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20

**JAMES JOYCE
THE JOYS OF EXILE**

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Franca Ruggieri*

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STYLE IN EXILE. THE EXILE OF STYLE.
GIACOMO JOYCE

“Beauty: it curves, curves are beauty. Shapely goddesses, Venus, Juno: curves the world admires.” (U 8:920)

Fifty years ago, on 1st January 1968, *Giacomo Joyce* was published by Richard Ellmann for the first time as a text. After fifty years, the amount and the quality of scrutiny generated by this editorial event is unparalleled. Those 2,500 words (about 50 narrative blocks of very different lengths – the sum total of the text of *GJ*) have elicited a flood of criticism and images¹, arriving in waves, successively centring on biographical details, enquiries into *genres*, or intra-textuality. No doubt a success of sorts, considering the fact that Joyce *did not* want to publish or *thought better not* to publish the text during his lifetime. However, the puzzling nature of the text and of its publishing history continues to provoke critical reaction².

¹ *GJ* is, to my knowledge, the text in the Joycean canon that has triggered the greatest number of interpretations on the part of graphic designers’.

² Every critical essay devoted to *GJ* has managed to address its rich secondary bibliography; indeed, this is what I try to do in my *Fogli triestini*, but of course the output has not stopped in the meantime. See Guerra 2007: 11-27.

The “exile” of the title is of course here represented by Trieste: the city comes after Dublin at the close of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (“Dublin 1904 – Trieste 1914”). It is also the first city in the triad “Trieste – Zurich – Paris 1914-1921” at the close of *Ulysses*, and it is the main setting of *GJ* – in fact almost a character in it. *GJ* is actually the only Joycean text jotted down in Trieste (presumably between 1912 and 1914), and the only one that is set almost exclusively there. It virtually ignores Dublin, if we exclude a fleeting mention (“Easy now, Jamesy! Did you never walk the streets of Dublin at night sobbing another name?” (*GJ* 1968:6). The first half of my title, “style in exile”, thus points to the fact that Trieste was a stepping stone in Joyce’s biography and writing, the breeding ground of much of his works, the birthplace of his children, and the city whose dialect became the family language – the *omphalos* of large part of his creative activity. Trieste appears in the text of *GJ* as a network of streets and buildings, entrapping the subject in a web that is alluring and disturbing at the same time:

“her classmate, retwisting her twisted body, purrs in boneless Viennese Italian: *Che coltura!*”¹;
 “*mia figlia ha una grandissima ammirazione per il suo maestro inglese*. The old man’s face, handsome, flushed [...] turns toward me as we walk down the hill together”⁵;
 “*A gentle creature*. At midnight, after music, all the way up the via san Michele, these words were spoken softly”; “Corpses of Jews lie about me rotting [...] Pimply Meissel brought me here”⁶;
 “*The lady goes apace, apace, apace ... Pure air on the upland road*. Trieste is waking rawly”⁸;
 “She thinks the Italian gentlemen were right to haul Ettore Albini, the critic of the *Secolo*, from the stalls” “[...] a leg-stretched web of stocking. *Si pol?*”⁹;
 “I expound Shakespeare to docile Trieste”¹⁰;
 “She stands black-robed at the telephone. [...] *Parlerò colla mamma*”; Loggione. The sodden walls [...] All night I have watched her”¹²;

“As I come out of Ralli’s house I come upon her suddenly [...] averting her black basilisk eyes” 14.

The web, the appeal and the perturbation provide a comprehensive system of imagery for an overall interpretation of the text.

With the second part of the title, “the exile of style”, I intend a reading of *GJ* as an exercise in voluntary stylistic exile, an abandonment of received notions of form and genre, starting of course with the formal layout and the materiality of the manuscript version (the only authorized version, in fact). Since these latter aspects have all received plenty of critical attention³, however, my present focus will be on how language and imagery bear on the peculiar nature of the text.

The web metaphor constitutes in my reading an isotopy underlying the otherwise disrupted balance of the 16 pages of *GJ*, the direction taken by my interpretation of the text. The lexeme *web* appears in the text on pages 1, 7 and 9, but its presence is implicated in images of convolution and entrapment that also come into view in other passages in various shapes, and more consistently in scenes of seduction of a sort (especially in connection with hair, as in *coil* 11 and 15, *knot* 11, *braided* and *pinnacled* 12).

