

Earmarking ‘Oxen of the Sun’: On the Dates of the Copybook Drafts

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The salient document in treatments of the ‘Oxen of the Sun’ genetic dossier, Joyce’s oft-quoted letter to Frank Budgen of March 1920 has enjoyed a long critical afterlife. First published as a lengthy extract by A. M. Klein in the Canadian quarterly *Here and Now* in January 1949, the letter was then in the possession of John J. Slocum. Ellsworth G. Mason had furnished Klein with a transcript in the summer of ’48, but it took some back-and-forth with the ever-circumspect Slocum before Klein gained closer access to the original in the form of a microfilm facsimile. Even at that remove, Joyce’s handwriting elicited ‘a positive thrill’.¹ The fruit of this encounter, Klein’s proto-structuralist treatment of the episode, thrills with positivism as the Canadian poet tries to make visible the divisions in the ‘nineparted episode’ by way of Joyce’s letter.²

The date assigned to the letter has been revised several times. Klein’s *Here and Now* contribution opens *in medias res*: ‘In a letter dated *Trieste, the second of March* 1920, James Joyce wrote to his friend Frank Budgen’.³ Stuart Gilbert brought this assignation forward in time to 13 March in the 1957 edition of *Letters of James Joyce*, an assessment that Richard Ellmann, in turn, further post-dated to a more tentative, question-marked 20 March in his 1966 update of Gilbert’s volume.⁴ This later date reappears, shorn of its question mark, in the 1975 *Selected Letters*.⁵ More recently, as Chrissie Van Mierlo has noted, the collection list for the James Joyce Collection at Yale University Library specifies 26 March as the date of the letter.⁶

Why these incremental nudges matter is because the letter has served for decades as the critical linchpin holding together the timeline of Joyce’s work on ‘Oxen’. For the editors of the *James Joyce Archive*, for example, the episode’s two surviving draft levels ‘probably date’ to between early February and 20 March 1920 (*JJA* 14:ix). The letter to Budgen, then, with its post-Gilbert dating, provides a *terminus ad quem* for the drafts because, as the editors see it, the letter quotes versions of the passages that are ‘a little more advanced’ than their copybook counterparts (*JJA* 14:ix). Similarly, in his catalogue of the University at Buffalo James Joyce Collection, Luca Crispi assigns a blanket dating of ‘between early February and 20 March 1920’ to all eight of the ‘Oxen’ copybooks that are now at Buffalo.⁷ What this essay argues, by contrast, is that late March was still a very early moment in the drafting of ‘Oxen’ and, moreover, that Joyce drafted the episode within a much shorter timeframe than we have previously supposed. In order to formulate this argument, the essay marshals two very different kinds of evidence: collation of the letter to Budgen with the surviving drafts of ‘Oxen’ shows just how far Joyce was in the drafting process by late March (i.e. not very far at all) and a focus on the exogenetic research he undertook for the episode indicates just how late it was in the spring of 1920 before he progressed beyond the early copybook draft.

I thank Chrissie Van Mierlo for sharing her unpublished research with me.

1. A. M. Klein to John J. Slocum, 9 December 1948, in Klein, *The Letters*, 177.

2. Joyce quoted in Klein, ‘The Oxen of the Sun’, 28, 29.

3. Klein, ‘The Oxen of the Sun’, 28 (emphasis in original).

4. James Joyce, *Letters of James Joyce*, 138; *Letters I*, 139.

5. *SL*, 251. To avoid confusing the two editions of *Letters I*, I quote from the letter in *SL*, 251–52.

6. See Chrissie Van Mierlo, ‘“Oxen of the Sun” Notesheet 17: Commentary and Annotations with a New List of Sources, and Transcriptions or Oxtail Soup: the Ingredients’, *Genetic Joyce Studies*.

7. Luca Crispi, The UB James Joyce Catalog.

This term, 'the early draft', is a mainstay of genetic treatments of 'Oxen of the Sun'. Whereas Bernard Gheerbrant in his catalogue of the 1949 Joyce exhibit at Librairie La Hune noted only that 'cahier D' or UB MS V.A.18 reprises material from 'cahier B' (V.A.12) in modified form,⁸ Peter Spielberg usefully separated the eight 'Oxen' copybooks into

two different stages in the development of the episode. MSS. V.A.11. and V.A.12. are early drafts. Probably Joyce divided the episode into four parts at this point, since each of the MSS. represents about 11 pages of the 45-page episode. MSS. V.A.13., 14., 15., 16., 17., 18. are late drafts. Probably Joyce divided the episode into ten parts at this point, since each of the MSS. represents about 4½ pages of the 45-page episode.⁹

For Crispi, each set of copybooks constitute a single 'earlier draft' and 'later draft'; more recently, he has written of an 'Earlier Draft Level' and a 'Later Draft Level'.¹⁰ What these labels lack in imaginativeness, they make up for with simplicity. But the contradistinction of 'earlier' from 'later' is defined solely in relational terms. Just how early is the early or earlier draft? how late the later? In a 2013 contribution to *Genetic Joyce Studies*, Crispi straddles the two drafts on either side of the March letter: he posits February to March as the 'active dates' of the Earlier Draft Level and March to May as the active dates of the Later Draft Level.¹¹ An appendix published in *Genetic Joyce Studies* last year reconsiders the neatness of this identification: the Earlier Draft Level is now described as active from February to April with the Later Draft Level confined to the months of April and May.¹² The present essay confirms this trend of re-dating the drafts to later in the spring and, furthermore, suggests that work on the Later Draft Level be confined to May.

