

UNEASY ORTHODOXY: THE JESUITS, THE *RISORGIMENTO* AND THE CONTEXTS OF JOYCE'S FIRST READINGS OF DANTE

Abstract: This article investigates the historical and cultural contexts of the literary relationship between James Joyce and Dante Alighieri, arguing that Joyce was fundamentally influenced by the poet's late nineteenth-century reputation. The article pays particular attention to the influence of the Italian *Risorgimento* and the counter-appropriation and re-Catholicising of Dante. Within the context of this wider discourse it considers the role of the Jesuit Order in Joyce's education, Joyce's Dante tuition at University College Dublin, and the editions of Dante's works which Joyce is known to have read. In doing so, the article challenges pre-conceived notions of Dante's canonicity and the nature of Joyce's relation to him, and ultimately demonstrates that Joyce received Dante as a complex, subversive and historically determined writer.

"A DANTE WITH A DIFFERENCE": RE-CONTEXTUALISING JOYCE'S READING OF DANTE

It has long been acknowledged that the influence of Dante Alighieri was central to the life and work of James Joyce.¹ From the Irish writer's earliest days whilst still a student in Dublin, a strong identification was drawn between himself and the medieval Italian poet, with Joyce's fellow students even going so far as to dub him "the Dante of Dublin, a Dante with a difference".² This joke arguably inaugurated what would go on to become not only Joyce's most important literary relationship, but also perhaps the central interaction between medieval and modernist literatures as a whole. However, whilst the connection between Joyce and Dante is widely accepted, the terms of their interaction have been relatively ill-de-

¹ The most wide-ranging consideration of the subject of Joyce's reception of Dante remains Mary T. Reynolds, *Joyce and Dante: The Shaping Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981). A more recent, limited in scope, yet much more accomplished study is Lucia Boldrini's, *Joyce, Dante and the Poetics of Literary Relations: Language and Meaning in 'Finnegans Wake'* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001).

² W. K. Magee, "The Beginnings of Joyce", *The Workshop of Daedalus: James Joyce and the Raw Materials for 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'*, ed. Robert Scholes & Richard M. Kain (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1965) 201.

fined by previous studies.³ Joycean critics have tended to see Dante as a monolith, as being overwhelmingly canonical: a safe and relatively inert monument within both Catholicism and Western Literature. Perhaps as a consequence of Dante's canonical status, and arguably bolstered by Umberto Eco's anachronistic notion of Joyce's mythical 'medieval mind' which allowed him to engage directly with the medieval poet, previous critics have been remarkably slow to investigate the historical circumstances of Joyce's reading of Dante.⁴ In the course of this essay, I will assert the importance of re-historicising Joyce's reception of Dante, and will demonstrate that by placing the encounter within its historical, spiritual and literary contexts, we discover that the Dante whom Joyce first read was not the canonical monolith of modern criticism but rather a complex, subversive and historically conditioned figure. Furthermore, we will see that Joyce's first readings of the poet were fundamentally determined by Dante's nineteenth-century reputation, and would set the course for Joyce's lifelong engagement with Dante. This attempt to recover the complexity of Joyce's view of Dante holds a substantial significance for the way in which we read Joyce's texts, encouraging us to question established and overly simplistic readings, and to discover new ways to read and enjoy Joyce.

The earliest documentary evidence for Joyce's reading of Dante comprises some twenty-eight notesheets now held at the National Library of Ireland.⁵ These notes, covering the first twenty-five cantos of *Inferno*, seem to record the reading of a schoolboy still grappling with the fundamentals of both the Italian language and of Dantean exegesis; for instance, Joyce provides (often incorrect) English glosses on words such as "pale" (which he gives wrongly as 'wings'), "cappe" ['gown'] and "cappuccio" ['hood'], as well as observing in his preparatory "Notazioni" that the proper names of God, Beatrice and Dante himself "non si pronunziano nell'inferno" ['are not spoken in Hell'].⁶ Accordingly the notesheets have been dated by Dirk van Hulle to between 1897 and 1898, placing Joyce's first substantiated contact with Dante in his final two school years at Bel-

³ A more recent example of a study which pays little attention to the contexts of Joyce's engagement is Jennifer Fraser's, *Rite of Passage in the Narratives of Dante and Joyce* (Gainesville, UP of Florida, 2002).

⁴ For Eco's influential view of Joyce's "medievalism" see his, *The Middle Ages of James Joyce: The Aesthetics of Chaosmos* (London: Hutchison Radius, 1989) 7. For an example of Joyce's supposed direct-connection to Dante see Lucia Boldrini, "Introduction: Middyevil Joyce", *Medieval Joyce*, European Joyce Studies 13, ed. Lucia Boldrini (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002) 12–17.

⁵ Dublin, National Library of Ireland, Joyce Papers 2002 MS 36,639/1, f. 1r–28v; for the only previous discussion of these notesheets see Dirk van Hulle, *Joyce & Beckett: Discovering Dante*, National Library of Ireland Joyce Studies 7 (Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 2004) 2–6, 27–29.

⁶ For Joyce's gloss on these words in *Inferno* 23 see NLI MS 36,639/1, f. 24r; for Joyce's "Notazioni" see NLI MS 36,639/1, f. 1r.

vedere College, something which had previously been firmly associated with Joyce's entrance into University College Dublin in 1899.⁷ This dating of the notesheets to the last period of Joyce's schooldays points towards an important aspect of the context of Joyce's reception of the poet: the influence of the Society of Jesus.⁸

As a middle-class, Catholic schoolboy in late nineteenth-century Dublin, Joyce first read Dante within a complex historical and cultural context; a context which was, in his case, arguably dominated by the influence of the Jesuits. Almost all of the educational institutions which Joyce attended were, to a greater or lesser extent, controlled and run by the Society. From his first, affluent school of Clongowes Wood, to his later days at Belvedere College, and finally during his years at University College, the Society of Jesus was a constant, determining influence on Joyce's intellectual development, and one on which he would later look back with apparent gratitude.⁹ Accordingly, the role the Jesuits played in the education of the young James Joyce has long been a subject of considerable and varied critical interest, and yet in studies of Joyce's reception of Dante this interest has been noticeably absent.¹⁰ At first this seems a puzzling oversight, as, whether Joyce first read Dante at school as we now suspect, or at university as was once thought, the importance of the Jesuits not only as Joyce's educators but also as the mediators of his initial contact with Dante appears self-evident. However, the apparent unwillingness of Joycean critics to engage with the issue of the Jesuits' influence on Joyce's reception of Dante is perhaps explained by the very complexity of the young Joyce's historical circumstances.

⁷ van Hulle 2004, 2. Mary Reynolds contends that Joyce first read Dante immediately upon entering University College Dublin, arguing from the evidence of a surviving 1902 immatriculation paper that Joyce may have initially been examined on the *Purgatorio*. It is from Reynolds's work that the view has arisen that Joyce's "first serious interest in Dante" was sparked at University College Dublin in 1899, and that *Stephen Hero*, an early draft of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, represents a "record" of this interest; see Reynolds 1981, 20–22.