This disseminated presence of images of intricacy has fostered a link with the eighteenth-century theorization of the “line of beauty” in Hogarth’s discussion of the serpentine line⁴. In *The Analysis of Beauty*

³ It is difficult within the remit of a single essay to provide an adequate review of the specific bibliographical references; however, mention must at least be made to the seminal chapter titled “The Jamesy Session: Giacomo Joyce” containing papers by Paola Pugliatti, Enrico Frattaroli, Giuseppe Martella and Donatella Pallotti, in Ruggieri 1999: 293-352.

⁴ I am perfectly aware of the fact that Joyce mentions Hogarth only twice and very briefly in his writings. Once in “The Centenary of Charles Dickens” the paper written for one of the exams he took in Padua when trying to enter the Italian State schools in April 1912, and published posthumous only in 1977 (Berrone 1977), where Dickens is defined a “great caricaturist in the sense that Hogarth is a great caricaturist”. The other occurrence is in a jokey passage in *Finnegans Wake* 435.07-09. But of course, the fact that Joyce does

(1753)⁵ Hogarth chooses this line as a symbol of his system, in connection with the idea of Variety. The word VARIETY⁶ is printed at the base of Hogarth's transparent prism enclosing an 'S', on the title page of *AB*, and follows a quote from *Paradise Lost*, Book IX, 516-18: "So vary'd he, and of his tortuous train/ Curl'd many a wanton wreath, in sight of Eve,/ to lure her eye". The serpentine line drawn in the logo-gram suggests a connotation of transgression, thanks to its position just below the Miltonic quote: the ideal line linking the spiralling movement of the serpent Milton describes in the act of tempting Eve and the figure in the prism, together with the fascination (the general topic of the treatise is Beauty) connected to it is set as a presiding image for the whole of Hogarth's text. In *Analysis*, together with Variety, it is the principle of Intricacy, with its burden of connotations, with its enveloping, labyrinth-like and fascinating morphology, that also emerges as a primary guiding force towards a flexible rationality, the engine underlying the whole system. Prompted by a reading of *AB* as a reflection on how an intricate ontology can match a desire where the objects are not directly faced but obliquely addressed (Bottiroli 2003: v), I see *GJ* as a *mise en scene* of the theorization of the line of beauty. The opposite of symmetry and uniformity, Variety establishes the dominance of the visual.

Discussing the baroque form in his 1956 *Tightrope Walkers*, Giorgio Melchiori underlined its fixity, which, however, also accommodates a constant drive suggesting an upward, irregularly spiralling movement. This is emphasized by the use of recurrent words, counterpoint schemes, in sinuous, curving and intricate patterns. It is *wit* in its metaphysical form that guides thought through the maze of reason – the labyrinth along whose winding paths also the whole spool of the film

not mention Hogarth is not in itself telling: as Jay Clayton reminds us when quoting a conversation he had with Roy Gottfried, Joyce was "always good at hiding the influences that mattered most to him" (Clayton 1995: 329).

⁵ William Hogarth (1997). *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753¹). From now on, all references to Hogarth's essay will be given in the text and identified by *AB* followed by page or chapter number.

⁶ "I mean here, and every where indeed, a composed variety; for variety uncomposed, and without design, is confusion and deformity." *AB* chapter II.

of Giacomo's mind unreels. *GJ* offers an instance of such an elaborate texture: the lexeme "serpent" – a Miltonic echo in our connection – appears central to the nebula of meaning attached to the self-enveloping and ensnaring thoughts relating to the female body. A close reading of the 16 pages highlights a number of serpentine images connected with female figures that finally conflate in the picture of the alluring serpent woman in *GJ* 15:

"**Cobweb** handwriting, traced long and fine with quiet disdain and resignation [...] I launch forth on an easy **wave** of tepid speech [...] Her classmate, **retwisting her twisted body**, purrs in boneless Viennese Italian [...] high heels clack hollow on the resonant stone stairs [...] the windings of the **winding turret stairs**" 1;

"Padua far beyond the sea. [...] the whores' eyes spy out for fornicators. [...] **A dark wave of sense**, again and again and again" 3;

"Papa and the girls sliding downhill, astride of a toboggan: the Grand Turk and his harem. Tightly capped and jacketed, **boots laced in deft crisscross** over the flesh-warmed tongue...." 4;

"I hold the **websoft edges** of her gown and [...] I see through the opening of the black veil her lithe body" 7;

"A skirt caught back by her sudden moving knee; a white lace edging of an underskirt lifted unduly; a leg-**stretched web of stocking**" 9;

"She walks before me along the corridor and as she walks a **dark coil of her hair slowly uncoils** and falls. **Slowly uncoiling, falling hair**" 11;

"Loggione. [...] All night I have watched her, all night I shall see her: **braided and pinnaced hair** and olive oval face and calm soft eyes. A green fillet upon her hair and about her body a green broi-dered gown [...] the hair of graves" 12;

"**Whirling wreaths** of grey vapour upon the heath. Her face, how grey and grave! [...] Her lips press softly" 14;

"She **coils** towards me along the crumpled lounge. I cannot move or speak. **Coiling** approach of starborn flesh. [...] Soft sucking lips kiss my left armpit: **a coiling kiss** on myriad veins" [...] From my right

armpit a **fang of flames** leaps out. **A starry snake** has kissed me: a **cold nightsnake**" 15 (emphasis mine).

