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Introduction

Towards the end of the fourth chapter of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus is walking nervously by the sea. Waiting to hear about his entry to the University, he shuttles between two symbols of competing orthodoxies: '[f]rom the door of Byron's publichouse to the gate of Clontarf chapel, from the gate of Clontarf chapel to the door of Byron's publichouse' (*P* IV. 607–9). Unable to endure the wait any longer, Stephen walks out to the North Wall, from where he sees a young girl standing in the rivulet running down through the strand:

> She was alone and still, gazing out to sea; and when she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes her eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze, without shame or wantonness. Long, long she suffered his gaze and then quietly withdrew her eyes from his and bent them towards the stream, gently stirring the water with her foot hither and thither. (*P* IV. 867–75)

In this moment of watching and reflection, another ethereal girl is turning, moving 'hither and thither' on the edge of a stream:

> Volsesi in su' vermigli ed in su' gialli
> Fioretti verso me, non altrimenti
> Che vergine, che gli occhi onesti avvalli:
> E fece i preghi miei esser contenti,
> Si appressando sè, che il dolce suono
> Veniva a me, co' suoi intendimenti.
> Tosto che fu là dove l'erbe sono
> Bagnate già dall'onde del bel fiume,
> Di levar gli occhi suoi mi fece dono.

> [so she turned on the crimson and yellow flowers toward me, not otherwise than a virgin who lowers her modest eyes, and she contented my prayers, drawing so near that the sweet sound reached me with its meanings. As soon as she was where the grass is already bathed by the lovely river, she made me the gift of raising her eyes.] (Purg. 28. 55–63)

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The intertextual resonance between James Joyce's 'bird-girl' and the dancing figure of Matelda, whom the protagonist of the *Commedia* meets in the Earthly Paradise on the banks of the river Lethe, is one testament to Joyce's lifelong engagement with Dante. And in the imagery of religious life, liberation, secularism and Romantic poetry that surrounds the encounter, we find some of the contextual terms of competing orthodoxy, narrative trajectory and literary mediation that would characterise this relationship.

Joyce's interest in Dante began early, long before the *Portrait* was conceived of, or any of the other texts that attest to their relationship had been written. Indeed, such was the fervour with which Joyce proselytised his reading of Dante whilst attending University College Dublin that his peers christened him 'Dublin's Dante, a Dante with a difference'.[1] This witticism – which Richard Ellmann attributed to Oliver St John Gogarty (*JJ* 75, 131) – raises an interesting question: was there a 'difference' in Joyce's Dante? We're more used to seeing Dante as undifferentiated, a monolithic and overwhelmingly canonical presence; a medieval monument at the heart of Western literature, so much part of the scenery that it can be difficult to remember that he was ever built in the first place, let alone to trace the cultural processes of his construction.[2] The Dante who, to John Ruskin and the nineteenth century, was 'the central man of all the world' remains largely in-post today, and he has been the subject of literary, political, religious and cultural conversation (a conversation that has oftentimes descended into open argument) for nearly seven hundred years.[3] So which Dante did Joyce read and engage with throughout his career? Was it the medieval monument or the contested conversationalist?

For other modernist writers, Dante was certainly the monument man. To T.S. Eliot he was 'the most *universal* of poets in the modern languages', the bedrock on which European literature rested, and – in the *Commedia* – the author of a 'vast metaphor' that embraced all aspects of the intellectual and linguistic climate of a medieval Europe 'mentally

[1] W. K. Magee, 'The Beginnings of Joyce', 201.

[2] As Albert Ascoli has observed of Dante and the *Commedia*: 'No work is more central to the Western canon and the educational and cultural apparatus that still actively propounds it […] no author possesses more "cultural capital" ', *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, 1. For a superlative discussion of these processes of cultural construction within Dante's British readerships see Nick Havely, *Dante's British Public: Readers and Texts from the Fourteenth Century to the Present*.

