

Early *Ulysses* Documents: Uncovering Joyce Re-covering His “Oxen’s” End

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For some time, Joyce studies have dealt with questions of text generation, how from one stage to another, the shape of his work emerged. With *Ulysses*, the focus has been, with few exceptions, on later versions, primarily those between the fair copy and the first edition of 1922. Earlier phases of the novel have been cast in the latter’s shadow, as if judged too fragmented, too elusive, and too little related to its final configuration to deserve serious consideration. Of what relevance could the rejected content of quick sketches or other false starts prove?

Of late, however, Joyce’s drafts have been accorded a more promising status. They are seen as holding a potential for uncovering the materialization of narrative details as well as the sources underlying—or even not underlying—them. Gabler’s recent exploration of pre-fair copy documents, for example, revealed (with, as he admits, “no little astonishment”) that the phrase, “[the] book *The Lamplighter* by Miss Cummins” (Joyce, *Ulysses* 13.633), only managed to enter “Nausicaa” at a fairly late stage. The discovery gives pause to criticism that, by and large, has tended to lean on the Cummins reference to explicate the stylistics of the Gerty McDowell episode (Gabler 6-7). The study of another pre-fair copy document has disclosed that in “Oxen” Joyce originally had Moore, and not Mulligan (*Ulysses* 14.1486), deciphering the source of “the sentimentalist” aphorism in Stephen’s telegram (Sullivan 189).

Earlier documents can also provide a fruitful resource for uncovering an author’s compositional method. Revisions found at these stages are far more likely to offer clues to how he or she set about organizing material than are those inscribed in later documents; the latter, added after a work has assumed a more-or-less set form, often do not affect its basic structure, its “independence from its author” (Hurlebusch 84). Once the form emerges, changes tend to be confined to narrative trifling of one sort or another.

Since after preparing the Rosenbach fair copy, Joyce’s changes to *Ulysses* are of this “[e]xpansion and elaboration” sort (Litz 19), documents reflecting its earlier inscription are more likely to admit clues to his composing process. This, in part, because of their spacio-temporal materiality. Joyce typically divided the manuscript page in half, and inscribed a running text in the right column, leaving the wide left margin blank, a site for future revisions. The earlier a page in his composing cycle, the more brimming its margin, filled with material that augments and re-structures, as well as expands, the original version (Ferrer 262-64). Marginalia positioned furthest from their place of entry are probably among the last made, their preferred manuscript position, adjacent to the running text, being already occupied by changes entered earlier. Where space allows, revisions are interlined.

In these documents, Joyce’s handwriting varies considerably. In some, it appears

deliberate and careful; in others, careless, as if done quickly and with little regard for clarity. His changes are the product of numerous actions—restructuring, deleting, expanding, replacing—created at different moments, with different intensity, belying different concerns. The specific status of Joyce’s inscriptions can be discerned only from the autograph page; even then, not always. Ambiguities notwithstanding, the early documents do capture—in a way later material does not—Joyce in the act of composing, when his text was “on the move, caught up at the very moment when it seems to be astir still” (Hay 132). Their interrogation holds out the promise of uncovering, with some precision, what the criteria were that precipitated his revisions, some of them at least, criteria more subtle than just narrative expansion or elaboration.

To this end, research would, ideally, survey the vast collection of Joyce’s manuscripts. This study, however, is more modest: it engages a five-page draft of a single episode. Originally, the document was part of the Rosenbach fair copy. And though not compositionally primordial, it contains the oldest extant autograph of “All off for a buster,” the linguistic gallimaufry that closes “Oxen of the Sun.” Joyce described the early version as “a frightful jumble” (Joyce, *Letters* 139). In typical draft style, the holograph’s pages were inscribed continuously, paragraph after paragraph, down right-hand columns. The ample left margins, initially blank, became the site of revisions. Limited at first to a word or phrase, Joyce’s changes, both marginal and in-text, had by the final page, augmented the episode by nearly a quarter and transformed much of its internal structure. Many were so hastily inscribed that portions of the autograph have been rendered all but illegible.