As the above quotations testify, the appearance of the serpentine line of whatever form is usually associated with images of lust or seduction. Hair also becomes a net of entrapment as in *GJ* 12, triggering a connection with uses of the image of hair in those late seventeenth-century Italian sonnets analysed by Melchiori (Melchiori 2007: 49-56). Hair is also discussed by Hogarth in his Chapter V devoted to Intricacy (and illustrated by him in Plate II accompanied by Plate I in the edition of *AB*). Fire flame (also a central image in Hogarth, as in *AB* 35) summons up the image of the serpentine line in many paintings, and is present in *GJ* 15, where it is coupled with the snake, the most explicit figure of the tempting serpent-woman. The whole scene described in *GJ* 15 conveys a strong flavor of transgression and of that merging of the sacred and the profane that echoes the perturbed imagery of much metaphysical poetry.

There is a voyeuristic quality in *GJ* that has been highlighted in many critical analyses⁷. The eroticism of the serpentine line of beauty that characterizes the woman/women described or simply evoked in *GJ*, increases in the gaze of the observer, who describes and fragments the bodies under examination, guiding the reader's gaze along the same path. There is a massive number of instances in which the bodies or the objects relating to them suffer fragmentation in *GJ*, just as there are parts of human bodies contained in the geometrical boxes lined along the borders of Plates I and II surrounding the central images. Here is a tentative list in *GJ*:

⁷ The voyeuristic quality of the text has received critical attention since 1968. A pre-2006 bibliographic survey is in Guerra 2007. If it is true that the iconographic strength of the word *web* must be related to the coeval Art Nouveau, *GJ* also invites a further suggestion – that of linking the drafting of the manuscript with the strong attraction cinema was starting to have on Joyce's imagination and his writings in those very years (his trip to Dublin to start the Cinema Volta was the spur for leaving Trieste for a while, in addition to introducing his child Giorgio to the family back home).

1. A pale face ... A brief beat of the eyelids ... quizzing-glasses ... a brief syllable. A brief laugh. A brief beat of the eyelids. Cobweb handwriting ... The long eyelids ... in the velvet iris ... High heels ... Tapping clacking heels.
2. She never blows her nose ... The wings of her drooping hat ... her false smile ... her falsely smiling face ... shadows under the jawbones ... on the moistened brow ... within the softened pulp of the eyes.
3. the whores' eyes ... eyes ... shapely haunches ... meek supple tendonous neck ... fine-boned skull
4. tightly-capped ... jacketed ... boots laced ... flesh-warmed tongue ... skirt... round knobs of the knees ... cheeks.
5. long lewdly leering lips.
7. her arms ... nape of her neck ... gown ... her lithe body ... slender buttocks ... fingers wet and calm and moving ... a voice.
8. Great bows on her slim bronze shoes ...
9. Skirt ... sudden moving knee ... white lace ... stocking... eyes... sucking mouths.
10. pale and chill ... her thin elbow ... her flesh ... cruel eyes ... her soul...
11. dark coil of her hair ... simple and proud ... in simple pride ... stainless of blood ... *my girdle this hair, in any simple knot* ... her entrails ... on her belly ... her full dark suffering eyes ... on her tongue ... happy laughter.
12. Black-robed ... little timid laughs ... little cries ... runs of speech ... braided and pinnaced hair ... olive oval face ... calm soft eyes ... a green fillet upon her hair ... embroidered gown.
13. My words in her mind ... those quiet cold fingers ... quiet and cold and pure fingers ... her body does not smell ... a cold pale hand ... dark languor flooded eyes ...
14. Her face, how grey and grave ... dank matted hair ... her lips ... her sighing breath ... my voice ... she leans back ... odalisque-featured ... her eyes have drunk my thoughts ... darkness of her womanhood ... liquid and abundant seed.
15. Her black basilisk eyes ... her sinking shoulders ... her sluggish side-long eyes a jet of liquorish venom ... a weak voice ... voice of wisdom ... soft sucking lips ... a coiling kiss ...