8. Bernard Gheerbrant, *James Joyce: sa vie, son œuvre, son rayonnement, Octobre–Novembre, 1949*, item 258 n.p.

9. Peter Spielberg, *James Joyce's Manuscripts & Letters at the University of Buffalo*, 41 n. 15.

10. Crispi, 'The UB James Joyce Catalog and 'Joyce at Work on *Ulysses*: 1917–22: A Chronological List of the Extant *Ulysses* Manuscripts and Typescripts', *Genetic Joyce Studies*.

11. Crispi, 'Joyce at Work on *Ulysses*: 1917–22'.

12. Crispi, 'A *Ulysses* Manuscripts Workbook: Appendix: A new Census of *Ulysses* Holograph Manuscripts', *Genetic Joyce Studies*.

1. Collating the Letter and the Drafts

In order to collate the letter with the drafts, the fair copy, and the Gabler edition of ‘Oxen’, this essay employs CollateX, a text collation tool developed by the European-funded research project Interedition since 2010.¹³ CollateX collates not drafts but witnesses. A witness, then, is an editorial construct, a version of a sentence or string abstracted for purposes of comparison from a carrier document (such as a draft copybook). In other words, multiple witnesses can be abstracted from a single, busy revision site, each representing a discrete moment along the continuum of Joyce’s work on a document.

Though they are editorially valid, no interdocument witnesses were prepared. For the sake of manageability, the collation that follows limits the number of witnesses to two per document. The first witness represents the earliest stage of writing committed to a given document—the ‘base layer’ of writing—and the second witness, if Joyce has made changes, abstracts a ‘final state’ of the sentence or string. These designations can be thought of as editorial constructs that bookend work on a given document. An exception to this two-witness rule appears in the witness list for the second quotation from Joyce’s letter (‘Bloom dull dreamy heard: in held hat stony staring’ [SL, 251]). This sentence appears twice in the early draft, Buffalo MS V.A.11: once on a recto and, subsequently, on the facing verso as part of a lengthy rewrite of the base layer. Four witnesses are abstracted from these two revision sites.

The collation results were fed into alignment tables. These follow the logic of the CollateX alignment tables with some minor modifications. Transposition, important in the first and sixth quotations from Joyce’s letter, are flagged in brown. Changes made *currente calamo* to the base layer of writing are cancelled in the alignment-table cell. For example, on the collateral Rosenbach Manuscript of ‘Oxen’, Joyce wrote ‘Before born the’ and doubled back to overwrite ‘babe’ on the definite article, which he earlier excised on the later draft. Tokenization is below the level of the word when it impacts collation. Capitalisation is not considered a disqualification to agreement.

In order to facilitate readers’ navigation of the collation and analysis, the seven fragmentary quotations are here hyperlinked to later points in the essay. In his letter to Budgen, Joyce describes ‘a nineparted episode without divisions introduced by a Sallustian-Tacitean prelude’ (for which he gives no teaser quotation):

then by way of earliest English alliterative and monosyllabic and Anglo-Saxon (‘Before born the babe had bliss. Within the womb he won worship.’ [1.1] ‘Bloom dull dreamy heard: in held hat stony staring’ [1.2])

then by way of Mandeville (‘there came forth a scholar of medicine that men clepen etc’ [1.3])

then Malory’s *Morte d’Arthur* (‘but that franklin Lenehan was prompt ever to pour them so that at the least way mirth should not lack’ [1.4]),

then the Elizabethan chronicle style (‘about that present time young Stephen filled all cups’ [1.15]), then a passage solemn, as of Milton, Taylor, Hooker, followed by a choppy Latin-gossipy bit, style of Burton-Browne,

then a passage Bunyanesque (‘the reason was that in the way he fell in with a certain whore whose name she said is Bird in the Hand’ [1.6])

after a diarystyle bit Pepys-Evelyn (‘Bloom sitting snug with a party of wags, among them Dixon jun., Ja. Lynch, Doc. Madden and Stephen D. for a languor he had before and was now better, he having dreamed tonight a strange fancy and Mistress Purefoy there to be delivered, poor body, two days past her time and the midwives hard put to it, God send her quick issue’ [1.7]) and so on [...] (SL, 251–252)

13. For an informative account of CollateX in the context of the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project, see Ronald Haentjens-Dekker et al, ‘Computer-supported Collation of Modern Manuscripts: CollateX and the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project’.

