odyssey*, and envisioning Homer more or less as a "prefiguration" of Joyce, though the only evidence we have is the title of the novel (not even the Greek names of the episodes were ever published). The distance between the writer's appar-

ent intentions and the textual parallels are such that we never know how far to take them or when to stop. Whether they are labelled “influence,” “allusions,” or “intertexts,” we are likely to end up repeating the dying replicant’s words in *Blade Runner*: “I’ve seen things you people wouldn’t believe.”

What came afterwards is well known to Joyceans (and commonly known as the “Joyce industry”). In order to read *Ulysses*, even precariously, we can hardly resist the temptation to stop from time to time and open other books. We need at least half a dozen on our desk. Weldon Thornton’s *Allusions in Ulysses* (U of North Carolina P, 1968) or James Atherton’s *The Books at the Wake* (Southern Illinois UP, 1959) are indispensable. There are also some concrete, distinguished ghosts. Were it not for his insistence on Homer, many would agree that Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* goes first in *Ulysses*. Vincent Cheng’s masterful *Shakespeare and Joyce, A Study of Finnegans Wake* (Pennsylvania State UP, 1984) explores the connections between these two major creators –that is, after God, as Joyce would say in *Ulysses*. Also, Mary Trickett Reynolds’ *Joyce and Dante: The Shaping Imagination* (Princeton UP, 2014); or Patrick Colm Hogan’s *Joyce, Milton, and the Theory of Influence* (Florida James Joyce, 1995) are valiant enough to bring these major writers together. Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, Giambattista Vico, and many others could be added. Virgil, no doubt, has an important place in this list. Don Gifford’s priceless *Annotated Ulysses* (U of California P, 1989), lists no less than a dozen references to Virgil, including cross-references to Dante, Milton, or Blake.

In chapter 1, “Joyce’s “Aeolus” and the Semicolonial Virgil,” Pogorzelski starts his analysis with the first allusion to Virgil in *Ulysses*:

VIRGILIAN, SAYS PEDAGOGUE. SOPHOMORE PLUMPS FOR OLD MAN MOSES.

—Call it, wait, the professor said, opening his long lips wide to reflect. Call it, let me see. Call it: *deus nobis hæc otia fecit*.

—No, Stephen said. I call it *A Pisgah Sight of Palestine* or *The Parable of The Plums*. (U 07.1054-8)

Following the (thin) threadline of the episode, “Aeolus,” two girls climb up Nelson’s Pillar to have a view of Dublin from the top. They are eating plums and spit the seeds (which make a “parable”) down the street. That is why Stephen proposes the title *The Parable of The Plums*. The connection between Virgil’s quotation in Latin and Nationalism is in order here if we remember the tendency to associate Latin with the Empire and England and Greek with Irish Nationalism.

What else is involved in a flight of stairs? Pogorzelski goes on to argue that “their laborious climb to the top represents the Irish struggle for independence in general, and the land war in particular” (35). It would appear that

Pogorzelski forces the reading of the episode. And does he? The Joycean answer is that he “allegorizes,” i.e., raises from the literal reading (climbing the stairs) to a different level (Irish struggle). Further, Pogorzelski borrows the term “semicolonial” from Derek Attridge’s successful study *Semicolonial Joyce* (Cambridge UP, 2000), to title this first chapter, “Joyce’s “Aeolus” and the Semicolonial Virgil.” “Semicolonial” applies to Joyce ambivalent, hybrid—and polemical—attitude in respect of Irish Nationalism. Reading Joyce in this way allows Pogorzelski to see Virgil, from a postcolonial perspective, as semicolonial too.

The only objection to Pogorzelski’s reading of the episode has little to do with how far he takes the parallel. This only makes him a Joycean. It is rather his initial assumption that Joyce and Virgil belong exclusively in their separate periods, that “Modern” and “Classic” are independent realities, rather than artificial tools we use to make a precarious sense of history.

The second chapter, “Joyce’s Citizen and Virgil’s Cacus” centers on the “Cyclops” episode and its association with Virgil’s monster Cacus, although the critical terminology used is somewhat elusive (are they allusions? Intertexts?). Cacus, who is killed by Hercules, serves as a model for the citizen, the famous nationalist. But Cacus (as Latin) is also the British colonizer: “‘Cyclops’ not only links the citizen to the monster Cacus, but also subtly aligns the citizen with the hero Hercules” (49). With the aid of the portmanteau concept of “hybridity,” Pogorzelski manages to combine a number of characters into one: the Cyclops and Cacus; the Irish Nationalist and the Roman invader. Other pastoral monsters, together with Fritz Senn’s hints to Polyphemus in Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* (52), are added to the citizen’s hybrid identity.

Joyce—it often occurs—seems to trap us in a web of resemblances. In 1980 Shari and Bernard Benstock made reference to this particularity in the title of their directory: *Who’s He When He’s at Home : A James Joyce Directory* (U of Illinois P). It is not a flaw, then, but the natural result of Pogorzelski’s meticulous reading of Joyce, that he uncovers multiple and even contradictory identities in the citizen: he is “Cacus” as “shepherd,” “Hercules” as “madman,” and “Augustus” a “repressive monarch” (67).

