Trenchant Criticism

Joyce’s Use of Richard Chenevix Trench’s Philological Studies in “Oxen of the Sun”

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Language is the armoury of the human mind, and at once contains the trophies of its past, and the weapons of its future, conquests.

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Richard Chenevix Trench (1807–86) was born in Dublin, but raised and educated in England. He was appointed Dean of Westminster in 1856 and then Church of Ireland Lord Archbishop of Dublin, Primate of Ireland, a position he held from 1864 to 1884. His belief that God’s purpose is manifest in all aspects of creation, including language, led to a passion for philology, a pastime that resulted in several book-length studies of English words. He is celebrated today for his seminal role in the establishment of the reference work that is now known as the Oxford English Dictionary, and he is acknowledged in its “Historical Introduction.”

The book that brought Trench’s philological scholarship to wide public attention was On the Study of Words, an accessible and lively account of the etymology, cultural and theological significance of items of English vocabulary first published in 1851, originating in five lectures delivered to the Diocesan Training School in Winchester. It ran to nineteen editions in Trench’s lifetime and shaped the popular understanding of the historical development of the English language for generations, promoting the idea that “in words contemplated singly, there are boundless stores of moral and historic truth.”

Trench selected a proverb from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s Biographia Literaria to serve as an epigraph for On the Study of Words. It presents words as the spoils of battle, figuring language as an “armoury” in which the “trophies” of past conflicts are arrayed and ready to be transformed into “weapons” for future “conquests.” The martial metaphor is implicit in Trench’s own writings. The many different linguistic formations that the English language preserves are considered to be richly edifying, not only because they are part of God’s creation, but also because they attest to different phases in England’s history. Language, Trench
explains, should be regarded as “a moral barometer indicating and permanently marking the rise or fall or a nation’s life” (109). It “is full of instruction, because it is the embodiment, the incarnation, if I may so speak, of the feelings and thoughts and experiences of a nation, yea, often of many nations, and of all which through long centuries they have attained to and won” (28). The student who mines the English language for “strata and deposits” of “Celtic, Latin, Low German, Danish, Norman words, and then once more Latin and French” might therefore “re-create for himself the history of the [English speaking] people,” and “with tolerable accuracy appreciate the divers elements out of which that people was made up, in what proportion these were mingled, and in what succession they followed, one upon the other” (126). Trench instructs readers in this art through a series of case studies of different groups of loan-words from other languages. Examples are discussed both for their intrinsic philological and moral interest and for the purpose of re-creating the history of England as a nation: one that was conquered many times; was brought into contact with far-flung cultures through trade and transport; and was—at the time of writing—a proud imperial power.

Trench wrote three further philological works mediating ideas about the development of the English language as a source of historical and moral instruction to a general-interest audience: On the Lessons in Proverbs (1853), English Past and Present (1855), and A Select Glossary (1859). His surname is familiar to readers of Ulysses (1922), as his grandson, Richard Samuel Dermot Chenevix Trench (1881–1909), was the model for Haines, the Englishman who outstays Stephen’s welcome in the Martello tower. Given the high position that Trench grand-père held in Dublin, the family connection could not have been unknown to James Joyce. The purpose of this article is to investigate the extent to which Archbishop Trench’s life and work are significant to the “Oxen of the Sun” episode of Ulysses by determining the precise use it makes of the detail of Trench’s various philological studies.

Gregory M. Downing was the first to notice that Trench’s compelling accounts of the etymologies of English words influenced Joyce’s historical play with language. In the 1998 issue of Joyce Studies Annual, Downing canvassed Trench’s four popular-philology books “for ideas and vocabulary also seen in Joyce,” particularly [. . .] in the “Oxen of the Sun” episode of Ulysses. The cumulative evidence Downing amassed suggested “quite strongly” that “Joyce knew Trench’s language-books, at the latest in his first year at University College, and that they contributed both to his basic ideas about language, and to his range of diction and awareness of the historical meanings, etymologies, and therefore connotations of a considerable number of specific words employed in Ulysses and ‘Oxen’<HS>” (38–9). A prime piece of evidence for this influence was Joyce’s first-year essay “The Study of Languages” (c. 1899), which “exhibits many parallels in thought and expression with Trench’s work and specifically On the Study of Words, beyond the obviously similar title” (40). However, Downing was
unable to identify “the precise pathways by which Trench words got into Joyce’s literary work” (42). Try as he might, Downing could find “no way to make absolute claims that Joyce owned copies of the Trench books while drafting *Ulysses* and ‘Oxen,’ or that Trench is the undeniable source for any one specific word used by Joyce” (38). The only one of Trench’s books to appear in what remains of Joyce’s personal library is an 1869 edition of *On the Lessons in Proverbs*, which he left behind in Trieste when he moved to Paris in mid-1920. According to Downing, the volume bears five marginal marks against passages that “might be seen as generally germane to such *Ulysses* themes as Bloomian prudence and the importance of daily life,” but which do not “show up in any closely allusive way in *Ulysses*” (53).

This essay presents the crucial genetic evidence that confirms that Joyce did in fact have a copy of *On the Study of Words* on hand as he prepared to write the “Oxen of the Sun” episode of *Ulysses* and identifies the particular text of the edition that he consulted. It builds on the work of Downing and other source-hunters to re-examine Joyce’s note-taking and compositional practices in the light of this finding, tracing the linguistic and literary sources for hundreds of the items of special diction that Joyce deployed in order to narrate the episode in a continuous, high-spirited simulation of the historical development of English prose style, capped by an eruption of the oral culture of Dublin circa 1904.

The next section of the essay, “Sourcing Entries for the Oxen of the Sun Notesheets,” begins by setting out the history and composition of the extant notesheets for the episode and providing an overview of source-hunting activities to date. I then scrutinize a sequence of notes that could only have been taken from *On the Study of Words* to reconstruct the specific philological principles that Joyce intended to incorporate into his parodic re-enactment of the history of English prose. The third section, “Further Trench Excavation,” proceeds to catalogue hundreds of items of historically telling vocabulary that Joyce extracted from *On the Study of Words, English Past and Present* and *A Select Glossary*, to establish that Trench’s major popular-philological works are indeed weighty and substantial sources for the historical language deployed in “Oxen.” It comments on the profusion and distribution of vocabulary glossed by Trench in the final text of “Oxen,” the comparative sparseness of Trench-inspired entries on the notesheets, and the relevance of these patterns for an understanding of the episode’s technique. The final section, “Trench Warfare,” moves beyond a tracing of sources to interpret the “Oxen of the Sun” in relation to Trench’s wider theories of language as a God-given, but organically evolving instrument of human culture, and thus the living legacy of successive waves of national “conquest.” I propose that Joyce appropriates the linguistic “trophy” that Trench put to the service of his own version of English national history to construct a linguistic patchwork which represents the state of late nineteenth-century philological knowledge, but simultaneously requites Trench’s Anglo-centric and Anglican worldview. In doing
so, I show how Joyce armed himself with philological learning, seizing material from Trench’s studies and transforming it into political, counter-colonial linguistic “weaponry” for the present and future “conquest” of the English language.