1.1 First Anglo-Saxon fragment [\[back to letter\]](#)

Joyce offers two fragmentary quotations to illustrate the episode's progression 'by way of earliest English alliterative and monosyllabic and Anglo-Saxon' (*SL*, 251). The witness list for the first of these runs as follows:

W1	The text of Joyce's letter.	<i>SL</i> , 251
W2	The base layer of the early draft.	V.A.11 [2r]
W3	The final state of the early draft.	V.A.11 [2r]
W4	The base layer of the later draft.	nli 11B [18r]
W5	The final state of the later draft.	nli 11B [18r]
W6	The base layer of the fair copy.	Rosenbach MS [3r]
W7	The final state of the fair copy.	Rosenbach MS [3r]
W8	The Gabler edition.	<i>U</i> 14.60

The results of automatic collation were fed into an alignment table:

W1	Before born	the	babe	had	bliss	.	Within	the	womb	he	won	worship	.
W2	Before born	the	babe	was	blessed	.	Within	the	womb	he	won	worship	.
W3	Before born	the	babe	had	bliss	.	Within	the	womb	he	won	worship	.
W4	Before born	the	babe	had	bliss	.	Within	the	womb	he	won	worship	.
W5	Before born		babe	had	bliss	.	Within		womb	won	he	worship	.
W6	Before born	the	babe	had	bliss	.	Within		womb	won	he	worship	.
W7	Before born		babe		bliss	had	.	Within	womb	won	he	worship	.
W8	Before born		babe		bliss	had	.	Within	womb	won	he	worship	.

All eight witness contain a common core of six units: 'Before born' and 'babe' in the first of Joyce's two sentences; 'Within', 'womb', 'won', and 'worship' in the second. These invariant units are flagged in green boxes in the alignment table. An additional unit, the subject pronoun of the second sentence ('he'), is transposed on **W5** and, in this new position, remains constant across the following witnesses. The transposed unit is flagged in brown. Another result of the automatic collation that is readily discernible from the alignment table is the excision of the two definite articles on **W5**. Save for a momentary return of the first of these on **W6**, the collateral Rosenbach Manuscript of 'Oxen' (a slip that Joyce overwrote *currente calamo*), the

definite articles are omitted in the remaining witnesses. The black boxes flagging the two remaining units represent elements of the fragment that play the same syntactical role across witnesses but are subjected to paradigmatic substitution: ‘had bliss’ replaces ‘was blessed’ on **W3** but does syntactically identical work across all versions of the first of the two sentences.

The value of preparing an alignment table is that it allows us to construct an argument about the timeline of Joyce’s work on ‘Oxen’. In the present case, that means asking which of the seven witnesses arranged below the broken line most closely resembles **W1**. In other words, we assume that **W1** represents the most recent version of the fragment that Joyce had written by late March 1920. Both **W3** and **W4** are identical to **W1** and so we conclude that the letter to Budgen quotes from the episode as it stood somewhere between Joyce’s final revisions to the early draft and the base layer of writing committed to the later draft. In Joyce’s elaboration of the first of his two sentences, the base layer of the earlier draft (**W2**) represents an earlier stage of development than **W1**: the copybook reads at this point ‘was blessed’ while the other three witnesses lifted from copybook drafts agree with **W1** and read ‘had bliss’. Transpositions introduced at **W5** and on the collateral Rosenbach Manuscript (**W7**) divert further from **W1**. In sum, then, collation suggests that Joyce had written and revised the earlier draft of ‘Oxen’ before quoting from the episode in progress in the letter to Budgen. This claim will require further evidence. On the evidence of this fragment alone, we can postulate that by the time of the letter he may also have fair copied the passage and presumably, therefore, the entire early draft into a later draft (i.e. a now non-extant intermediary) and from that draft layer into the later draft. In order to test or refine the latter hypothesis, we continue in our collation of the other letter fragments.

1.2 Second Anglo-Saxon fragment [\[back to letter\]](#)

The witness list for the second Anglo-Saxon fragment includes:

W1	The text of Joyce's letter.	<i>SL</i> , 251
W2	The base layer of the early draft (recto).	V.A.11 [4r]
W3	The final state of the early draft (recto).	V.A.11 [4r]
W4	The base layer of the early draft (verso).	V.A.11 [3v]
W5	The final state of the early draft (verso).	V.A.11 [3v]
W6	The later draft. (unrevised)	V.A.13 [7r]
W7	The fair copy. (unrevised)	Rosenbach MS [5r]
W8	The Gabler edition.	<i>U</i> 14.104–5

Collation of these witnesses leads to the following alignment table:

W1	Bloom	dull dreamy	heard	:	in held hat	stony	staring.			
W2	His	,	mute,	condolent	,	heard	,	in held hat	dull	staring.
W3	Bloom	,	mute,	ruminant	,	heard	,	in held hat	sadly	staring.
W4	Sad	he	heard	those	words	,	in held hat	sore	staring.	
W5	Sad	he	heard	those	her	words	,	in held hat	sore	staring.
W6	He	heard	her	sad	words	,	in held hat	,	sore	staring.
W7	He	heard	her	sad	words	in held hat	,	sad	staring.	
W8	He	heard	her	sad	words	,	in held hat	sad	staring.	