⁸ Of the three most extensive studies of Joyce's reception of Dante, neither Boldrini nor Fraser make any reference to the Jesuits, and Reynolds barely mentions them; see Reynolds 1981, 18, 27, 54.

⁹ In a letter to Valéry Larbaud written in 1923, Joyce attributed his ability to continue to work in adverse circumstances to the "influence of *ad maiorem dei gloriam*, perhaps", referring to the Jesuit motto; see James Joyce, *Letters*, vol. 3, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking, 1966) 84. See also, Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982) 27 (all further references are marked JJ in the text).

¹⁰ The best overview of Joyce's education by the Jesuits remains Kevin Sullivan, *Joyce Among the Jesuits* (New York: Columbia UP, 1958); however, Bruce Bradley, *James Joyce's Schooldays* (New York: St. Martin's P, 1982) gives a useful (and more recent) account of Joyce's education, from a Jesuit perspective.

Mary Reynolds, in one of the only places in her influential study of Joyce and Dante in which she does directly address the Jesuitical presentation of Dante and its potential impact upon Joyce, writes that:

Joyce's Dante, however, was not the Dante of his day, who had become something of an establishment figure. On one side were Joyce's Jesuit teachers: the Church had long since adopted the *Divine Comedy* as its own instrument in defense of a narrow orthodoxy. On the other side were the serious students of the *Divine Comedy* in England (in Dublin there was no counterpart of the Oxford Dante Society), where the work of Moore and Toinbee had brought explanation a long way.¹¹

Whilst Reynolds doesn't pursue this line of her investigation any further, her statements do open up for us a sense of the complexity of Dante's late nineteenth-century portrayal, suggesting that political, religious and literary critical discourses would all have intersected in the presentation of Dante within Joyce's Jesuit-run classroom. On the one hand, Reynolds draws out the institutionalisation of Dante, both by the Roman Catholic Church and by the secular literary establishment represented by Paget Toinbee and the Dante Society of Oxford; whilst on the other she hints at an on-going discourse surrounding Dante and issues of orthodoxy.¹² As we will see, the experience of just such historical, social and literary critical discourses, was crucial to establishing the character of Joyce's lasting, lifelong engagement with Dante. However, before we can begin to understand Joyce's first reading of the poet, it will be necessary to explore something of the Jesuits' own relationship with Dante, as it is this relationship – and the problems which surrounded it – which set the terms for Joyce's initial experience of the poet.

“INDEFATIGABLE IN THEIR HOSTILITY”: DANTE AND THE JESUITS

The history of the Jesuit response to Dante is extremely long and complex, and stretches from the foundation of the Order in the sixteenth century, right up to the Italian nationalising project of the *Risorgimento* in the mid-nineteenth century and beyond, taking in issues of theology, philosophy, literary criticism and politics along the way. Indeed, as we will see, the Jesuits' relation to Dante was instrumental in crystallising the so called “neo-Ghibelline” and “neo-Guelf” schools of Dantean interpretation – the contrarily secularising and religious critical positions which competed to define the poet's reputation throughout the nineteenth, and into the twen-

¹¹ Reynolds 1981, 10f.

¹² For a brief account of the Oxford Dante Society, see J. Took, “Oxford Dante Society”, *Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. Richard Lansing (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000) 668.

tieth, century.¹³ However, whilst complicated, the Jesuit attitude to Dante is an influence which we can't ignore, if we want to understand Dante's reputation within Catholic society at the moment when Joyce encountered his work.

One of the earliest recorded intersections of the Jesuits with Dante took place in Reformation England, where Jesuits such as Robert Parsons were at the forefront of a rehabilitation project aimed at "saving" Dante from his appropriation by Protestant polemicists, a project which established the character of the on-going attempts to "re-Catholicise" Dante.¹⁴ However, by the turn of the nineteenth century, this positive association between the Jesuits and the poet seems to have been largely forgotten in Britain; writing in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1818, Ugo Foscolo, the Italian novelist, poet and political exile, states that "the Jesuits were indefatigable in their hostility to Dante".¹⁵ Given this striking *volte-face* in the perceived Jesuit reaction to the poet, we must wonder whether this apparent ambiguity in the Jesuit response to Dante might have been reflected in Joyce's introduction to the poet. The answer is inevitably complex.

Arguably, the crux of the nineteenth-century discourse on the Jesuit attitude towards Dante can be found in a little-known work of criticism called the *Lettere Virgiliane*, published in Venice in 1757 and written by the Jesuit Saverio Bettinelli. In his *Lettere*, Bettinelli occasionally ridicules the supposed "barbarism" of Dante in favour of a neo-classicist approach. In doing so, he adopts a literary-critical stance not all that dissimilar from that which Petrarch and other early humanists had taken.¹⁶ Surprisingly,

¹³ The "neo-Ghibelline" and "neo-Guelf" interpretations of Dante were so named by later Dante scholars using terms derived from the factional discord of Dante's Florence, where the Ghibelline party traditionally supported the Holy Roman Emperor in political matters, and the Guelfs were, nominally at least, of the Pope's party. Whilst the categorisation of secular readings of Dante as "neo-Ghibelline" and of religious (and particularly Catholic) readings as "neo-Guelf" is undoubtedly a little simplistic, these terms do serve to indicate the broad trends in late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century Dante studies. For more details on the "neo-Ghibelline" and "neo-Guelf" positions; see Michael Caesar, *Dante: the Critical Heritage: 1314(?)–1870* (London: Routledge, 1989) 61–63; and Edoardo Crisafulli, *The Vision of Dante: Cary's Translation of 'The Divine Comedy'* (Market Harborough: Troubadour, 2003) 268–269.

¹⁴ For a detailed account of the Protestant appropriation of Dante's *Monarchia* and *Paradiso* 29, and for the Jesuits' role in countering this propaganda; see Nick Havely, "'An Italian writer against the Pope'? Dante in Reformation England c. 1560–c. 1640", *Dante Metamorphoses: Episodes in a Literary Afterlife*, ed. Eric G. Haywood (Dublin: Four Courts P, 2003) 127–149.

¹⁵ U. Foscolo, "Article IX-Dante: with a new Italian commentary", *Edinburgh Review* 29 (1818): 463.

