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**JOYCE'S FICTION  
AND  
THE NEW RISE  
OF  
THE NOVEL**

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by  
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*edited by  
Franca Ruggieri*

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fitting Jim like a turned out glove, a perfect fit. How do we decipher such a strange relationship, and what was Nora's part in Joyce's *symptom* as a writer (with Lacan's additional *h* to differentiate this new concept from traditional symptoms)?

All the above questions are explored by Muriel Drazien in her book – which strives both to do justice to Lacan's thought, and to demonstrate its clinical importance.

*Gabriela Alarcon*

Enrico Frattaroli, *Envoy verso : in : attraverso : da : Giacomo Joyce. Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies* n. 5-2015, suppl. 2, (Firenze: Firenze University Press – pp. 139)

Ever since its first publication in 1968, the text known as *Giacomo Joyce* has baffled critics no less than the huge novels universally considered as the most complex and cryptic works in the Joyce canon. As Paola Pugliatti reminds us in an illuminating essay, scholars have used many different labels in their attempts to pin down its manifold aspects: “prose sketches”, “visual poem”, “vignettes”, “collection of impressions and moods”, “love poem”, “sketchbook”, “interior dialogue”, “interior monologue”, “epiphanic narration.”<sup>1</sup> It is no surprise, therefore, that this multifaceted text has caught the attention of such a versatile artist as Enrico Frattaroli, independent author of theatrical, acoustic and audiovisual works, as well as the singular piece of criticism *Envoy verso : in : attraverso : da : Giacomo Joyce*.

Just as *Giacomo Joyce* is a work that crosses traditional generic boundaries, *Envoy*—as Donatella Pallotti remarks in the Postface—is at the same time an essay, an artist's memoir, the story of Frattaroli's different approaches to Joyce's text over many years and through different ar-

<sup>1</sup> P. Pugliatti, “Nookshotten: the Text Known as *Giacomo Joyce*”, in F. Ruggieri (ed.), *Classic Joyce: Papers from the XVI International James Joyce Symposium, Rome 14-20 June 1998*, Rome, Bulzoni, p. 293.

tistic media, and a commentary on his own Italian translation of the English original. The best way to refer to *Envoy*, therefore, is probably as an *excursus*, a designation which fails to identify its genre, but which undoubtedly has the undisputed merit of being proposed by the author himself. Even more interestingly, in *Envoy* Frattaroli often describes what he is writing as a “path”, or a process of progressive investigation of, and acquaintance with, Joyce’s literary text in order to achieve something different: his own response as an artist to an enigmatic piece of writing.

Frattaroli, then, briefly plays the part of the literary critic when he discusses, for instance, the particular nature of *Giacomo Joyce* as “a discrete set of micro-narrations” (“un insieme discreto di micro-narrazioni”, 63), and changes Giorgio Melchiori’s definition of it as “epiphanic narration” (“narrazione epifanica”<sup>2</sup>) into what he perceives as the more appropriate denomination of “epiphanic system” (“sistema epifanico”, 64), or flux and constellation at the same time, where the discrete set of single epiphanies is transformed into an epiphanic flow. According to Frattaroli, the writing of the different sections which make up *Giacomo Joyce* can undoubtedly be seen as epiphanic, but the piece, with its peculiar graphic layout alternating text and blank spaces of varying lengths, transcends the fleeting nature of the epiphany and moves forward in the direction of the stream of consciousness of subsequent works, thus anticipating the writing of *Ulysses*. Furthermore, in *Giacomo Joyce* the author performs for the first time what Frattaroli calls a “mise en scène of writing” (“messinscena della scrittura”, 64) and creates something unique on a visual level, which *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* will be able to produce only by means of words. By eliminating the figure of the narrator, *Giacomo Joyce*—the first authentic Joycean stream of consciousness in Frattaroli’s view—foregrounds the visual aspect of writing, or substitutes the narration of something with *that something itself*, which the reader perceives in an unmediated and immediate way.

As he states in the first section of the book, entitled “In statu quo ante”, Frattaroli’s interest in *Giacomo Joyce* was stirred by Fabio Maestri’s invitation, in the Spring of 1996, to collaborate on a musical adapta-

<sup>2</sup> G. Melchiori, *James Joyce: il mestiere dello scrittore*, Torino, Einaudi, 1994, p. 55.

tion of Joyce's text; furthermore, this must be seen in the context of an enduring passion for the literary production of the Irish author, as his theatrical works on the Ulysean stream of consciousness *Mr Bloom* (1984), *Mr Bloom/ALP* (1984) and *fluidofiume* (1988-1989) also demonstrate. The original plan was abandoned, but at the same time represented the beginning of a growing interest in the text accompanied by a thorough search for various approaches to it, for example, in the form of a study of its graphic aspects presented at the XVI International James Joyce Symposium held in Rome in June 1998,<sup>3</sup> or in the form of audiovisual works. As Frattaroli clearly specifies, however, his fascination for *Giacomo Joyce* has always been that of an artist (not of a scholar) who starts from an analysis of the materiality of the text in order to transpose it into something of a different nature. *Envoy*, therefore, must be seen in the context of its author's diverse approaches to Joyce's works and, at the same time, as an original contribution to Joyce studies, expanding the confines of the traditional critical essay. To this aim, Frattaroli starts with an analysis of both the merits and the drawbacks of various editions of *Giacomo Joyce* published to date, which he evaluates on the basis of what he considers as its distinctive extraordinary features, namely the layout, the alternation of text and blank spaces of varying proportions, the position of the single words on the page, its material appearance of loose sheets rather than a book, and ultimately its resistance to being transformed into a typewritten text. As a true artist, Frattaroli decides to work on a facsimile of the original, to give utmost importance to the visual and physical experience of approaching the text exactly as Joyce did. As readers, we are invited to share this experience with the author, who includes in *Envoy* both the photostatic copies of the handwritten pages published as an appendix to the first edition by Richard Ellmann for the Viking Press (1968), and his own Italian translation of the text.