Most of chapter 3, “The Virgilian Past of Nationalism,” centers on Nationalism and the *Aeneid*. Even though the concept of “Nationalism” itself is modern and initially alien to Virgil, reading *Ulysses* changes our perception of things, and also our understanding of the past. Consequently Pogorzelski reads the *Aeneid* with postmodern eyes. More concretely, it is Joyce’s idea of “Irish Nationalism” that allows him to “envision” a new Virgil, the Virgil of nationalism.

And what is a Nation? “—A nation? says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place” (*U* 12.1422-3). Pogorzelski can read in Bloom’s definition the preeminence of “territoriality” over race and language. He adds to this the creation of artificial ancient roots: “They imagine the territory as an ancient and natural whole” (79). The ways in which Virgil constructed ancient roots for Italian identity are seen as parallel to Joyce’s exploration of ancient roots for Irish identity.

With the aid of Benedict Anderson’s influential *Imagined Communities* (Verso, 2006), Pogorzelski recalls for us the ways in which Nationalism transforms “fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning (Anderson 2006, 11)” and remarks the “Nationalist’s” need of “mourning”: “Nationalism, as Anderson makes clear, is a form of mourning”(83). Consequently the chapter ends with an account of the death of Lausus.

“Joyce’s Rudy and Virgil’s Marcellus” (chapter 5) centers on Marcellus, the heir of the Roman empire, and Rudy, Bloom’s dead son. In both a similar process is at work: “the emotional power of ancient injustice to engender collective nationalist identification”(91). In this chapter Pogorzelski makes an important correction in the traditional understanding of *Ulysses*. He contends that Joyce’s “Circe” (episode 15 of *Ulysses*) is more similar to the *Aeneid* 6 than “Hades” (episode 6 of *Ulysses*). What makes “Circe” similar to a descent to Hades is its peculiar understanding of time: it is a return to the past (the past of dead friends and family) and an anticipation of the problematic future (by way of prophecies).

At this point, curiously, Pogorzelski takes a two page detour (94-95) to account for references to *Aeneid* 6 in *Finnegans Wake*. Is he suggesting a broader parallel between the *Wake* and Virgil’s *Country of the Dead*? In any case, Rudy, Bloom’s dead son, appears as a ghost at the end of “Circe,” and makes Bloom speculate on what would have become of Rudy, had he lived. Virgil follows the same trend of thoughts regarding the death of his son Marcellus.

Certainly, “paternity” and the loss of a son, are central thematic links in *Ulysses* (that is why the ghost of *Hamlet* haunts the book). What Pogorzelski does is to associate it to Virgil and to Nationalism through Marcellus. First, once Marcellus and Rudy die, the lineage is discontinued. Second, “the association with Marcellus, . . . politizes Rudy”(102). The death of the son, (Marcellus, Rudy), announces the conflicts to come, in Virgil’s Rome, in Joyce’s Ireland. Again this is at a remove from a literal reading. It is another level of reading, the political level, where “Circe” enacts the “Problem of Succession”(107), namely, the absence of an heir.

Pogorzelski goes to the extreme and associates this discontinuity of lineage to fragmentation in narrative and style. “Circe” is, in this way also, an interruption in the narrative of *Ulysses*: “the discontinuities and anti-narrative style of “Circe” also suggests difficulties of style” (108). Those readers

who are not ready to go this far with Pogorzelski should take into consideration that he supports his arguments with the help of notorious critics, like Emer Nolan, Enda Duffy or David Quint, (111).

Chapter 5, “Virgil’s Joycean Poetics,” brings a “new” postmodern perspective on Virgil and eventually a “new” Virgil. “Discontinuity” is the essential postmodern feature that Pogorzelski imports from Frederic Jameson to embark on his original reading. Provoked by Imperialism, always according to Jameson (113), “discontinuities” point to the fragmentation of daily life, and this is true in both modern Ireland and ancient Rome, in “times of of violent and significant change” (11). Pogorzelski contemplates a variety of discontinuities. The first is “Familial Discontinuity” (115) and applies to Daedalus’ “incomplete” stories and sculptures as he arrives at Cumae. Pogorzelski makes a considerable effort to make us see “incomplete” as “discontinuous.” A second type of discontinuity is “semantic” and applies to the sibyl’s prophecy (119). Prophecies have multiple meanings, and thus are semantically unstable, whereas the space between text and meaning mark the territory of --precisely-- “discontinuity” (120). A third kind of discontinuity to be seen in the *Aeneid* is “historical” (129) and concerns The Parade of Heroes. The parade is not ordered history, but rather a “discontinuous selection of vignettes” (130). Pogorzelski’s undeniable merit and originality in this chapter is slightly marred by enthusiastic –and perhaps vague– generalizations on discontinuity: “The problem lies in language itself. There is a gap between signifier and referent that renders semantic communication discontinuous” (125).

To conclude, Pogorzelski’s *Virgil and Joyce: nationalism and imperialism in the Aeneid and Ulysses* is valuable for many reasons. First, the book exhausts almost all the possible parallels between Virgil and *Ulysses* (not *Finnegans Wake*). There is not much to be added after Pogorzelski’s thorough reading. Secondly, a new Virgil is born in this book, the Virgil of Postmodernism. And thirdly, our understanding of “Nationalism” expands its original boundaries, as it is no longer “only” modern, no longer disconnected from the ancient past.

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