

World Literature and the Case of Joyce, Rao, and Borges

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**Abstract:** In her article "World Literature and the Case of Joyce, Rao, and Borges" Bhavya Tiwari discusses the work of James Joyce and poses the question why Joyce is considered an important figure in Latin America and South Asia. Have Indian languages (e.g., Bengali and Hindi) responded differently to Joycean aesthetics? If yes, can there be political reasons behind this difference? Joyce's own position in Europe as a modernist aesthete complicates his reception in the "periphery," India and Latin America. Hence, Tiwari queries as to what happens when Joyce's texts are received on two different continents. In this context, Tiwari discusses Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), and Jorge Luis Borges's texts with regard to their linguistic innovations and word play. Tiwari's comparative and contextual analysis is meant to illustrate the relevance of comparative cultural study.

## **Bhavya TIWARI**

### **World Literature and the Case of Joyce, Rao, and Borges**

Emily Apter in her book *The Translation Zone* (2006), propounds that although there are "historical and pedagogical reasons for maintaining geopolitical relations between dominants and their former colonies, protectorates, and client states, there are equally compelling arguments for abandoning postcolonial geography" (87). Hence, "Francophone" would no longer "designate the transnational relations among metropolitan France and its former colonies, but linguistic contact zones all over the world in which French, or some kind of French, is one of many languages in play" (Apter 87). Indeed, globalizing postcolonial studies by freeing it from the "master" and "native" narrative would be a path in order to broaden our notions of language, politics, aesthetics, and translations. Taking Apter's thoughts as my point of departure point, I propose that even if common "linguistic contact zones" do not exist, for instance, between Latin America and South Asia, a comparative cultural and literary approach, especially with respect to world writers, would yield relevant results in postcolonial discourses.

In order to elaborate on my argument, I take the example of James Joyce — a global figure who has influenced writers and critics across the world — and explore the following questions: Why is Joyce an important figure in Latin America and South Asia? Can there be a comparative study on Joyce's reception in India and Latin America? If yes, what could be the relevance of such a study? Have Indian languages (i.e., Bengali and Hindi) responded differently to Joycean aesthetics? If yes, can there be political reasons behind this difference? Joyce's own position as practitioner of modernist aesthetics complicates his reception in the "periphery" (India and Latin America). What happens when an important writer such as Joyce is received in two linguistically different geographical regions, in former colonies of European powers? For my discussion on India, I look at Raja Rao's novel, *Kanthapura* (1938), which decolonizes and naturalizes English to Kannada (one of the Dravidian languages of India) rhythms. I compare his linguistic innovations with Jorge Luis Borges's dislike for neologisms and word-play in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). I conclude my article arguing for the advantages of comparative cultural and literary study.

There is an amusing scene in Vikram Seth's novel, *A Suitable Boy* (1993), where James Joyce becomes an inspiration of a "sudden murderous impulse" for a young university professor who is seized with an incomprehensible desire to kill his senior colleagues for not including Joyce in the curriculum. Dr. Pran, who as a young student had risked his Ph.D. orals and his career at Allahabad University by devoting his time to reading *Ulysses* stands alone against his seniors to support the inclusion of Joyce in the course called "Modern British literature." The head of the department, Dr. Mishra, who might remind many readers of Mr. Deasy in the "Nestor" chapter of *Ulysses*, thinks that *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* (1939) are "unreadable." To him, that kind of writing "is unhealthy for our students. It encourages them, as it were, in sloppy and ungrammatical writing. "And what about the ending of *Ulysses*?, he thinks aloud, "There are young and impressionable women whom in our courses" and it "is our responsibility to introduce" them "to the higher things in life" (Seth 56-7). Dr. Mishra dismisses his young colleague's ideas and thinks that Dr. Pran has imported his ideas about Joyce from Anglo-American scholarship, and thus reminds him reproachfully that India is an independent country, and that he should be careful on blindly following the "American dissertation mill" (56). He goes on to argue that the faculty is already hard-pressed for teaching twenty-one writers in the time allotted to the course, and if "Joyce goes in what comes out?" is his response to Dr. Pran's earnest plea. "Flecker," bursts out Dr. Pran, to which the head of the department laughs indulgently and says: "Pass not beneath, O Caravan, or pass not singing, Have you heard / That silence where the birds are dead yet sometimes pipeth like a bird?" (57). It is at this moment that Dr. Pran remembers that his head of the department has two more years before he retires. The narrator tells us that a sudden murderous impulse seizes Pran now as "he realized that his hands were trembling slightly. And all this over Joyce, he said to himself" (59).