In the second section, entitled "“Unde derivatur?”", Frattaroli explores the consequences of a possible alteration of the delicate balance between Joyce's words and the void in which they appear, represented by

<sup>3</sup> E. Frattaroli, "The Proteiform Graph Itself Is a Polyhedron of Scripture", in F. Ruggieri (ed.), *Classic Joyce: Papers from the XVI International James Joyce Symposium, Rome 14-20 June 1998*, Rome, Bulzoni, pp. 303-317.



the blank page. In doing so, he highlights once again the importance of a visual approach to *Giacomo Joyce* that should maintain the original proportions between the blocks of written text and the blank spaces, by illustrating his own typographical experiments with a typewritten version of Joyce's work in Word format. He thus shows the procedures through which he obtained a condensed version of the text ("*Giacomo Joyce condensato*") by reducing to a minimum of one line jump the blanks which separate the fifty sections, as well as an expanded version ("*Giacomo Joyce espanso*") by stretching the same blanks to the maximum, that is to say, by placing each section at the centre of one single page. Both versions, Frattaroli notes, obviously alter the text considerably. On the one hand, this seems to confirm its uniqueness and peculiarity, and on the other it shows the utter impossibility to have a typewritten equivalent of the handwritten original. In another type of manipulation, Frattaroli puts together the photostatic copies of the handwritten pages both vertically—thus obtaining a *rotulus* which he calls "*Nacheinander*", because it reproduces the temporal dimension of writing—and horizontally—thus producing a *volumen* that he names *Nebeneinander*, as it recreates our spatial perception of the words on the page. This experiment allows him to demonstrate, once again, that despite his use of a facsimile, our experience of the final product differs significantly from that of the original.

Such graphic experiments became the starting point for all of Frattaroli's other investigations or projects concerning *Giacomo Joyce*, such as the diagrams he produced in 1997 in an attempt to create a visual representation of an essentially visual text; his own interpretation of the relationship between written words and blank spaces in terms of fuzzy logic, or of artificial neural networks; or the plan (then abandoned) of a theatrical work based on Joyce's text based on the manuscript turned into images and sounds, as Frattaroli explains in the section entitled "My voice, dying in the echoes of its words". It seems particularly interesting that all these ventures, regardless of their achievements, must be seen—as the author explains—as instruments for the reading, analysis, interpretation and reimagination of the original text, or a necessary step in his own exploration of *Giacomo Joyce*, with its distinctive alternation of words and non-words. In this perspective, the manuscript becomes the matrix/source/model/structure of any other vocal, visual, musical and theatrical reelaboration of it.

In the last section of *Envoy*, “Sliding – space – ages – foliage of stars”, Frattaroli further illustrates the manifold domains and media through which the influence of *Giacomo Joyce* has made itself felt on his own imagination and career as an artist: plastic installations with audio-live interventions, such as *Mandala bianco: scrittura come perturbazione del vuoto* (2001), or his “crumpled books”, conceived as transformations of readable books into material objects which can only be observed. All of these “products” derive from his personal conception of Joyce’s text as a force field, in which the blank spaces represent the void, and writing a perturbation of it.

*Envoy*, therefore, retraces and tells the story of its author’s fascination for *Giacomo Joyce*, and at the same time self-reflexively comments on such a personal and intellectual growth. The basic idea, again, is that of the infinite reverberations of an elusive literary work on the heterogeneous production of an eclectic artist. All of this enormously enriches our experience, as both readers and spectators, of the process at the core of artistic creation (whether literary, plastic, or audio-visual): the transformation, *by a commodius vicus of recirculation*, of something into something new.

*Annalisa Federici*

James Joyce, *Best-Loved Joyce* (edited by Jamie O’Connell).  
(Dublin: The O’Brien Press – 2017, pp. 128, €12.99)  
Anthony J. Jordan, *James Joyce Unplugged*.  
(Dublin: Westport Books – 2017, pp. 204, \$9.76 kindle)

In the congestion—predicted by Joyce himself—of Joycean criticism, there are publications that are meant to make the difference and add interesting insights to the ongoing debate, while others are less ambitious, in a way, but still make Joyce’s work more accessible to new readers. Two recently published books belong to the list of such less ambitious contributions: *Best-Loved Joyce*, edited by Jamie O’Connell and *James Joyce Unplugged* by Anthony J. Jordan.