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Joyce Studies in Italy is a peer-reviewed journal aimed at collecting materials that throw light on Joyce’s work and world. It is open to essays from scholars both from Italy and abroad, and its broad intertextual approach is intended to develop a greater understanding of James Joyce, the man and the artist. The project was initiated in the early 1980s by a research team at the University of Rome, ‘La Sapienza’ led by Giorgio Melchiori. It subsequently passed to the Università Roma Tre. Originally no house style was imposed regarding the individual essays in the collection, but in recent issues a standardized style sheet has been adopted which can be found at the end of each volume.

Under the patronage of honorary members Umberto Eco and Giorgio Melchiori, the James Joyce Italian Foundation was founded in 2006 (<http://host.uniroma3.it/Associazioni/jjif>). The work of the Foundation, and the issues of the Piccola Biblioteca Joyciana series, are intended to promote and further the work undertaken by “Joyce Studies in Italy” (website: <http://joycestudiesinitaly.netsons.org/index.php/>).

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JAMES JOYCE
THE JOYS OF EXILE

Edited by
Franca Ruggieri

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BOOK REVIEWS

Joyce Garvey, *Lucia: The Girl who Danced in Shadows*.
(Create Space Independent Publishing Platform – 2017, pp. 196 Euro
€11.44)

The enigmatic figure of Lucia Joyce has never ceased to attract the attention of critics and biographers, especially those who have tried to illuminate her relationship with her father or some of his acquaintances like Samuel Beckett. However, Joyce Garvey's attempt at imagining her final years in a mental hospital is undoubtedly a singular venture. The novel *Lucia: The Girl who Danced in Shadows*, a literary fiction based on historical fact, is mainly a story of love and injustice, of the blurred line between sanity and madness, as well as of the consoling power of friendship and creativity. It reveals the endeavour of the author, herself an eclectic artist, to shed light on women who live in the shadow of great men, as well as to deal with the complex issue of genius and how this affects people closest to it.

The book gives a fictional account of the time Lucia spent in St. Andrew's Asylum in Northampton, England, from 1951 until her death in 1982, when, abandoned by her mother and brother, she tried to cope with the loneliness and despair of her condition, the restraints of mental illness, and, most of all, the loss of her father. Her confinement partly overlapped with that of the aristocratic Irishwoman Violet Gibson, an inmate of the same institution who claimed to have attempted to assassinate Benito Mussolini. It is not known whether Lucia and Violet actually had any kind of contact during their troubled years at Northampton Asylum; however, Joyce Garvey imagines their complex and bizarre relationship – made immortal by art, as Lucia works on a portrait painting of her friend – as well

as Violet's singular character and behaviour. On the other hand, Lucia's fictional portrayal seems to be in line with the traits we are familiar with through such biographical accounts as Carol Loeb Schloss's *Lucia Joyce: To Dance in the Wake*, namely her fierce rebelliousness, her passion for dancing, her aversion to her mother and brother, and her symbiotic relationship with her father, with whom she even shares a private language of their own. Although both women actually died of natural causes, the fiction has Violet ending her life by suicide, while Lucia is still alive – and dancing in shadows – when the novel ends, finally able to complete her portrait in a way not dissimilar from Virginia Woolf's Lily Briscoe. Significantly, throughout this fragmented text, the language itself manifests Lucia's mental breakdown. The voice of the protagonist as first-person narrator is interspersed with the official medical staff diagnoses (in bold) of the two women. Moreover, the narrative – which perhaps resembles more a prose-poem – closes with their brief obituaries, also given in bold type.

The experimental nature of this book, without any trace of linear plot or fully rounded characterisation, mirrors modernist techniques and thus seems to be particularly appropriate to the subject who inspired it. The prosaic, prescriptive and coercive language of confinement in the institution is constantly juxtaposed with the fluid, anarchic and memory-haunted language of Lucia, whose mind hovers between her present incarceration at Northampton, and memories of Paris or of her happy childhood spent in Trieste. On the one hand, the protagonist has to cope with the stereotypical role of the insane woman that the controlling power of the institution has attributed to her; on the other hand, it is true that Lucia only occasionally and fleetingly inhabits the quotidian, diachronic space-time continuum that the so-called “sane” people inhabit. Her narrative, therefore, cannot follow a linear, conventional plot, nor can her own character adapt to realist techniques. Even the graphic aspect of the book – with its sections titled with place names, dates or situations, and containing discrete segments of narrative separated by silently-speaking blank spaces – mirrors the fragmented consciousness and troubled experience of the fictional Lucia and her curious friend Violet. The frequent use of syntactical inversion is particularly effective in an attempt to highlight specific words that have an emotional effect on the protagonist, revealing her distractedness as well as her struggle to hold on to a sense of self, despite the shifting timeframe of memory.