The humorous episode could be taken as an instance from any faculty's meeting in the world where debates on the inclusion and exclusion of writers in the syllabi take a mock epic stature. But more than that, the episode showcases objections to the reading of Joyce in an Indian university in

1950s, interestingly, three years after India's independence from the British Raj. Clearly, Joyce, for many members in that committee was then not a postcolonial, marginal, and subaltern figure. In fact, he comes out as a dangerous writer who can corrupt India's second official language, English, and the innocent minds of young Indians, especially women. Moreover, the episode also highlights that the senior faculty members of the Department of English at the university in the novel are oblivious to Indian English writers like Mulk Raj Anand or G.V. Desani, who in the 1930s and 1940s had published their major works which subverted the use of the English language, literary genres, and Indian nationalism. It is only a decade or so later that in Joyce becomes the touchstone for many scholars of English-language literature and a staple entity in departments of English departments at Indian universities.

Unlike Eliot and Yeats, who were being translated into Indian languages and had become the muse of at least 600 dissertations and publications by 1988, Joyce's presence, reception, and contact with India has remained intangible (see Sen 207). Indeed, Dr. Pran, after the episode on Joyce wonders why Eliot is such a "sacred cow for us Indian intellectuals?" (61). Although, many important essays by Eliot and poems by Yeats, who were contemporaries of Joyce, were being translated in India, Joyce's works remained outside the intellectual discourse for a long time. Much of this has to do with Eliot's engagement with Sanskrit, and Yeats's close connection with Rabindranath Tagore, whose *Gitanjali* (1912), a collection of poems, bore a preface by Yeats, and had won him the Noble Prize in Literature in 1913, thus making Tagore a national, as well as a world poet. The situation has changed since then. With Salman Rushdie's acceptance of Joycean aesthetics as a primary inspiration for his work and with the *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* becoming the staple diet of all departments of English in India, it would be a sign of a lack of university education to dismiss Joyce the way the chair of the Department of English did in Seth's novel. In fact, Rushdie satirizes this new found respect for Joyce amongst South Asian academicians in his *The Satanic Verses* (1988), when a protagonist tries to impress by telling that she has read the *Finnegans Wake* and is therefore well versed in sophisticated Western postmodern discourse (261). But even if Joyce's relationship with India has been intangible at first, Joycean aesthetics in India and fragments of Eastern philosophy in his own work beg a fresh approach to this subject because the connection between India and Joyce is difficult to dismiss after looking at the Buddhist and *Upanishadic* philosophy one can find in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Further, as essays such as "Home Rule Comes of Age" demonstrate, Joyce was well aware of the political similarities between Ireland and India as England's colony (Sen 208). To showcase Joyce's knowledge of India, its religious and mythical complexity, Suzette Henke discusses J.S. Atherton's speculations in his *Books at the Wake* which propounds that Joyce's knowledge of Hindu mythology came from Helene Petrovna Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*, her *Mahatma Letters*, and a German text by Heinrich Zimmer entitled *Maya, der Indische Mythos* (see Sen 208). As pointed out by Krishna Sen, in the factual and philosophical haziness of "Madam Blavatsky and the carefully cultivated Orientalist mystique of Zimmer are only too apparent in Stephen's and Bloom's figuration of India in *Ulysses*" (208).