Brevity aside, the holograph reveals the criteria Joyce used in revising his “jumble.” The episode placed an unusual strain upon Joyce’s representational practice in two ways. First, it required the rendering of an unprecedented array of English vernaculars: African, American, Scots, Chinese, Hibernian, and Yiddish, among others. The “voices” are heard (or more precisely, overheard) as Stephen Dedalus and company go “off for a buster,” off for a pub crawl following the birth of a Mina Purefoy’s child at the National Maternity Hospital. Second, the entire section, all nine paragraphs, lacks any indication of narrative presence. That is, in addition to inscribing a vernacular *melange*, the episode required Joyce as narrator to disappear from the text. Without a narrative voice, the holograph’s lines—or more accurately, its words and phrases, often elliptical—follow one another without intervention. The “Oxen” document, then, presents a plethora of voices in vernacular transcription, with each only haphazardly related to the others.

The manuscript’s appearance, filled with revisions and revisions of revisions, attests that after judging the composition of “All off for a buster” finished, Joyce returned to it in earnest. An interrogation of his changes shows that beyond a few that served to expand the narrative, like Bantam’s no longer being “teetee” but limiting his libations to “claret,” most of his revisions reflect criteria either absent from or only inadequately represented in the original right column.

The first of these called for tightening the structure of an all-too-demanding episode. Among revisions falling under this criterion, foremost are those repeating verbal fragments from prior sections of the novel. Document marginalia on the Gordon Bennett race; the Russo-Japanese war; Madden’s backing of Sceptre because of his jockey’s name; Bloom’s denial that he gave Bantam the tip on Throwaway: all are of this sort. Another group of revisions tightening the relation of “Oxen’s” *finale* to the

wider novel, were those girding its Homeric parallels. One, “[P]issed on green calf,” adds a thinly veiled allusion to the sacred oxen of Poseidon (Weiss 6); another, “cribbed” in “Cribbed out of Meredith,” recalls the traditional name of the sleeping space or stall for oxen (Osteen 228). The insertion of “Bloom” in “Rome boose for the ^Bloom^ toff,” created a spondee at each end of the utterance. With it, Joyce was conceivably trying to create a “double-thud motive,” an effect, he admitted, intended to give the reader “the sense of the hoofs of oxen” (*Letters* 140).

Finally, Joyce inscribed a pair of changes to augment not the narrator-less section’s relation to the larger work but rather its internal cohesion. “Your attention” is one. Echoing the military jargon found in the opening passage, “millingtary step” and “Tention,” the phrase links the martial tone of the beginning and end of “All off for a buster.” Another is the lone margin entry on the last holograph page, “Not half.” It enters the text just after Alexander J. Dowie’s claim to have saved “most half” this planet. Joyce’s addition could serve either of two functions. Either it denies this claim: Dowie has indeed not saved half the planet; or if taken as a marker of “emphatic assent” (Turner 108), “not half” creates the dialogic “call and response” pattern typical of the preaching style being parodied. In either case, like the others discussed here, it serves to establish an island of coherence, albeit a small one, in what, in the right column, appears more a sea of unrelated voices.

Holograph changes indicate that the second criterion governing Joyce’s revision of “Oxen’s” close concerned his readers’ ability to follow the unmonitored rush of vernacular English. In this, the episode inscribed in the right column left much to be desired. These revisions fall in two groups.

The first involves speaker identification. As if in an effort to mitigate bedlam, Joyce inserted material that had characters quoting themselves. In one, “Ours is the white death, o the ruddy birth,” squeezed into a slip of space in the main column, Joyce repeated almost verbatim a line used by Mulligan in “Wandering Rocks” (*Ulysses* 10.1073-4). In another, “~~The~~ aunt^y^’s is writing your Pa,” he combined material from different episodes. The segment blends Simon Dedalus’s “Hades” admonition that he was going “to write” Mulligan’s aunt (*Ulysses* 6.65-66), with Mulligan’s warning in “Scylla and Charybdis” that his aunt was about “to call on” Simon (*Ulysses* 9.552-3). Here, Joyce turned the aunt’s “calling upon” into Simon’s “writing.” In both, “Ours is the white death, o the ruddy birth” and “~~The~~ aunt^y^’s is writing your Pa,” the speaker can be recognized more readily: Buck Mulligan.