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**Sourcing Entries on the “Oxen of the Sun” Notesheets**

Twenty sides of Joyce’s preparatory notes for “Oxen of the Sun” are extant. These notesheets, which are now held in the British Library, represent the earliest documented stage in the writing of the episode and would seem to date from the first half of 1920. They contain some 3,000 or so fragmentary notes, ranging in length from a single word to brief sentences. Roughly two thirds of the entries concern examples of distinctive vocabulary and collocations from different periods in English literature. The remainder mainly pertain to the stages of human gestation, character development, and references to other episodes. The entries were to provide the raw ingredients for confecting the most technically audacious episode *Ulysses*, which enacts the principle of “embryological development” by recapitulating the historical development of the English language, the gestational development of the human embryo and also the evolutionary histories of species.

The “Oxen of the Sun” notesheets were transcribed by Phillip F. Herring in *James Joyce’s “Ulysses” Notesheets in the British Museum* (1972). Color facsimiles of the notesheets later appeared in volume IX of the *James Joyce Archive* (1978), presented in a different order from Herring. This article adopts Herring’s system for numbering notesheets, columns of notes, and individual entries for ease of reference, but it takes account of the spatial arrangement of the facsimiles. Joyce’s standard note-taking practice was to begin by making a leaning column of notes in the middle of each sheet, which was positioned so as to leave a margin on the left-hand side (which became wider and wider as he worked his way down the page). Having completed the central column of notes, Joyce would start to fill the left-hand margin with entries. If there was sufficient space, he sometimes created a further right-hand column of notes. When a sheet began to get crowded, Joyce would often insert new entries haphazardly, even if that meant writing them upside-down. As a consequence, while the majority of the notes from a given source are grouped together sequentially, it is not uncommon for scattered notes to have been assimilated into nearby clusters from different sources, or for notes to be split between two or more semi-defined constellations on one or more sheets. Understanding the spatial arrangement of the entries on the notesheets is, therefore, essential for source-hunting, as linear transcriptions can place physically proximate entries far apart.
Robert Janusko was the first scholar to discover that it was possible to pinpoint Joyce’s sources for many of the words and phrases on the “Oxen of the Sun” notesheets. Herring and J. S. Atherton made further discoveries, as did Janusko, who produced a “List of Joyce’s Borrowings from His Sources” as an appendix to The Sources and Structures of James Joyce’s ‘Oxen’ (1983), in which he catalogued almost 800 entries that had then been securely traced to literary texts. Janusko continued his work on the episode and published details of subsequent discoveries in a series of articles (1990–2002). Scholars have been able to identify Joyce’s precise sources for the words and phrases he entered on the “Oxen of the Sun” notesheets because he scoured the canon of English literary prose for words and collocations that were sufficiently distinctive to be redolent of a particular historical phase in the evolution of the language, and only made small adjustments to the suggestive material he found (most commonly changing the tense, number, or person). Because Joyce canvassed texts systematically, jotting down words and phrases in roughly the same order that he encountered them, sequences of fragmentary entries from one source compose snippets of a genetic code that is unique to a particular literary text. The largest number of literary entries were found to come from turn-of-the-century anthologies, such as William Peacock’s English Prose from Mandeville to Ruskin (1903), Annie Barnett and Lucy Dale’s An Anthology of English Prose (1332 to 1740) (1912), and A. F. Murison’s Selections from the Best English Authors (1901). Another prime source was George Saintsbury’s A History of English Prose Rhythm (1912), an authoritative technical study of the development of English prose style from its very beginnings in Latin and Greek, via Old English, Middle English, all the way to the late nineteenth century. What unites all these key sources for the episode is that they all conveniently re-enact the development of English prose style in capsule form by presenting excerpts from the most representative and admired writers in historical sequence.

Downing began what was intended to be a complete and systematic compilation of known literary sources for the “Oxen of the Sun” notesheets, supplemented by new sourcing work. The first and only installment of “Joyce’s ‘Oxen of the Sun’ Notesheets: A Transcription and Sourcing of the Stylistic Entries” appeared in Genetic Joyce Studies (2002), providing a detailed account of notesheet 1 and the left-hand column of entries on notesheet 2. With the support of the British Academy, I have been following in the footsteps of “Oxen”’s source-hunters, collating their work and attempting as full a sourcing of the literary entries on the “Oxen” notesheets as is possible.

Had Downing been able continue his transcription and sourcing, he would surely have found the evidence he needed to prove that Joyce consulted Trench while he was writing “Oxen.” Downing did spot in the notesheets twenty-five words that were of signal interest to Trench, but they are not in close proximity to one another. Because Downing was unable to find any sequential clusters, he
concluded that “Trench was not systematically or even partially canvassed onto the extant sheets,” and he speculated that Joyce either made notes on Trench on “hypothetically inferable but non-extant notesheets” or otherwise knew Trench’s works sufficiently well for memoranda to be superfluous (66). However, a string of notes that Joyce made on On the Study of Words do, in fact, appear on “Oxen of the Sun” notesheet 3 (Herring 173–7; JJA IX 25).

The entries on notesheet 3 are organized in two columns. There is a wide central column of notes and a secondary column in the left-hand margin. The central column mainly contains examples of literary diction from works by Early Modern prose stylists such as Lord Berners, Sir Thomas Elyot, Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Raleigh, John Florio, Fulke Greville, Richard Hakluyt, Sir Thomas More, and Sir Thomas North (all from excerpts selected by Peacock and Barnett and Dale). There are also some gleanings from Saintsbury’s discussion of Bishop Fisher in A History of English Prose Rhythm. A few brief notes derived from works by Jonathan Swift appear at the very bottom of the central column and the top of the left-hand margin, followed by some entries from Raphael Holinshed and also from Peacock. The notes on On the Study of Words are positioned at the very bottom of the left-hand margin, in the lines numbered 26–35 in Herring’s transcription, in an area corresponding to less than one-tenth of space on the sheet.

The following transcription of lines 25–36 of “Oxen of the Sun” notesheet 3 supplies the relevant passages from On the Study of Words. The entries that Joyce struck through in a red pencil are indicated with a line through the text.

*N 3.26* Yea, nay, ay, yes, no,

If in the course of time distinctions are thus created, and if this is the tendency of language, yet they are also sometimes, though far less often obliterated. Thus the fine distinction between “yea” and “yes,” “nay” and “no,” once existing in English, has quite disappeared. “Yea” and “Nay” in Wiclif’s time, and a good deal later, were the answers to questions framed in the affirmative. “Will he come?” To this it would have been replied, “Yea” or “Nay,” as the case might be. But “Will he not come?”—to this the answer would have been, “Yes,” or “No.” Sir Thomas More finds fault with Tyndale, that in his translation of the Bible he had not observed this distinction, which was evidently therefore going out even then, that is in the reign of Henry VIII, and shortly after it was quite forgotten. (Study 269)

*N 3.28* household word

Not otherwise there are words, once only on the lips of philosophers or theologians, of the deeper thinkers of their time, or of those directly interested in their speculations, which step by step have come down, not debasing themselves in this act of becoming popular, but training and elevating an ever-increasing number of persons to enter into their meaning, till at length they have become truly a part of the nation’s common stock, “household words” used easily and intelligently by nearly all. (Study 246)
word changed as to pronunciation aright