[3] John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, vol. 11, 187; for a discussion of Ruskin's engagement with Dante see Alison Milbank, *Dante and the Victorians*, 29–44. On the term 'conversation' as characterising ongoing reactions to Dante see Havely, *Dante's British Public*, xiv.

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more united than we can now conceive'.[4] As Seamus Heaney put it, for Eliot Dante 'walks in the aura of cultural history and representativeness'.[5] Equally, Ezra Pound's reaction to Dante was rooted in veneration and emulation in the shadow of the monolith, with *The Cantos* cast as the successor to the *Commedia* and the summation of Pound's lifelong wish to write a Dantean 'epic of judgement'.[6] For Pound, Dante was an overwhelming and institutional presence whose example was implicated in his plans for an 'American *risorgimento*' and national cultural renewal on the grandest scale.[7] And yet, before the poet could be drawn more fully into Pound's own poetic practice, he needed to reconfigure Dante into a more approachable form, a transfiguration achieved through the alternative canonicity Pound constructed around Guido Cavalcanti, that other *trecento* poet who was 'much more "modern" than his young friend Dante'.[8]

Yet it's long been acknowledged that Joyce's engagement with Dante differed significantly from these other modernists, that Joyce's Dante really was a 'Dante with a difference'.[9] One perennially popular explanation for this difference is the belief that Joyce could somehow enter straight into the heart of the Dantean monument. In the most lastingly influential statement of this position, Umberto Eco identified the 'presence of medieval patterns in the mental economy of our author'.[10] This sense that Joyce was in some way 'medievally minded' – that he possessed an innate 'medievalism' – is based on a structural parallel that Eco saw between Joyce's thought and an abstract model of the 'medieval': 'If you take away the transcendent God from the symbolic world of the Middle Ages, you have the world of Joyce.'[11] The move that Eco thus makes to put Joyce into direct contact with the 'medieval' can only be called radically subtractive: as

[4] T. S. Eliot, *Dante*, 9, 17,11. For discussion of Eliot's position in this essay of 1929 see Steve Ellis, *Dante and English Poetry: Shelley to T.S. Eliot*, 210–14; and Dominic Manganiello, *T.S. Eliot and Dante*, 11–16.

[5] Seamus Heaney, 'Envies and Identifications: Dante and the Modern Poet', 14.

[6] See Heaney, 'Envies and Identifications', 16; Reed W. Dasenbrock, *Imitating the Italians: Wyatt, Spenser, Synge, Pound, Joyce*, 212; Stephen Sicari, *Pound's Epic Ambition: Dante and the Modern World*, x–xii; and A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet*, vol. 1, *The Young Genius 1885–1920*, 46–9.

[7] See Moody, *Ezra Pound*, 130–3.

[8] Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, 149. On Pound's use of Cavalcanti see Maria L. Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti: The Other Middle Ages*, 134–5; and James J. Wilhelm, *Dante and Pound: The Epic of Judgement*, 69–70. For a discussion of Pound's Dantean reading of Cavalcanti (and Cavalcantian reading of Dante) see Milbank, *Dante and the Victorians*, 233–6.

[9] On Joyce's difference see Lucia Boldrini, 'Introduction: Middayevil Joyce', 25–7; Dasenbrock, *Imitating the Italians*, 126; and Milbank, *Dante and the Victorians*, 238–9.

[10] Umberto Eco, *The Middle Ages of James Joyce: The Aesthetics of Chaosmos*, 7.

[11] Eco, *Middle Ages of James Joyce*, 7. For a range of resultant readings of Joyce's response to the medieval, see Lucia Boldrini (ed.), *Medieval Joyce*.

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well as 'taking away' the notion of God, Eco effectively deletes the intervening six hundred years between the worlds of Joyce and Dante.