Krishna Nand Joshi in his *The West Looks at India* (1969), gives a long list of words from various Indian languages that Joyce uses in *Wake*. Indeed, it is now an axiom that Joyce was a great innovator of words and that he believed in the suggestive power of words which could represent multiple levels of an individual's consciousness. Joyce's remark on his multi-linguistic experiments is relevant here. Joyce said he felt he could not "use words in their ordinary connexions. Used that way they do not express how things are ... in the different stages—conscious, then semi-conscious, then unconscious ... when morning comes ... I will give them back their English language" (Joyce qtd. in Joshi 114). Clearly, it is his multilingual experiment that has impressed Indian English writers the most. Although many scholars and critics think that Joyce employed Eastern philosophies the most in his *Wake*, one can find an undercurrent of Indian philosophy in *Ulysses* too. The discourse on metempsychosis that Bloom delivers to Molly in *Ulysses* brings to mind the ancient Hindu and Buddhist theory on rebirth and avatar of the soul. Metempsychosis is an important concept in *Ulysses* especially because the novel records not only personal deaths, but also a national death in the figure of Parnell. Additionally, the dead, the living, and the semi-dead are present in the minds of Bloom and Stephen all the time. In fact, they all come alive in the "Circe" chapter, which belies not only the conventional narrative and generic techniques of a novel, but challenges the concept of time. Further, the

numerous references to Hindu gods and goddesses and Bloom's active imagination — which deludes him into thinking that he is "somewhere in the East" while walking on the streets of Dublin—makes Joyce's text a microcosm of Indian philosophy.

However, despite using Eastern philosophies liberally, Joyce was satirical of the commercial exploitation of Orientalist fantasy in the British press, as evident in his review of Aquila Kempster's *The Adventures of Prince Aga Mirza* in Dublin's *Daily Express* (see Sen 209). One could argue that for Joyce Eastern philosophies became a tool to replace the locus that once belonged to the catholic religion. But more than a replacement, Joyce's use and burlesque of catholic and Eastern religions is a reflection of the plague that every modern artist carried in his/her work: the death of god. And, in this godless world, only the artist could become the creator, the destroyer of myths and beliefs, and only he/she through his/her art could provide metempsychosis to salvage humanity. Unfortunately, the godless world of Joyce does not have a tangible presence in India. One would think that the close link formed between India and Ireland in the early nineteenth century with respect to Home rule league or Annie Besant's connections with the Theosophical Society (see Sen 208) would make Joyce a success in India. This is not the case and Joyce's direct presence has remained spectral in the vernacular literatures of India. For instance, Joyce's *Dubliners* is easily the most translated work of Joyce in the world, but so far only two stories from it have been translated in a the Bengali literary magazine, *Desa* in 1946 and 1948 (see Sen 216). Although a small piece on the narrative technique of Joyce's *Ulysses* was also published in a leading Hindi literary journal, *Aajkal* in 1964, it unfortunately does not touch upon the influence of *Ulysses* in Hindi literature. Further, as recently as in 2005 the first complete work of Joyce, *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, was translated into Malayalam, one of the Dravidian languages of India (Joyce, *Yuvāvenna*). No attempts to translate *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* have been made. Indeed, it would be intriguing to ask why Joyce has been such a refracted and marginal figure in Indian languages, even after becoming the golden muse for so many Indian authors writing in English. Could it be that Joyce's use of parodic tone and catholicism make him unreceptive for translations in India? Or, is it that unlike Latin America, where English remains a foreign language thereby necessitating the need to translate US-American, Canadian, Australian, and British authors into Spanish, Indians have become what Thomas Macaulay wanted and declared in articles 33 and 34 in his "Minutes on Education"?:

To sum up what I have said. I think it clear that we are not fettered by the Act of Parliament of 1813, that we are not fettered by any pledge expressed or implied, that we are free to employ our funds as we choose, that we ought to employ them in teaching what is best worth knowing, that English is better worth knowing than Sanscrit or Arabic, that the natives are desirous to be taught English, and are not desirous to be taught Sanscrit or Arabic, that neither as the languages of law nor as the languages of religion have the Sanscrit and Arabic any peculiar claim to our encouragement, that it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars, and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed (Article 32) ... In one point I fully agree with the gentlemen to whose general views I am opposed. I feel with them that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern — a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population (Article 34).

