Defining his poetics: Joyce's early notes on the Divine Comedy

JOYCE STUDIES IN ITALY

21

LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGES IN JOYCE'S FICTION

Edited by
Serenella Zanotti

ANICIA

Volume pubblicato con il contributo di The James Joyce Italian Foundation

Direttore responsabile: Franca Ruggieri
Registrazione Num.R.G, 1885/2016, Tribunale Ordinario di Cassino

ISSN 2281 – 373X

http://www.edizionianicia.it/store/
info@edizionianicia.it

Single copy price: €18.00
Subscription rates (one issue annually):
Personal: €18.00
Institutional: €30.00

The journal will be published on the following website:
https://thejamesjoyceitalianfoundation.wordpress.com/
Purchases can be made by directly contacting the publisher and then completing a bank transfer covering the price of the book and postage costs (this is €5.00 within Italy, but varies according to the country of destination).

Address: James Joyce Italian Foundation
Dipartimento di Lingue, Culture e Letterature Straniere
Via Valco di San Paolo, 19
00146 Roma
joyce_found@os.uniroma3.it
franca.ruggieri@uniroma3.it

CONTENTS

1. LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGES IN JOYCE'S FICTION

ILARIA NATALI

DEFINING HIS POETICS: JOYCE'S EARLY NOTES ON THE *DIVINE COMEDY*

In the "Eumaeus" episode of *Ulysses*, Bloom proves that he is not only unfamiliar with Italian, but also rather fallible and prone to error: easily prey to superficial and stereotypical views, he praises the melodious beauty of a string of vulgar expressions heard from a group of Italian ice cream sellers (*U* 16.309-347). Unable to understand the meaning of their conversation, Bloom focuses on the phonetic qualities of speech and prosody; yet, as Stephen emphasizes, the relationships between sound and meaning can be treacherous (*U* 16.362). As various scholars have already noted, while praising Italian, Bloom also misuses it, since his invocation "*Bella Poetria!*" should be "bella poesia", and when he attempts to say, "I want a beautiful woman", he ends up mentioning a poisonous plant, deadly nightshade (*U* 16.346-347).

"Eumaeus" suggests that the Italian language can be deceptive, but Fritz Senn notes that whenever language cannot be trusted in *Ulysses*, it simultaneously justifies unusual trust because "even its trickiness has a communicative value" (1972: 44); errors are particularly productive, as Bloom shows with his awkward comment. Because of his linguistic inadequacy, Bloom's approach to Italian is naïve, uninformed, unaware of any ideological deformations. While he may be candid, language in Joyce is never innocent or ideologically neutral, and the exclamation "*Bella Poetria!*" immediately attracts our attention, if nothing else, for the unexpected capitalization of the noun. As both Corinna Del Greco Lobner and Juliette Taylor-Batty have emphasized, "*Poetria*" can be read as a portmanteau word blending "poesia" and "patria", the Italian fatherland; therefore, Bloom's error could have political implications and bear an allusion to the predicaments of Hasburg-ruled Trieste, as well as, by exten-

sion, of Joyce's native Dublin (Del Greco Lobner 1989: 8; Taylor-Batty 2013: 48).

While the 'political' implications of Bloom's words have received wide critical coverage, other overtones of the hybrid phrase "*Bella Poetria*" need further attention: "*Poetria*" is also a trilingual contamination of Latin, Italian and English. Furthermore, in Medieval Latin, the term *poetria* indicates the art of poetry, poetics. Its first uses are attested around the ninth century, and starting with the tenth century it was increasingly used in glosses of Horace's works or, more specifically, with reference to his *Ars Poetica* (see *OED*). Incidentally, Horace's poetry might have been in Joyce's mind when writing *Ulysses*, as suggested by an unexpected association of ideas in one of his letters: "I thought of beginning my story Ulysses: but I have too many cares at present. Ferrero devotes a chapter in his history of Rome to the Odes of Horace" (*Letters* II: 190).

