

# “Do you know what you are talking about?”

Hans Walter Gabler

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James Joyce wrote *Ulysses*—as the saying goes. The phrase – the way we put the fact – is true. Yet it is a shortcut. It compresses a complex web of simultaneously sequential mental and scripted processes into one material result named in one word in the past tense: he ‘wrote’ *Ulysses*. The fact that Joyce’s (or any writer’s, author’s) processes of language composition in mind and in drafting resulted in a material record written out for preservation, and that this material record has survived, is the pre-condition for text we possess in transmission. Material records of writing have often enough come down to us only in derivative removes from their authors’ own first materialising their composition in text written. In the case of James Joyce, consecutive early writing — inscription on paper in his own hand or in the hands of scribes and type-setters — has very largely been preserved. The material records of Joyce’s composition and writing frequently survive in series of states of descent from authorial drafts and fair copies in Joyce’s hand to typescripts and proofs, often multiply derivative one from the other, in transcript by others. Typescripts and proofs were always basically the work of typists and printers’ compositors. Variation, by contrast, that is: text changes on top of surviving typescripts and proofs, were Joyce’s, again in his own hand.

\* \* \*

One third into the ninth episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus is in full swing performing his Hamlet lecture to his listeners, a circle of librarians in Dublin’s national library. He draws from Shakespeare’s last plays the names of their protagonists’ daughters and recalls from *Pericles* how Marina, Pericles’ daughter, searches out her father. A section of Stephen Dedalus’ speech to the Dublin librarians in the episode as published runs as follows:

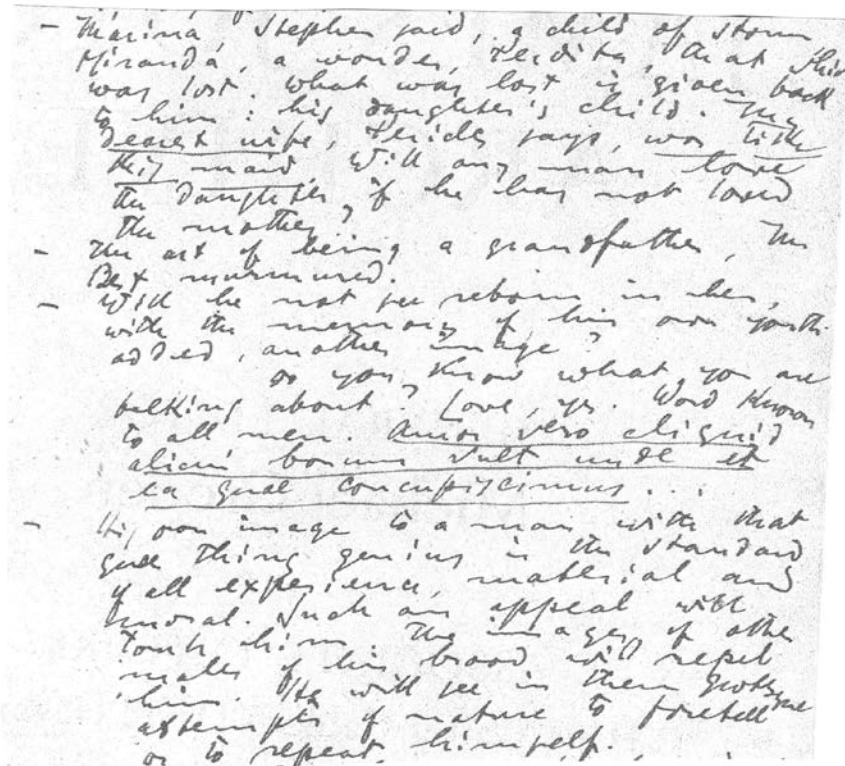
— Marina, Stephen said, a child of storm, Miranda, a wonder, Perdita, that which was lost. What was lost is given back to him : his daughter’s child. My dearest wife, Pericles says. was like this maid. Will any man love the daughter if he has not loved the mother?

— The art of being a grandfather, Mr Best gan murmur. *L’art d’être grand...*

— His own image to a man with that queer thing genius is the standard of all experience, material and moral. Such an appeal will touch him. The images of other males of his blood will repel him. He will see in them grotesque attempts of nature to foretell or repeat himself.

Image 1: first edition as published

To prepare for a scholarly edition, one undertakes a search into the spread of all documented instantiations, maybe variant, of the text in transmission. When Joyce, accomplishing the novel one episode after another, felt he had sufficiently stabilised a given episode, he would write it out in fair copy. In the fair-copy rendering of the passage that concerns us, the text reads as follows:



The image shows a page of handwritten text in cursive, which is a fair copy of a passage from James Joyce's 'Ulysses'. The text is written on a light-colored paper and is organized into several paragraphs, each starting with a dash. The handwriting is somewhat slanted and includes some underlines and corrections. The text is as follows:

- Maxima Stephen said, a child of stone  
Miranda, a wonder, rec'd to at that  
was lost. What way lost is given back  
to him: his daughter's child. The  
dearest wife, the child says, was with  
the maid. Will any man love  
the daughter if he has not loved  
the mother?