Has Macaulay been successful in creating Indian authors who write in English and who have become English in tastes, in opinions, and in intellect, and are now "interpreters" of aesthetics for and of the English speaking world? On the surface, English-speaking South Asians are nothing but Homi Bhabha's hybridized mimics of the colonizers. However, India's multilingualism and the dominations of languages such as Hindi and Bengali not only in north India, but also in places like Fiji, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Bangladesh, does not leave us with a simple answer to the powerful presence of English in India. Further, the English used by Indian English authors is hardly the English Macaulay wanted his subjects to learn.

It is difficult to imagine that Joyce would not have left an impression on Indian vernacular authors, especially after considering the fact that Indian vernacular authors are mostly well versed in canonical British and even Continental European literatures. A marked difference between the vernacular literatures of India and Indian writing in English can be seen when it comes to Joycean aesthetics and techniques. The early part of the second half of the twentieth century prompted Indian authors to

create protagonists that felt alien to the world around them. This motif of the alienated individual helped the writers in foregrounding the psychological analyses of characters through the technique of interior monologue (see Sen 216). In Bengal, for instance, the exploration of psyche begins with Tagore's novels and dramas and it is possible, as argued by Sen, that the motivating impulse for creating interior monologue would have come from Joyce and Proust.

The vernacular literatures of India, as argued by Sen, used the stream of consciousness and interior monologue more readily than the early Indian English authors. For example, the use of interior monologue was well used in an experimental novel *Lagna Bilanga* (1961) by an Oriya writer, Gopinath Mohanty. Further, Buddhadeb Bose, one of the early comparatists of India, used stream of consciousness narration in his *Lal Megh* (1934) (*The Red Cloud*) for the first time in a Bengali novel (see Sen 217). The technique of stream of consciousness and interior monologue was also employed by the Bengali author Gopal Haldar — in *Ekadā* (1939) (*Ekada* 1969), *Arek Din* (1951) (*Some Day*), and *Anyadin* (1950) (*Some Other Day*) — in order to capture the anguished memories of three captured freedom fighters sentenced to death by British authorities, where each part is occurring within a single day as in *Ulysses* (Sen 217). Something similar can also be seen in the novel *Suraj ka Satva Ghora* (1952) (*The Sun's Seventh Horse*, 1999) by Hindi author Dharamvir Bharati in which he captures the life story of two men in a mere span of three hours. Contrary to writings in vernacular languages, Indian English novels such as that of G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1948), and Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) exploit counter-discursive techniques as used in *Ulysses* for the subversion of colonial language. Further, Indian English writers often turn to Joyce's texts for generic conventions.

Rushdie says that English has been "conquered" by acculturation: "we can't simply use the language in the way the British did ... it needs remaking for our own purposes" (Rushdie qtd. in Elleke 201). Rushdie's words only echo what Raja Rao has said in his Foreword to his novel, *Kanthapura*, almost three decades before him: "We cannot write like the English. We should not" (vii). Joyce, too, believed that the Irish language, although of the Indo-European family, differs from English as the language spoken in Rome differs from that spoken in Tehran (Sen 215). Indeed, Stephen in the *Portrait* debates on the origin of the word "tundish" and decides that the English words "home," "ale," and "Christian" are different on his and his headmaster's lips, who is apparently British: "The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine" (146). Clearly, Joyce was particularly aware of the position of English the language of imperialism. In both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* Joyce narrates stylistically in a manner that initiates a loss of the grandeur of English as an imperial language to become any other language.