Joyce could have also been aware that *poetria* was famously used in the early thirteenth century by the rhetorician Geoffrey of Vinsauf, whose rhymed treatise *Poetria Nova* reclaimed novelty for the literature of his time by re-reading Horace's 'old' poetics – Vinsauf influenced other rhetoricians, as well as scholastic thinkers, historians, and poets (including Chaucer). Indeed, some parts of the night-town scene of *Ulysses* (e.g. *U* 15.2096-2109) seem to bear resemblance to the parodic and humorous examples of *ethopoeia* in *Poetria Nova* (III.508-515). In addition, Vinsauf repeatedly warns his readers not to trust the "face of a word" (IV.743), or phonetically pleasant sounds, which may conceal "the deformity" of speech (IV.746). He notes that musicality can be "a false thing" (IV.744), which "charms one who stands at a distance, but displeases the viewer who stands at close range" (IV.747-749). This certainly reminds us of Bloom and Stephen's encounter with the ice cream sellers' peculiarly ornate speech.

Even more interestingly, Dante Alighieri's *De vulgari eloquentia* is both a theoretical treatise on language and "a rhetoric, or *poetria,* of the *canzone*" (Boldrini 2001: 58). Dante himself consistently used the word "poetria" in both his Latin and vernacular writings[1] with reference to

[1] See, for instance, *Convivio* II.13.10, *Epistole* XIII.30 and XIII.32, *Vita Nuova* XXV.9.

Horace, and when explaining that the rhetoric of the ancients should be a model for the new poets who write in the 'illustrious' vulgar tongue (*De vulg*. II.IV.3). In light of Joyce's proven familiarity with *De vulgari eloquentia,* "Bella Poetria" could contain an allusion to Dante; if this is the case, in *Ulysses* his conception of 'vulgar tongue' is taken literally, in the current sense of crude or coarse speech. Seen in this perspective, Bloom's mistake "*Poetria*" ridicules the Medieval Italian tradition of 'good speech' and 'good writing', reducing it to a volley of oaths. Alternatively, Bloom could be posing as a 'Dantean' figure – after all, the general theme of "Eumaeus" is imposture – conferring nobility and authoritativeness on the 'vulgar'.

In either case, it seems particularly appropriate that references to Medieval Italian culture and Dante should surface in an episode dominated by ideas such as fatherhood and genealogy, exile and homecoming. Joyce's connection with Dante was deep-rooted and multifaceted; the following pages propose to deal with some of these many facets.

Joyce's notes in MS 36,639/1 at NLI

As is well known, Joyce's tendency towards language renovation developed at an early age, and Giorgio Melchiori discusses this precocious linguistic consciousness in "The Languages of Joyce", where he states: "Joyce's awareness of the feast [of languages] goes back to his adolescence" (1992: 2). After having mentioned "The Study of Languages", the essay Joyce wrote during his matriculation year at University College, Melchiori quotes a passage from *Stephen Hero* to demonstrate how some linguistic procedures found in later writings, especially in *Finnegans Wake*, were at work starting with Joyce's earliest approaches to literature.

Today, Melchiori's views find further support: ten years after "The Languages of Joyce" was published, the National Library of Ireland acquired a large collection of manuscripts known as the *Joyce Papers 2002*. This collection includes what could be some of the earliest documents written by Joyce, in particular his annotations on Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, which, according to Dirk Van Hulle, should be dated shortly before Joyce's matriculation exam in 1899. These notesheets offer precious

insights not only into Joyce's relationship with Dante, but also into the development of some predominant stylistic hallmarks of Joyce's works.