The second Anglo-Saxon fragment has a smaller pool of common units: only 'heard', 'in held hat', and the terminal 'staring' feature in all eight witnesses. Again, the issue is which of the seven witnesses arranged below the broken line most closely resembles **W1**. Before answering this question, note how the alignment table makes visible Joyce's syntactic reorganisation of the sentence at **W4**. In the first three witnesses, the subject of the sentence ('His' or 'Bloom') is followed immediately by adjectival elaboration. At **W4**, Joyce dispenses with this structure, shifting the emphasis to a direct object of the verb (initially 'those words'). He also replaces the subject with a subject pronoun. This structure, for all Joyce's subsequent deliberation over

the adverb qualifying ‘staring’, remains a constant throughout all five witnesses from **W4** onward.

In other words, **W1** most neatly accords with **W2** and **W3**. What is unclear, however, is whether or not **W1** precedes these witnesses abstracted from the recto of the earlier draft. **W1** could either represent a version of the fragment preceding entirely the base layer of inscription on the recto or else it is an interim, extradraft version located between **W3** and **W4**, the base layer witness abstracted from the facing verso. The presence of ‘dull dreamy’ in **W1**, a recapitulation of Bloom’s extemporized verse from ‘Lestrygonians’—‘*The dreamy cloudy gull / Waves o’er the waters dull*’ (*U* 8.549–50)—finds an accord in the word ‘dull’ used adverbially in **W2**. This suggests that **W1** closer in the compositional sequence to the base layer of inscription of the copybook recto than to its subsequent revision on the same recto. What is certain, however, is that the quotation in the letter records a stage in the development of this fragment which precedes Joyce’s work on the facing verso of the draft and, hence, which precedes his work on the later draft.

What collation of both Anglo-Saxon fragment suggests, then, is that the letter quotes from the early draft of the episode. The hypothesis formulated at 2.1—that by the time he wrote the letter, Joyce may have fair copied the early draft into a later document—has been falsified. The evidence of this fragment confines agreement to the early draft and, moreover, to the first of its two ‘in held hat staring’ revision sites.

1.3 Mandeville fragment [\[back to letter\]](#)

The witness list for the fragment ‘by way of Mandeville’ includes:

W1	The text of Joyce's letter.	<i>SL</i> , 251
W2	The base layer of the early draft.	V.A.11 [6r]
W3	The final state of the early draft.	V.A.11 [6r]
W4	The base layer of the later draft.	V.A.14 [4–5r]
W5	The final state of the later draft.	V.A.14 [4–5r]
W6	The fair copy. (unrevised)	Rosenbach MS [9–10r]
W7	The Gabler edition.	<i>U</i> 14.188–93

Collation of these witnesses leads to the following alignment table, which, on account of the length of the passage, has been divided in two and, in the case of the witnesses after **W1**, has also been abbreviated:

W1	there	came	forth	a	scholar					
W2	There	?came							Dixon	...
W3	There	was	a	sort of scholars			, that is to wit,	Dixon	...	
W4	There	was	a	sort of scholars			, that is to wit,	Dixon	...	
W5	There	was	a	sort of scholars			along either side the board	, that is to wit,	Dixon	...
W6	There	was	a	sort of scholars			along either side the board	, that is to wit,	Dixon	...
W7	There	was	a	sort of scholars			along either side the board	, that is to wit,	Dixon	...

W1			of medicine				that men clepen	etc
W2	...	Madden, scholars	of medicine	,	and	...	Costello	Punch Costello
W3	...	Madden, scholars	of medicine	,	and	...	Costello	Punch Costello
W4	...	Madden, scholars	of medicine		and	...	Costello	Punch Costello
W5	...	Madden, scholars	of medicine		and	...	Costello	Punch Costello
W6	...	Madden, scholars	of medicine		and	...	Costello	Punch Costello
W7	...	Madden, scholars	of medicine	,	and	...	Costello	Punch Costello

For such a long string, even in this abbreviated rendering, it is telling that only four or five units are shared by **W1** and any of the subsequent six witnesses. These include the opening ‘there’ (with or without capitalization), the indefinite article, ‘scholar’ or ‘scholars of medicine’, and the phrase ‘that men clepen’. The uncertain reading ‘?came’ in **W2** may make up a fifth agreement. What this disparity suggests is one of two things: either the fragment had already assumed a complexity and degree of elaboration far beyond **W1** by the time Joyce came to commit a base layer of writing to the early draft or else, in the course of writing to Budgen, he abridged and condensed material that he had already written out at greater length. In other words, the letter either quotes from a germinal note for ‘Oxen’ or else it makes an abridgement of the draft in progress. This ambiguity is most apparent in the terminal unit. Where all of the other witnesses agree in the reading ‘Punch Costello’, **W1** has a placeholder ‘etc.’ in this position. Is this a case of an omitted substantive or a substantive yet to be specified?

The verb form at position two suggests **W1** is closest in the compositional process to **W2**. The witnesses from **W3** onward agree in verb choice (‘was’) but only the uncertain reading of ‘?came’ at **W2** matches **W1**. In other words, if **W1** were an instance of notetaking *from* the draft, the structure ‘came forth a’ is closest to **W2**. If not, it would precede **W2** as a germinal note for the passage.