- The art of being a grandfather, the  
Best murmured.

- Will he not see reborn in her,  
with the memory of his own youth  
added, another image?  
Do you know what you are  
talking about? Love, yes. Word known  
to all men. *Amor vero alicui bonum vult unde et ea quae concupiscimus...*

- His own image to a man with that  
good thing genius in the standard  
of all experience, material and  
imortal. Such an appeal will  
touch him. The image of other  
matters of his brood will repeat  
him. He will see in them grotesque  
attempts of nature to foretell  
or to repeat himself.

Image 2: fair copy (Rosenbach MS)

As Stephen pauses briefly from: 'Will any man love the daughter if he has not loved the mother?', Mr Best mumbles: '—The art of being a grandfather, [Mr Best murmured].' Thereafter, this fair-copy instantiation of the passage includes two paragraphs that are lacking in the novel's first edition as published (my first quote above). Unresponsive to Mr Best's interjection, Stephen climaxes his rhetorical questions with the first of these two paragraphs: '—Will he not see reborn in her, with the memory of his own youth added, another image?' This is the climax to Stephen's rhetorical questions. Apostrophising 'rebirth', it refers specifically, too, to a core motif in Shakespeare's last plays. Above all: at this point Stephen pauses in his performance. He is moved to a self-querying silent reflection: 'Do you know what you are talking about? Love, yes. Word known to all men. *Amor vero alicui bonum vult unde et ea quae concupiscimus...*'

Only thereupon does he pick up again his performance to the librarians in the National Library.

The Critical and Synoptic Edition of *Ulysses* restores this pair of paragraphs. The restoration has been controversial in Joyce criticism for the past forty years. The bone of contention has been that, within the second of the restored paragraphs, it renders available as text of *Ulysses* three sentences in English; from them springs, in turn, a long, yet still only half-finished quote in Latin. The three sentences in English read: ‘Do you know what you are talking about? Love, yes. Word known to all men.’

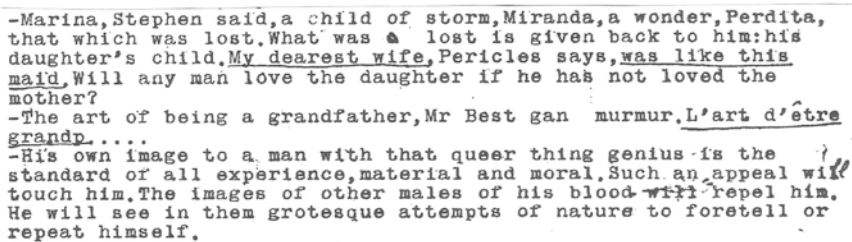
Since it is two whole paragraphs, short but complete, that are no longer present in the book *Ulysses*, we need to know and to understand on what grounds these two paragraphs together got lost together, in the first place; and why they get editorially restored together again in the scholarly edition. Over and above that, be it granted, there arises within this two-paragraph text body a particular question, contextually complex, in the light of *Ulysses* as a whole. Does Stephen Dedalus here, or ever in the novel, himself articulate the ‘[w]ord known to all men’? This specific question however is not for the reader or critic to decide. Nor can the editor follow a mere hunch that either to leave it out, or else to restore it, gives the text as it should be.

In analysing, arguing, and decision, the editor follows principles of editorial procedure. The task is comprehensively to assess the textual situation, to recognise and adjudicate whether there is a problem to be solved—not with regard to the presence vs. absence of a pick of three sentences, but comprehensively to the flow of the narrative of the two paragraphs in toto, as the block unit of writing and consistent argument they are, and to take editorial measures, or not, accordingly. The editor assesses the two-paragraph variant between the fair copy and the first-edition book as a whole. With respect to the records in material transmission, there is in the first instance only one question to be answered: were the two paragraphs in revision deleted, or were they passed over by accident in the text’s descent through copying from one document to the next? This latter question is (simply) binary. It is independent of content and meaning whole or in part of the text contained in the block variant in question.

Knowledge of Joyce’s working practice needs at this stage to be adduced in terms of how an established episode text was handed over to agents responsible for typing and eventual type-setting. In principle, the fair-copy text was meant without delay to go into typescript and thence into proof. Yet there were time gaps between finishing fair copies and passing on their text to prepare typescript copy for printing-house type-setting. In these intermittent periods Joyce would have further ideas about touching up the fair-copy text. How and where were they to be inserted in standing documents? Joyce went back with what he wished to revise to the final document from which he had established the fair copy. This final working draft does not survive. But from rich collation, it has been analytically established that there existed a ‘final working draft’

document from which the fair copy (the Rosenbach Manuscript) was written out. It is clear that the changes to the text that survives materially for us in the fair copy was in reality copied into the typescript from the lost document, the final working draft. The typescript in turn served as copy for the typesetting of the first edition. In it, the two paragraphs are still missing that the fair copy documents. The lacuna was so ultimately established in the published text.