Set in a mythical village of India, which Rao says could be any village in India, *Kanthapura* records the colonial struggle against the British, the breaks in Indian nationalism, the victory of the Indians over the British, and the pervasive presence of Gandhi through his devout follower, Moorthy, the protagonist of the novel. Here, I submit that the Gandhi of *Kanthapura* could be replaced by the ghostly presence of Parnell in *Ulysses*, who, like Gandhi in *Kanthapura* remains in the narrative without ever being seen. Apart from not following the linear structure of a traditional narrative, the novel abounds in linguistic and stylistic innovations similar to the erasure of the difference Stephen had felt while speaking in English with his headmaster. For instance, the abundant physical objects and mythical allusions Rao uses not only "Indianize" the English language, but also "localize" or "Kannnadaize" it. Thus, the blowing of conch, the burning of camphor, the breaking of coconut before any temple, the offering of bananas and the lightening of lamps before the goddess inflects English linguistic properties in such a manner in which to replace the word "Christian" from Stephen's mouth with the word "Hindu" would not sound alien. Further, the references to a number of south Indian dishes like *od'e*, *Happalams*, *sajji*, *payasams*, *chitrana*—despite sounding different like the word "ale" on Stephen and his headmaster's lips—bargue into the English language to create a new world. A similar effect results in Rao's narrative from his speech tunes he gives to English, for example the functional address of "No, no, Bhattare" or in the non-functional address of expressions like "Yes, sister" and the general habit of using the Native words for "brother," "sister," "mother," and "father" in the narrative creates a "home," which would "other" the headmaster of the *Portrait*. But it is just not English that is subverted in the novel. Rao's Foreword to the novel advocates subversion of only



the colonizer's language and to a casual reader the novel may seem to be a weapon of protest against the colonial center — and in this case it is England.

Nevertheless, the Foreword, as well as the novel, address complex language issues connected with the power structures that go beyond Rushdie's notion of "the empire writing back": "English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up—like Sanskrit or Persian was before — but not of our emotional make-up" (vii). By associating English with Sanskrit and Farsi, Rao is emphasizing the hegemony of three past empires in India, and by dividing the function of language in "intellectual" and "emotional" categories, he is preparing his readers for the linguistic subversion he performs in the novel, where this dichotomy is broken.

The campaign for the employment of a local language in *Kanthapura* accomplishes a dual purpose for Rao: not only is he able to explore the potential of a "Kannada English," but presents it as a measure against the growing hegemony of Hindi (at the time of the writing of the novel soon to become the national language of independent India). In many ways, the linguistic innovations in *Kanthapura* are comparable with those of Latin American authors such as José María Arguedas and Juan Rulfo, who challenged their readers with a Spanish which Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari would say contains a "high coefficient" of a minor/indigenous language. *Kanthapura* has popular Kannada phrases translated to English without changing any words. For instance the phrase, "make our stomachs burn" is used instead of "heartache" or "heartburn." There are also numerous South Indian rural expressions in the novel, for example, Subba Chetty calls to his bulls "Ho" and "H'e-H'e" (1) or when Suranna and Rangappa call Bhatta every morning before his house: "H'e Bhattar'e, are you up? Time to go to the river, h'e !" (23), or when Lakkamma uses the same expression when she sees a snake: "H'e, H'e, H'e, a snake!, a huge snake! A cobra!" (47). Yet another case of typical south Indian expression is used when Ramayya sees the cobra while passing through jungle and he cries "Ayyo ... Ayyoo" (49). Then, there are certain culture specific phrases translated to English, intelligible to a foreign reader and also to an Indian not from the south of India. For instance, the expression "before the cock has time to crow three times," which in Kannada means that the action was done speedily or the phrase "let them set fire to their dhoti and sari and die" (4) meaning that let them destroy themselves demands local knowledge. Sometimes there are Sanskrit and Kannada expressions and words not translated in the novel. The untranslated words have a functional value in postcolonial literature (see, e.g., Brahms): they signify certain cultural experiences or objects or rituals which can never be reproduced accurately in a foreign language and this is the case of India where regional languages can be as foreign to Indians as French could be to a Russian. Thus, words like *thothi*, *maya*, *vada*, *jamadar*, *sahib*, *charka*, *sravan*, *bhajans*, *thirtham*, *lathi*, *prayaschitta*, *dasarahavu*, *thoo!thoo!thoo!*, *mandap*, *dharma sastras*, *vedanta*, *sutras*, *gaas*, assist in domestication of English by drawing it closer to the new cultural environment while it excludes other Indians or Indian languages from the discourse.