1.4 Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* [back to letter]

The witness list for the Malory quotation includes:

W1	The text of Joyce's letter.	SL, 251–52
W2	The base layer of the early draft.	V.A.11 [7r]
W3	The final state of the early draft.	V.A.11 [7r]
W4	The later draft. (unrevised)	V.A.14 [6r]
W5	The fair copy. (unrevised)	Rosenbach MS [11r]
W6	The Gabler edition.	U 14.217–18

Collation of these witnesses leads to the following alignment table:

W1	but	that	franklin Lenehan was prompt	ever	to pour them		so that at the least way mirth	should	not lack
W2	but	the	franklin Lenehan was prompt		to pour them	ale	so that at the least way mirth	should	nothing fail
W3	but	the	franklin Lenehan was prompt		to pour them	ale	so that at the least way mirth	might	nothing fail
W4	but	the	franklin Lenehan was prompt		to pour them	ale	so that at the least way mirth	might	not lack
W5	but	the	franklin Lenehan was prompt		to pour them	ale	so that at the least way mirth	might	not lack
W6	but	the	franklin Lenehan was prompt	each when	to pour them	ale	so that at the least way mirth	might	not lack

In contrast with the Mandeville fragment, most of the elements of the Malory witness list are in agreement. A fifth unit, the word 'ale', is common to all witnesses after **W1**, but its exclusion from **W1** is presumably mistaken (notwithstanding the syntactic possibilities of Late Middle English). If ever there was any doubt that Joyce's letter represents a series of self-quotations rather than, say, extemporized composition, the dropped unit 'ale' in **W1** indicates that he was copying, however imperfectly, from another document. This means that about four fifths of the Malory fragment are invariant from letter to published edition. What is, as ever, at issue is just which witness most closely resembles the text of the letter.

In this respect, the alignment table exhibits several curious features. Focusing on the second and penultimate units—at **W1**, the words 'that' and 'should'—suggests that **W1** precedes all other witnesses. But **W1** also has the qualifier 'ever' at position four, a feature which aligns it most closely with **W6** and the published edition. (The latter's 'each when' was added as late as October 1921.) Moreover, **W1**'s final unit, 'not lack', agrees with the three witnesses from **W4** onward. In sum, then, the second unit of **W1** diverges from all subsequent witnesses (unless it is further evidence of imperfect copying on Joyce's part?); its fourth is absent or empty in **W2–W5**; its penultimate agrees only with **W2**; and its final unit agrees with witnesses **W4**, **W5**, and **W6**. Bearing the analysis of the previous collations in mind, the most

plausible explanation is that **W1** precedes **W4** – the unrevised, base layer of writing in the later draft. It might, moreover, correspond to a hypothetical witness to be abstracted from a now non-extant intermediary draft. All the same, we are inclined to place it closer in the compositional sequence to **W3**. While the final unit of the latter, ‘nothing fail’, does not agree with **W1**’s ‘not lack’ at this position, its penultimate unit, ‘might’, has already been revised beyond the ‘should’ of **W1**.

The basis for the final unit in **W2** and **W3** is the red-crossed note ‘did nothing fail’ on British Library ‘Oxen’ notesheet 3:11.¹⁴ Davison has traced this notesheet entry and its immediate neighbours to the Raphael Holinshed extract (‘Witchcraft’) in William Peacock’s *English Prose from Mandeville to Ruskin* (1903).¹⁵ What this means is Joyce had already started combing through anthologies for appropriable period diction before he wrote to Budgen in March 1920. While this should not surprise us, what is intriguing is the fact that, even before penning the letter, Joyce was already admitting clear anachronisms into his stylistic parodies. Holinshed’s floruit is a full century later than Malory’s. In other words, the section of ‘Oxen’ that Joyce would go on to describe to Budgen as ‘Malory’s *Morte d’Arthur*’ partook, in its earliest instantiation, of the ‘Elizabethan chronicle style’ his letter is so careful to distinguish it from.

Davison has done the most to dispel the critical commonplace that Joyce’s vaunted ‘progression’ (*SL*, 252) through English prose style is ‘successive, sequential and pedantically correct’, and she argues convincingly that the episode’s ‘final synthesis’ of historical prose styles is both more complex and less systematic than Joyce’s letter suggests.¹⁶ But the evidence of the Malory fragment and its early reliance on an Elizabethan chronicler suggests that, even before March 1920, Joyce was flouting chronology in the composition of the episode.

14. Phillip F. Herring, ed. *Joyce’s ‘Ulysses’ Notesheets in the British Museum*, 173.

15. Davison, ‘Joyce’s Incorporation of Literary Sources in “Oxen of the Sun”’, *Genetic Joyce Studies*. Joyce’s copy of Peacock is the 1912 fourth impression (item **153** in Michael Patrick Gillespie, *James Joyce’s Trieste Library*).

