

JOYCE STUDIES IN ITALY

20

**JAMES JOYCE
THE JOYS OF EXILE**

*Edited by
Franca Ruggieri*

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FOREWORD

JOYCE'S EXILES AND THE JOYS OF EXILE

At first glance the title, *Joyce's Exiles and the Joys of Exile*, might simply seem a pun on words with clear oxymoronic and ironic overtones. But, apart from the easy joke, the phrase indeed characterizes the voluntary exile of James Joyce, the perfect representative of voluntary intellectual exile. The man who himself gives voice to the need for the philosophical concept of *coincidentia oppositorum*, both in his life and in the tormented success of his work that was mainly produced after he had left his Irish homeland.

In fact, exile represents what is perhaps the broadest instance of action combined with memory in the western world, comprising all levels of experience, running through all cultures, literatures, traditions, metamorphoses. Over the centuries it is the painful, varied experience of exile that links Homer's Ulysses, *Exodus* and the biblical wandering Jew, the great religious, political and ethnic upheavals of history with people escaping poverty, famine or danger, and the most recent massive flow of unknown millions from East to West, from South to North, for whom, we might add, and unlike for James Joyce, not many "joys" are reserved.

In *Minima Moralia*, Theodor Adorno, himself an exile fleeing Hitler's Germany, observed that exile was a condition of dislocation and maladjustment. This could be resolved by taking a distanced critical

stance that might lead the intellectual towards self-expression perhaps through literature or critical writing. However, he also added that this was something of an illusion as there can be no release in any writing that is divorced from the possibility of shared life; a writer is not allowed to live only in his writing.

On the other hand, Edward Said, an exile in the United States from his own Arab-Palestinian world, deals with both real and metaphorical exile in his two essays: *Reflections on Exile* (1984) and *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994), and explicitly states that in both contexts the intellectual is encouraged to see writing as his/her only home and fatherland.

In the case of Joyce, the experience of a real, voluntary exile – from his home, religion and nation – began at the early age of 22. It was a choice undertaken freely, a coherent, pervasive, problematic choice that at times would be *endured*, and at times *enjoyed* for the rest of his life. At the same time Joyce's actual exile was also a psychological metaphor for that perpetual state of exile that he, the "invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent" artist, narcissistically, eternally "paring his fingernails", had been fashioning since the early writing of "The Day of the Rabblement" in 1901.

In 1968, nine years after Ellmann's *James Joyce* (1959), Helen Cixous, an Algerian exile, and the daughter of a mother, who, in turn, was a German Jewish exile, published *The Exile of James Joyce*. Longer than *Ulysses* itself, a few years after its publication it was acclaimed by Julian Moynahan in *New York Times* (11th February 1973) as the most distinguished and prestigious critical writing on Joyce "that we have or are ever likely to get", "a masterpiece of modern criticism". Indeed, the book is a seminal record of Joyce's journey into exile from the earliest *Epiphanies* through to the 1904 *A Portrait of the Artist, Stephen Hero, Dubliners, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Exiles, Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. It was Cixous's opinion that through exile Joyce took his departure from Dublin into "the world of the book", "the limitless spaces of art, and that his journey entailed the full recreation of self and world in and through written language."

However, as is well known, Italo Svevo, himself an exile in Trieste, had stressed the importance of the project of exile in James Joyce's art as early as 1927. Joyce's choice of writing from this distance meant a new, different centrality for his hated/beloved Dublin, and helped transform the small capital of Ireland into a universal city.

This fundamental feature of Joyce's writing, the meeting of Irish/particular/local/provincial "scrupulous meanness" with a dimension that was European/universal/cosmopolitan/encyclopedic/all-embracing, is often found at the core of Joycean writing, as well as of Joycean criticism. And this is also recorded on the memorial plaque placed by the Comune di Roma, on the centenary of Joyce's birth (2nd February 1982), on the house in via Frattina, 52. It reads, in Giorgio Melchiori's words, "In this house in Rome, where he lived from August to December 1906, James Joyce, a voluntary exile evoked the story of Ulysses, making of his Dublin our universe".

However, any general reader of Joyce's biographies or essays on Joyce that link him and aspects of his work to various European towns – where he spent years, months, perhaps days in some cases, either actually or in his imagination – can only agree that it is a "truth universally acknowledged" that Joyce's exile was a choice that was both bitter and passionate, complex and impulsive. It enabled him to achieve the joys of true art: James Joyce is, at one and the same time, the Joyce and the Joys of exile, since exile, in all its multifarious aspects is the basic Joycean theme, consistently underpinning his writings.

A multifaceted theme in itself, exile is also a narrative strategy as well as a means of comparing the experiences of different writers: all strands that come together in the writings of Joyce, from *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to *Exiles*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

The papers collected in this book lead us to reflect on some of the many possible ways of considering the various dimensions and forms that the two exiles, both real and metaphorical, assumed in the life and the work of Joyce. From the notion of a "canon in exile" as the key to "present and problematize the flow of modernization in 20th century Serbian literature from the perspective of the creative reception of

James Joyce's works" to the reconstruction of "the public image of Joyce as a self-exiled genius and expatriate writer" shaped by French literary journals and international little magazines based in 1920s Paris; from an intense, allusive analysis inspired by the interplay of a witty mutation of the theme/word "exile" into "exisle" and the "angst of return" to an investigation exploring exilic identity through the use of narrative fetishism in *Finnegans Wake*. Other topics explored range from a stimulating new reflection on the women in *Exiles* to an original, thorough reading of *Giacomo Joyce* as a sample of "style in exile" that can be linked to William Hogarth's theories on the line of beauty and the serpentine line. An in-depth discussion of humour, music and the inter-relationship between two forms of exile in *Finnegans Wake* is followed by an article offering a fresh substantial view of "Cyclops" as a hologram of exile relating to the "Red Summer" and lynching culture in post-World War I America. Exile is further explored in terms of "lexile" in an undeniably seminal and enjoyable article, while another paper introduces an evocative parallel, in terms of exile and music – though by no means limited to that –, between Joyce and Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. And finally there is a rewarding journey into Joyce's languages as metaphors of exile, followed by a reinterpretation of "Oxen of the Sun", where the phrase "silence and cunning" leads to postcreation and exile.

In conclusion, as the list of contents shows, volume 20 of *Joyce Studies in Italy* follows a well-established tradition dating back to 1986, when its very first issue, *Joyce in Rome*, was published. As ever, the aim has been to publish essays by young researchers alongside papers by well-established scholars. And once again, the thanks of the editorial board go to Peter Douglas for his unfailing editorial support.