¹⁶ On Petrarch's and the Renaissance humanists' reactions to Dante see Caesar 1989, 151–158; on the critical stance of the *Lettere Virgiliane*, see Franco Betti, "Dante, the Jansenists and the Jesuits in XVIII–XIX Century Italian Literary Criticism", *Italian Quarterly* 15 (1971): 3f.

then, for a work intended primarily as a serious treatise on poetic style, and written within a context of Enlightenment rationalism with the aim of helping “the aspiring poets of his time to look for a more original, more modern source of inspiration” than Dante’s medievalism, Bettinelli’s *Lettere Virgiliane* caused considerable turbulence within the currents of Italian literary-critical discourse.¹⁷

Although the root of the Italian critical response to the *Lettere* might be expected to be the apparent clash of Enlightenment and proto-Romantic paradigms, or the argument between poetic innovators and those championing “la pietà delle tradizioni” [‘the piety of tradition’], Franco Betti has shown that beneath these discourses lay a virulent prejudice against Bettinelli’s religious order.¹⁸ Jansenist sympathisers such Giovanni Lami, the publisher and “fiero avversario dei gesuiti” [‘fierce adversary of the Jesuits’], sought to move their theological dispute with the Jesuits into the literary arena, and seized upon Bettinelli’s mild criticisms of Dante as evidence of his lack of any poetic sensibility whatsoever.¹⁹ Whilst this in itself would be an interesting critical overreaction, writers such as Lami represented the first voices in a new discourse in Italian letters which, building upon the increasing popularity of secular, anti-clerical and “neo-Ghibelline” readings of Dante, would metamorphose Bettinelli’s literary opinion into a “manifestation of a particular hate nourished by the Society of Jesus as a whole against the Florentine poet”.²⁰

In the articles written for the *Edinburgh Review* in 1818 by Ugo Foscolo, this accusation of Jesuit hostility towards Dante entered a context more immediate to Joyce’s education.²¹ Written whilst in exile in England, Foscolo’s articles sought to give an account of Italian literature tailored to the perspective of the nationalist *Risorgimento* project, and they focused upon furthering a secularised reading of Dante, a poet “whose fame was rising again after a long eclipse”.²² In the first of these articles for the

¹⁷ Betti 1971, 4; I am indebted to Betti’s work throughout this discussion of Bettinelli’s *Lettere Virgiliane*.

¹⁸ Mario Apollonio, “Dante, Storia della *Commedia*”, cited in Betti 1971, 3.

¹⁹ Giulio Natali, *Il Settecento*, cited in Betti 1971, 8.

²⁰ Betti 1971, 11.

²¹ Foscolo’s articles have been the subject of substantial interest for Dante scholars; see Beatrice Corrigan, “Foscolo’s Articles on Dante in the *Edinburgh Review*: a study in collaboration”, *Collected Essays on Italian Literature Presented to Kathleen Speight*, ed. Stephen Cristea & Sheila Ralph (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1971) 211–225; Alison Milbank, *Dante and the Victorians* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1998) 12–14; Andrea Ciccarelli, “Dante and Italian Culture from the Risorgimento to World War I”, *Dante Studies* 119 (2001): 129–132; and most recently, Nick Havely, “*Francesca franciesa*: Exile, Language and History in Foscolo’s Articles on Dante”, *Dante in the Nineteenth Century: Reception, Canonicity, Popularization*, ed. Nick Havely (Oxford and Bern: Peter Lang, 2011) 55–74.

²² Corrigan 1971, 213.

Edinburgh Review Foscolo revisits Lami's earlier discourse, describing Bettinelli's *Lettere* as "an ingenious but tasteless book" which "ridicules Dante as the most barbarous of poets", and he places the blame squarely on the Jesuits, who have "possessed themselves of the education of Italy and ... systematically decried" the poet.²³ Although, writing at the start of the nineteenth century, Foscolo was faced by the irreducible fact of the Jesuits' fall from grace and suppression by Pope Clement XIV in 1773, he is adamant throughout his articles that the Society of Jesus remains an implacable enemy of Dante, and that they established "literary and religious prejudices" in Italy which last into Foscolo's day.²⁴

Attempts to understand the critical stance which Foscolo adopted in his article (beyond his clear adherence to a wider, secularised reading of Dante) have often focused on the influence and silent co-authorship of leading Whig figures; yet, this view cannot explain Foscolo's continuation of the anti-Jesuit discourse started by Lami fifty years earlier, and indeed even the "neo-Ghibellinism" ascribed to Foscolo cannot account for the focussing of his anti-clerical ire explicitly upon the Jesuit order.²⁵ As we have seen, the original context for Lami's criticism may well have been the Jesuit-Jansenist dispute, yet by the time of Foscolo's articles, Jansenism was on the wane across Europe, and he makes no mention of it. It appears that by the nineteenth century, as we approach the time of Joyce's birth, the anti-Jesuit discourse within Dante studies had passed the limits of its initial context, and another explanation for it must be sought.

One such explanation for the continuation of Lami's discourse can be found in the political situation of Italy during the *Risorgimento*.²⁶ Franco Betti sees Lami's attack on Bettinelli as, "a good example of the conservative academician ever ready to defend the centuries old national tradition," and Dante's presence within an explicitly *national* tradition was crucial in determining the Jesuit attitude towards him in the nineteenth century.²⁷ As we have mentioned, there is a long history of the appropriation of Dante as an "anti-papal writer" by Protestant propagandists, and an equally long history of his reclamation by Catholic writers, often by the Jesuits themselves, such as the sixteenth-century Cardinal Roberto Bellarmine.²⁸ However, within the context of *Risorgimento* Italy, things had

²³ Foscolo 1818, 462.

²⁴ Foscolo 1818, 463. On the suppression of the Jesuits, see William V. Bangert, *A History of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1986) 395–396.

²⁵ Milbank 1998, 14–16; Corrigan 1971, 212–223; and Havelly 2011, 59–64 all discuss this Whig influence on Foscolo's articles.

²⁶ For a good introduction to the *Risorgimento*; see Harry Hearder, *Italy in the Age of the Risorgimento 1790–1870* (London: Longman, 1983); and Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (London: Penguin, 2008) 293–297.

²⁷ Betti 1971, 10.

²⁸ Havelly 2003, 140–146; and Caesar 1989, 34–37.

changed: to be ‘anti-papal’ was to be, first and foremost, political. In this respect, when the Jesuits re-emerged from suppression in 1814, they found the rules of the centuries-long game of appropriation and counter-appropriation had changed: Dante’s purported anti-papalism no longer took the form of a simple religious or ecclesiastical discourse, which could be repudiated on its own terms. The problem wasn’t that Dante had shown “popes in Hell” or that, in the *Monarchia*, he had argued forcefully for the political independence of the Holy Roman Emperor; indeed, the content of Dante’s work itself was no longer the issue. Instead, thanks in part to his defence of the unity of the Italian language in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, and his clear sense of Italy as a discrete geographic and cultural body, Dante had been assimilated as one of the cultural figureheads of the nationalist project of the *Risorgimento*, and as such posed a direct political threat to papal interests.²⁹

The *Risorgimento*, a movement for which, as Christopher Duggan has shown, the creation of an Italian national myth was equally important as the formation of the nation state of Italy itself, also brought about considerable change for the Roman Catholic Church. This was the period that saw the transition of the role of the Church and the Papacy from that of a temporal and political potentate to a largely social and spiritual role following the destruction of the independent Papal States in 1870.³⁰ Throughout this period, as the restored Jesuits realigned themselves with the Papacy they moved inexorably into conflict with the *Risorgimento* presentation of Dante as “father” of the nation and language, a persona for the poet which was now set irrevocably against the interests of the Papacy; indeed, Dante arguably represented one of the key cultural tools in the unification of Italy and the resultant diminishment of papal temporal power.³¹