It is one aim of this study to put back those six hundred years, placing the slow, accretive and contested development of Dante's reputation, readership, personae and texts at the heart of our understanding of Joyce's relationship with the poet. Joyce's Dante *was* a 'Dante with a difference', most particularly because the terms of their first encounter in Joyce's youth were determinedly non-monumental. Indeed, as the first chapter will demonstrate, Dante's contestation by the prevailing orthodoxies of nineteenth-century Dublin was such that Joyce could not help but be acutely aware of the processes of erection – and thus the subsequent ease of deconstruction – of any Dantean monument. In resisting the urge to monumentalise, we can instead conceive of Joyce's engagement with Dante not as the meeting of medieval and modernist masters (or even 'modern' medieval or 'medieval' modernist), but as a historically complex and contextually determined interaction. The Dante who Joyce first read during his schooldays was a fundamentally nineteenth-century figure, and one who was subject to unusually intense political, religious and literary discourses that would determine the course of Joyce's lifelong engagement. However, this is not to claim that, for Joyce, Dante was not a medieval writer but rather to emphasise that when Joyce read Dante he was, crucially, always reading *through* the nineteenth century and the circumstances of their first encounter.[12] In this way, it will become clear that Joyce's Dante was not a monument to align with, or an authority to invoke, but rather a partner and 'collaborator' in a creative project.

In writing about Joyce's engagement with Dante, I am very much aware that I am walking a well-trodden path: ever since Samuel Beckett warned us that 'the danger is in the neatness of identifications', Joyce's readers have been discussing this relationship.[13] The intertextual presence of Dante has thus become something of an accepted premise in Joycean criticism, and has been the subject of many discussions, and included within the scope of many more.[14] This book benefits immeasurably from that wealth

[12] In this respect, my approach develops Lucia Boldrini's discussion of the role of Romantic and Victorian 'medievalisms' in determining Joyce's approach to the Middle Ages, see 'Introduction: Middayevil Joyce', 17–27.

[13] Samuel Beckett, 'Dante … Bruno. Vico … Joyce', 5. On Beckett's essay in relation to *Finnegans Wake* see Lucia Boldrini, *Joyce, Dante, and the Poetics of Literary Relations: Language and Meaning in 'Finnegans Wake'*, 15–25. For a discussion in the context of the modern reception of Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia* see Iman Javadi, 'The English Reception of Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia*', 301–3.

[14] Examples of readings that place Joyce within wider studies of Dante and Italian literary culture include Milbank, *Dante and the Victorians*, 238–9; and Dasenbrock, *Imitating the Italians*, 125–6, 209–19.

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of discussion, but two particular studies have proved invaluable. In what was the first full-length study of Joyce's relationship with Dante, Mary Reynolds revealed the wide scope of the engagement, uncovering a range of quotations and allusions to the *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia* within works from *Stephen Hero* to *Finnegans Wake*. Reynolds advanced a number of comprehensive arguments for seeing Dante's texts as operating as structuring devices within Joyce's works, and emphasised his persistent interest in a number of Dantean themes. Indeed, Reynolds saw within Joyce's intertextual engagement 'a reasoned critical view of Dante's art, which he embodied in his fiction and did not otherwise express'.[15] Whilst today this kind of structural reading may seem a little problematic, Reynolds's study remains an important source that will be drawn on throughout our discussion. More recently, Lucia Boldrini has made a perceptive and stimulating study of the influence of Dante on the poetics of *Finnegans Wake*, in which she argues, not that 'the *Wake* was written according to a notion of poetics arrived at, practised or theorized by Dante and which Joyce adhered to, but that there is *a* poetics of *Finnegans Wake* […] which is comparable to the poetics of Dante's work'.[16] In following this nuanced line of argument, Boldrini not only convincingly shows Dante's importance to the *Wake* but also offers intertextual readings with substantial implications for Joyce's other texts, particularly *Ulysses*.[17]