Rao is not dissociating English at just the lexical and syntactical level: he is creating a whole new language for a community. By clothing the language with myths, local beliefs, religious rituals, social practices, a cultural outlook, and superstitions, Rao advances in "foreignizing" English. Thus, we are told in the novel that the plantation workers would not have allopathic medicines but would hang "a three piece bit and a little rice and an areca nut" (52) on the roof to get rid of fever. Superstitions like "why, my right eye winks, we shall have a grand harvest" (110) or certain community specific phrases like "she will come home in a few week's time" (22), a reference to a young girl about to have puberty or even bidding farewell: "and they get a coconut and betel-leaf goodbye" are new to English, as well as other north Indian languages. Also, Rao sometimes uses a corresponding Kannada proverb in lieu of an English proverb or an idiom when the English one could have conveyed adequately the meaning. For instance, the proverb, "crow-and-sparrow story" (15) is used instead of "cock and sparrow story" or "every squirrel has his day" in place of "every dog has his day" (77). In the first case the "crow and sparrow" story is famous parable in India. Without any changes Rao has been able to convey his thought to both audiences, English and Kannada. In the second case, however, a squirrel has been used as a substitute for a dog, which is a stretch for anyone who does not speak Kannada.

The linguistic innovations in the novel are ample and could be argued to have been a result of Rao's European connections: Rao wrote the novel in France and writes in his Foreword that "we cannot write only as Indians" (vii). Rao says about himself that "a south Indian Brahmin, nineteen, spoon-fed

on English, with just enough Sanskrit to know I knew so little, with an indiscreet education in Kannada, my mother tongue, the French literary scene overpowering me. If I wanted to write, the problem was, what should be the appropriate language of expression, and what my structural model" ("Entering the Literary" 537-8). In other words, a man educated in four languages tries to give expression to his thoughts in his own idiom. Just as the language in Joyce's textual world is fluid, free of syntactical prisons, and often interspersed with many other languages of the world, Rao's text demands constant active participation from readers in understanding polyglottism, heteroglossia, and neologisms captured in the text. Neologism, heteroglossia, polyglottism, and word play, however, can also be "annoying" to some writers or readers.

I began my discussion about Joyce's journey in India by referring to a humorous scene from a faculty meeting at a university in India, where a junior colleague is ready to kill his head of the department for not including Joyce in the curriculum. The fictional murderous impulse continues in Latin America, while this time it is not for including Joyce in the syllabus but to kill him and his encyclopedic readers. Dr. Yu Tsun, a Chinese professor who teaches English in England kills Dr. Albert in Borges's "The Garden of Forking Paths" for the conveying to the Germans the name of the city that was to be attacked. But before being shot by Dr. Yu Tsun, Stephen Albert reveals to him that he has finally solved the labyrinth that Ts'ui Pên created in his unfinished novel. Interestingly, on his way to Albert's house, Tsun was thinking about the genius of Ts'ui Pên's artistry in creating an intricate novel, where all men had lost their way. We cannot overlook at Borges's satire on Ts'ui Pên and Joyce's common intention in keeping readers astray from arriving at any conclusive interpretation. Further, the first name of Dr. Albert is the first name of Dedalus in *Portrait* and *Ulysses* and we can assume that Borges was mocking Stephen Deadlus, whom Leopold Bloom imagined of becoming an inspiring professor in *Ulysses*.