16. her voice ... a woman's hat, red-flowered ... umbrella, furred.

The voyeuristic gaze literally dis-members the object of observation, and gaze and object are both superseded by irregular spots of blankness: Giacomo scatters rhymes and bits and pieces of his women's bodies, or of the places and objects connected with them, across the text, just as Hogarth does with his anatomised fragments of human bodies and things in the two Plates: in both, variety is composed in a geometrical order. The anatomy of the love object pursued in *GJ* is recapitulated in the closing page of the manuscript (*GJ* 16), where the fragments are heaped up with the help of music and words.

Art is not meant to resolve chaos into order but actually to hold disorder in tension with creativity, since both the work of art and chaos are signs of the same urge that is planted in our natures. Disorder however, is always implicated within a geometrical order, that in Hogarth is a play with frames and circles, and in *GJ* with the layout of the 16 pages, mysteriously elaborate and asserting the absolute value of the visible.

The practice of fragmentation, of course, also has to do with cubism and modernism, but my point here is to complicate this voyeuristic attitude by coupling it with the theme of the chase to which Hogarth attributed a fundamental role in his theory. The chase, in point of fact, involves eyes and bodies as well, sketching a visual path that engages the observer in a playful pursuit that is essential to art and to understanding. In Hogarth's words:

[INTRICACY, V] "Pursuing is the business of our life; and even abstracted from any other view, gives pleasure. Every arising difficulty, that for a while attends and interrupts the pursuit, gives a sort of spring to the mind, enhances the pleasure, and makes what would else be toil and labor, become sport and recreation. Wherein would consist the joys of hunting, shooting, fishing, and many other favourite diversions, without the frequent turns and difficulties, and disappointments, that are daily met with in the pursuit? [...] This love of pursuit, merely as pursuit, is implanted in our natures, and

design'd, no doubt, for necessary, and useful purposes. Animals have it evidently by instinct. The hound dislikes the game he so eagerly pursues; and even cats will risk the losing of their prey to chase it over again. [...] It is a pleasing labour of the mind to solve the most difficult problems; allegories and riddles, trifling as they are, afford the mind amusement: and with what delight does it follow the well-connected thread of a play, or novel, which ever increases as the plot thickens, and ends most pleased, when that is most distinctly unravelled?" (*AB*: 41-42)

The passage illustrates how the pleasures of movement are involved in all visual perceptions of form – in life as well as in art. If we consider *GJ* as a chapter in Joyce's aesthetic meta-discourse, just as Hogarth's *AB* is part of a project aimed at "fixing the fluctuating Ideas of Taste" – as his subtitle reads – then its function and its content appear in an interesting light. It is well known that Joyce formulated his first statements on aesthetics quite early: while still in Dublin in June 1899 in "Ecce Homo", in 1900 in "Drama and Life", and, from Paris in February-March 1903, in the so-called *Paris Notebook*, where he issued a very conscious series of statements (accompanied by date and name) to be followed by the so-called *Pola Notebook*, in November 1904. In between (20th March 1903) he had written in a letter to his mother from Paris: "My book of songs will be published in the spring of 1907. My first comedy about five years later. My Aesthetics about five years later again" (*LII*: 38) – which means his theory of Aesthetics was being planned for 1917. The war delayed the schedule, but 1919-1920 is probably the last moment when Joyce was able to go back to Trieste for a short while and work on the manuscript of *GJ*, after the war years spent in Zurich and before moving to Paris⁸.

After 1905 Joyce stopped writing on aesthetics in independent essays and began using his narrative works as vehicles for his theories

⁸ Internal evidence shows that the passage in *GJ* 3 "Twilight. Crossing the piazza. ... The fine-boned skull" was used for *U* "Oxen of the Sun", while *GJ* 15 evidences different handwriting in the last paragraph.