In its concern with contextualising Joyce's engagement and seeing his interaction with Dante taking place within a historical discourse, this study will take a different line from either Reynolds or Boldrini, and where the discussion does touch upon similar material to these earlier studies (such as in the poetics of *Ulysses*), it will view them from a different perspective. In this respect, this book is positioned to take advantage of a number of recent developments in scholarship and approach. One such development is the wealth of new manuscript material now available for the study of Joyce's writing; thanks to this expanding resource, we will for the first time be able to draw the documentary evidence of Joyce's first reading of Dante into a wider study of his Dantean engagements. This manuscript evidence of Joyce's early reading reflects the importance of relocating our view of his relationship with Dante within its textual context. Thus, every

[15] Mary Reynolds, *Joyce and Dante: The Shaping Imagination*, 3–4.
[16] Boldrini, *Joyce, Dante*, 13.
[17] Other notable studies of Joyce's relationship with Dante include Howard Helsinger, 'Joyce and Dante', 591–601; and Dominic Manganiello, *Joyce's Politics*, 190–202. Studies that parallel the canons of Joyce and Dante include Gian Balsamo, *Joyce's Messianism: Dante, Negative Existence and the Messianic Self*; Jennifer Fraser, *Rite of Passage in the Narratives of Dante and Joyce*; and Sam Slote, *The Silence in Progress of Dante, Mallarmé, and Joyce*.

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quotation from Dante in this book will be drawn – in the case of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia* – from the editions Joyce is known to have owned and used, or – in the case of the so-called *opere minori* – from Edward Moore's contemporary edition of he complete works (1894), and at points throughout we will engage closely with the material textuality of Joyce's Dantean texts. In contextualising and historicising Joyce's reading, this book joins a growing number of Joycean studies that are returning to the cultural and social contexts of Joyce's youth, and unearthing stimulating readings of his work through this historical discourse.[18] Finally, the discussion will take full advantage of the remarkable recent developments in the study of Dante. Such is Joyce's dominance in 'modern' literary studies that it's sometimes hard to see him as part of a larger 'conversation'; however, in recent years the study of Dante's 'modern afterlife' has intensified, and Dante's nineteenth-century appropriations and interpretations are being more fully understood and lucidly discussed than ever before.[19] Thus in re-contextualising Joyce's relationship with a 'nineteenth-century' Dante, this study will be seeking to further draw Joyce into the conversation around Dante, as well as drawing Dante more fully into a reading of Joyce.

With the benefit of these developments in scholarship and textual material, this book will seek to trace a trajectory through Joyce's reading of Dante. Whereas a study like Reynolds's positioned Dante as a structuring parallel for all of Joyce's work, I make no such comprehensive claims; the sheer breadth of Dantean material, and the lifelong nature of Joyce's engagement with the poet, offers ample reason to question any totalising reading of their relationship. Indeed, it is one hope of this study that, by re-visiting the presence of Dante within Joyce's work from a contextual perspective, it might stimulate further discussion and reappraisal of this central intertextual engagement. In this respect, the partiality of the term 'trajectory' commends itself: we will be taking one possible path through Joyce's Dantean engagement, of which there are many others equally traversable. However, as the first chapter shows, the trajectory of this study

[18] See Roy Gottfried, *Joyce's Misbelief* and Geert Lernout, '*Help My Unbelief*': *James Joyce & Religion* for two examples of contrasting, contextual readings of Joyce's attitude to religious faith.

[19] For examples of some of the most important work on Dante's nineteenth-century and 'modern' reception see Ellis, *Dante and English Poetry*, 3–139; Milbank, *Dante and the Victorians*; Julia Straub, *A Victorian Muse: The Afterlife of Dante's Beatrice in Nineteenth-Century Literature*; Havely, *Dante's British Public*, 128–259; Nick Havely (ed.), *Dante's Modern Afterlife: Reception and Response from Blake to Heaney*; Nick Havely (ed.), *Dante in the Nineteenth Century: Reception, Canonicity, Popularization*; Aida Audeh and Nick Havely (eds.), *Dante in the Long Nineteenth Century: Nationality, Identity and Appropriation*.