Borges's literary relationship with Joyce is to a great extent an example of what I term the "Bloomidian complex," where a young author (generally the son) harbors the intentions of killing his admired author (generally the father) in order to replace him. A lover of short fiction, who declared the death of the novel, Borges was never able to reconcile his love-hate relationship with Joyce (see Salgado, *From Modernism* 33-47). In fact, the death of Funes in "Funes the Memorious" is a strong statement by Borges on the death of an ideal reader of Ulysean-like novels, who must have an encyclopedic memory to understand a meta-text like *Ulysses* or *Wake*. In fact, as pointed out by César Augusto Salgado in his "Barroco Joyce: Jorge Luis Borges's and José Lezama Lims's Antagonistic Readings," Borges pictures *Ulysses* as the last phase in the dissolution of the genre: "Isn't *Ulysses* — with its charts, itineraries, and precisions — the splendid death rattle of an entire genre?" (65). However, Borges was not always anti-Joycean with regard to aesthetics (see, e.g., Novillo-Corvalán). While writing on *Ulysses* in his "El Ulises de Joyce" (1925), the twenty-six years old Borges had proudly declared: "I am the first traveler from the Hispanic world to set foot upon the shores of *Ulysses* ... I will speak of it with the license my admiration lends me and the murky intensity of those ancient explorers who described lands new to their nomadic amazement and whose stories about the Amazons and the city of the Caesars combined truth and fantasy" ("Joyce's Ulysses" 12) ("Soy el primer aventurero hispánico que ha arribado al libro de Joyce ... Hablaré de él con la licencia que mi admiración me confiere y con la vaga intensidad que hubo en los viajadores antiguos, el describir la tierra que era nueva frente a su asombro errante y en cuyos relatos se aunaron lo fabuloso y lo verídico, el decurso del Amazonas y la Ciudad de los Césares" (3).

Although by using the marine metaphor Borges was able to attach his name permanently to *Ulysses* in Latin America, even when he was not the first one to write on it, it was Antonio Marichalar who had first published an article on *Ulysses* in 1924 in *Revista de Occidente* (see Pérez Simón 122). But his initial enthusiasm was short lived and Borges started criticizing neologisms, word-play, and the high order of signification and language game in Joyce's works. Later, in his "Course in English Literature" Borges described *Ulysses* as a frustrated attempt to "replace its lack of unity for a system of laborious and useless symmetries" (Pérez Simón 126). A similar condemnation is repeated in an interview that Borges gave to Richard Burgin, published in *Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges* (1969), where he retorts: "Well, by the time it is read through, you know thousands and thousands of circumstances about the characters, but you don't know them ... you know all the book they read...but you don't really know them. It's as if Joyce had gone over them with a microscope or a magnifying



glass" (Burgin 36). But why did Borges become disgruntled with Joyce's novels? Did Joyce's ability to twist and invent language seem a monstrous talent to Borges that he secretly wished for? Or, was Borges uncomfortable with Joyce's treatment of sexuality and other tabooed subjects in his novel. Interestingly, Borges defends censorship while mentioning Joyce:

I know that everyone opposes the idea of censorship of literary works: in my case, I believe the censorship can be justified, when executed with probity and not used to conceal persecutions of personal, racial, or political nature ... A skillful writer is able to say without infringing good manners and conventions of his time ... It will be said that one thing is Joaquín Belda's pornography (which I do not remember having read) and another, James Joyce's occasional scatology, whose historic and aesthetic values nobody can deny. But the dangers of literature are in direct proportion with the talent of its authors. To affirm that nobody has the right to modify Joyce's works, and that every modification or suppression is a sacrilegious mutation, is a mere argument of authority ... As for me, I suspect that all work is a draft and that modifications, even made by a magistrate, may be beneficial (Borges qtd. in Pérez Simón 130-31).