[P]ronunciation is itself continually changing; [. . .] and a multitude of words are now pronounced in a manner different from that of a hundred years ago, indeed from that of ten years ago; so that, before very long [were phonetic spelling to be introduced], there would again be a chasm between the spelling and the pronunciation of words;—unless indeed the spelling varied, which it could not consistently refuse to do, as the pronunciation varied, reproducing each of its capricious or barbarous alterations; these last, it must be remembered, being changes not in the pronunciation only, but in the word itself, which would only exist as pronounced, the written word being a mere shadow servilely waiting upon the spoken. (Study 307)

longest wanderings

[T]he etymology of a word exercises an unconscious influence upon its uses, oftentimes makes itself felt when least expected, so that a word, after seeming quite to have forgotten, will after longest wanderings return to it again. (Study 274)

shall we through such discovery obtain

And yet with how lively an interest shall we discover those [words] to be of closest kin, which we had never considered by as entire strangers to one another; what increased mastery over our mother tongue shall we through such discoveries obtain. (Study 312)

at twain, at one

Tell your scholars that “atonement” means “at-one-ment”—the setting at one of those who were at twain before. (Study 335)

catch pole

“Policeman” has no evil subaudition with us, though in the last century, when a Jonathan Wild was possible, “catchpole,” a word in Wiclif’s time of no dishonour at all, was abundantly tinged with this scorn and contempt. (Study 117)

fall in with

Now when you thus fall in with a word employed in these two or more senses so far removed from one another, accustom yourselves to seek out the bond which there certainly is between these several uses. (Study 313)

Although these notes from On the Study of Words may appear slight and distinctly unpromising on first glance, they actually yield a lot of valuable information about the edition Joyce consulted and his likely level of acquaintance with Trench, as well as examples of specific vocabulary and philological principles that are subsumed in “Oxen.”

The phrase “shall we through such discoveries obtain” only appears in the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first editions of On the Study of Words (the texts of which are substantively the same), which indicates that Joyce’s copy was published between 1882 and 1890. Establishing which text of On the
Joyce consulted *On the Study of Words* is vital to the integrity of the genetic reading that is to follow. As J. Bromley (Trench’s biographer) notes, “few writers were so particular as he in carefully revising and correcting all subsequent editions.” The 1851 text of *On the Study of Words* was first expanded from five lectures to six lectures in 1853 and then to seven lectures in the ninth revised and enlarged edition of 1859. Trench continued to make revisions to the editions published in his lifetime. After his death, subsequent editors made further interventions to update the text in line with recent scholarship. In “Richard Chenevix Trench and Joyce’s Historical Study of Words,” Downing worked with the twenty-second (posthumous) edition of *On the Study of Words*, edited by Anthony Lawson Mayhew, with supplementary study questions added by Theodore W. Hunt (1892). Downing chose this text on the basis that it “would have been a fairly recent edition when Joyce began at University College, Dublin (1898)” (43). The speculation that Hunt’s questions may have been one source for the catechistic technic of the “Ithaca” episode of *Ulysses* is not supported by the genetic evidence (49), unless we assume that Joyce owned more than one copy of *On the Study of Words*.

Joyce’s notes on passages from *On the Study of Words* pertain to Trench own commentary rather than to specific examples of the kinds of vocabulary or phrases that distinguish England’s most celebrated prose stylists. Although *On the Study of Words* has not been canvassed in near-sequence, the closeness of the wording confirms the match. Because the entries in the left-hand margin of notesheet 3 are evenly spaced, it is likely that they appear in the order that Joyce made them. It would seem, then, that Joyce was flicking backward and forward through *On the Study of Words*, the way readers do when they know a reference work well—for example, returning to the text on facing pages 312 and 313 after taking notes from other parts of the book.

Joyce’s usual practice was to strike through notesheet entries once he had made use of them. However, it is not uncommon for material in unstruck entries to make an appearance in *Ulysses*. Presumably, the substance of the entries stuck in his memory once they had been made. Only four of the eight notes Joyce made on Trench’s book are struck through, but all conditioned Joyce’s re-enactment of the historical development of English prose style. The entry “Yea, nay, ay, yes, no” was left unstruck. However, the “fine distinction between ‘yea’ and ‘yes,’ ‘nay’ and ‘no,’ <HS>” that existed in the time of Wyclif—where “yea” and “nay” were answers to questions framed in the affirmative and “Yes” or “no” to negatively framed questions—appears to have conditioned Joyce’s choice of words in “Oxen.” The distinction is preserved in a passage that loosely emulates the styles of late-fourteenth- and early-fifteenth-century prose, in which Madden puts the case to the drinkers assembled in the doctors’ mess that in obstetric emergencies where mother and child are both at mortal risk it “were hard the wife to die” (*U* 14.204) and “all cried with one acclaim nay, by our Virgin Mother, the wife
should live and the babe to die” (U 14.214–15). However, once the presiding prose style post-dates the Tudor period, the distinction disintegrates, as seen in a Bunyanesque passage, where “yes” and “no” are used regardless of the way that questions are posed (U 14.429–47), and also in the interlude in the style of Charles Lamb when a question is answered twice, first with “Nay,” then “No” (U 14.1070–4).

The other two examples of specific vocabulary that Joyce has noted down are also subsumed into “Oxen” at appropriate points in the historical prose pageant. Although “at twain, at one” is uncrossed, “twain” appears as a synonym for “two” in the seventh paragraph of the episode, at an early stage of the genesis of the English language: “Truest bedthanes they twain are, for Horne holding wariest ward” (U 14.79). The phrase “a chanceable catchpole” (U 14.538) appears in a passage redolent of eighteenth-century prose in an account of the low company Lenehan keeps, where it retains something of the scorn and contempt familiar to contemporaries of Jonathan Wild, the real-life gangland thief who inspired Henry Fielding’s novel of the same name (1743). 19 The term “catchpole” also caught Downing’s attention. He noted that it is replaced by the neutral term “police” in later paragraphs of “Oxen” (U 14.1511 and 14.1564).

The remaining notes in the left-hand margin of “Oxen of the Sun” notesheet pertain to Trench’s commentary on the social customs that superintend changes to the language and the reading practices that reveal the human histories preserved in words. The notion that the specialized discourses of “deep thinkers” gradually percolate through to common usage and become “household words,” to the elevation, enrichment, and moral improvement of nearly all, evidently caught Joyce’s attention long before he prepared the “Oxen” notesheets. Joyce discusses this phenomenon at length in his undergraduate essay “The Study of Languages,” which clearly emulates Trench in tone and substance:

First, in the history of words there is much that indicates the history of men, and in comparing the speech of to-day with that of years ago, we have a useful illustration of the effect of external influences on the very words of a race. [. . .] Secondly, this knowledge tends to make our language purer and more lucid, and therefore tends also to improve style and composition. Thirdly, the names we meet in the literature of our language are handed down to us, as venerable names, not to be treated lightly but entitled beforehand to our respect. They are landmarks in the transition of a language, keeping it inviolate, directing its course straight on like an advancing way, widening and improving it as advances but staying always on the high road, though many byways branch off it at all parts and seem smooth to follow. [. . .] The study of their language is useful as well, not merely to add to our reading and store of thought, but to add to our vocabulary and imperceptibly to makes us sharers in their delicateness or strength. 20
This early essay contains the germinal seed for the technic of “Oxen,” though it completely lacks the skepticism and irreverence that characterize Joyce’s mature work.