Another revision witnessing Joyce’s enhancement of character identification is the interlinear, “Lives up near the Mat[e]r.” Straddling two sentences, “Buckled he is” and “Know his dona?,” it links their “he/his” pronouns. The “he” who is “buckled” and has a “dona” is the one who “lives” near the maternity hospital. A further addition, positioned in the left margin, announces “a pectoral trauma,” the result of a bee sting: it too strengthens the connection. Together, they identify the “he” who in the original draft was but furtively intimated. The “he” referent becomes unmistakable: the only male character who lives near the Mater and has recently suffered a pectoral wound is Leopold Bloom.

That “busters” interlocutors were to be defined, at least partly, by their oral style further accounts for Joyce’s eventual line-out of “Steve” in a late margin entry on the penultimate manuscript page. Its deletion avoided overtly attributing the added voice to a specific character. The same motivation accounts for his revising “Amby Bannon,”

with its obvious character referent, to the oblique "Namby Amby." Throughout the episode, who speaks to or even about whom was to be deciphered, if at all, by verbal features alone.

The second group of changes Joyce carried out to improve his vernacular cascade's readability demonstrate a concern with discourse cohesion. In the right-hand inscription, many utterances appear unconnected. They admit little, if any, relation either to lines which precede them or to those which follow. They occur contiguously for one reason: Joyce meant them to be "overheard" in the sequence given. He had set himself a formidable challenge: to represent the voices of perhaps as many as a dozen different characters without narrative intervention, with no indication of speaker turn-taking. Given such a demand, some dearth in comprehension seems inevitable. However, it leaves the reader, or perhaps "hearer," confronting a babble of voices engaged in simultaneous conversation; the result, an incessant and not quite intelligible verbal flow. His changes show that on re-reading, Joyce sensed the technique's potential for confusion, and revised with an eye toward bolstering its conversational form.

A few of these changes stand out. In "Avuncular's got my timepiece. Ten to. Don't mention it," the last phrase, "Don't mention it," bears no relation to the earlier two. It stands alone, inviting the query, "Mention what?" The margin addition, "Obligated awful," keyed to be entered just prior, gives the "it" a clear reference and clarifies the sequence's turn-taking character. What is being brushed aside by one speaker with "Don't mention it," is not as might appear initially, the time, "Ten to," but another interlocutor's approbation for being told the time, "Obligated awful." In short, the mutation turned the lines toward conversation.

Joyce's concern for the dialogic aspect of "All off for a buster," is attested by another revision. In the holograph's brief exchange, "Mullee! Whatee?" he deleted the enclitic suffix, "ee," a pidgin English feature, from "Whatee?" and transformed it into the opening of an Hibernian phrase, "What's on you?" He very likely dropped the enclitic because its iteration assigned the /i:/ marker to two speakers. Throughout the right-column draft, Joyce was careful to avoid giving the same speech features to different characters, as though these markers were functioning as leitmotifs, speakers each having their own unique repertoire. While it is not possible to assign all, or even more than a portion, of the lines to individual characters, in "Mullee! Whatee?" it is fairly obvious that two speakers, Mulligan and his interlocutor, use the same "ee" marker. Upon review Joyce augmented the segment's dialogic roots by transforming Buck Mulligan's initial response, "Whatee," into "What's on you." Clarifying again the episode's "give and take" banter.

Perhaps the most poignant illustration of Joyce's concern for discourse cohesion, for his reader's ability to follow a cascade of vernaculars, occurs midway through the episode where nine marginalia appear on a single page, almost all of them amplifying speech styles present in the right column. Their significance derives from their placement—each was carefully tailored to be inserted in a matching vernacular context.

Joyce marked, "S'elp me," a likely candidate for American colloquial, to precede the Americanism, "Honest injun." Nearby is the insert key for the more complex segment, "There's one great big holy friar! Vat for you no me tell, mossos." Its first half captures American colloquial, its second Yiddish English. Both conform to the style they adjoin in the running draft. The sequence enters immediately after the

Americanisms of, "Honest injun. Shiver my timbers if I had," and just prior to the Yiddish string, "Vel, I reckon, if that aint a sheeny nachez." Most, if not all, of Joyce's "voice" marginalia demonstrate a similar awareness of vernacular context, as if in forging his revisions Joyce recognized that style mixing would only further encumber his reader's ability to follow along.