The text is suffused with persistent recollections accompanied by a pervasive sense of loss and pain, along with echoing motifs and allusions. These time-shifts, according to which Lucia is physically in Northampton Asylum while her free-flowing memory takes both her and the reader back to the past, reflect her endless oscillation between a hopeful, artistic sense of wholeness on the one hand, and the diametrically opposed experience of mental and emotional disintegration on the other.

The most affecting aspect of this fictional portrayal of Lucia Joyce is undoubtedly the depiction of her relationship with her father, whom she affectionately calls “Babo”. In contrast with the prison-like institution she is presently confined to, and the figure of her controlling mother Nora, Lucia’s loving father has always defended – in fiction as he did in real life – her instinctive freedom, wildness and beguilingly lunatic transgressions. Faithful to biographical evidence, Garvey decides to portray James Joyce as constantly absorbed in his writing and little Lucia as his muse, their private language inspiring the linguistic playfulness of *Finnegans Wake*. For this reason, conceding that she is not sane in the conventional sense, the protagonist prefers to see her own lunacy as a “gift” and a sign of higher intelligence, precisely as her father convinced himself do, interpreting her bizarre behaviour in terms of genius – though a genius which was not in the least to overshadow his own. Lucia’s hallucinatory imagining of her father coming from the other world to visit her in the asylum is clearly a longing for consolation and healing provided by the presence of the only person who, she feels, ever loved her. The sad truth of his actually being dead recurs again and again in Lucia’s thoughts, especially when an inmate or medical member of staff dies and is buried in the asylum cemetery; furthermore, his apparently repeated interment makes the protagonist feel every time as if she were buried with him too, his presence being only falsely consoling and inspiring.

Apart from her fragile mental and emotional condition, the aspect of Lucia that emerges most poignantly from this fictional portrayal is the fact that she is depicted as constantly dancing, her body in movement expressing to her desperate attempt to impose a unifying pattern upon her troubled experience. In other words, the protagonist is shown to possess the creative, visionary and synthesising qualities of an artist, with which she seeks to attain control, order and emotional stability. In Joyce Garvey’s novel,

beauty and aesthetics become antidotes to unfulfilled love and the suffering of life, and perhaps there could not be a better way to do justice to the bewildering character of Lucia Joyce.

Annalisa Federici

Jolanta Wawrzycka and Serenella Zanotti (eds.), *James Joyce's Silences* (London: Bloomsbury – 2018, pp. 272, £76.50)

It is no coincidence, perhaps, that a book concerning Joyce's silences should break a prolonged scholarly silence on the subject, and thus fill magisterially an enormous critical gap. As Jolanta Wawrzycka and Serenella Zanotti – the editors of this compelling volume – note in the introduction, despite the pioneering publication of now established essays such as Hugh Kenner's "The Rhetoric of Silence" (1977)¹ and Jean-Michel Rabaté's "Silence in *Dubliners*" (1982)², no book-length study has so far been devoted to the concept of "silence" in Joyce's *oeuvre*. *James Joyce's Silences*, therefore, focuses on the textual, rhetorical and aesthetic implications of gaps and ellipses, compensating for the lack of sustained and multidimensional critical approaches to this crucial aspect of Joyce's writing, while at the same time attempting to cope with a different kind of absence, being dedicated to the memory of Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli, who conceived the original plan for the book.

The collection is divided into four parts. The first section, "The Language of Silence", deals with the various ways in which Joyce explores and questions the efficacy of language in conveying silence. Fritz Senn's essay, "Active Silences", examines silence as absence of noise as well as absence of speech, and analyses the strategies Joyce adopted – not without an inherent paradox – to articulate them in words. Senn also addresses

¹ H. Kenner, "The Rhetoric of Silence", *James Joyce Quarterly* 14.4, 1977, pp. 382-94.

² J.-M. Rabaté, "Silence in *Dubliners*", in C. McCabe (ed.), *James Joyce: New Perspectives*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982, pp. 45-72.