Available manuscript evidence of Joyce's early reading of *The Divine Comedy* consists of twenty-eight notesheets containing transcriptions from and annotations to Dante's *Inferno* from Canto I to XXV.[2] Significantly, the first sheet is partially covered by the name "Dante" written in blue (MS 36,639/1/1r);[3] throughout his writing career, Joyce often used coloured crayons whenever he revised his drafts in order to mark annotations that he included or planned to include elsewhere. Indeed, the different writing instruments used in the Dante notes (e.g. MS 18r) suggest that Joyce returned to the annotations to add words and phrases, or re-read his glosses at different stages. Mary Reynolds (1981) and Lucia Boldrini (2001), among others, have effectively demonstrated that Joyce's interest in Dante developed over a long span of time and never lapsed; thus, we may suppose that Joyce continued to study the *Comedy* and modify his annotations for some time.

Joyce's notes on the first six Cantos appear orderly and filled with lengthy glosses, most of which, as Dirk Van Hulle puts forward (2004: 4), could be taken from Eugenio Salomone Camerini's edition of the *Comedy*, first published in 1868. Doubtless, there are significant relationships between Camerini's commentary and Joyce's annotations; however, some caution is needed in establishing a direct connection between these texts. For one thing, Camerini's *Comedy* draws almost exclusively on previous exegetical findings, quoting verbatim from other commentators.[4] This edition has long been known as a broad and perspicuous collection of the 'best' critical tradition on Dante, with very marginal personal contributions from the editor. Given that also previous commentators tended to rely extensively on one another, often without signalling the parts of quoted text, identifying a single source for Joyce's Dante notes in such a

[2] Digital reproductions of the manuscripts can be accessed online through the Catalogue in the NLI website: http://catalogue.nli.ie/Collection/vtls000194606.

[3] All subsequent references to the notesheets in MS 36,639/1 will contain only sheet numbers.

[4] It might be useful to mention that the full title of Camerini's edition is *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri, con note tratte dai migliori commenti per cura di Eugenio Camerini*, "Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, with Eugenio Camerini's edition of notes drawn from the best commentaries".

re-circulation of commentaries seems hardly possible. In addition, Joyce's glosses often include information that is not provided by Camerini, as is the case with MS 3r. In the notes for Canto II, line 102, Joyce associates Lucia with "carità attiva" ("active charity") and Beatrice with "la Filosofia Divina" ("Divine Philosophy"), aspects that are not mentioned by Camerini but are attentively discussed, for instance, by one of Camerini's sources, Giambattista Giuliani (Alighieri 1861: 224; 263; 270).

Starting roughly with Canto VII, Joyce's glosses to the *Inferno* become progressively hastier and more concise, until they are limited to lists of words and phrases. Apparently, there is a shift in focus from explanatory or exegetical accounts of the lines to the language Dante used in his text, a new interest which suggests that the *Comedy* could have been used as an instrument of language acquisition.

Joyce's level of proficiency in Italian when drafting the Dante notes has been the object of some critical debate. For instance, Van Hulle remarks that "[some pages] give the impression that Joyce was in full command of the language", but also that "[…] Joyce's command of the Italian language was still limited" (2004: 2, 3). There is no contradiction in Van Hulle's line of reasoning: he merely acknowledges that the documentation contains puzzling discrepancies that lead to opposing interpretations. On the one hand, the manuscripts indicate that Joyce's linguistic competence was not so basic: in most cases, he glosses quotations from the *Comedy* finding synonyms in Italian, and working with intralingual equivalents presupposes being able to cope with a rather extensive lexicon. On the other hand, the papers also include annotations regarding basic Italian vocabulary and elementary grammar rules (MS 28r), of which the following are some examples:[5]

non parlare (tu)	non parlate (voi)
" parli (Lei, lui)	" parlino (Loro)

tavolo – table
tavola – plank

[5] Throughout this essay, the following conventions have been used in the transcriptions of Joyce's notes: square brackets enclose added text; crossed out text is rendered as strikethroughs; the original underlining is maintained.