Therefore, in the heat of the *Risorgimento*, any Jesuit criticism of Dante – such as Bettinelli offered in his *Lettere Virgiliane* – was quickly taken out of its original context by the nationalistic movement; Bettinelli was not seen as attempting to further Enlightenment rationalism but as a papal agent dishonouring the “national poet”. In turn, the castigation of the Jesuits by Foscolo, despite the fact that it continued a discourse originating in the Jansenism of Lami, could now be seen as a political blow struck against the power of the Papacy, and in support of the incipient Kingdom

²⁹ For more on Dante’s appropriation by the *Risorgimento*; see Ciccarelli 2001, 128–137; Maurizio Isabella, “Exile and Nationalism: The Case of the *Risorgimento*”, *European History Quarterly* 36 (2006): 497–500; Milbank 1998, 58–82; and Crisafulli 2003, 268–269.

³⁰ For more details on the military campaigns against the Papal States during the *Risorgimento*, including the capture of Rome in 1870 see Lucy Riall, *Garibaldi: Invention of a Hero*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007) 352–355; Hearder 1983, 283–293; and Duggan 2008, 256–259.

³¹ On the alignment of the Jesuits with papal interests, see Hearder 1983, 291.

of Italy. Indeed, as Duggan has pointed out, the idea of a liberal, secular society was essential to the nationalist myth crafted by writers such as Giuseppe Mazzini during the *Risorgimento*, and which would result in the effective institutionalisation of Foscolo's brand of "neo-Ghibelline" reading of Dante within the nascent Italian state.³² It is small wonder that so heated a political climate bred the myth of an institutionalised Jesuit antipathy towards Dante.

UNEASY ORTHODOXY: JESUIT REAPPROPRIATIONS

We can already begin to see how potentially difficult it will be to arrive at a definite understanding of what influence the Jesuit attitude to Dante might have had on the young James Joyce. The turmoil of the *Risorgimento* offers a plausible explanation as to why the Jesuits were painted so broadly as the poet's "enemies", but in truth it is likely that some of the "anti-papal" content of Dante's writings did arouse suspicion on the part of the Society. As we noted, by the time of the unification of Italy in 1870, the Jesuits had reassumed their position as close allies to the Papacy, and Dante's record with this institution was undeniably spotty.

Following its publication, Dante's *Monarchia* suffered a rebuttal at the hands of a Dominican cleric in 1327, followed in turn by its "ritual burning" in 1329. Once the Vatican's Index of prohibited books had been established in 1554, *Monarchia* quickly earned a place on it (a decision on the part of the Papacy which, inevitably, led to the speedy reprinting of Dante's treatise in a new Protestant edition in 1559). In 1581 it was joined on the Index by some of the more controversial passages of the *Commedia*; indeed, the *Monarchia* remained on the Papal Index right up until the year before the birth of James Joyce, only being removed from the list in 1881.³³ That Dante was the author of a "banned book" as well as a figurehead for the anti-papal nationalising movement in Italy must surely suggest that whilst, by the time Joyce entered Belvedere College in 1893, the Jesuit attitude to Dante was probably not the open hostility posited by Foscolo and his predecessors, it would surely not have been an uncomplicated veneration of a great "Catholic Poet".

Yet there is compelling evidence elsewhere for just such a late nineteenth-century Catholic and Jesuit veneration of Dante. From a late fourteenth-century manuscript of the *Commedia* which served as a quasi-shrine for Jesuits passing through Mumbai in the 1860s, to the inclusion

³² On Mazzini and the myth of 'secular religion' and the 'liberal state', see Duggan 2008, 292. For more on Dante's role in this national myth, see Ciccarelli 2001, 126–139. It is also worth noting that Mazzini helped ensure the primacy of Foscolo's reading of Dante by posthumously editing Foscolo's edition of the *Commedia* and commentary; see Isabella 2006, 498.

³³ Crisafulli 2003, 266.

of an article on Dante in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (published between 1907 and 1914), a distinctly “neo-Guelf” discourse was audible throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century.³⁴ Whilst not as vocal, or ultimately successful, as their nationalist counterparts, Italian “neo-Guelfs” such as Gaetano Polidori and Bartolomeo Sorio, Luigi Benassutti and Luigi Ritelli placed themselves in direct opposition to the anti-clerical, liberal thinkers of the *Risorgimento* in their attempt to politically neutralise Dante by reclaiming him to the Catholic fold.³⁵

Undoubtedly the clearest example of the “neo-Guelf” desire to resituate Dante within orthodox Catholicism can be seen in two papal encyclicals given by Leo XIII and Clement XV respectively, “*Auspicato Concessum*” (17th September 1882) and “*In praeclara summorum*” (21st April 1921). In the first of these, Dante is cited as an example of St Francis of Assisi’s beneficial influence on Italian art; whilst this might not seem the most effusive endorsement of Dante or the *Commedia*, it is significant that, within the space of a year (and in the year of Joyce’s birth, no less), Dante’s status had changed from being the author of a prohibited book to having his name dropped in a papal encyclical. This re-branding of Dante was then continued by Benedict XV, who on the six hundredth anniversary of Dante’s death (and in what represents arguably the zenith of his Catholic re-appropriation), makes the poet himself the subject of an encyclical.³⁶ Benedict asserts that, for Dante, the “Roman Church is the Most Holy Mother” and is owed “perfect submission in matters of faith and morals”.³⁷ Whilst this in itself is a significant development in the Church’s

³⁴ Crisafulli 2003, 267 provides more details of the “neo-Guelf” movement early in the nineteenth century; for more on *The Catholic Encyclopedia* and Joyce’s education, see my “Purgatorio in the Portrait: Dante, Heterodoxy and the Education of James Joyce”, *Dante in the Nineteenth Century: Reception, Canonicity, Popularization*, ed. Nick Havely (Oxford and Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, 2011) 264; for Cardinal Newman’s relationship with Dante, see Milbank 1998, 164–166, 170–172. I am grateful to Nick Havely for sharing his forthcoming work on the Mumbai *Commedia* manuscript with me; for more details on the Jesuit veneration of the Mumbai manuscript see his “‘Un présent d’un si grand prix et d’une telle beauté’: le manuscrit de Dante d’Elphinstone et la Literary Society de Bombay”, *Synergies Inde* 4 (2009) 140.

³⁵ I am indebted to the recent work of Stefano Jossa for identifying this range of Italian, Catholic responses to Dante during the *Risorgimento*; see his essay, “Politics vs. Literature: the Myth of Dante and the Italian National Identity”, *Dante in the Long Nineteenth Century: Nationality, Identity, and Appropriation*, ed. Aida Audeh & Nick Havely (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012) forthcoming.