Although Joyce took careful note of Trench’s observations about “household words” as he was preparing to write “Oxen,” he no longer subscribed to the accompanying narrative of moral improvement. “Oxen” willfully strays from “the high road” as it mimes the succession of the venerable prose-stylists who left their mark on the English language. The high mannerism of the episode contrasts with the low, vulgar tone of much of the discussion to comic effect. Certainly, the dialogue in this richly intertextual episode bears out Joyce observation in “The Study of Languages” that quotations are in “everyone’s mouth,” without their “seeming, in the least to recognize that fact” (16). But for all its literariness, the conversation presented in “Oxen” is far from edifying. When the stately progress of English prose is brought to an abrupt halt in the final paragraphs of the episode, the style enters the present day and erupts into riotous demotic, where “households words” are debased in drunken conversation (U 14.1440–1591). Whoever hollers “Abaft there!” (U 14.1452) to Buck Mulligan uses the nautical term that Joyce entered on to notesheet 3 (N 3.85) from “Frobisher’s Third Voyage” by Hakluyt (Barnet and Dale 52). The phrase “her anker of rum” (U 14.1479–80) derives from Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay’s “ankers of brandy” (Saintsbury 373; N 19.58). Stephen uses “Cut and come again” to order yet another round at the bar, rather than to describe the more wholesome action of Sir Walter Scott slicing extra bread in John Gibson Lockhart’s Characteristics of Scott (Peacock 328; N 19.103). Joyce also responds playfully to Trench’s observation that “[Thomas] Fuller, when he used ‘to avuncularize,’ meaning to tread in the footsteps of one’s uncle, scarcely proposed it as a lasting addition to the language” (223) by extending its longevity further with the phrase “Avuncular’s got my timepiece” (U 14.1471) (meaning “my watch is at the pawnbrokers”). That literature adds to men’s working vocabulary cannot be in doubt, but in “Oxen” not necessarily in ways that guarantee the speaker will share in the “delicateness or strength” of their literary forebears.

The words the imbibers slur are not represented orthographically in the tailpiece of “Oxen,” but are instead “changed as to pronunciation” (N 3.29). The most striking instance is the pidgin-English question “Kind Christian will you help young man whose friend took bungalow key to find place where to lay crown of his head tonight,” which is rendered phonetically as “Kind Kristya n wil yu help yung man hoose frend tuk bungellow kee tu find plais whear to lay crown of his hed 2 night” (U 14.1539–40). The notesheet entry “words changed as to pronunciation, aright” is not a perfect match for the text of On the Study of Words, but clearly encapsulates the phonological principle that Trench sought to elucidate as he inveighed against mid-nineteenth-century campaigns for the adoption of phonetic spelling.
Incidentally, the term “household word” also appears in an as yet unsourced cluster of literary entries on notesheet 14 (which functions as a repository for examples of eighteenth-century diction). The phrase appears in “Oxen” in a bawdy discussion about contraceptives in which Lynch reports that his “dear Kitty” (U 14.788) told him “it is a household word that il y a deux choses for which the innocence of our original garb, in other circumstances a breach of the proprieties, is the fittest, nay, the only garment” (U 14.792–4). The first circumstance “is a bath” (U 14.796). The second is left to the imagination, as Lynch’s anecdote is interrupted by the ringing of a bell. This discussion takes place as Lynch handed Kitty “to her tilbury” (a two-wheeled carriage) (U 14.795). This detail would be unremarkable were it not for the fact that Trench informs readers of On the Study of Words that “A little town in Essex gave its name to the ‘tilbury’ <HS>” in his commentary on the linguistic history of commerce (159). To have had his treasured words re-appropriated in such a context would doubtless have mortified Archbishop Trench.

Another note Joyce jotted down from Trench’s prose has also been transplanted into the text as if it were period diction. The phrase “longest wanderings” is used anachronistically in “Oxen” to describe the peregrinations of Sir Leopold (U 14.200) in a passage said to be redolent of Lord Berners. (The term appears nowhere in the excerpt that Peacock entitled “Insurrection of Wat Tyler,” which was Joyce’s prime source for Berners’ prose [14–18].) Since Berners is one of the authors mentioned by name at the top of notesheet 3, it would seem that Trench’s phrase became subsumed into the cache of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century diction. Slippage of this kind was perhaps inevitable given the complex spatial arrangement of the notesheets, a problem that was only compounded once entries had been struck through in colored pencil.

Presumably, what first moved Joyce to note down the phrase “longest wanderings” was the principle Trench sought to elucidate: that “the etymology of a word [. . .] oftentimes makes itself felt when least expected.” Trench held that recalling words to their “primitive sense” was the mark of the very best writers:

One main device of great artists in language, as such as would fain evoke the latent forces of their native tongue, will very often consist in reconnecting words by their use of them with their original derivation, in not suffering them to forget themselves and their origin, though they would. (274–5)

Trench’s prize example of such an artist is John Milton, who compelled words to return to their original meanings with “signal effect” in Paradise Lost, for instance using “sagacious” in the sense of “keen sense of smell” (275). Awakening the “latent forces” in the English language was also a primary concern for Joyce as he was writing “Oxen.” Not only does he restore obsolete language to use, but he consciously reconnects modern words to their etymological roots. A striking example occurs when Joyce describes the sudden apparition of the “sins” or “evil
memories,” which men try to hide in the “darkest places of the heart” (U 14.1344–5):

Not to insult over him will the vision come as over one that lies under
her wrath, not for vengeance to cut him off from the living but
shrouded in the piteous vesture of the past, silent, remote, reproachful.
(U 14.1352–5)

Here, “to insult” is used in the original sense in which Trench defines it, where
“<HS>‘to insult’ means properly to leap as on the prostrate body of a foe” (321).

Joyce’s note “shall we through such discoveries obtain” concerns Trench’s
belief that learning which words are of “closest kin” increases one’s mastery of
English. The example Trench gives is that “shore,” “share,” “shears,” “shred,” and
“sherd,” are “all most closely connected with the verb ‘to sheer,’<HS>” and relate
to division, separation, or demarcation (312–13). Joyce likewise encourages
readers to perceive the kinship between words with the same etymological root by
using them in close conjunction. For instance, Trench’s observation that
“<HS>‘happy’ and ‘happiness’ are connected with ‘hap,’ which is chance” (99)
finds a correlative in Joyce’s proximate use of both terms in “Oxen”:

And she was wondrous stricken of heart for that evil hap and for his
burial did him on a fair corset of lamb’s wool, the flower of the flock,
lest he might perish utterly and lie akeled (for it was then about the
midst of the winter) and now Sir Leopold that had of his body no
manchild for an heir looked upon him his friend’s son and was shut up
in sorrow for his forepassed happiness. (U 14.268–73)

The wider point that Trench then proceeds to make, which is also absorbed by
Joyce, concerns what happens when readers encounter words used in two or more
senses:

You will meet in books, sometimes in the same book, and perhaps in
the same page of this book, a word used in senses so far apart from one
another that at first it will seem to you absurd to suppose any bond of
connexion between them. Now when you thus fall in with a word
employed in these two or more senses so far removed from one
another, accustom yourselves to seek out the bond which there certainly
is between these several uses. (313)

Readers of “Oxen” are given many such chances to “fall in with” words,
including many of the specimens Trent discussed. The clearest example is “lewd.”
In his third lecture, “On the Morality in Words,” Trench expresses regret at the fall
of honorable “words which men have dragged downward with themselves” so that
they acquire “unworthy” secondary meanings (77). He notes that there was a time
when “<HS>‘lewd’ meant no more than unlearned, as lay or common people
might be supposed to be” (8). Correspondingly, “lewd” first crops up in “Oxen” in
its uncorrupted form, as in “Let the lewd with faith and fervour worship” (U
14.311), and then reappears later in a debauched context as a synonym for
“lascivious” (U 14.935).21
Recovering the observations that underlie the notes Joyce made on Trench’s work throws many aspects of “Oxen” into sharp relief. Evidence from the notesheets confirms that “Oxen” was deliberately constructed to enact the historical principles Trench discusses and to foster the reading practices that he advocates, even as it mocks his Anglican moralizing. The fact that such fleeting notes as those that appear on notesheet 3 were all that was needed to recall the complex linguistic phenomena treated in On the Study of Words corroborates the view that Joyce was intimately acquainted with Trench’s ideas.