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arises out of the circumstances of Joyce's first reading of Dante, and (as reflected in the subtitle to this book) traces a movement through Joyce's writing on a key thematic concern: his exploration of exile as a mode of alienation and his growing interest in ideas of community.

In discussing exile we will thus be considering a well-worn topic of Joyce criticism, most prominently addressed through Hélène Cixous's monumental study, but a subject that remains a continuing concern in scholarship today.[20] Previous critics have already paralleled Joyce's self-imposed 'exile' from Dublin with Dante's experience of politically inflicted exile from Florence; however, the path through Joyce's writing on exile and alienation that his Dantean reading will allow us to chart will come to condition and unsettle some of these earlier discussions.[21] By seeing Joyce's exilic discourse as unfolding throughout the course of his work in tandem with his developing conception of Dante, it will be possible to clarify Joyce's growing scepticism towards his early thoughts on exile, explore his discovery of a creative form of textual memory and chart the emerging co-implication of ideas of community and belonging within his exilic writing. In this respect, following an itinerary of exile and community through Joyce's Dantean engagement will reveal the potential for a re-contextualised sense of Joyce's reading to alter our understanding of this central literary relationship and of one of his lasting thematic and rhetorical preoccupations.

Contrary to the view that Dante's importance to Joyce diminished with time, or that his interest represented a 'Dante phase', Joyce's engagement with the poet was – as Boldrini and Reynolds have shown – truly lifelong, and thus this study will offer substantial readings of works from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to *Exiles, Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.[22] Discussion of these works is not intended to offer a comprehensive survey of Joyce's oeuvre, but a particular itinerary through it, and one that originates in the terms of his earliest Dantean engagement. This particularity can easily account for the omission of *Dubliners* as a focus of discussion: whilst in stories like 'Eveline' and 'A Little Cloud' departure from Dublin figures prominently, there is no such explicit framing of these departures within the mode of 'exile' as we find in *A Portrait of the Artist*

[20] See Hélène Cixous, *Exile of James Joyce*; for more recent discussions of exile in Joyce's work see Joseph Kelly, 'Joyce's Exile: The Prodigal Son', 603–35; and Wim van Mierlo, 'The Greater Ireland Beyond the Sea: James Joyce, Exile, and Irish Emigration', 178–97.

[21] See Manganiello, *Joyce's Politics*, 190–202.

[22] On the 'waning' of Dante see Nino Frank, 'The Shadow That Had Lost Its Man', 80. On Joyce's supposed 'Dante phase' of 1903–6 see Cixous, *Exile of James Joyce*, 38.

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as a Young Man.[23] However, the question of *Dubliners* and its relation to the trajectory of Joyce's Dantean engagement raises a further important methodological point.

The view that *Dubliners* is structured by an intertextual parallel with the *Inferno* – originating in Stanislaus Joyce's reading of 'Grace' – was significantly developed by Mary Reynolds, and has become a critical commonplace.[24] Recently, some readers have started to challenge Stanislaus's sense of the parodic structure of 'Grace', and whilst exploration of Dantean intertexts can continue to produce interesting readings, I would tend to share this scepticism.[25] For example, in reading the opening line of 'The Sisters': 'There was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke' (*D* 1. 1), belief in the structural influence of the *Inferno* has led to seeing this sentence as a deliberate paralleling of the final lines inscribed above the Gates of Hell in the *Inferno*: ' "Lasciate ogni speranza, voi, ch' entrate!" ' [' "Abandon every hope, you who enter!" '] (*Inf.* 3. 9). Quite apart from the apparent 'misalignment' of the opening of *Dubliners*' first story with the close of the incipit of the *Commedia*'s third canto, we must admit on reflection that in all grammatical aspects of the sentences there is no similarity, and in actuality only a single resonant word: 'hope' and 'speranza'.