³⁶ The importance of “*In praeclara summorum*” in re-establishing Dante’s position within Catholicism was first noted by Teodolinda Barolini; see her, *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture* (New York: Fordham UP, 2006) 7.

³⁷ “*In praeclara summorum*: Encyclical of Pope Benedict XV on Dante, to Professors and Students of Literature and Learning in the Catholic World”, *Papal Archive*, June 2010, <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xv/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xv_enc_30041921_in-praeclara-summorum_en.html>.

relationship with Dante, Benedict then goes on, only some fifty years after the capture of Rome and the completion of the *Risorgimento* project, to correctly cite Dante's *Monarchia* (III, 16) in support of his argument. Nowhere more clearly than in this most unexpected of citations can we see the inherent ambiguity in Dante's presentation within Joyce's Jesuit classroom.

So it would appear that, by the end of the nineteenth century, the Jesuits had not really performed a *volte-face* on Dante at all; rather, they had spun around in a dizzying and often confusing circle. The long tradition of Dante's assimilation as an "anti-papal" writer not only continued into Joyce's immediate historical context but had actually intensified through the agency of the *Risorgimento* project; yet equally, Dante was not simply defined by this secularised presentation. In fact, the most accurate summary of Dante's presentation within a late nineteenth-century Jesuitical context would be to characterise him as occupying a place of "uneasy orthodoxy", a position both simultaneously within and without the canon of Catholicism.

The issues of appropriation and orthodoxy, of religiosity and secularization which have emerged from this consideration of the Jesuits' reaction to Dante have all been previously, if loosely, associated with Joyce's reception of Dante. In a suggestive passage of his essay on "The European background of Joyce's writing", Klaus Reichert began to question whether Joyce would have encountered Dante in the same guise in which he often appears to more modern readers, that of "the greatest of Catholic poets, the verbal architect of the hierarchical edifice of the church".³⁸ Whilst it is uncertain in exactly what way Dante could have designed the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, Reichert does proceed to clearly outline what he considers a uniquely "modern" approach in Joyce's reading of the poet, one in which Dante appears as "a 'committed' writer, a political poet who is never cowed by authority" and whose presentation leads Joyce to an ultimately "anti-Catholic view of Dante".³⁹

However, having explored Dante's reception by both Catholic and secular movements in the nineteenth century, we can go quite a few steps further than Reichert, who wonders whether this "new" reading of Dante "need not have originated with Joyce" (Reichert's prime suspects are Byron, Shelley and Thomas Carlyle, all of whom were vocal advocates of the *Risorgimento*).⁴⁰ Instead we can see that, far from suggesting a "modern" reading, Reichert has, in fact, postulated a simple "neo-Ghibelline" position for Joyce, one in which "Dante became one of the great challenges to orthodox Catholic tradition".⁴¹ In this respect, Reichert ignores

³⁸ Klaus Reichert, "The European background of Joyce's writing", *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 56.

³⁹ Reichert 1996, 56.

⁴⁰ Reichert 1996, 56. On Byron's, Shelley's and Carlyle's interest in Dante and in Italian nationalism see Milbank 1998, 10, 49–50, 58–60.

⁴¹ Reichert 1996, 57.

the position Joyce himself took in his 1903 review of Ibsen's *Catalina*, where he castigated the unthinking secular interpretation of Dante by writers of the previous generation, who fancied themselves "a Dante without the unfortunate prejudices of Dante".⁴² Given the ambiguity of the Jesuit attitude towards Dante we must question whether Joyce's relation to the thorny issue of Dante's reputation was ever likely to be one of simple adherence to the secular orthodoxy of "neo-Ghibellinism". Indeed, as we will see in the rest of this essay, it was the essential liminality of the poet's presentation, his uncertain location between competing orthodoxies, which would be of greatest influence on Joyce's initial reading of Dante.

DANTE IN THE CLASSROOM: JOYCE'S JESUIT EDUCATION

Although Joyce seems to have known the influential translations of the *Commedia* by Henry Boyd and Henry Francis Cary, the weight of evidence – particularly the NLI notesheets with the limited knowledge of the *Commedia* which they display – would suggest that Joyce's reading of Dante was bound up with his learning of the Italian language.⁴³ The history of Joyce's Italian is sometimes hard to follow and has to be pieced together from his school records. Whilst the young James Joyce was an undeniably bright boy, he was not so obviously gestating his eventual genius that the records of his education were preserved with any great diligence and, consequently, those records which do survive are fragmentary and often confusing; however, all the available sources on Joyce's education agree that his acquaintance with Italian began upon his entry into Belvedere College in 1893 (JJ 47).⁴⁴

Whilst many details of Joyce's early Italian tuition remain uncertain, some of the texts on which he was eventually examined are known. Between his first Intermediate examination in 1894 and his departure from Belvedere in 1898, Joyce was examined on a range of Italian texts from De Amicis' *Cuore* to Metastasio's *Gioas Re di Giuda*; however, at no point did Dante appear upon the school examinations that he is known to have sat.⁴⁵ Yet this need not suggest an institutionalised suppression of Dante within Jesuit schools. Reflecting on his schooldays many years later,

⁴² James Joyce, *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. Kevin Barry (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 73 (all subsequent references to Joyce's critical writings are given as OCPW in the text).

⁴³ One indication of Joyce's familiarity with Boyd and Cary comes from a mangled reference to them in his Italian lecture "L'Irlanda: isola dei santi e dei savi" (OCPW 257).

⁴⁴ On Joyce's starting to learn Italian, see Sullivan 1958, 91; Bradley 1982, 106; and Herbert. S. Gorman, *James Joyce: A Definitive Biography* (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1941) 43.

⁴⁵ Bradley 1982, 108–117.

Joyce's friend J.F. Byrne (the inspiration for Cranly in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*) recalled an atmosphere of relatively "liberal" literary appreciation at Belvedere, and a willingness on the part of the Jesuit masters to allow, and even encourage, reading outside of the prescribed examination texts.⁴⁶

Indeed, although the College was subject to the strict syllabus and controls of the Society's *Ratio Studiorum*, there is evidence that in the school year 1895–1896 Joyce was, as a result of his success in previous examinations, allowed a good degree of academic freedom.⁴⁷ It is during this year that Joyce is known to have begun reading both widely and without supervision, and, whilst trying to reconstruct Joyce's exact pattern of reading is undoubtedly futile, it does seem unlikely that, given the role Dante played in the history of the Italian language (a role which had been keenly emphasised by both the *Risorgimento* writers and the still relatively new state of Italy), Joyce would have ignored the poet completely in this period.⁴⁸ Given that van Hulle has loosely dated the NLI notesheets to c. 1897–1898, it is entirely possible that Joyce might have first opened the *Commedia* a year or so earlier, during his year of relative academic freedom.⁴⁹

Hence, if we follow both the dating of the NLI notesheets and the conjectural evidence of Joyce's Italian education, it seems reasonable to conclude that Joyce probably did first read Dante towards the end of his career at Belvedere College, and that this encounter occurred outside of his regular syllabus. If so, then the passage of *Stephen Hero* in which Joyce first makes an attempt to fictionalise his experience of reading Dante, and on which Mary Reynolds focused her suggestions that Joyce first encountered Dante at university, can be read more clearly:

The second year of Stephen's University life opened early in October. His godfather had made no comment on the result of the first year but Stephen was told that this opportunity would be the last given him. He chose Italian as his optional subject, partly from a desire to read Dante seriously, and partly to escape the crush of French and German lectures.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ John F. Byrne, *Silent Years: An Autobiography with Memoirs of James Joyce and Our Ireland* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Young, 1975) 21–23. Certainly Joyce's reading was not curtailed at home, as when a visitor to the Joyce house was shocked to see that the young man was reading Zola, he was told brusquely by Joyce's parents that "Jim can read what he likes" (JJ 75).

