

Reconsidering Joyce's 'Notes on Business and Commerce.'

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The notebook catalogued as Cornell 38 and continued partially in Cornell 63, reproduced as 'Notes on Business and Commerce' in the *James Joyce Archive* (*JJA* 3:474-617), has received almost no critical attention.¹ This neglect is partly due to its content: these are mundane notes on mundane subjects, 138 pages of reasonably neat longhand notes taken by Joyce on the subjects of banking, commercial law, clerical work, insurance, the stock exchange, shipping, advertising, and trade. However, this critical neglect is also due, I believe, to the received assumption that these notes were taken by Joyce only to facilitate his short-lived career at Nast-Kolb and Schumacher, the private bank in Rome where, aged 24-25, he worked between August 1906 and March 1907. With this dating, the 'Notes on Business and Commerce' have been connected with one of the few absolutely non-literary endeavours of Joyce's life, and denied the kind of genetic attention that his other notebooks have long received. In this article, I locate the sources of six of the eight sections of these notes, and use these sources to revise the accepted dating of Cornell 38 and 63. Not only does this revision allow us to dispel a minor biographical myth, it retrieves the notes from the closed-off commercial department of Joyce's biography, and grants them a new legitimacy as genetic resources for the study of his fiction.

The Rome dating was first proposed by Robert E. Scholes in his 1961 catalogue of the Cornell Joyce Collection, with the suggestion that Cornell 38 'reveals the industry and thoroughness with which James Joyce tried to master the banking trade.'² When the notes were reproduced in the *James Joyce Archive* in 1979, Hans Walter Gabler reinforced the connection, affirming that 'Joyce methodically familiarized himself with the idiolects of the world of commerce which he joined for a while as a bank clerk in Rome in 1907' (*JJA* 3:Preface, vii). And when Franco Onorati published an article on Joyce's bank career in 1984, the attribution of the notes to his time at Nast-Kolb and Schumacher took on the tone and detail of positive biographical fact:

Joyce had not taken his new job lightly: during the two months of negotiations with Nast-Kolb and Schumacher he had tried hard to make good his lack of specific experience in banking. His preparation could not have been more thorough: it is documented by two notebooks he wrote in long hand in Trieste between May and July, obviously based on a careful study of the most up-to-date publications on the subject.³

This account of the genesis of the 'Notes on Business and Commerce' stuck, and the occasional critical references to these notes have followed its assumption. So it is that Mark Osteen, as far as I know the only critic to have discussed the contents of these notes in print, proceeds with the claim that while 'Joyce was less than brilliant in the banking business,' he

nevertheless ‘tried to succeed, filling an entire notebook with notes on banking and commerce, carefully writing each term on the left and its definition on the right.’⁴ Scholes’s interpretation of these notes’ proof of Joyce’s ‘industry and thoroughness’; Gabler’s suggestion that Joyce had ‘methodically familiarized himself’ with his new trade; Onorati’s claim for his ‘thorough’ and ‘careful study’; Osteen’s assertion that Joyce ‘tried to succeed’: all culminate in the figure of Joyce the banker, temporarily turning his genius away from his literary calling.

Since the first section in Cornell 38 is headed ‘Banking,’ the attribution of the ‘Notes on Business and Commerce’ to Joyce’s time at Nast-Kolb and Schumacher is understandable, although it might have been wondered what relevance insurance or advertising would have had to Joyce’s relatively menial clerical job. Onorati explains this free range as testament to ‘the extraordinarily professional conscience of the candidate to a banking career,’⁵ but Joyce’s letters to Stanislaus in this period do not give the impression of conscientiousness. He started off in the Italian correspondence department, and wrote to his brother on 7 August 1906 that ‘[t]he work is very easy and mechanical’ (LII 145). He was moved to the reception room in September, and was apparently not much busier: ‘Have a desk and lamp all to myself and not at all much to do’ (LII 159). And by October, Joyce still does not seem to have tried very hard to ‘master the banking trade’: ‘I am constantly making the most absurd mistakes here, knowing damn all about banking business’ (LII 181). So, in February 1907, after just over six months at the bank, Joyce abruptly gave his notice: ‘I have no “*carriera*” before me in commerce’ (LII 215). In his letters from Rome, Joyce describes his diet, his reading, his sightseeing, his health, and almost every other detail of his life in this unhappy period. The references to his banking job are uniformly ironic, uninterested and dismissive.