To ascertain why this is so, we ought to be able to access the final working draft from which the typescript was copied. But it is lost. We must take recourse to hypothesis in one particular of the material appearance of the text inscription. In the fair copy (extant) in Joyce’s hand, it is notable that such words and phrases that are to be italicised (eventually) in print are regularly and reliably underlined. No doubt it was Joyce himself who so italicised the fair copy. There is thereupon, as said, a gap in the document descent. The final working draft—established before, but revised after the fair copy—is missing. The text reappears in the typed transcript from it. The typescript pages do not lack underlining for italics, yet it is unlikely to be authorial.



-Marina, Stephen said, a child of storm, Miranda, a wonder, Perdita,  
that which was lost. What was ~~a~~ lost is given back to him: his  
daughter's child. My dearest wife, Pericles says, was like this  
maid, Will any man love the daughter if he has not loved the  
mother?  
-The art of being a grandfather, Mr Best gan murmur, L'art d'être  
grandp....  
-His own image to a man with that queer thing genius is the  
standard of all experience, material and moral, Such an appeal will  
touch him. The images of other males of his blood will repel him.  
He will see in them grotesque attempts of nature to foretell or  
repeat himself.

Image 3: typescript

As to the final working draft that provided copy for the typescript, we can do no more than confidently hypothesise that Joyce himself underlined such phrasing in the final working draft as he did in the fair copy. We rely thus on the assumption that the phrasing ‘Mr Best gan murmur. L'art d'être grandp....’ as it appears in the typescript, ended Mr Best’s interjection in the [lost] final working draft with the words in French underlined for italics. Notably this half-phrase ends with five dots. We proceed then (according to the fair-copy text) through the two paragraphs that the fair copy features (but the documents from typescript to first-edition printing in 1922 do not). The second of these paragraphs in the fair copy ends—as we saw in Image 2 above—in a long passage in Latin, which is italicised and peters out into three dots.

In this situation, the discipline of scholarly editing and the bibliographical evidence together guide us to the only consistent assessment and consequent solution. On account of the visual near-identity of the closing phrases of the paragraphs as styled in the final working draft, both there (hypothetically) being underlined for italics and ending in rows of dots, the typist fell victim to an eye-skip from one end-of-paragraph

to its counterpart, both ends underlined for italics, and running out into dots. The solution is neatly text-independent. It requires no aid from reading, understanding, interpreting the text. It simply corrects a human error. What is consequently not even remotely in question is that Stephen's three silent sentences were, in the course of composition and revision of *Scylla & Charybdis*, ever considered for deletion, let alone deleted. They belong in this passage as Joyce wrote it. Hence, they belong in *Ulysses*, and have therefore through critical editing been restored to their place of composition in the novel's ninth episode.

\* \* \*

Which, with regard to Joyce's novel *Ulysses* as a whole, brings up a text occurrence in the novel's fifteenth episode, *Circe*, that is seemingly inconsistent with *Scylla & Charybdis* as authentically restored. Stephen Dedalus encounters his dead mother and gets drawn into anguished exchanges with her. In their course, he urges her: 'Tell me the word mother, if you know now. The word known to all men.' (*U* 15, 4192-93) Is Stephen – shaken by fear and thoroughly drunk as he is anyhow – is he hoping to learn from his mother now, dead though she is, what she was never able to assure him of in her life? Or else: does he challenge her to speak out at last, from beyond death, that word of which, alive, he is certain—has been certain since silently in *Scylla & Charybdis* thinking and feeling and confirming it: 'Love, yes.' Which we as Joyce's readers know to be the ultimate confirmation: 'Yes', the last word in *Ulysses*.

and the night we missed

1597| the boat at Algeciras the watchman going about serene with his lamp and O  
 1598| that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson sometimes like  
 1599| fire and the glorious sunsets and the figtrees in the Alameda gardens yes  
 1600| and all the queer little streets and the pink and blue and yellow houses and  
 1601| the rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums and cactuses and  
 1602| Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the  
 1603| rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and  
 1604| how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as  
 1605| another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he  
 1606| asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my  
 1607| arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts  
 1608| all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will  
 1609| Yes.  
 1610| Trieste-Zurich-Paris  
 1611| 1914-1921

[Image 4. *Ulysses*, end]

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‘Do you know what you are talking about? Love, yes. Word known to all men.’ says Stephen silently to himself in *Scylla & Charybdis*. Careful text attention, scholarly, genetically-critical, and editorial, proves capable still, even against accident-prone spans of a text’s descent through pre-publication transmission, to fine-tune its resonance to its very core word of significance.

[Munich, 12 October 2023]