⁴⁷ Sullivan 1982, 100, discusses Joyce's "academic interlude" in 1895–1896.

⁴⁸ Boldrini argues that Joyce's study of the formation of the Italian language made it extremely unlikely he would not have read Dante by this point; see Boldrini 2001, 4f.

⁴⁹ van Hulle 2004, 2; although it should be noted that van Hulle gives no explicit reasoning for his dating, and the notes could well be even earlier than he is suggesting.

⁵⁰ James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, ed. Theodore Spence, John J. Slocum & Herbert Cahoon (London: Granada, 1977), 152 (all further references are cited as *SH* in the text).

The “desire to read Dante seriously” which Joyce here ascribes to Stephen, would obviously suggest that, prior to choosing Italian as a special subject, Stephen has *already* read Dante. Therefore, even if we follow Reynolds’s misguided dedication to reading *Stephen Hero* as a biographical source for Joyce, it seems clear that Joyce was most probably already familiar with Dante prior to 1899.⁵¹ However, when he did finally enter the university in 1898/1899, if Joyce shared Stephen’s desire to “read Dante seriously”, then University College Dublin offered him a unique opportunity to satisfy it.

JOYCE’S “MAESTRO” AND “AUTORE”:
CHARLES GHEZZI AND EUGENIO CAMERINI

Joyce’s days at University College could only have strengthened the association of Dante with academic freedom formed during his ‘spare’ year at Belvedere. Firstly, the rigid control of Joyce’s syllabus by the *Ratio Studiorum* was replaced by the curriculum of University College’s secular examining body, the Royal University of Ireland; and secondly, it was at University College that Joyce encountered his first real “maestro” of Dante in the person of Fr. Charles Ghezzi. In Joyce’s novels Fr. Ghezzi is a mercurial figure. He is evidently the inspiration for two characters who feature in *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait of the Artist* and in *Ulysses*; appearing in the first and last under the name Almidano Artifoni and in *Portrait* under his own.⁵² Whilst I don’t want to fall foul of the temptation to read Joyce’s work as biography, the fact that a version of Ghezzi appears in three of Joyce’s novels, and in each has undergone some new consideration of character, does suggest that the historical Ghezzi, as the man who properly introduced Joyce to Dante, remained of some interest throughout Joyce’s career.

The details of the life of the historical Ghezzi are few but fairly well established: he was, as is suggested by *Stephen Hero*, an Italian Jesuit from Bergamo (*SH* 152), and the *Catalogus* of 1902 records him as being “on loan” from Venice, although Ellmann claims that he had come to Ireland from a long residence in India (*JJ* 60).⁵³ Ghezzi taught Italian at University College in tutorials that seem to have quite closely resembled those which Joyce chose to recreate in *Stephen Hero*, with the exception that at least one other student, Eugene Sheehy, attended.⁵⁴ Italian was certainly unpopular enough at the University to justify Herbert Gorman’s assertion

⁵¹ Reynolds 1981, 20.

⁵² Mary Reynolds briefly discusses Ghezzi/Artifoni in her study of paternity themes in Joyce’s work; see Reynolds 1981, 52f.

⁵³ Sullivan 1958, 155.

⁵⁴ Eugene Sheehy, “My School Friend, James Joyce”, *James Joyce: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. E. H. Mikhail (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990) 11.

that, in the year of his graduation, Joyce was the only male student to sit the Italian exam in the whole of Ireland.⁵⁵

One document related to Ghezzi which seems to have been overlooked as regards his relationship to Joyce, is a manuscript notebook entitled “The Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas: Addresses of Members and Minutes of Meetings”.⁵⁶ The book records Ghezzi’s presence, along with that of Joyce, at the inaugural meeting of this Aquinas society on November 27th 1901; further suggesting a shared intellectual sympathy (and interest in an important Dantean intertext) between Joyce and his first Dante tutor.⁵⁷ Two unpublished letters to Joyce from Ghezzi also survive, both of which now reside in the Cornell Joyce Collection, and one of which may be referred to by Joyce in a letter to his mother from Paris in 1903, when he assures her that “I answered Fr Ghezzi’s letter”.⁵⁸ As this correspondence postdates Joyce’s graduation, the letters suggest that, like Artifoni and Stephen in the “Wandering Rocks” episode of *Ulysses*, Ghezzi’s interest in Joyce continued beyond his academic obligations.

The character of the historical Ghezzi was interestingly observed by Stanislaus Joyce, who made a concerted effort to locate him outside of the general Irish Catholic climate of the time:

Jim was in spite of that on good terms with this young Italian Jesuit who, coming from a Kultur-Stadt in the producer country of Catholicism, was not in full sympathy with the ignorant obedience mixed with Puritanism, which is the Irish blend.⁵⁹

As well as surely qualifying as some of the highest praise that Stanislaus ever offered anyone, this observation of Ghezzi also suggests that in Joyce’s experience of studying Dante at University College Dublin, some of the issues discussed earlier surrounding Italy and notions of orthodoxy may have been bubbling below the surface. However, if Stanislaus saw Ghezzi as in some way out of step with his immediate Catholic context in Dublin, in *Stephen Hero* Joyce presents Artifoni as set apart from the nationalist context of Italian politics, stating that the tutor was “unlike many of the citizens of the third Italy in his want of affection for the English” (*SH* 153).⁶⁰ It is tempting indeed to see Joyce’s contextualisation, whilst writing *Stephen Hero*, of the figure of his Jesuit Dante teacher within the

⁵⁵ Gorman 1941, 59.

⁵⁶ For more on these minutes, see Sullivan 1958, 168.

⁵⁷ Ellmann discusses Joyce’s attendance at the meeting in the context of his involvement with Catholicism during his time at UCD (*JJ* 65).

⁵⁸ James Joyce, *Letters*, vol. 2, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking, 1966) 38. For details of the Cornell letters, see Robert E. Scholes, *The Cornell Joyce Collection: A Catalogue* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1961) 87f. Ellmann suggests another letter may survive in Yale’s collection but gives no details (*JJ* 764 n. 9).