when not as actual benchmarks to test them out on: the subsequent drafts leading to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* are a good case in point. Building on research carried out by Franca Ruggieri (Ruggieri, 1999: 177-193), Joyce's early aesthetic writings can be examined in connection with the impact the myth of the hunter Actaeon had on him, as he "received" it through the works of Giordano Bruno and Francis Bacon. Giordano Bruno repeatedly appears in Joyce's preoccupation with aesthetics, at least from 1901, when he famously opened "The Day of the Rabblement" with the sentence: "No man, said the Nolan, can be a lover of the true or the good unless he abhors the multitude" (*OCPW* 2000: 50). Bruno's *Degli Eroici Furori* (London 1585), that Joyce had certainly read at University College, Dublin (Ellmann 1959: 61, 93), was bought by Joyce in Trieste in the new Italian Sonzogno edition of 1906. Joyce's Trieste library also included English editions of "Bacon's *De sapientia veterum* and *New Atlantis* where brief tales of Dedalus' and Actaeon's challenge to truth and art are reported" (Ruggieri, 1999: 182-83). Therefore Joyce did necessarily come to terms with both Bruno's and Bacon's verbal representation of the myth of the hunter Actaeon⁹, and of his transformation into a stag to be torn to pieces by his own dogs, a hunter turned prey (as dealt with by so much Renaissance poetry and iconography). A similar chasing movement as that portrayed in the myth and in its narratives – in whatever artistic language – repeatedly turns the epiphanic moment in *GJ* into a cinematic tension leading the eye, of both the subject and the reader, simply by its natural curiosity, to constantly vary its path in the pursuit of beauty and pleasure. *GJ* is a worksite for this empirical process of searching for beauty, pleasure and meaning. An experience shared with the narrating-I by the reader, whose slow process of reading invites the eye to lose itself in the details and to return over and over to them. A detective eye, like that required by Hogarth's "readers". In the passage quoted above, Hogarth compares the pleasures animals feel in chasing their prey to the pleasure resulting from the process through which the reader extricates

⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book III, 131-252. See the discussion in Ruggieri, 190.

himself from the thickening plot of a play or a novel. Thus, as Hogarth in his engravings/paintings invites the viewer along distinct visual paths engaging them in the chase schematized in *AB* and theorized as the only means of making art not only pleasurable, but also an instrument of knowledge, *GJ* exemplifies, or rather *actualizes* – turns into “situations” – what Joyce’s theoretical writings had already hinted at. Hunting images in point of fact had already appeared, as Franca Ruggieri has stressed, in the essay of 1904 (“A Portrait”) with a series of words and images connected with the lexical range of hunting¹⁰ and had been confirmed in 1906 in *Stephen Hero*¹¹. In *GJ* the reader is plunged directly into the same hunting activity that the subject himself carries on throughout the 16 pages. Theory has become creative text.

My hypothesis is that *GJ* – the text Joyce chose not to publish, but that was ready in a very clean manuscript – can be read as an accompanying document to both his creative and his theoretical statements. *GJ* is a metamorphic text – mutable and dynamic, the papers unnumbered, like the Sybil’s scattered leaves, the paragraphs running on irregularly with significant blank spaces pointing to a far from casual arrangement. But it is also a very ambiguous text: the opening monosyllable (*Who?*), the loose papers that invite the reader to a personal arrangement of the pages according to the desired meaning and the uncertain identity of his model(s?) all point to a reading of the text as a stylistic “workshop” carried out in the years Joyce spent in Trieste, and bound to be left on its own. Its meta-aesthetic quality emerges when we

¹⁰ “Field sports [...] are perhaps the most effective cure, but for the fantastic idealist, eluding the **grunting** booted apparition with a bound, the **mimic hunt** was no less ludicrous than unequal on a ground chosen to his disadvantage. [...] Let **the pack of enmities** come **tumbling** and **sniffing** to the **highlands** after their **game** – there was his **ground**: and he **flung** them disdain from **flashing antlers**” (“A Portrait of the Artist” 1904). Passage quoted in Ruggieri 1999: 191 (emphasis hers).

¹¹ “Field sports [...] are perhaps the most effective cure and Anglo-Saxon educators favour rather a system of hardy brutality. But for this fantastic idealist, eluding the grunting booted apparition with a bound, the mimic warfare was no less ludicrous than unequal in a ground chosen to his disadvantage. [...] Let the pack of enmities come tumbling and sniffing to my highlands after their game. There was his ground: and he flung them disdain from flashing antlers. Indeed he felt the morning in his blood” (*SH*: 35-36). Ruggieri 191-3.

read it as we read the two plates that accompany Hogarth's *AB* and as we consider that both can be appreciated independently.

Joyce's preoccupation with aesthetics dates back to his early university years: the new Italian edition of the letters and the essays clearly points to this concern (Terrinoni, 2016). The critical essays produced after a certain date focus on various topics, but the theoretical stance – the focus on aesthetics – seems to have migrated to the creative works. The divide could be probably set in the year 1904, after the so-called *Pola Notebook*. The date of course is also the beginning of Joyce's voluntary exile in Trieste. From 1904 to the publication of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* his reflections on aesthetics move from the original essay "A Portrait of the Artist" through *Stephen Hero* and *Epiphanies* to the final novel. In the meantime, *GJ* acts as the instrument of Joyce's "aesthetics in act", or as the *mise en scene* of principles to be developed in the works to come.

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