Lei è molto buona(o)
Voi/plurale

Perhaps, then, Joyce's competence in this language was not as developed as other parts of the documentation seem to suggest. The latter view is supported by James Robinson, who believes that the Dante notes "record the reading of a schoolboy still grappling with the fundamentals of both the Italian language and Dantean exegesis" (2016: 11).

In order to emphasize Joyce's lack of familiarity with Italian and with Dante, Robinson provides some examples of incorrect glosses (2016: 11); among them, he mentions a note to Canto XXIII, line 48:

48 pale – wings

In this Canto, Dante uses an analogy involving a water mill and its parts (lines 46-49):

Non corse mai sì tosto acqua per doccia A volger ruota di mulin terragno, Quand'ella più verso le pale approccia, Come il maestro mio per quel vivagno […]	Never did water, as it nears the paddles, rush down along the sluices cut through earth to turn a millwheel more swiftly than my master down that bank, […][6]

Joyce wrote the English term "wings" next to the Italian "pale", instead of choosing among semantic equivalents that are more suitable to the context, such as "blades" or "paddles". His translation may be adventurous, but it is acceptable in this context. Indeed, Joyce could have derived "wings" from secondary literature in Italian on the *Comedy*: the commentator Giosafatte Biagioli wrote that "pale, sono quelle ali conficcate nella ruota [del mulino]", that is, "*pale* are those wings fixed to the wheel [of the mill]" (Alighieri 1818: 463).

[6] All quotations from the original Italian text are from the fifth edition of Camerini's *Commedia* (Alighieri 1873), while English translations are by Jean Hollander and Robert Hollander (Alighieri 2000).

Various glosses may appear ambiguous, questionable, or incorrect, until we start reading them from a different angle. I believe that in these manuscripts Joyce is not only annotating interpretations of the *Comedy*, or expanding his Italian vocabulary: he is also experimenting with the language. In particular, he often explores minimal pairs, or phonologically similar words. This is the case with the notes for Canto VIII (MS 9r); next to the verb "fregi", taken from line 47, Joyce drafts the infinitives "fregiare : fregare", "to decorate : to rub", words that appear in the *Comedy* as both verbs and nouns, and had probably intrigued him.[7]

Through a similar juxtaposition of words, Joyce modifies the original text of Canto XXII, line 4, where his annotations read as follows (MS 22r):

> carradore = carter
> 4 – corridor[e] = runner

In the *Comedy*, "corridor" is a plural noun meaning "soldiers riding horses". After writing down "corridor" in his notes, Joyce adds a final "e" to the noun, transforming it into "corridore", "runner"; he also writes above it another word that sounds strikingly similar, but does not appear in the *Comedy*, "carradore", an ancient term for "carter" or "cartwright". The source of the latter term is unclear, but it is worth noting that in *Finnegans Wake* both "corridore" and "carradore" are brought together again in "corricatore" (*FW* 602.23), a word surrounded by references to horses and riding.

In these and other instances, Joyce shows that he was already attracted by the sensuality of sound and inclined to feats of linguistic gymnastics, which seem preparatory for the well-known euphonic wordplay that characterizes all his writings. The Dante notes, therefore, should not be read merely as a student's annotations, but rather as a language workshop that has evolved over time. This perspective makes it possible to explain seeming inconsistencies in Joyce's language skills, as well as the

[7] Though Joyce seems to be intrigued by the juxtaposition, his notes do not acknowledge further occurrences of its constituents in *Inferno*, such as the noun "fregi" ("decorations") in Canto XIV, line 72 and the verb "freghi" ("to rub [feet on the floor]", i.e. "to walk") in Canto XVI, line 33.

presence of a number of words and phrases that Joyce did not transcribe from the *Comedy*. Changing our perspective on the documentation shifts the significance of the Dante notes in Joycean studies to the foreground: by transcribing and glossing a selection of lines and words from the *Comedy*, Joyce provided useful hints concerning what parts of Dante's text were at the centre of his attention, opening the way to speculation about the reasons for such attention.