Further Trench Excavation

Lines 26–35 of “Oxen of the Sun” notesheet 3 provide incontrovertible proof that Joyce had a copy of the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, or twenty-first edition of On the Study of Words on hand as he was preparing to write the episode. The lines confirm Downing’s thesis and strengthen the possibility that Joyce also sought out Trench’s two other major works of popular philology, all of which Downing maintains “contributed both to his basic ideas about language, and to his range of diction and awareness of the historical meanings, etymologies, and therefore connotations of a considerable number of specific words employed in Ulysses and ‘Oxen’<HS>” (38–9)


It would appear that *On the Study of Words* was not the only work by Trench that Joyce consulted during the writing of “Oxen,” nor the one he quarried most extensively for archaic vocabulary. There is considerable overlap between the words and phenomena Trench analyzes in *On the Study of Words* and his next popular-philology book, *English Past and Present*, which also discusses language as an organic outgrowth of human culture. In 1998, Downing noted that over 100 of the 408 entries in the “Index of Words” to the edition of *English Past and Present* prepared by A. Smythe Palmer (1905) also appear in “Oxen” in some form (56–9). Highlights include archaic words, such as “wanhope,” meaning despair (*English* 115; *U* 14.105), “witwanton,” a word used by Thomas Fuller (*English* 117; *U* 14.411), “undeadliness” (*English* 118; cf. *U* 14.104), “againbuying,” a compound made obsolete by Latin borrowings, found in Wyclif (*English* 120; cf. “Agenbuyer,” *U* 14.295), “lovesum,” also in Wyclif (*English* 140; cf. “lovesome,” *U* 14.87); and reduplicative words such as “pell-mell” (*English* 141; *U* 14.487) and “namby-pamby” (*English* 141; *U* 14.1537). Downing
also lists words such as “bran-new” (English 231; cf. “brandnew,” U 14.1492),
“brangle” (English 177; U 14.505), “coxcomb” (English 229; U 14.769), “cozen”
turvy” (English 215; U 14.463) and “welkin” (English 158; U 14.82). Again,
Joyce does not simply treat English Past and Present as a lexicon, but responds to
the fine detail of Trench’s analysis. To give but one example, Trench notes in
English Past and Present that loan-words are often adopted in English two
different guises. An example of such a pairing is “<HS>‘girdle’ and ‘kirtle;’ both
of them corresponding to the German ‘guertel’<HS>” (39). Accordingly,
“Kirtles” appears first in “Oxen” (U 14.489), followed by “girdle” (U 14.600), a
doubling that underscores Trench’s etymological point by indicating the forking
twists and turns through which language develops.

An observation that is unique to English Past and Present is the challenge
Trench puts to his students:

If you wish to convince yourselves by actual experience, of the fact
which I just now asserted, namely, that the radical constitution of the
language is Saxon, I would say, Try [sic] to compose a sentence, let it
be only of ten or a dozen words, and the subject entirely of your choice,
employing therein only words which are of a Latin derivation. I venture
to say you will find it impossible, or next to impossible to do it;
whichever way you turn, some obstacle will meet you in the face. (27)

Joyce rises to that challenge in the painfully contorted second, third, and fourth
paragraphs of “Oxen,” where the lexical field is largely drawn from Latinate
words (U 14.7–59). A Select Glossary of English Words Used Formerly in Senses
Different from Their Present (1859)—to give Trench’s final full-length
philological book its full-title—was another rich source for the episode. In 1998,
Downing found fifty words (or derivatives thereof) that make an appearance in
“Oxen” in the archaic senses that Trench glossed: “allow,” as in approve (U
as in right away (U 14.483), “chaffer,” as in to bargain (U 14.1412), “clumsy,” as
in stiff (U 14.785), “comfort,” as in to make strong (U 14.284), “conceit,” as in
as in a drove (U 14.566), “endeavour,” as in to do one’s duty (U 14.953),
“exemplary,” as in serving as an example or exemplar (U 14.901), “exemplify,” as
in to make an example of (U 14.968), “fact,” as in thing done, deed (U 14.1228),
“fancy,” as in imagination (U 14.508), “geld(ing),” to refer to people as well as
promptly, dexterously (U 14.574), “hardy,” as in bold, daring (U 14.27),
“humour,” as in mood determined by levels of bodily fluids (U 14.239),
“intend/intention,” as in stretching toward (U 14.187), “lust,” as in any kind of

In total, hundreds of the distinctive words that were signally interesting to Trench as instructive landmarks in the historical development of English language and culture also appear in the final text of “Oxen” in some form, among them archaic words, uncommon words, biblical words, literary treasures and “words used formerly in senses different from their present.” The extent of the overlap confirms that Trench’s three major popular-philology works—On the Study of Words, English Past and Present, and A Select Glossary—are key sources for the Joyce’s historical play with language in the “Oxen of the Sun” episode of Ulysses.

Words that Trench glossed are dispersed throughout the text of “Oxen,” all the way from its Latinate beginning right through to the oral tailpiece (as is indicated by the line numbers to the Gabler edition in the foregoing paragraphs). The greatest number of the words that caught Trench’s attention are concentrated in the first 960 lines, in the paragraphs corresponding to Middle and Early Modern English. The distribution is perhaps unsurprising, as a large proportion of Trench’s examples are drawn from Middle and Early Modern English and Wyclif’s Bible. The proliferation of words provides further evidence that Joyce was intimately acquainted with Trench’s philological studies in their finer detail. We know that Joyce absorbed lessons from On the Study of Words during his undergraduate years. The welter of Trench-words that appear in “Oxen” suggest that at some stage—perhaps in his youth, perhaps in the writing of “Oxen”—Joyce had consulted Trench’s works with the same fervor that the Stephen of Stephen Hero scoured the works of Trench’s successor, the great Anglo-Saxon and Middle English philologist William Walter Skeat (1835–1912), reading “Skeat’s Etymological Dictionary by the hour” (SH 26).

The precise routes by which so many of the words discussed in Trench’s philological works made their way into the final text of “Oxen” are uncertain. Downing could only spot twenty-five instances where words that were dear to

Indeed, with the exception of the entries on notesheet 7 (which are part of the ditty “Behold the mansion reared by dedal Jack<TH>/<TH>[ . . . ] In the proud cirque of Ivan’s bivouac” [N 7.66–8]), the majority of the items of vocabulary of signal interest to Trench that appear on the notesheets have been securely sourced to sequences of notes that Joyce took from literary texts, primarily those he encountered in turn-of-the-century anthologies. For instance, Joyce took “leman” from Holinshed (Peacock 28), “witwanton” from Fuller (Peacock 80), “brave” from Samuel Pepys (Peacock 128), “dotard” from Philip Dormer Stanhope (Peacock 173), “chaffering” from Thomas Carlyle (Peacock 332), “sad” from Sir Thomas Elyot (Barnet and Dale 27), “mean of fortunes” (N 4.147) from Sir Henry Wotton (Barnett and Dale 76), “abait” from Hakluyt (Barnett and Dale 175), “kirtles” from William Dunbar (Murison 46), “contrary” from Richard Hooker (Murison 109), “megrimms” from a note on Ben Jonson (Murison 115), “puny” from Milton (Murison, 175), and “anker” from Macaulay (Saintsbury 373).