In addition to those uncovering Joyce's struggle to tighten the episode's structure and to enhance the cohesion of its vernacular voices, the "buster" document contains other revisions. None, however, are more engaging than those which reveal how he recreated on the manuscript page, in a linear medium, a feature frequently encountered when numerous conversations take place at the same time. That is, they uncover his criteria for representing the aural experience of "voice overlap," of simultaneous speakers' voices interfering with one another. His autograph revisions indicate that Joyce's linguistic criteria for capturing this were rather sophisticated. They can be reconstructed from his line-out of "Amping" and his reduction of "Beatitudes" in, "March! Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are. [^]Beatitudes![^] ~~Amping~~ [^]parching^{^^}." Occurring as they do in the same line, or more precisely, at the same moment, these changes, modest at first sight, clarify the principle he used in deciding when, under what textual conditions, part of an expression could be eliminated without the reader's understanding being impaired. Or so he thought.

The sequence was generated as follows. After completing the initial segment, "March! Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are. Amping," Joyce interlined "Beatitudes!" He then deleted "Amping," a clipped form of "tramping," and replaced it with a similarly reduced form of "Beatitudes"; he crossed out its first syllable, leaving "atitudes!" Each change was carefully designed. Before the opening syllable was dropped, "Beatitudes!" marked the third appearance of the word in almost as many lines: four earlier in the phrase "British Beatitudes!"; two earlier where the original phrase was cut to "Beatitudes!"; and here reduced to "atitudes." With such iteration Joyce surmised that "atitudes!" could easily be read as a clipped version of the original. In the rush of conversation, with multiple characters speaking at the same moment, the word's opening syllable was eclipsed by the "are" intoned by someone finishing the song line "Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are. . . ." Its single "t" seemed to assure that it would be recognized as a shortened form, and not be confused with homophonous "attitudes," army slang for "straighten up." (Their polyphony, however, was probably not lost on Joyce. Both meanings suited the context: one as a reduced word form caused by speaker overlap; the other as a command breaking the military song line.)

Joyce's linguistic criteria are further elucidated in the autograph revision of "Amping" to "Parching." Because it had been preceded by its full form twice, Joyce felt that "atitudes" would be read as a contraction of "Beatitudes." "Amping," however, was not so contextualized. It was not preceded by a full equivalent: there is no "tramping" earlier on in the original version. Even though uninflected "tramp" was repeated three times, on reviewing his lines Joyce must have sensed the confusion possible with "amping." Without a single occurrence of "tramping" to prepare the reader, a successful reading of the clipped variant was not assured. So he deleted it, and replaced it with "Parching." Once again, Joyce's choice is instructive. "Parching" offered three advantages. Its full form status avoided confusion. It rhymed, as did "amping," with the progressive verb inflection expected at the end of the song line parodied here: "Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching." And, finally, its denotation

resonated with the speakers' destination, Burke's pub.

From these final revisions, then, the deletion of "amping" and the reduction of "Beatitudes," it is clear that Joyce's representation of verbal overlap was guided, at least partially, by the criterion of anaphoric equivalence, viz., clipped forms could be effective only when their full anaphoric equivalent appeared earlier in the text. His judgment was correct. When at the next compositional level, both fair copy and typescript, the second "Beatitudes" was deleted, "atitudes" lost much of its textual grounding. In the first edition of *Ulysses*, it appeared as "atitudes," with a single "t"; but by 1926 the form had acquired a second "t,"—"attitudes," its clipped status and polyphonic features being abandoned. The original form, with its subtle connection to the verbal context, remained lost to readers until the Gabler edition of 1984.

Thus however elusive, however fragmented, and however difficult to decode, the revisional evidence found in this early "All off for a buster" document captures Joyce in the act of composing one of *Ulysses*' more demanding language experiments. It uncovers the criteria, a few at least, he used to scaffold his "frightful jumble," criteria which would be far more difficult—if not impossible—to uncover from any subsequent version. The degree to which these criteria proved sufficient for Joyce's task, crafting a sort of vernacular "free fall," may remain an open question, but their recovery clearly indicates that an interrogation of other *Ulysses* documents, notebooks, and drafts, stands to further elucidate as yet unrecognized phases in his composing process.

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