It should be emphasized that the extant documentation concerns only some Cantos of the *Inferno*, so, unfortunately, the complete picture remains obscure; the evidence that we have, however, is certainly enough to trace some main tendencies. If, as Melchiori states, "[r]hythms and sounds of words are the most powerful suggesters of dislocutions" (1992: 6), Joyce was undoubtedly discovering and appreciating their potential through Dante's *Comedy*. An example can be found in the notes for Canto XV: Joyce seems to pay much attention to rhyme and assonance, writing down the words "orbi", "forbi" "strame" "letame" "garra" "marra" "arra" "vedervi" "servi" (MS15r).[8]

A brief parenthesis should be opened on the last term listed above: "servi" ("servants") is only part of Joyce's original annotation, "il servo de' servi". This expression is used ironically by Dante in line 112 as a reference to the Pope, who is officially named *servus servorum Dei*, "the servant of servants of God", a formula that was probably devised from St. Augustine's *Confessions* (9.9.22). Joyce re-employed this locution in *Ulysses* ("A server of a servant", *U* 1.312) and in *Finnegans Wake* ("the server of servants", *FW* 233.17)[9], connecting it with Noah's curse on Canaan (*Gen* 9:25) rather than with *Confessions*.

Returning to questions of sound, Canto XV of *Inferno* is replete with harsh rhymes: Dante walks among the sinners punished for violence against nature and meets his former teacher Brunetto Latini, who uses a series of animal metaphors to warn him that the Florentines will try to devour him in a political sense. Accordingly, the rhotic sounds that per-

[8] These words are taken from lines 67-112 of Canto XV; according to their context, they could be translated in English as "blind", "purify", "forage", "dung-heap", "chide", "hoe", "prophecy", "see (you)", and "servants".

[9] Further allusions to *servus servorum Dei* can be found in *FW* 97.34, 364.19, 465.5, and 604.27.

vade this canto remind us of the growling of an angry (or hungry) beast. As John Ahern remarks, the human mouth, the narrator's, the character's or the reader's, is always the true locus of Dante's *Inferno* (1998: 416). The same thing can be said of Joyce's works, judging by the extent to which words are chewed, mouthed and gnashed in his writings; as concerns the "Calypso" episode of *Ulysses*, for instance, Maud Ellmann suggests that Joyce "invites the reader to munch the consonants" together with the protagonist Bloom (2009: 335). This sounds strikingly similar to Ahern's remarks on the *Inferno*, when he says that Dante reminds the reader "that the poem is, among other things, sound uttered by his mouth" (1998: 416).

The connections between Dante and Joyce, however, are not limited to harsh diction and jaw-breaking lines. As Mandelstam notes, "Dante made careful study of all speech defects, listening closely to stutterers and lispers, to nasal twangs and inarticulate pronunciations, and […] he learned much from them" (qtd. in Heaney 1985: 15); in turn, apparently, Joyce learnt much from Dante. Among the notes for Canto VII is the famous line of the *Comedy* "Pape satan, pape satan aleppe" (line 1, MS 8r), the five garbled words pronounced by the guardian of the fourth circle which admittedly inspired Joyce, and which he repeatedly re-worked and imitated in his writings.[10] The National Library notesheets not only show that Joyce's interest in Plutus' deformed utterance started very early, when he was still a young man, but they also suggest that he paid particular attention to other instances of perturbed language or altered speech fluency in the *Comedy*. Let me consider two significant examples in this sense.

In MS 10r, Joyce looked into an instance of broken speech in the *Comedy*, transcribing Virgil's interrupted and hesitant speech in line 8 of Canto IX, which has been defined as the canto of weakness, ambiguity and apprehension (Cerbo 2011: 402):

8 Cominciò ei: se non… tal ne s'offerse

[10] Reportedly, Joyce commented this line of the *Inferno* with Ettore Settanni as follows: "Padre Dante mi perdoni, ma io sono partito da questa tecnica della deformazione per raggiungere un'armonia che vince la nostra intelligenza, come la musica" ("May father Dante forgive me, but I started from this technique of deformation to achieve a harmony that defeats our intelligence, as music does"). See Boldrini 2001: 92.