16. Davison, ‘Joyce’s Incorporation of Literary Sources in “Oxen of the Sun”’.

1.5 The Elizabethan chronicle style [[back to letter](#)]

The witness list for the ‘Elizabethan chronicle-style’ fragment includes:

W1	The text of Joyce’s letter.	<i>SL</i> , 252
W2	The early draft. (unrevised)	V.A.11 [8r]
W3	The later draft. (unrevised)	nli 11C [2r]
W4	The fair copy. (unrevised)	Rosenbach MS [13r]
W5	The Gabler edition.	<i>U</i> 14.277

Collation of these witnesses leads to the following alignment table:

W1	about that present time young Stephen filled	all cups
W2	about that present time young Stephen filled	full all cups
W3	about that present time young Stephen filled	all cups
W4	about that present time young Stephen filled	all cups
W5	About that present time young Stephen filled	all cups

What the alignment table shows is that the Elizabethan chronicle fragment stabilized very quickly. Indeed, this is the only case where the words Joyce quotes in his letter to Budgen are identical with those of the published text (save for an instance of capitalization). The only variant in the table occurs at **W2**. This suggests that either Joyce briefly considered a variant at this point or else the letter postdates the composition of the early draft. On the evidence of this alignment table alone, **W1** corresponds to any subsequent witness.

1.6 A passage Bunyanesque [\[back to letter\]](#)

The witness list for the ‘passage Bunyanesque’ includes:

W1	The text of Joyce’s letter.	SL, 252
W2	The base layer of the early draft.	V.A.12 [3r]
W3	The final state of the early draft.	V.A.12 [3r]
W4	The later draft. (unrevised)	V.A.15 [2r]
W5	The fair copy. (unrevised)	Rosenbach MS [19r]
W6	The Gabler edition.	U 14.448–50

Collation of these witnesses leads to the following alignment table:

W1	... that	in the way	he fell in with a	certain	whore		whose name	she said	is	Bird in the Hand	
W2	... that		he fell in with a		whore		whose name		was	Bird in the Hand	of an eyepleasing exterior
W3	... that	in the way	he fell in with a	certain	whore	of an eyepleasing exterior	whose name	she said	is	Bird in the Hand	
W4	... that	in the way	he fell in with a	certain	whore		whose name	, she said ,	is	Bird-in-the-Hand	of an eyepleasing exterior
W5	... that	in the way	he fell in with a		whore	of an eyepleasing exterior	whose name	, she said ,	is	Bird-in-the-Hand	
W6	... that	in the way	he fell in with a	certain	whore	of an eyepleasing exterior	whose name	, she said ,	is	Bird-in-the-Hand	

W1 includes several elements—‘in the way’, ‘certain’, and ‘she said’—that are absent in **W2**. Moreover, the verb tense in the relative clause in **W2** is in the past tense: the sex worker’s name *was* ‘Bird in the Hand’. Taken together, this suggests that **W1** represents a later stage in the fragment’s development than **W2**. All of the missing elements are added by **W3**, which, coupled with the transposition of ‘of an eyepleasing exterior’ on that witness, suggests that **W1** precedes **W3**. Qualifying this claim is the evidence at **W4** that Joyce either neglected to copy over this transposition or else briefly reverted to the reading at **W2**. Here, we observe that the rendering of the sex worker’s name as the hyphenated ‘Bird-in-the-Hand’ and the commas surrounding ‘she said’ in **W4**—features which remain in the fragment through to the published edition—indicate that **W4** represents a later stage in the fragment’s development. In fine, then, the letter postdates the base layer of the early draft but precedes its final state.

1.7 A diarystyle bit Pepys-Evelyn [\[back to letter\]](#)

Because Joyce quotes from the ‘diarystyle bit Pepys-Evelyn’ at such great length, we limit the witness list for the final fragment to the following versions only:

W1	The text of Joyce’s letter.	<i>SL</i> , 252
W2	The base layer of the early draft.	V.A.12 [5r]
W3	The final state of the early draft.	V.A.12 [5r]
W4	The base layer of the later draft.	V.A.14 [4–5r]
W5	The final state of the later draft.	V.A.14 [4–5r]

Collation of these witnesses leads to the following alignment table, which, on account of the length of the passage, has been divided into four segments and suitably abbreviated:

W1	Bloom		sitting snug with a party of wags ,						
W2	There	Bloom	with some wags						
W3	There	Bloom	sitting snug with a party wags ,						
W4	There	Bloom	sitting snug with a party of wags ,						
W5	There	Bloom	of Crawford's journal	sitting snug	with	a	covey	of	wags ,

Collation of only the first segment or phrase of Joyce’s fragment is sufficient to indicate the letter’s contemporaneity with the early draft of the episode. One apparent outlier, the absent initial unit ‘There’ in **W1**, is more suggestive of slight abbreviation on Joyce’s part in the course of letter-writing than an indication that the witness precedes all over versions. More convincing are the changes introduced at **W3**. For the first time, Bloom is described as ‘sitting snug’, a detail common to **W1** and to all witnesses after **W3**. The ‘party’ of wags is also introduced on this witness, although the ‘of’ unit linking the collective noun to the noun collected is not yet present. Finally, at this level **W2**’s ‘some’ is replaced by ‘a’ in **W3**, which agrees with **W1**. On the other hand, two changes first introduced on **W5**—the addition of ‘of Crawford’s journal’ and the substitution of ‘party’ with ‘covey’—most likely postdate the letter. In short, then, the evidence of the first segment alone indicates that the letter postdates the base layer of writing in the early draft but precedes the final state of the later draft.