There are several reasons why it would not have been necessary for Joyce to prepare voluminous lists of the historically and culturally telling vocabulary he encountered in Trench’s studies. His powers of memory were prodigious; he evidently knew Trench’s work well; and, most important, the majority of the words that Trench glossed were already archived in a convenient form. On the Study of Words contains an alphabetized “Index of Words” (with page numbers) at
the back of the volume, *English Past and Present* is indexed in the same way, while *A Select Glossary* is organized alphabetically. Moreover, Trench’s literary tastes were informed by the same canonical values that guided the anthologists Joyce consulted in their selection of the best and most representative excerpts of English prose. Indeed, Trench’s discussions draw on many of the same sources that Joyce encountered as he rifled Saintsbury, Peacock, and Barnett and Dale. For instance, each entry in *A Select Glossary* is supplemented by illustrative passages drawn from literary texts Trench had read, so that the book is effectively a sampler of literary diction from the fourteenth to the late-eighteenth century. The “List of Authors Quoted” contains over one hundred names, several of which are familiar to “Oxen”’s source-hunters, including Edmund Burke, Florio, Fuller, Edward Gibbon, Hakluyt, Hooker, Jonson, Sir Thomas Malory, Sir John Mandeville, Milton, and Wyclif (xiii–xviii).

Downing suggests that “Given Joyce’s insistence in *Ulysses on the complexity of even the most ordinary phenomena*, we should shun simplistic assumptions about note-taking, genetics and composition” (67). In the light of his findings and my own supplementary work, I would like to propose a dynamic model for Joyce’s note-taking and compositional practices that takes close account of the genetic evidence. The degree of crossover between the period diction on the notesheets that was drawn from literary sources and the words that Joyce would have encountered as he read Trench’s philological works strongly suggests the following: (1) When Joyce took notes from literary texts as he was preparing to write “Oxen,” he was actively looking out for collocations that featured words that Trench held to be particularly revealing of the historical development of English language. (2) The number of items of distinctive vocabulary glossed by Trench that appear in the final text of “Oxen” far exceed those Joyce entered on to the extant notesheets. It is therefore likely that Joyce continued to consult *On the Study of Words* (and—in all probability—copies of *English Past and Present* and *A Select Glossary*) throughout the writing of “Oxen,” enriching his historical pastiche by drawing self-consciously on Trench’s knowledge of English past and present and deploying these words in ways that took account of Trench’s discussions.

The fact that hundreds of the linguistic “trophies” Trench displays in his account of the historical development of the English language appear in some form in “Oxen” signals Joyce’s strong determination that the episode should reflect the state of late-nineteenth-and early-twentieth-century philological knowledge, rather than simply mime the historical succession of English prose stylists in a way that simplistically reflects how those authors used language in their own time. In my previous work on “Oxen of the Sun,” I have suggested that Joyce’s attitude toward the historical provenance of literary vocabulary was willfully cavalier. Not only did his working practices admit slippage, but he also re-appropriated materials freely, weaving “diverse snippets of diction into
convincing, and compelling, imitations that feel redolent of particular periods or authors” (Davison, paragraph 27), to the extent that many words he took from literary sources appear out of strict chronological sequence. Although the evolving style of “Oxen” performs a broad, forward historical progression, the episode is, in its entirety, very much a work of the early twentieth century, as Joyce’s preference for accessing historical diction through turn-of-the-century prose anthologies rather than editions of primary texts suggests. In “Oxen of the Sun,” Joyce draws freely on all the evolutionary stages through which English prose has passed to arrive at an assessment of the development of the English language as it is understood in the present moment.

**Trench Warfare**

As the foregoing sections of this article demonstrate, Joyce regarded Trench’s linguistic studies as storehouses of useful philological knowledge that could be raided for historically and culturally revealing examples of period vocabulary, as well as information on the general principles that have guided the development of the English language through time. Joyce subsumed Trench’s insights into the origins of words to produce a history of the English language that is freighted with an awareness of the many moments of incursions, invasion and contact with other cultures that progressively enriched and enlarged its vocabulary. The reader steeped in On the Study of Words will appreciate that the coming of the Norman conquest is re-enacted linguistically in the early paragraphs of “Oxen,” when unadorned Saxon words such as “board” (Study 129; U 14.141), “churl” (Study 129; U 14.325), and “home” (Study 129; U 14.68) give way to more imposing Norman words such as “castle” (Study 129; U 14.123, 14.132, 14.139, 14.141, 14.166) and “palace” (Study 128–9; U 14.403). The student of Trench is also in a position to recognize that the enduring legacy of the eleventh-century invasion and occupation of England is recalled whenever loan-words from Old French reappear, for instance “curfew” (Study 171; U 14.1339). Trench remarks: “We all know what fact of English history is laid up in ‘curfew,’ or ‘couvre-feu,’<HS>” nodding to the incorrect, but widely held, notion that the curfew was introduced into England by William the Conqueror (Study 171). Trench’s student might also discern that the wider history of the relative power of nations is deftly indicated by the use of words such as “alkali” (Study 131; U 14.1297) and “almanack” (Study 131; U 14.520), which, as Trench notes, announce that “the Arabs were the arithmeticians, the astronomers, the chemists, the merchants of the Middle Ages” (Study 131). However, the implied reader of On the Study of Words is an English Christian, as Trench’s pronouns attest:

How solemn a truth we express when we name our work in this world our “vocation,” or, which is the same in homelier Anglo-Saxon, our
“calling.” What a calming, elevating, ennobling view of the tasks appointed us in this world, this word gives us. We did not come to our work by accident; we did not choose it for ourselves; but, in the midst of much which may wear the appearance of accident and self-choosing, came to it by God’s leading and appointment. (336)

To the Joyce who presented Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* discussing the Old English word *tundish* with the English dean of studies and fretting, “How different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master,* on his lips and on mine!” (*P* 189), such a complacent expression of the Sassenach moral duty to impose its language and cultural values abroad would have been a red rag to an Irish bull. While Joyce drew extensively on Trench’s scholarship in order to compose his linguistic cavalcade, he slyly turned Trench’s insights against him to mount a forceful rebuttal of his Anglo-centric and Anglican approach to the historical study of language and culture.

In the “Introductory Lecture” in *On the Study of Words*, Trench cites Ralph Waldo Emerson’s observation that language is “fossil poetry” and then teases this point out, explicitly linking stages in the development of species to stages in the evolution of a nation’s language and culture. (The references to evolution in *On the Study of Words* sit uncomfortably with Trench’s commitment to Christianity, but they reflect his determination to treat language as a field that can be studied scientifically.)