At the opening of this canto, Dante and Virgil are outside of the gate to the infernal City of Dis, where they are threatened by devils and awaiting divine intervention. Virgil tries to reassure Dante, but his speech betrays a moment of doubt (lines 7-8):

"Pur a noi converrà vincer la punga"	"Yet we must win this fight," he began,
Cominciò ei: "se non... tal ne s'offerse. […]"	"or else… Such help was promised us […]"

Virgil's hypothesis ("se non…", "or else…") is left without a consequence, and a feeling of uncertainty underlies the whole speech. The technique of breaking off sentences before their appointed time is a typical figure of classical rhetoric, aposiopesis, which Dante exploits here in an innovative way to express subtle psychological characterization.

In MS 14r, Joyce transcribes (incorrectly) another instance in which Dante uses poetical and rhetorical devices in a creative way. His note from Canto XIII reads as follows:

25 Io credo ch'io credetti ch'io credesse

In this case, the episode of dysfluency in the *Comedy* concerns the narrator, who repeats the same verb in different moods (line 25):

Io credo ch'ei credette ch'io credesse	I think he thought that I thought

This line has received much scholarly attention since the second half of the fourteenth century; various critics dismissed it as just a rhetorical quibbling typical of the Medieval period (see Alighieri 1817: 164, 1888: 332). The figure of speech employed here, in fact, is polyptoton, the repetition of words in different grammatical functions. Yet, Cesare Angelini notes that context is essential to appreciate the innovative use of polyptoton in this line (1967: 31); Dante the character is in the wood of the suicides, where those who committed self-murder are transformed into trees. As he enters this wood with Virgil, he can hear cries of pain but cannot see any tormented soul. Dante the traveller is baffled because he cannot

identify the source of the voices he hears, and Dante the narrator reproduces this feeling of bemusement in the text with a stammering verse.

Joyce must have been equally puzzled by this line, because he misquoted it as "Io credo ch'io credetti ch'io credesse", "I think I thought that I thought", thus managing to make the narrator's words more fractured and full of repetitions than the original. Even more significantly, Dante's text might have been a fruitful source of inspiration for the "Ithaca" episode of *Ulysses*:

> What, reduced to their simplest reciprocal form, were Bloom's thoughts about Stephen's thoughts about Bloom and about Stephen's thoughts about Bloom's thoughts about Stephen?
>
> He thought that he thought that he was a jew whereas he knew that he knew that he knew that he was not (*U* 17. 527-531).

In this passage, echoes of Dante's convoluted line seem to be combined with those of an instance of polyptoton in Persius' *Satires*: "scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter", "it is nothing for you to know a thing unless another knows that you know it" (I.27).

Adopting Dante's techniques

Since, as shown in the examples above, Joyce's annotations on the *Comedy* shine light on interruptions in the flow of speech, or failed attempts at eloquence contained in the first XXV Cantos of the *Inferno*, it is very tempting to think that the lines from Canto IX and XIII inspired and influenced Joyce's writing methods. For what concerns truncated speech and polyptoton specifically, there is little need to stress how central these rhetorical stratagems became in Joyce's later writings. Marian Eide notes that Joyce's works sometimes overwhelm their readers with the rhetoric of aposiopesis, so that, "[u]nexpectedly denied closure, the reader experiences a sense of not knowing, of not being able to arrive at an epistemological destination [...]" (2002: 32). Joyce's aposiopesis, together with other forms of hesitancy, may reproduce familiar features of ordinary speech, such as Father Butler's "get at you work or…" in "An Encounter" (*D* 20), or combine with other techniques to represent the complex mech-