W1				among them Dixon jun.		,
W2						
W3	likely		fellows	among them Dixon jun.		,
W4	likely		fellows	,	among them Dixon jun.	,
W5	likely	brangling	fellows	,	among them Dixon jun.	scholar of my lady of Mercy's ,

W2 is silent for this entire segment of the fragment. On the other hand, **W3**, the final state of the early draft, is already more advanced than **W1**. The addition of ‘likely fellows’ to this witness, then, allows us to refine our earlier hypothesis: the first and second segments indicate that the letter postdates the base layer of writing in the early draft but precedes its final state. In other words, the fragment is confined to the early draft. By **W5**, the addition of ‘brangling’ and of Dixon as a ‘jun. scholar of my lady of Mercy’s’ indicate a degree of development far beyond **W1**.

W1	Ja. Lynch, Doc. Madden and Stephen D.		for a languor he had	before	and	was now better, he having dreamed tonight a strange	fancy
W2			for a languor he had	before	but	was now better, he having dreamed tonight a strange	dream
W3	Ja. Lynch, doc. Madden and Stephen D.		for a languor he had	before	but	was now better, he having dreamed tonight a strange	fancy
W4	Ja. Lynch, doc. Madden and Stephen D.	Bloom	for a languor he had		but	was now better, he having dreamed tonight a strange	fancy
W5	Ja. Lynch, doc. Madden and Stephen D.	Bloom	for a languor he had		but	was now better, he having dreamed tonight a strange	fancy

The alignment table for the third segment indicates that the letter postdates the base layer of writing in the early draft but precedes the base layer of the later draft. **W2** lacks the initial unit ‘Ja. Lynch, Doc. Madden and Stephen D.’ common to all other witnesses, and its alternative final unit—‘dream’ for ‘fancy’—places it before **W1** in the sequence of the fragment’s development. **W1** does have the word ‘and’ at its third to final position where **W2** agrees with the ‘but’ of all other witnesses. This is less suggestive, then, of **W1** as first in the sequence of development than of an alternative to ‘but’ considered briefly between **W2** and **W3**—or of imperfect copying between **W3** and **W4**.

W1	...	poor body, two days past her	time and	the midwives	hard	put to it		, God send her	quick	issue
W2	...	poor body, two days past her	time and	the midwives	sore	put to it		, God send her		issue
W3	...	poor body, two days past her	time and	the midwives	sore	put to it		, God send her	quick	issue
W4	...	poor body, two days past her	term	the midwives	sore	put to it		, God send her	quick	issue
W5	...	poor body, two days past her	term	the midwives	sore	put to it	and can't deliver	, God send her	soon	issue

The final segment of the ‘diarystyle bit Pepys-Evelyn’ (SL, 252) is closest to **W3**, the final state of the early draft. While Joyce’s letter has the word ‘hard’ where all other witnesses agree with ‘sore’, the absence of a penultimate unit (‘quick’ in **W1** and **W3**) indicates that the letter version of the final segment postdates **W2**. At the other extremity, the revision of ‘time and’ to ‘term’ at **W4** indicates a degree of development beyond **W1**.

All told, then, the balance of evidence for the final fragment of Joyce’s letter is that it postdates the base layer of writing on the early draft but accords with or precedes the final state of the early draft. although there is some local agreement with the base layer of the later draft this is limited to the first segment, in which the final state of the early draft is identical with the base layer of the later one.

*

Noting the ingenuity with which critics have read ‘Oxen’ in terms of the letter to Budgen, Davison detects a general failure to appreciate the document’s status as ‘an exuberant statement of work in progress’.¹⁷ The evidence of collation bears out this indictment. In late March 1920, the early draft of ‘Oxen’ was in progress; Joyce had written a base layer of writing in at least the first two copybooks of the four-copybook draft. He had definite ideas as to how he would reshape and revise this material and had likely already begun to inflict changes on the draft. But, as Davison writes elsewhere, the material quoted in the letter is itself ‘embryonic’—suggestive of work in progress or yet to come to full fruition.¹⁸ This hypothesis finds confirmation in a very different form of evidence: what we know of Joyce’s exogenetic reading for the episode.

17. Davison, “‘The True-Born Englishman’ and the Irish Bull: Daniel Defoe in the “Oxen of the Sun” Episode of *Ulysses*”, *New Quotatoes: Joycean Exogenesis in the Digital Age*, 112.