*J*ust as in some fossil, curious and beautiful shapes of vegetable or animal life, the graceful fern or the finely vertebrated lizard, such as now, it may be, have been extinct for thousands of years, are permanently bound up with the stone, and rescued from that perishing which would else have been their portion,—so in words are beautiful thoughts and images, the imagination and the feeling of past ages, of men long since in their graves, of men whose very names have perished, there are these, which might so easily have perished too, preserved and made safe forever. (5)

The same set of evolutionary parallels provide “Oxen” with thematic and structural coherence, as set out in the famous letter in which Joyce informed Frank Budgen that the episode’s historical “progression” of English prose will be “also linked back at each part subtly with some foregoing episode of the day and, besides this, with the natural stages of development in the embryo and the periods of faunal evolution in general.”

In *On the Study of Words*, Trench repeatedly invokes familial, evolutionary and gestational metaphors to describe the way that language develops, referring for instance to “the parentage of all words” (241), “the secret of their origin” (240), and “the time and place of their birth” (184). The mapping of the progress of the language onto biological reproduction provides the logic that links the technique of “Oxen” to its ostensible subject, the symbolic meeting between the fatherly Bloom and the embryonic artist Stephen, as Mina Purefoy labors to bring
forth new life. Inspiration for the abiding, unifying concept of “embryological development” seems to have come from the potent nexus of ideas implicit in Trench’s conception of language as “fossil poetry,” “fossil ethics,” and “fossil history” (5).

While Joyce seized on the organic metaphors that Trench unfurled to describe how language is a living record of human history, he remonstrated with Trench’s predictably conservative opinions on the necessity of safeguarding English from future changes that would dramatically change its character.

So far as Trench is concerned, the story of the evolution of language begins with Genesis. He points to the chapter where God brings the creatures he created to Adam “to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof” (Genesis ii. 19) as evidence that humankind’s innate capacity for language is God-given and that “the origin, at once divine and human, of speech; while yet neither is so brought forward as to exclude or obscure the other” (14–15). The act of tracing words back to their origins is morally instructive because it brings the philologist closer to an appreciation of Edenic language. Trench can therefore “conceive of no method of so effectually defacing and barbarizing our English tongue, of practically emptying it of all the hoarded wit, wisdom, and imagination, and history which it contains, of cutting the vital nerve which connects its present with the past as the introduction of the scheme of phonetic spelling” (305).

The written word is a superior source of knowledge to the spoken word, as far as Trench is concerned, because “in the written word [ . . . ] is the permanence and continuity of language and of learning, and that the connexion is most intimate of a true orthography with all this, is affirmed in our words ‘letters,’ ‘literature,’ ‘unlettered’<HS>” (306). As a consequence, Trench regards any movement that takes spoken English for its model will irrevocably debase the language. Although Trench recognizes that language is an instrument of culture and it is not in its nature to remain unchanged for long, his preference is that these changes should happen incrementally, so that there is a fossil record that might be traced. Thus, he pleads at least for moderation: “Shall the labour-pangs of this immense new-birth or transformation of English be encountered all at once?” (311).

Joyce answers Trench’s rhetorical question with an emphatic “yes” in the oral tailpiece of “Oxen of the Sun.” The episode labors through many centuries of literary language to bring forth a new, dramatically transformed version of written English, that takes its cue from a live, oral culture. When the historical pageant of English prose crashes into the present day, the high literary style disintegrates into what Joyce described as “a frightful jumble of pidgin English, nigger English, Cockney, Irish, Bowery slang and broken doggerel” (Letters I 140). The English language is dramatically reconfigured to correspond to the non-standard ways in
which it might be spoken in regional dialect, and by different nationality and races:

Up to you, matey. Out with the oof. Two bar and a wing. You larn that
go of they there Frenchy bilks? Won’t wash here for nuts nohow. Lil
chile velly solly. Ise de cutest colour coon down our side. Gawds
teruth, Chawley. We are nae fou. We’re nae tha fou. Au reservoir,
mossoo. Tanks you. (U 14.1502–6)

The style careers from Cockney to Chinglish, to a crass approximation of black
American vernacular, to mock upper-class English, to Scots, to faux-French
malapropism and ends in illiteracy. Joyce indicates pronunciation through
phonetic spelling, degrading literature to the unlettered condition of non-standard
speech, much of which is slurred and drunken, ungrammatical or exaggerated to
the point of parody.

The use of regional dialects is significant in the light of Joyce’s
undergraduate essay “The Study of Languages,” in which Joyce reproduces
Trench’s arguments about the ways in which the progress of a language reveals
the historical superiority of nations, but from standpoint of the colonized:

Sometimes they [words] have changed greatly in meaning, as the word
“villain” because of customs now extinct, and sometimes the advent of
an overcoming power may be attested by the crippled diction, or by the
complete disuse of the original tongue, save in solitary, dear phrases,
spontaneous in grief or gladness. (15)

Joyce reverses the process by which overcoming powers cripple the native
language in the oral tailpiece by looking to the dialects of the outlying regions
where “solitary, dear phrases” are spontaneously used and bringing them into
literary use. He revives the Anglo-Irish word “bonnyclaber” (U 14.1438), first
attested in the seventeenth century, from bainne (milk) and claba (thick) and
accesses obsolete Scots through the oral tradition that is preserved in the ballads of
Robert Burns. For instance, the Scots term for malt liquor, “barleybree” (U
14.1490)—“bree” being boiling liquor or broth—makes an appearance in a
fragment that echoes the wording of “The Jolly Beggars; A Cantata”; the
exclamation “We’re nae tha fou” (U 14.1565)—“fou” being “full,” and, in this
case “drunk”—also comes from that ballad; while “wame” (U 14.1496), the
northern form of “womb,” adopted in the seventeenth century as a jocular term for
the belly, derives from Burn’s “Ken ye ought o’ Captain Grose?”28 “Tell her I was
axing at her” (U 14.1495) uses the form of “asking” that survived in literature until
nearly 1600, but which is still preserved in some middle and southern dialects and
that Trench discusses in English Past and Present (124).

The old words and phrases that are lovingly preserved in the oral cultures
of outlying regions are mixed with recent coinages, such as “Jubilee Mutton” (U
14.1547), Irish slang for “not much,” after the relatively small quantities of mutton
distributed to the Dublin poor during the celebration of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee),
and the American word “speakeasy” (U 14.1507), first attested in 1889. Joyce undermines Trench’s thesis that “the radical constitution of the language is Saxon” by presenting an influx of words and dialects from across the globe. There are loan-words from Indian American (“squaws and papooses” [U 14.1484]) and German (“Übermensch” [U 14.1467]), snippets of mock Yiddish (“Vyfor you no me tell? [U 14.1525]), interjections in Spanish (“Caramba!” [U 14.1470]), as well as snatches of Franglaise (“Horryvar, mong vioo” [U 14.1522]), which all busily assert that the English language is no longer the preserve of England’s national history and culture, but is instead invigorated from without. Joyce deforms English to decolonialize it. The “frightful jumble” of regional dialects and world Englishes asserts that the future of the language is to be found in its deformation beyond England’s borders, particularly in emergent voices from her former and soon-to-be former colonies. It sets the program for Joyce’s future “conquest” of the English language, anticipating the flamboyant deformation of Anglo-Irish into the interlingual, supra-tongue of Finnegans Wake.