anisms of human thought: "All quiet on Howth now. The distant hills seem. Where we. The rhododendrons. I am a fool perhaps" (*U* 13.1097-98). Borrowing Bernard Dupirez's categorization (1991:58), we might assume that Joyce makes wide use of "natural" aposiopesis; in a conflation of writing and orality (which can border on inarticulate discourse), the utterance is left incomplete as a representation of how our speech or thoughts do not follow to the end of a predictable development. The 'naturalness' of aposiopesis does not imply that the gaps are easily filled, as is the case with the mysterious truncated sentence that Bloom writes on the sand in "Nausicaa" (*U* 13.1258-64). Indeed, interrupted sentences mostly convey a sense of doubt, suspension, disruption, or indeterminacy, as in "The Sisters", where repeated use of aposiopesis creates "an intentional and ad infinitum suspension of meaning" (Pelaschiar 2018: 35).

Peter Auger (2010: 235) remarks that the English language does not offer much opportunity for the use of polyptoton, a trope of repetition that is said to be more fruitfully employed in other European languages. Despite linguistic constraints, polyptoton has become a distinguishing feature of Joyce's prose, starting with his earliest writings; in *Stephen Hero*, for instance, the protagonist addresses his "entire joyful spiritual salutation" to "the very spirit of Ibsen himself" (*SH* 47). Here, the narrator lapses into a humorous patronising of Stephen's intellectual conceit, and polyptoton is exploited as a means of regulating the 'distance' between narrator and character. This rhetorical device can help establish both the ironic detachment between fictional entities seen in *Stephen Hero* and the symbiotic proximity found in *Ulysses*, where "Mr Best said youngly. I feel Hamlet quite young" (*U* 9.387). As Dante does in Canto XIII of *Inferno*, Joyce uses polyptoton not only to signal affected artfulness and formality (see also Gabriel's speech in "The Dead", *D* 202), but also to hint at an underlying irony. The playfulness with the sounds of words extends itself to meaning, often establishing a sense of ambiguity, paradox, or downright humour; in the latter case, polyptoton is found in forms that resemble epigrams ("The mocker is never taken seriously when he is most serious. They talked seriously of mocker's seriousness", *U* 9.542-43) and tautologies ("[…] every natural act of a nature expressed or understood executed in natured nature by natural creatures in accordance with his, her and their natured natures", *U* 17. 2178-80).

Aposiopesis and polyptoton, however, find their most peculiar articulations in *Finnegans Wake*, where they become methods of linguistic composition and word formation. Not only is polyptoton rather frequent, but it can also be contained immanently in individual words, with no need of repetition, since grammatical functions are often unstable. For instance, in the excerpt "all the nights have falled on to long my hair. Not a sound, falling" (*FW* 619.21-22) there is only one actual repetition ("falled" / "falling"), but readers may perceive two instances of polyptoton, unsure whether the word "long" functions as an adjective, a verb, or both simultaneously. In addition, the text of *Finnegans Wake* itself is a sort of self-referential macro-aposiopesis, as its last sentence remains incomplete, and finds its conclusion only when one returns to the beginning of the book.

This essay also needs to find its conclusion by going back to the beginning, to the *bella poetria*. In Medieval times, the *poetriae* were studied at school, by young pupils; they were chiefly designed "to instil habits of mind" (Murphy 2005, 60) and teach about the possibilities of speech, without concern about national or linguistic boundaries. At a young age, similarly, Joyce seems to have fashioned at least some principles of his literary composition by exploiting Dante's *Comedy*, which for him became a linguistic playground of textual possibilities, and therefore, his own '*poetria*'. Through this encounter with Dante, Joyce started defining his polysemous and babelized personal language, with increasing awareness of working simultaneously within and beyond the reach of tradition, of engaging in a constant dialogue with the past and the elsewhere. After all, Dante was not the only example Joyce followed. Apparently, he also applied quite too literally the advice offered by Geoffrey of Vinsauf in *Poetria Nova*:

