

REVIEWS

Enrico Terrinoni *James Joyce e la fine del romanzo*

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TERRINONI'S *James Joyce e la fine del romanzo* explores Joyce's works from *Dubliners* to *Finnegans Wake* and illustrates the connections between Joyce and other authors who are associated with him. He begins his work by explaining his choice of its intentionally ambiguous title and plays with the Italian word 'fine' in true Joycean fashion. 'Fine del romanzo' has a double meaning, easily understandable in English because of the perfect equivalent, 'end', meaning either a point which marks the limit of something or the purpose of something.

Starting with a reference to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, considered by many the first novel in the history of English literature (and whose protagonist was inspired by the Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk, who was rescued, on 2 February 1709 after spending several years as a castaway on a tropical island), Terrinoni underlines how ironic and also how tragic it is that, on the same day 213 years later, *Ulysses*, a work which marked the end of the novel genre, saw the light in Paris. Despite this death blow, the novel would soon rise again, like a phoenix from its ashes, and this explains the title of the introduction 'Where the novel begins ...'

The book is divided into six chapters. Each outlines a work by Joyce and/or refers to other authors linked in some way to him, starting with Samuel Beckett. In 'Doubling the capital of the romance: *Dubliners* e Beckett', Terrinoni suggests that *Dubliners* could be considered a novel in the manner of *Ulysses*. The stories in *Dubliners* are interrelated in several ways and they may be seen as a novel comprised of episodes, like *Ulysses*, where the episodes are connected though presented with very different strategies and techniques. In this chapter, Terrinoni introduces the concept of 'escape', also intended as escape from the language of the oppressor, and draws a parallel between *Dubliners* and Beckett's *More Pricks than Kicks*, stressing one aspect in particular which connects the two authors: the masterful use of words. For Beckett one of the functions of language is to set a boundary between those who know how to use language resources successfully and those who do not.

In the second chapter, 'Il Modernismo tra oralità, storytelling e isolamento', Terrinoni employs certain keywords – orality, storytelling and isolation – to refer to other authors associated with Joyce, starting with Brendan Behan, who wrote autobiographies with a flair for pastiche and melodrama and also 'oral' books in the sense that he recorded them. This orality is easily visible, or, rather,

audible, in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. Orality is often linked to the short story but, here, Terrinoni also refers to one of the most famous of modernist novels, *The Good Soldier*, by the English author Ford Madox Ford. The disjointed sentences and digressions of the prolix narrator recall Joyce. The last part of the chapter is dedicated to D. H. Lawrence and isolation as a tool for communicating which, Terrinoni claims, is typical of Modernism and linked to the concepts of island, movement, travel and segregation.

In the chapter on *Ulysses*, Terrinoni compellingly recounts the episodes of the novel, outlining characters, stories, myths and styles, concluding that *Ulysses* seems to go nowhere. It is a journey without a destination whose only end is to exist. The fourth chapter deals with the relationship between Joyce, Flann O'Brien and B. S. Johnson, with O'Brien creating a pastiche of the Joycean corpus in *At Swim-Two-Birds* and Johnson also taking up Joyce's baton, but doing so via Beckett.

Terrinoni opens his next chapter by telling an anecdote. After the publication of *Finnegans Wake* in 1939, *Time* published a cover picture of Joyce subtitled 'James Joyce. He wrote Hawthorne's dreambook'. In his notes, Hawthorne records that he wanted to write an unconventional book about a real dream with all its inconsistencies and discrepancies and weird transformations. *Time's* caption was intended to suggest that Joyce was not the first to entertain the idea of writing a dream book. Going against the idea that *Finnegans Wake* should not be translated, Terrinoni, once again elegantly plays with language, writing:

Il Wake è infatti, secondo opinione confusa di molti, anche un libro che non va tradotto. Forse perché andrà 'tradetto'? È così che una traduzione diviene 'tra-dizione', la sola recitatività che può infondergli vita.

The wordplays 'tradetto' and 'tra-dizione' have no equivalent in English. 'Tradetto', which is a non-existent Italian past participle, is the blending of 'trans' and 'told', while 'tra-dizione' could be translated as 'trans-diction'.

Terrinoni then provides us with a captivating interpretation of *Finnegans Wake's* text/texture in a section dedicated to language. He underlines that Joyce continuously tried to escape the prison-house of the language imposed on him and reflects on the Italian word for 'translation' which can also mean to transfer a detainee from one prison to another, suggesting that we all live imprisoned in our linguistic worlds.

Terrinoni ends as he started, playing with the word 'end'. Joyce began his career writing in a language that was not his and ended it writing in a language that was not ours and he did so to free us from the chains of all our ends. Terrinoni aptly invokes the end of 'The Dead' in his conclusion:

His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.

Linda Barone