My scepticism about the teleological formulation of Dantean readings of *Dubliners* raises the question of the forms of intertextuality considered in this study. The focus of discussion will be on an array of intertextual intersections and resonances with Dante's works. The idea of resonance, with its interconnected senses of sympathetic vibration, 'sounding again' and of a placement within a spectrum, is key to the model of intertextuality I will be utilising. This discussion of Joyce's engagement with Dante will not take the form of a source-study or model of influence, nor represent an attempt to advance new theories of the operation of Joycean modes of intertextuality. Sometimes the resonances we explore will be of such a strong 'frequency' that they can be characterised through a source or influence relation, but at other times they will represent a softer, illuminating rhythm. By contextualising Joyce's reading of Dante and following

[23] Although Katherine Mullin has shown how in 'Eveline' Joyce drew on the rhetoric of economic emigration figured as exile, see 'Don't Cry for Me, Argentina: "Eveline" and the Seductions of Emigration Propaganda', 172–200.

[24] See Reynolds, *Joyce and Dante*, 156–9, 236–47.

[25] See Lernout, '*Help My Unbelief*', 128; and Lucia Boldrini, 'The Artist Paring His Quotations: Aesthetic and Ethical Implications of the Dantean Intertext in *Dubliners*', 228–48.

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an emergent trajectory through this engagement, we will both re-visit familiar intersections and uncover a range of new intertextual resonances of varying frequencies and significances.

Given the aims of this book to relocate Joyce's reading of Dante within a number of contexts, the structure of the discussion will be largely chronological.

Chapter 1 lays out the historical, cultural, educational and textual contexts in which Joyce first encountered Dante, and to which subsequent chapters will return. It explores the ways in which Dante's contestation by competing Catholic and secular orthodoxies within Joyce's Jesuit classroom established the liminal terms of his lifelong engagement with the poet.

Chapter 2 then follows the trajectory established by Joyce's early reading and considers his engagement with Dante's conceptions of exile and alienation. Drawing on both the nineteenth-century political and literary discourses of Dante as a figure of exile, and the manifestation of exile within such works as the *Vita Nuova*, the chapter shows how these Dantean traditions of 'heroic' and 'spiritual' exile determined the processes of self-fashioning alienation that Joyce explored within *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Exiles*.

Chapters 3 and 4 are concerned with the presence of Dante within the poetics of *Ulysses*. The first part of this discussion explores the ways in which Dante's process of 'Infernal metamorphosis' circumscribes the representation of Stephen Dedalus in the 'Proteus' and 'Scylla and Charybdis' chapters. Drawing on a range of intertextual resonances with Dante and other *trecento* authors, the third chapter shows how these Dantean poetics emphasise Joyce's growing scepticism towards exile, as expressed through Stephen's continual implication within a form of textual 'community'. Chapter 4 then considers the resonance between the poetics of 'Circe' and Dante's poetics of creative memory. Exploring the forms of textuality that Joyce encountered in the *Vita Nuova*, the chapter shows how Dante's memorative poetics can offer a reading of 'Circe' that reconceptualises the relation of the chapter to the rest of *Ulysses*, and alters our understanding of the operation of narrative and history throughout Joyce's novel.

Chapter 5 completes the trajectory of the study by further addressing the issues of interconnection and involvement raised in relation to *Ulysses*, through a discussion of the role of Issy in the family of *Finnegans Wake*. Exploring Issy's manifestation of a unique form of femininity intertextually conditioned by Joyce's reading of Dante's lyric poetry, this chapter

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demonstrates the *Wake*'s ultimate rejection of exile and withdrawal in favour of compromised participation and involvement in community.

Having thus arrived in the course of five chapters at a fuller sense of the contextual dynamics of Joyce's engagement with Dante, the Epilogue will address a final question. Did Joyce's Dante – this 'Dante with a difference' – have a life after Joyce?

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