⁵⁹ Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother’s Keeper* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958) 154.

⁶⁰ For an account of English sympathy for the *Risorgimento* and the ‘third Italy’, see Riall 2007, *Garibaldi*, 142–144.

politics of the *Risorgimento* as evidence that he was aware of the critical discourses which we discussed earlier. However, before we can draw further conclusions about the effect of Dante's uneasy orthodoxy upon Joyce's early reading of the poet, there is one more element of the immediate historical context of this reading which we need to put in place.

If Fr. Ghezzi was Joyce's Dante "maestro", then Eugenio Camerini was his "autore"; Camerini, the editor and annotator of the surviving copy of the *Commedia* which Joyce bought in Trieste c. 1907–1914, is a figure of considerable importance in the history of Joyce's reception of Dante, and yet he has been paid relatively little attention by Joyce critics. In her study, Mary Reynolds only briefly discusses Camerini's edition of the *Commedia*, speculating that Joyce may have bought a copy in Trieste because it was the same edition with which he had studied back in Dublin (and had presumably lost or sold during the course of his European travels).⁶¹ This suspicion, as van Hulle has outlined, is borne out by the NLI notesheets, in which the vast majority of the notes recorded are cribbed directly from the copious marginal annotations of Camerini's edition.⁶² One clear example of Joyce's reliance on Camerini's edition of the *Commedia* can be seen in one of his first notes on the first canto of *Inferno*:

Il momento in cui comincia l'azione del
poema è la notte precedente al Venerdì
Santo, la notte del 24 Marzo 1300. Il
Giorno in cui Dante esce dalla selva
(il 15 Maggio 1300, V.S.) è il principio
decimo
del quarto secolo contando gli anni
ab Incarnatione secondo l'uso fiorentino
(NLI Ms. 36,639/1f. 2v)

This note by Joyce is in reality a crib of Camerini's more extensive note for the first line of the poem:

Il momento in cui comincia l'azion del Poema, è la notte precedente al venerdì santo, cioè la notte del 24 al 25 marzo: il momento in cui termina, è l'ottava di Pasqua; cosicchè tutta l'azione dura dieci giorni. Questo 25 marzo del 1300 (stile commune a *Nativitate*), la cui mattina Dante, uscito dalla selva, si trova appiè del colle, è il primo giorno del nuovo secolo, cioè dell'anno 1301, contando gli anni *ab Incarnatione*, siccome usavano alcuni degli antichi, e fra essi i Fiorentini.⁶³

[The moment at which the action of the poem begins is the night before Good Friday, that is the night of the 24th to the 25th of March; the time at which the poem ends is the eighth day of Easter; so all the action takes only ten days. This

⁶¹ Reynolds 1981, 31.

⁶² van Hulle 2004, 2–4.

⁶³ Eugenio Camerini, "1. Nel mezzo, ecc.", *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri con note tratte dai migliori commenti*, ed. Eugenio Camerini (Milan: Società Editrice Sonzogno, 1904) 27.

25th March 1300 (common style, counting from the Nativity), the morning on which Dante left the wood at the foot of the hill, is the first day of the new century, that is of the year 1301, counting the years from the Incarnation, as some of the ancients, and amongst them the Florentines, used to do.]

Although the corroborating evidence of the NLI notesheets has only recently been discovered, it seems puzzling that critics have not made more of Camerini and his edition when studying Joyce's reception of Dante; after all, Mary Reynolds hints at his importance in guiding Joyce's interpretations of the poet when she claims that Joyce bought his later copy of the edition "for the sake of the notes".⁶⁴ And yet only Jennifer Fraser, of all the scholars who have looked at Joyce's relationship to Dante in one way or another over the years, seems to have thought to open a copy of Camerini's edition and read these editorial notes. Unfortunately, Fraser's engagement with Camerini's *Commedia* is limited to citing his annotations in support of some of her dubious claims for Joyce's possible interpretation of a few passages in *Purgatorio* 25.⁶⁵

The little attention which has been paid to the context of Camerini's edition of the *Commedia* within Joyce studies is represented by Mary Reynolds's essay on "Joyce's Editions of Dante"; published a few years prior to her monograph, this essay briefly discusses Camerini's background, noting that he "was not an academic scholar but an essayist and critic of the Mazzini era".⁶⁶ Giuseppe Mazzini was a leading figure of the *Risorgimento*; indeed, along with Giuseppe Garibaldi, Mazzini was arguably the most influential and totemic of all the *Risorgimento* revolutionaries. Camerini himself seems to have been an active participant in the cultural wing of the *Risorgimento* as, after having been exiled from Florence, he moved to Turin where "si fu rapidamente inserito nell'ambiente politico-culturale torinese che faceva capo all'Azeglio" ['he was quickly assumed into the politico-cultural atmosphere of Turin, whose leader was d'Azeglio'].⁶⁷ Massimo d'Azeglio, the novelist, painter and eventual Italian statesman, whilst more moderate in his views than Mazzini, was certainly a member of the *Risorgimento* movement, and had even come into conflict with the Jesuits over the issue of their political influence in Piedmont; furthermore, as Mary Reynolds puts it, Turin was, at the time Camerini

⁶⁴ Reynolds 1981, 31.

⁶⁵ See Fraser 2002, 118 for an example of her use of Camerini's edition; although Fraser's claims are heavily reliant on the work of the twentieth-century American Dantist John Freccero, and are thus not particularly grounded in the historical conditions in which Joyce encountered Dante.

⁶⁶ Mary T. Reynolds, "Joyce's Editions of Dante", *James Joyce Quarterly* 15 (1978): 380.

⁶⁷ A. Palermo, "Camerini, Salomone (Eugenio)", *Dizionario biografia degli italiani*, vol. 17, ed. V. Cappelletti (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1974) 187.

lived there, “the Risorgimento capital.”⁶⁸ However, Reynolds did not include her brief material on Camerini in her eventual monograph, and she goes no further in drawing out the significance of Joyce’s having first read Dante in what – both in its commentary and several of its introductory essays – was certainly a pro-*Risorgimento* edition.⁶⁹

Having already characterised Dante as occupying a position of uneasy orthodoxy within the Catholic culture of Joyce’s education, we can clearly see how Joyce’s use of Camerini’s “neo-Ghibelline” edition of the *Commedia* would have introduced a further level of ambiguity into his early experience of the poem, in turn further strengthening the sense of Dante’s liminality, the sense that he was neither wholly approved of by Joyce’s teachers nor entirely condemned. This liminality was to be crucial in determining the character of Joyce’s interaction with Dante throughout his early career in *Stephen Hero*, *Dubliners* and most particularly, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

READING UNEASY ORTHODOXY

Having investigated the historical contexts of their first encounter, we can see that Dante appeared to the young Joyce as a figure who, through the efforts of his “neo-Guelf” readers, could be found within the sphere of Jesuitical Catholicism, but whose position within this sphere was subversive and unstable.⁷⁰ The notion of an established literary authority, such as Dante, being used to negotiate a heterodox space within a larger orthodoxy has been readily identified in Joyce’s interest in authors such as Giordano Bruno. Roy Gottfried has shown that, in his attitude to orthodoxy, Joyce was not so much interested in formulating new heretical positions as he was in co-opting pre-existent, established ones.⁷¹ Dante’s uneasy orthodoxy, as encountered by Joyce during his Jesuit education, presented a uniquely powerful example of just such a position as, through

⁶⁸ Reynolds 1978, 380. For an account of d’Azeglio’s *Risorgimento* activity see Header 1983, 58, 199–203, 213–215.