Andrés Pérez Simón interprets Borges's dislike of *Ulysses* as personal. In fact, in the prologue to his book, *The Conspirators*, Borges mentions, a few months before his death that "theories can be admirable encouragements ... but at the same time can engender monsters or museum pieces ... We just have to remember James Joyce's interior monologue" (32-3). Despite Borges's antagonism with Joycean aesthetics Gerald Martin argues that a number of writers in twentieth-century Latin America saw in Joyce a potential to narrate the colonial and postcolonial experiences of their nations in the genre of novel. Martin considers Latin American boom and post-boom writers as practicing Joycean aesthetics in their novels, but Martin asks a relevant question: "Is 'Joyce' something that is bound to happen to each or to most cultures anyway at a given moment of technocratic-capitalist development, or did Latin America simply imitate an original model some forty years too late, when the conditions for such assimilation were finally favorable?" (140). Indeed, the works of writers like, Alejo Carpentier, Miguel Angel Asturias, and José Lezama Lima cannot be called a blind imitation of Joycean aesthetics; instead, they can be appreciated by a "new type of reader" (Salgado 80). With regard to Martin's question and my above discussion of Joyce and India, even if "Joyce" is something that is bound to happen to all literary traditions at a particular time in history, the "Joyce" of Indian writings in English will differ from the "Joyce" of writings done in other Indian languages. Further, to build upon Martin's question, what could be the point of recording several "Joyces" of/in different cultures?

In the beginning of my article I propose that even if common "linguistic contact zones" do not exist, as for instance between Latin America and South Asia, a comparative approach, especially with respect to world writers would yield beneficiary results in postcolonial discourses. David Damrosch, in "World Literature in a Postcanonical, Hypercanonical Age," writes that

So, it's said, we rely on Butler, Foucault, Said, and Spivak to provide the common basis for conversations formerly underwritten by a common fund of knowledge of Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Proust, and Joyce. But *have* these old-economy authors really dropped by the wayside? Quite the contrary: they are more discussed than ever, and they continue to be more strongly represented in survey anthologies than all but a very few of the new discoveries of recent decades. Like the Lexus, the high-end author his (much more rarely, her) market share by adding value from the postcanonical trends: the James Joyce who used to be a central figure in the study of European modernism now inspires ambitious collection of articles with titles like *Semicolonial Joyce* and *Transnational Joyce*. Undeniably, comparatists today are giving more and more attention to "various contestatory, subaltern or, marginal perspectives," as the Bernheimer committee hoped we would, yet these perspectives are applied as readily to the major works of the "old" cannon as to the emergent works of the postcanon. (44-5)

Damrosch's concerns remind us of the scene from Seth's novel where the exclusion of Joyce from the syllabus had inspired a "murderous impulse" and had thrown the faculty members of the university in a dilemma. In an age where literary canons are being contested from within and outside national traditions, one wonders about the benefits of reading repeatedly "established" and "iconic" writers like Joyce. Would it not be equally important to read some other authors instead of Joyce? To this Damrosch suggests to take Joyce as a central modernist figure and that scholars can work on authors that Joyce knew well, such as Ibsen, and authors that Joyce did not know such as Tagore and Higuchi Ichiyo. Certainly, such contrapuntal reading of texts can expand our ideas of aesthetics and open doors to unforeseen results in new knowledge. Moreover, such a reading would introduce us to authors who are located beyond the common "linguistic contact zones," where the Hispanic Asturias

could be read with the Bengali Bibhutibhushon Bondopadddhae or Indian English author Rao with Borges, either via Joyce or not. This would further us in going beyond the usual debates on dichotomized comparisons between authors from the "old" and the "new" counter canon of categories of colonial "self" and the "other." Such contrapuntal reading also gives us the hope of including authors in languages often ignored, thus encouraging us to go beyond Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of "minor literature" in a "major language."

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