18. Davison, ‘Joyce’s Incorporation of Literary Sources in “Oxen of the Sun”’.

2. Reading for ‘Oxen’

In a valuable response to Ellmann’s *The Consciousness of Joyce*, Richard Brown reproduces the text of a bill that Joyce received for ‘antiquarisch aus Katalog 229’.¹⁹ Dated 20 April 1920, the document was sent by the Leipzig firm of booksellers Simmel & Co. along with a shipment of books. It is now at Cornell (Scholes 1402), and Brown quotes its contents as follows:

No 1396 Adam of Cobsam
1450 Bonaventura
1760 Specimens
1982 Seawards
346 Joyce²⁰

Consulting a scan of the bill and cross-referencing this with Simmel & Co.’s *Lagerkatalog* No. 229 allows us to correct Brown’s reading of ‘Seawards’. For Item 1982 in the sale catalogue is listed as ‘**Sea Words** a. Phrases along the Suffolk Coast. Lowestoff 1869. 8.’²¹ Why this correction is significant is because, as Harald Beck and the Intertextual Joyce team of Davison and Van Mierlo independently discovered, Joyce canvassed this short, eighteen-page pamphlet, *Sea Words and Phrases along the Suffolk Coast* (1869), for examples of regional English to port into the ‘Oxen’ tailpiece.²² Although it would not have been clear to Joyce from the description in the *Lagerkatalog* alone, the pamphlet was the work of Edward FitzGerald. As Van Mierlo argues, Joyce copied about seventeen words from the slim volume onto BL ‘Oxen’ notesheet 17:2–10.²³ The underlined word ‘Sea’ heads this cluster (BL 17:1), a rare nod in the notesheets to the title of a source. The Simmel & Co. bill, with its end-of-April date, supplements Van Mierlo’s discovery that the *Freeman’s Journal* for Saturday 17 April 1920 was the source for a cluster of horse-racing terms further down the same notesheet. As she writes, this evidence places an ‘effective time-stamp’ on the ‘Oxen’ notesheet.

How does this time-stamp relate to the drafts? To take one example from *Sea Words*, the first term which FitzGerald glosses is ‘ARMSTRONG. Arm in arm, “they came hallorin’ down the street *armstrong*”’.²⁴ ‘A good word surely’, FitzGerald editorialises,²⁵ but, in fact, these were five good words (surely) because Joyce worked the entire phrase into the early draft of ‘Oxen’. Working over the fourth and final copybook of the draft, he made an addition in the margin: ‘armstrong, halloring down the street’.²⁶ This places an ‘effective time-stamp’ on Joyce’s revisions to the early draft, limiting them to very late April or early May at the earliest. This claim receives support from the third item on the Simmel & Co. bill. As Brown writes,

19. Richard Brown, ‘Addenda and Corrigenda to Ellmann’s *The Consciousness of Joyce*’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 314. The bill itself is item 1402 in Robert Scholes, *The Cornell Joyce Collection: A Catalogue*, 210.

20. Brown, ‘Addenda and Corrigenda to Ellmann’s *The Consciousness of Joyce*’, 314.

21. Simmel & Co., *Lagerkatalog von Simmel & Co. Buchhandlung und Antiquariat insbesondere für klassische Philologie und Linguistik in Leipzig Rossstrasse 18*, 68 (emphasis in original).

22. See Harald Beck, ‘Edward FitzGerald at Sea: Oxen Notesheet 17’, *James Joyce Online Notes*; Sarah Davison, ‘Oxtail Soup: Dialects of English in the Tailpiece of the “Oxen of the Sun” Episode of *Ulysses*’, *Genetic Joyce Studies* and Van Mierlo, ‘Oxtail Soup: The Ingredients’.

23. Van Mierlo, ‘Oxtail Soup: The Ingredients’.

24. Edward FitzGerald, *Sea Words and Phrases along the Suffolk Coast*, 1 (emphasis in original).

25. FitzGerald, *Sea Words*, 1.

26. Dublin, National Library of Ireland, Joyce Papers 2002 MS 36,639/11/B, p. [12r]. Joyce missed the addition in the course of fair-copying the early draft and was obliged to rewrite the material as an addition on the first of three loose leaves making up the ‘All off for a buster’ section in the later draft. NLI MS 36,639/11/F, f. [1r].

“Specimens” is surely the book listed by Ellmann from the Nelly Joyce collection as R. Morris’s *Specimens of Early English*.²⁷ The 1910 *Lagerkatalog* bears out his hunch.²⁸ But as Van Mierlo has discovered, Morris’s *Specimens* was the source for a cluster of notes on BL ‘Oxen’ notesheet 15.²⁹ I will not here pre-empt her forthcoming scholarship, but this cluster includes the red-crossed entries ‘behest’, ‘bairn’, ‘wife’, and ‘groom’ (BL ‘Oxen’ 15:91–109), all of which were first added to ‘Oxen’ on the early draft.

27. Brown, ‘Addenda and Corrigenda to Ellmann’s *The Consciousness of Joyce*’, 315. Morris’s *Specimens* is item **464** in Gillespie, *James Joyce’s Trieste Library*.

28. Simmel & Co., *Lagerkatalog von Simmel & Co.*, 60.

29. Simmel & Co., *Lagerkatalog von Simmel & Co.*, 60.

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