⁶⁹ For instance Camerini’s “neo-Ghibelline” bent can be discerned in Joyce’s note to *Inferno* 1. 45, where he interprets the allegorical figure of the she-wolf whom Dante-pilgrim encounters in the dark wood thus: “La Lupa – avarizia – potenza temporale dei papa” (NLI Ms. 36,639/1 f. 2v) [‘the Wolf – avarice – temporal power of the pope’]. Furthermore, in his introductory essays on Dante’s life and works, Camerini strongly emphasises the roles played by Pope Boniface VIII in forcing Dante’s exile from Florence, and by Pope John XXII in suppressing the *Monarchia*.

⁷⁰ Indeed, Caesar has stressed that the terms “neo-Guelf” and “neo-Ghibelline” are themselves unstable, and he has criticised their often too rigid application and inadequacy in describing the “many exceptions and crossovers” between the two positions; see Caesar 1989, 62.

⁷¹ Roy Gottfried, *Joyce’s Misbelief* (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2008) 5.

this liminality – his uncertain position between heresy and veneration – Dante could remain permanently heterodox, never quite settling into a comfortable religious, secular, or literary orthodoxy.⁷²

This liminal aspect of Joyce's encounter with Dante found a strikingly physical expression in the locations of Joyce's reading; in order to read Dante's relatively more obscure works such as the *Convivio* or *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, Joyce was required to literally remove himself from a Catholic environment and enter either the Anglican setting of Archbishop Marsh's Library, or else the determinedly secular environment of the National Library.⁷³ Thus, if we follow Ellmann in his belief that Dante was one of only a few authors whose work Joyce read in its entirety, we can see the poet's essential liminality at the time of Joyce's early reading echoed through the peregrinations of the young writer across Dublin to seek out Dante's more obscure works.⁷⁴ If this was the case, then by the time he took classes with Ghezzi at University College, Joyce could hardly have remained unaware of the *Monarchia*, Dante's most heterodox work (it was no longer, as of 1881, technically heretical); a knowledge of this most controversial of all Dante's works would have again impressed Dante's potential as a subversive Catholic writer upon the young Joyce.

The significance of Joyce's first reading of Dante, then, was not in the encounter with an "anti-Catholic" Dante as Reichert suggested, but rather it was in the unique spiritual and artistic potency that Joyce found within the poet's uneasy orthodoxy, and the ability this gave him to negotiate with the fixed orthodoxies of Irish Catholic life. Indeed, it was this unstable, liminal character of Dante which Joyce would later exploit fully in the writing of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.⁷⁵ Stanislaus suggests that Joyce's discovery of Dante came at the end of reading a sequence of English authors, the last of whom was William Blake.⁷⁶ Blake is a figure who can helpfully remind us that Joyce was not alone in reading Dante in late nineteenth-century Dublin.

In 1897, whilst Joyce was making his notes on the *Inferno*, W. B. Yeats published an extensive article on Blake's illustrations to the *Commedia*, and the Dante of Yeats's essay serves to underline for us the essentially

⁷² For more on Dante as one of Joyce's "heterodox authors", see Robinson 2011, 261–263.

⁷³ On the Dante holdings in Marsh's library and the NLI see Boldrini 2001, 5; Joyce certainly portrays Stephen as using Marsh's library in connection to Dante: "Stephen went there a few times in the week to read old Italian books of the Trecento" (*SH* 159).

⁷⁴ Richard Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972) 12.

⁷⁵ Robinson 2011, 265–275 offers a further exploration of the presence of Dante within *A Portrait of the Artist*, and the poet's contribution to the negotiation of the 'double bind' of orthodoxy within the novel.

⁷⁶ Stanislaus Joyce, "James Joyce: A Memoir", *The Hudson Review* 2 (1950): 488.

Catholic nature of Joyce's reading.⁷⁷ To Yeats's Protestant ethos, the special power Dante accrued through his uneasy orthodoxy in Joyce's Jesuit context was meaningless; from a non-Catholic viewpoint, Dante's subversive potential could only ever be as a "writer against the pope", he could only act as an exterior assault upon Catholicism. And, by the end of the nineteenth century, with the reformulation of the role of the Papacy and the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy, Dante's potency as such a figure was arguably fading. But to Joyce, who read him first within a Jesuit context, Dante was his "inside man", a figure who was at work within an oppressive orthodoxy, helping the young artist to subvert, and ultimately elude it. The liminal heterodoxy of Dante, which Joyce first encountered through his education at the hands of the Jesuits, connected beyond Joyce's literary experience, into his social and cultural identity as a middle-class Irish Catholic.

The liminality of Dante's nineteenth-century presentation, and particularly its development within Joyce's immediate historical context, would in turn largely determine Joyce's engagement with Dante, and without acknowledging its influence it is difficult to adequately explore the range of Joyce's varied, persistent response to Dante throughout his mature works from *Dubliners* to *Finnegans Wake*. Having gone somewhat in this essay towards redressing the historicist vacuum in previous studies of their interaction, we can now see that, contrary to Mary Reynolds's opinion, Joyce's Dante was very much "the Dante of his day".⁷⁸ Joyce's reception of Dante represented not a break with the past, not a uniquely "modern" reading, but rather the development and transformation of a vital and pervasive discourse on the issue of literary and religious orthodoxy. Through an awareness of this complex, anti-monolithic view of Dante, we can begin to find unexpected and hitherto unacknowledged Dantean presences within Joyce's works; for instance, the notion of an active, direct engagement with Dante's theories of memory and vision can open up new readings of the "Circe" episode of *Ulysses*. In this respect we can see that Dante did not appear to Joyce as an inert literary monument whose presence in the Western canon must simply be acknowledged, but rather as a source of vital, fissionable material with which to experiment. To the Protestant polemicists of three hundred years earlier, Dante had been a weapon with which to destroy the Catholic Church; through the influence of the Jesuits, he became one of Joyce's ways to render it a spiritual irrelevance and a source of artistic inspiration.

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⁷⁷ See William Butler Yeats, *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1961) 116–145. For a brief account of Yeats's relation to Dante, see Steve Ellis, *Dante and English Poetry: Shelley to T. S. Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983) 141f.

⁷⁸ Reynolds 1981, 10.