New Trends and Methodology in Intertextuality: On Joyce and Flaubert

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The latest volume of the journal *Comparative Critical Studies* has been especially devoted to what the guest editors, Ben Hutchinson and Shane Weller, call in the introduction ‘The Archive Time.’ Indeed, academic research tends to pay more attention to genetic material at the present time. Allusions to manuscripts and letters by renowned authors have been recurrent in renewing studies in the past few decades. Yet genetic criticism is not a new trend; it has been a field of study since the late 1960s. Also, the intertextual theory emerges in the same decade. Surprisingly, the most recent comparative studies on Joyce and Flaubert date back from the same period: Hugh Kenner’s *Flaubert, Joyce, and Beckett: The Stoic Comedians* (1964), and Richard Cross’s *Flaubert and Joyce: The Rites of Fiction* (1971).

The temporal coincidence of these three factors – the emergence of genetic studies, the postulation of the intertextual theory, and the publication of
the latest works that deal with the relation between Joyce and Flaubert –, may be the reason for a lack of convergence and parallel developments as fields of study. A revision of the Joyce-Flaubert relation seems therefore convenient at this time. After the recent nuances within the concept of intertextuality, one can look back, take a bird’s-eye view of both authors’ relation, and make use of the huge amount of genetic material that is currently available to provide additional evidence.

Significant contributions to Joycean studies can be reached when the methodology of a study combines renewing perspectives. This is exactly the case with Scarlett Baron’s *Strandentwining Cable: Joyce, Flaubert, and Intertextuality*. By applying genetic criticism to the intertextual study of Joyce and Flaubert, Scarlett Baron has provided an innovative turn that can help scholars interested in comparative literature. The result is a handbook that will definitely become a reference work because of the renewing interdisciplinary methodology applied, and the innovative and unquestionable evidence provided in the intertextuality between both authors’ works.

The introduction presents an account of the evolution of intertextual theory. Like Gérard Genette and Michael Riffaterre, Baron understands intertextuality as a paradigm which nowadays involves authorial intention. She also clarifies that the field of intertextuality has been frequently confused in the past – even recently, in the last decade – with some of its components, such as quotations, allusions, and influence in particular.

In the introduction Baron makes the reader aware of the scope of her work and the expectations one should have. Despite the numerous parallels and intertextual evidence provided, her study remains realist and she never claims that Flaubert is the only valid source of inspiration for Joyce. Baron also qualifies her analyses and statements by adding differences and exceptions in both authors’ works. The analysed correspondences between both authors are not forced either. In fact, in most occasions, the intertextual connections and
coincidences presented are extraordinary. The section on plagiarism is thus suitable in her research. However, one must realise that, unlike the rest of the book, Baron does not draw intertextual parallels between Flaubert and Joyce in this part, but rather focuses on two of their works to discern both authors’ view of this practice: *Bouvard et Pécuchet* and *Finnegans Wake*. These two works are major examples of both authors’ application of intertextuality. According to Baron, Flaubert and Joyce were even conscious of their readers’ possible reactions once ‘the full extent of their intertextuality was understood’ (273). Yet Joyce’s ‘appropriating process’ was apparently more playful than Flaubert’s.

Baron provides evidence of a broad range of intertextual correspondences between the works by Flaubert and Joyce, which cover different subjects. Evidently, some readers may think that the analogies and contrasts between Flaubert and Joyce are crystal clear when the passages analysed focus on linguistic echoes. However, the reader must appreciate and bear in mind the huge amount of work that is behind. Baron provides emendations of inadequate published translations, as well as her own translations of passages that had not been translated until now. The reader can also observe Baron’s familiarity with both authors’ oeuvre in English and in French respectively. The *finesse* of her translations together with her attention to detail in the sections in which she contrasts passages in different languages are extremely valuable for the reader.

The analysis of other aspects is much more complex than the linguistic echoes, and it requires a deployment of hermeneutical skills. Baron convincingly argues that the connections between Flaubert and Joyce are sometimes less visible on the surface. Such is the case when she contrasts narrative techniques. Baron compares both authors’ intra- and intertextual systems of writing on the different stages of the creative process, such as their reading habits, the way they took notes, and how they made use of quotations. At the end, one of Baron’s conclusions is extremely revealing: ‘The Uncle
Charles Principle is a direct successor to Flaubert’s *style indirect libre*’ (265). In effect, Baron’s discovery implies that one of Joyce’s most discussed narrative techniques would not be as original and revolutionary as it seemed when Hugh Kenner stated it in *Joyce’s Voices* (1978).

Although it is not strictly a book on genetic criticism, genetic critics will definitely be interested in most parts of Baron’s work. One of Baron’s many merits in her book is her innovative methodology: she makes use of the huge amount of genetic material discovered since the publication of the last comparative studies that dealt with Joyce and Flaubert in order to deal with the intertextual relation between the two authors. Baron’s analysis of genetic material does not only include manuscripts and letters, but also both authors’ personal libraries, and the books they consulted in public libraries. She provides bibliographic evidence of Joyce’s great interest in Flaubert by providing an account of the works Joyce read. One of the sections in which Baron applies the study of genetic material to intertextual analysis can be found in the first chapter, in which she refers to the handwritten draft of *Stephen Hero* to draw attention to Flaubert’s use of cinematographic cuts and simultaneous narrative, also discernible in Joyce’s epiphanies. Again, in chapter 5 she makes use of manuscripts when she connects the ‘Circe’ notesheets with Flaubert’s *La Tentation de saint Antoine*. Her final archaeological investigation is found in the first section of the final chapter, when she examines a number of pages of *Finnegans Wake* notebook VI.B.8 to deal with Joyce and Flaubert in terms of paternity and genealogy.