> […] if a word is old, be its physician and give to the old a new vigour. Do not let the word invariably reside on its native soil – such residence dishonours it. Let it avoid its natural location, travel about elsewhere, and take up a pleasant abode on the estate of another. There let it stay as a novel guest, and give pleasure by its very strangeness. (IV.758-763)

Ahern, John (1998). "Canto XXXII. Amphion and the Poetics of Retaliation". In *Lectura Dantis: Inferno*, edited by Allen Mandelbaum, Anthony Oldcorn, Charles Ross, 413-423. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Alighieri, Dante (1817). *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, vol. I, edited by P. Pompeo Venturi. Livorno: Tommaso Masi.

Alighieri, Dante (1818). *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, vol. I, edited by Giosafatte Biagioli. Paris: Dondey-Dupré.

Alighieri, Dante (1873). *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, *con note tratte dai migliori commenti*, edited by Eugenio Camerini. Milano: Sonzogno.

Alighieri, Dante (1873). *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, vol. I, edited by Giuseppe Campi. Torino: Utet.

Alighieri, Dante (1896). *De Vulgari Eloquentia*. Firenze: Le Monnier.

Alighieri, Dante (2000). *Inferno*, trans. Jean Hollander and Robert Hollander. New York: Doubleday.

Angelini, Cesare (1967). *Il commento dell'esule (noterelle dantesche)*. Milano: All'Insegna del Pesce d'Oro.

Auger, Peter (2010). *The Anthem Dictionary of Literary Terms and Theory*. London and New York: Anthem.

Augustine of Hippo (1998). *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Boldrini, Lucia (2001). *Joyce, Dante, and the Poetics of Literary Relations: Language and Meaning in* Finnegans Wake. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Cerbo, Anna (2011). "Il canto IX dell'*Inferno*". In *Lectura Dantis 2002-2009. Vol. II: 2004-2005*, edited by Anna Cerbo, Aleksandra Žabjek, Ciro Di Fiore, 397-414. Napoli: Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale".

Del Greco Lobner, Corinna (1989). *James Joyce's Italian Connection*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Dupriez, Bernard (1991). *A Dictionary of Literary Devices*, trans. Albert W. Halsall. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Eide, Marian (2002). *Ethical Joyce*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Ellmann, Maud (2009). "James Joyce". In *The Cambridge Companion to English Novelists*, edited by Adrian Poole, 326-344. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Heaney, Seamus (1985). "Envies and Identifications: Dante and the Modern Poet". *Irish University Review,* Vol. 15, No. 1: 5-19.

Melchiori, Giorgio (1992). "The Languages of Joyce". In *The Languages of Joyce*, edited by Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli, Carla Marengo Vaglio, Christine Van Boheemen, 1-18. Philadelphia and Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Murphy, J. J. (2005). “The Arts of Poetry and Prose”. In *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: The Middle Ages*, vol. II, edited by Alastair Minnis, Ian Johnson, 42-67. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
Pelaschiar, Laura (2018). “Joyce’s Art of Silence in *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*”. In *James Joyce’s Silences*, edited by Jolanta Wawrzycka, Serenella Zanotti, 33-50. London: Bloomsbury.
Persius, *The Satires*, ed. John Conington. Oxford: Claredon.
Reynolds, Mary (1981). *Joyce and Dante: The Shaping Imagination*. Princeton: Princeton UP.
Robinson, James (2016). *Joyce’s Dante: Exile, Memory, and Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
Senn, Fritz (1972). “Book of Many Turns”. *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 1: 29-46.
Taylor-Batty, Juliette (2013). *Multilingualism in Modernist Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Van Hulle, Dirk (2004). *Joyce and Beckett, Discovering Dante*. Dublin: National Library of Ireland.
Vinsauf, Geoffrey of (1967). *Poetria Nova*, trans. Margaret F. Nims. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.