It is possible that the seed for Joyce’s punning language was sown when he read Trench discussions of “Prophecy in Names,” in which he remarks “How often, for instance, and with what effect, the name of Stephen, the protomartyr, that name signifying in Greek ‘the Crown,’ was taken as a prophetic intimation of the martyr-crown, which it should be given to him, the first in that noble army, to wear” (Study 37). The page of On the Study of Words where Trench discusses the name Stephen also contains a section of a hugely distended footnote on the topic of “Names changed to worse” that spans several pages (35–8). The “contumely of names” (35) Trench presents would surely have piqued Joyce’s interest:

Tiberius Claudius Nero, charged with being a drunkard becomes in the popular language “Biberius Caldius Mero.” [...] Berengar of Tours calls a Pope who had taken side against him not pontifex, but “pompifex.” [...] Metrophanes, Patriarch of Constantinople, being counted to have betrayed the interests of the Greek Church, his spiritual mother, at the Council of Florence, saw his name changed by popular hate into “Metrophonos” or the “Matricide.” [...] Baxter complains that the Independents called presbyters “priestbiters,” Presbyterian ministers not “divines” but “dry vines,” and their Assembly men “Dissembly men” (35–7).

Further examples appear in the main body of the text, including the fact that “Spanish peasantry during the Peninsular War would not hear of Bonaparte, but changed the name to ‘Malaparte,’ as designating far better the perfidious kidnapper of their king and enemy of their independence” (33). These amusing appellations provide a historical precedent for the playful, but pointed deformation of names (and other parts of speech) in Finnegans Wake, where Bonaparte is variously configured as “boney part” (FW 83.26), “Boomaport” (FW 133.21), “Bohnaparts” (FW 238.26), “Boehernapark” (FW 321.08), “born appalled” (FW 334.14), and “Bonaboche” (FW 388.31).
While Joyce extracted many concepts from Trench’s studies that would prove useful for constructing “Oxen,” from items of vocabulary to wider linguistic principles, methods of historical interpretation and even metaphors for comprehending how language evolves, he deployed them with a view to avenging the colonial occupation of Ireland by remaking the language through which English rule was enforced. As Church of Ireland Lord Archbishop of Dublin, Primate of Ireland, Trench was the embodiment of English religious authority. For Dublin’s Catholic population, the establishment of the Protestant Episcopal Church of Ireland was, as Bromley notes, “a perpetual reminder of their subjection to a neighboring government” (156). It “was the Church of the English settlers, the Church of the landowning class whose rights originated in conquest,” and “its considerable privileges and endowments” resulted in fierce accusations that it derived “its wealth from a poverty-stricken peasantry” (156).

The Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland became an item in William Gladstone’s Liberal political agenda in the wake of the Great Famine, the suffering of the Irish peasantry, and the increased number of violent campaigns against landowners. In response, Gladstone saw an opportunity to make the Church of Ireland a scapegoat for all the past iniquities of English rule. Trench resisted Gladstone’s proposal as far as he could, but was ultimately powerless to prevent Gladstone’s bill from becoming law. The Irish Church Act 1869 came into force on January 1, 1871, repealing the law that required the payment of tithes. With great reluctance, Trench guided the Church through Disestablishment. For Catholic Dublin, then, Lord Archbishop Trench was first the highest representative of the Church of England in Ireland, and then the figurehead for an institution that had been made a scapegoat for past wrongdoings. It is no mere coincidence, therefore, that the word “bishop” appears as the punchline to the incendiary list of the eight “British Beatitudes” spat out by Stephen at the end of the “Oxen” (U 14.1459–60). The inclusion of this Anglo-Saxon word is not simply a play on “<HS>‘Beer and Bible,’ the nickname of a combination of High-Church Conservatives and English brewers who resisted Parliament’s attempts to limit the sale of intoxicating beverages in and after 1873,” as Gifford suggests (442), but also a sharp dig at Trench, for whom “bishop” was a dear Saxon word:

Thus “bishop” [A.S. biscop], a word as old as the introduction of Christianity into England, though derived from “episcopus,” is thoroughly English; while “episcopal,” which has supplanted “bishopsly,” is only a Latin word in an English dress (232). Trench’s regard for the term is unlikely to have escaped Joyce’s notice as it appears on the same page of On the Study of Words as “quinsy” and “megrim,” archaic terms for common medical complaints (which also make an appearance in “Oxen,” as discussed previously). Joyce’s disdain for Trench’s activities as Anglican archbishop of Dublin are transferred on to the character of Haines, an apologist for history, who exculpates his countrymen with the comment “We feel in England that we have treated you rather unfairly. It
seems history is to blame” (U 1.307). Evidently, Haines is a product of the longstanding colonial history in which the grandfather of his real-life model played a key part. Indeed, the rumor that Haines’s “old fellow made his tin by selling jalaps to Zulus or some bloody swindle or other” (U 14.156–7) nods to Trench’s observation that the word “jalap” (a purgative drug that is obtained from the roots of a plant) derives from “Jalapa, a town in Mexico” (Study 159) and indicates that generations of Trenches have been making their way in the world by exploiting colonial subjects.

Joyce labored hard to make the language of “Oxen” reverberate with the teachings of contemporary philology, so that it might tell of the histories of nations and human culture more broadly. He drew extensively on Trench’s knowledge of particular words and linguistic phenomena and his ideas about language as a living outgrowth of human culture to produce a literary work which far exceeded any future linguistic formation Trench could imagine. Far from being entrenched in the world-view of the mid-nineteenth-century’s most popular and influential philologist, Joyce armed himself with this knowledge in order insert himself into the linguistic succession as a supremely creative stylist who gives birth to a radically transformed English language with which he can counter the colonially invested power Trench himself symbolized in his role as Church of Ireland Lord Archbishop of Dublin.

Notes


6 British Library Add MS 49975; British Library microfilm 2934.

7 Ulysses: Notes & “Telemachus”—“Scylla and Charybdis,” A Facsimile of Notes for the Book & Manuscripts & Typescripts for Episodes 1–9, 23.


15 A transcription of notesheet 3, with sourcings and commentary, appears in Sarah Davison, “Joyce’s incorporation of literary sources in ‘Oxen,’<HS>” *Genetic Joyce Studies* 9 (Spring 2009), http://www.geneticjoycestudies.org/. Subsequent references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text, by paragraph number.

16 Compare the text of these two editions of *On the Study of Words*:

And yet with how lively an interest shall we discover words to be of closest kin, which we had never considered till now but as entire strangers to one another; what a real increase will it be in our acquaintance with and mastery of English to become aware of such a relationship. (Richard Chenevix Trench, *On the Study of Words: Five Lectures Addressed to the Pupils at the Diocesan Training School*, Winchester [London: John W. Parker and Son, 1851], 121–2.)

And yet with how lively an interest shall we discover those [words] to be of closest kin, which we had never considered by as entire strangers to one another; what increased mastery over our mother tongue shall we through such discoveries obtain. (Richard Chenevix Trench, *The Study of Words*, 20th ed., rev. A. L. Mayhew [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1888], 312.)


21 Downing also draws attention to the various senses in which “lewd” is used in “Oxen of the Sun” (45).

22 The word “gossamer” does not appear in the twenty-second edition of *On the Study of Words*, or in previous editions.


24 The first the title-page of 1905 edition of *English Past and Present* quietly states that the text had been “Edited with Emendations” by Palmer, whereas the text of the posthumous editions prepared by A. L. Mayhew were “revised and in part rewritten” (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1889). For the sake of consistency, and in the absence of genetic evidence, I have used the edition that Downing selected.

25 I have not supplied page numbers for *A Select Glossary*, as all the entries are organized alphabetically.

26 The note “wellwilling (ness)” is uncrossed and does not appear in the text of “Oxen” in any form.