The amount of correspondences between both authors’ oeuvre is remarkable and they involve technique, structure, characterisation, plot, theme, and linguistic echoes. In terms of plot, one of the most significant correspondences can be found between *Madame Bovary* and *Ulysses* due to the complex treatment of adultery and sympathy. Baron believes that Joyce’s focus of interest on the theme of cuckoldry was inspired by Flaubert’s work.
Therefore she includes an illustration of a manuscript with Joyce’s comments about *Madame Bovary*, in which the Irish author emphasises his concern for this issue. Baron’s innovative methodology is visible in these passages in which she supplies genetic material to support her opinion. She explains that, although Joyce’s representation of adultery yielded ‘puzzling results in *Exiles,*’ it ‘was put to masterful use in *Ulysses*’ (109). One can observe how the existing intertextual correspondences in the plots of *Madame Bovary* and *Ulysses* produce intertextual connections in terms of characterisation as well, because an additional interesting detail in Baron’s intertextual analysis can be found in the figure of the sympathetic cuckold. In Flaubert’s work, Charles is the framework of the story of his wife: the novel opens and closes with Emma’s husband. Such an account makes the reader closer to Charles. Similarly, the focus on Bloom in *Ulysses* plays an essential role in his relationship with the reader. Bloom’s portrait is accordingly influenced by the arrangement of the story and by the frequency of passages with his interior monologue. It is also significant how Baron proves that Bloom benefits from the reader’s sympathy indirectly, because of ‘Joyce’s denial of interior monologue to the fancyman in *Ulysses*, Blazes Boylan’ (128), a character who becomes ‘a mere montage of adulterous code,’ and, is then, ‘in this sense at least, no rival for Bloom’ (129).

The fifth chapter draws parallels between *La Tentation de saint Antoine* and *Ulysses*. In terms of technique, both texts are characterised by what Baron calls ‘faux theatricality’ (150), by transformation, and by Flaubert’s *style indirect libre*. The structural analogies are noteworthy, and, in fact, most readers will agree with Baron’s remark when she points out that both *La Tentation* and ‘Circe’ are identical and take shape from a long series of hallucinations. Baron also identifies equivalences in characterisation, mainly between the oriental apparition of Queen of Sheba and three characters from ‘Circe’: Molly, Bloom, and Rudy. However, Joyce’s works contain some more characters that bear resemblance to Flaubert’s, and the most outstanding examples are discussed
extensively in the next two sections. First, she analyses the satiric caricatures of both ‘the citizen’ in ‘Cyclops’ and ‘le Citoyen’ in L’Education sentimentale. Baron presents the coincidental mocking characterisation of both by means of a comparable nationalistic discourse with chauvinistic utterances, vehement tones, and grammatical simplicity. Baron also focuses on an additional intertextual correspondence in characterisation: the couple formed by Stephen and Bloom in the ‘Nostos’ is connected to the two clerks in Bouvard et Pécuchet. She unveils that characterisation parallels between both works go together with correspondences in plot motifs. Accordingly, the most characteristic thematic overtones are produced by linguistic echoes, and the coincidence in the fascination toward the void is one of the examples provided. Baron goes a step beyond and extends her comparison of ‘The Homecoming’ and Bouvard et Pécuchet to the respective authors’ purpose, and she points out that ‘[w]hereas Flaubert wrote to punish’ […] ‘Joyce’s fictional assessment of human foibles, linguistic and otherwise, is suffused with a more neutral look’ (215). She believes that Joyce revisits Flaubertian themes in order to provide a less severe statement. In a way, one can understand that both authors have a parallel vision of certain topics, and one can observe how Joyce questions his master’s earnest opinions and judgments, not only regarding the common topics of Bouvard et Pécuchet and the last episodes of Ulysses, such as encyclopaedic knowledge, but also, as said above, in relation to plagiarism.

An additional intertextual connection between both authors can be found in the ‘epiphanic endings’ found in Trois Contes and Dubliners. Both works share the same effect that Baron calls ‘frozen permanence’ (70). These epiphanies are related to other excellent passages in which Baron, within the framework of the intertextual analysis, focuses on interdisciplinary studies and on cinematography in particular, such as the section ‘Cinematographic Cuts and Structural Patterns’ within the chapter on early writing, and ‘Blurring the Boundaries’ within the one on Dubliners. Photography plays an important role
in the latter, because, as Baron points out, there are sketches in which the effects are ‘neither photographic nor cinematographic – being too static for the cinema [...], too dynamic for photography’ (76). The reader will find many additional sections related to other disciplines. For instance, the analyses devoted to authorship and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* include thorough references to religion, philosophy – Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas –, and aesthetics. Baron also alludes to science when she compares Pound’s and Joyce’s conceptions on literary evolution to ‘the survival of the fittest,’ and to Darwin’s ‘inextricable web of affinities’ respectively (144).

*Strandentwining Cable: Joyce, Flaubert, and Intertextuality* is not only an intertextual study on Joyce and Flaubert. It is a book that teaches scholars how to carry out a research on comparative literature. Many academics will benefit from the renewing methodological approach in which genetic material is applied to a specific field of study, such as intertextuality. After reading the book, one agrees with Baron when she points out that a comparative study on the relation between these two masters of prose is valuable, in order to understand ‘what excellent prose, an excellent novel, or outstanding literature might be’ (3). However, the reader will also observe how Scarlett Baron’s work pays attention to detail and nuances, providing not only convergences, but also divergences between both authors. *Strandentwining Cable* clarifies what Ezra Pound meant when he stated that Joyce ‘does’ Flaubert in English, and what Joyce meant when he wrote ‘G.F. can rest having made me.’ It is, in a way, a work of alchemy: a handbook to dejoyce Flaubert and to deflaubert Joyce.