If contemporary letters do not support the idea of Joyce as a dedicated banker, taking copious notes to forward his career, the real objection to the 1906-7 dating can be found in the notes themselves. The ‘Advertising’ section includes reference to figures for the year 1909: ‘Financial Times 300 M subscribed in resp to prospectus in 1909’ (JJA 3:609). It is this detail that enabled me to trace the source for this section of the ‘Notes on Business and Commerce’: Joyce took the ‘Advertising’ notes from a handbook written by the advertising manager for the *Financial Times*, entitled *Advertising, Or the Art of Making Known*.⁶ Although Bridgewater’s book is undated, contemporary reviews and library records allow us to establish the earliest date at which Joyce could have taken his ‘Advertising’ notes. Published in London by Isaac Pitman & Sons, it could not have appeared any earlier than July 1909, as it contains the *Financial Times* advertising revenue figures for ‘the first six months’ of that year (which Joyce approximately doubled to get the annual figure quoted above.)⁷ Contemporary journal references to the book give a publication year of 1910, and *The Economic Bulletin* for September of that year includes it in a list of recent publications, ‘published principally since May 1 1910.’⁸ Though copies of the book are now relatively rare, the British Library copy was received and stamped by the British Museum on 8 June 1910, and the Bodleian Library copy on 17 June 1910. We can thus say with certainty that *Advertising, Or the Art of Making Known* must have been published between July 1909 and June 1910, and most likely in May or very early June 1910—nearly four years after Joyce had moved to Rome to take up his ‘*carriera*’ with Nast-Kolb and Schumacher.

That Bridgewater's book is the source for Joyce's 'Advertising' section is confirmed by the sequential consistency of Joyce's notes (they follow Bridgewater's account exactly), and by the peculiarity of some of the examples that Joyce copies. Indeed, many of Joyce's notes can only be understood when read against their original source. For instance, Joyce's laconic 'Amer. Ad. frog reading ad. for coffee' (*JJA* 3:605) seems nonsensical, and I had suspected that the enigmatic amphibian had emerged from my own mistranscription. In fact, it is a fair paraphrase of one of Bridgewater's critical observations: 'I have seen an advertisement of a famous coffee firm (American, too!) illustrated by a huge frog depicted reading an announcement descriptive of the virtues of a largely advertised brand of coffee.'⁹ There are countless examples of this kind to confirm the identification. Joyce records some very specific figures and statistics from Bridgewater, such as the estimated returns from a particular kind of advertising campaign.¹⁰ He records particular brand-names such as 'Sunlight,' he notes unusual advertisement examples such as the coffee-drinking frog, and he copies Bridgewater's reference to the famous Pears' Soap advertisement 'Bubbles (Millais).'¹¹ Joyce sketches an optical illusion that is printed in Bridgewater's book, and reproduces exactly the irregularly spaced phrase, 'You / Are / a / Fair / Dealing / Man.'¹²

Bridgewater's *Advertising* is a 102-page clothbound crown octavo book, priced at a shilling, and offered as a 'practical help to those who may find it necessary or desirable to have a knowledge of the main principles governing [. . .] the science of advertising,' or for those who 'are yet interested in it as a psychological study.'¹³ It was published as a number in the popular Pitman's Practical Primer series, a range of non-specialist business and commercial guides 'intended to serve the purpose of an introduction to the particular subject treated.'¹⁴ The full prospectus for this series is published at the rear of Bridgewater's book, and this prospectus gives vital clues for the sources of the other sections of the 'Notes on Business and Commerce': I have so far traced six of the eight sections of Joyce's notes back to books in the Pitman's series, each written by a different author, though uniform in appearance and price. The entire series is undated, but the other books upon which Joyce drew were apparently all published the year before Bridgewater's *Advertising*: each has been stamped as received by the British Museum between July and September 1909, dates which are consistent with references to the books in contemporary journals.

Below is a list of Joyce's notes as they appear in the notebooks, with details of those sources that I have located. I have also included the date on which the book was stamped as received by the British Museum, and the earliest journal reference to that title that I have been able to find.

'Banking' (*JJA* 3:474-94)

J. P. Gandy, *The Elements of Banking: A Guide to the Principles and Practice of Banking* (London: Pitman, n.d.)

—Stamped B.M. 25 Aug 1909; *Journal of Political Economy* 17:9 (Nov 1909), 661.

'Commercial Law' (*JJA* 3:495-519)

A. H. Douglas, *The Elements of Commercial Law* (London: Pitman, n.d.)

—Stamped B.M. 2 July 1909; *Publisher's Weekly* 76 (1909), 293.

‘Clerical Work’ (*JJA* 3:520-36)

Not found.

‘Insurance’ (*JJA* 3:537-60)

J. Alfred Eke, *The Elements of Insurance: A Guide to the Principles and Practice of Accident, Fire, Marine, and Life Insurance* (London: Pitman, n.d.)

—Stamped B.M. 1 Sep 1909; *The Economic Journal* 19:76 (Dec 1909), 654.

‘Shipping’ (*JJA* 3:561-85)

Arnold Hall and F. Heywood, *Shipping: A Guide to the Routine in Connection with the Shipment of Goods and the Clearance of Vessels Inwards and Outwards* (London: Pitman, n.d.)

—Stamped B.M. 21 Aug 1909; *Journal of Political Economy* 17:8 (Oct 1909), 585.

‘The Stock Exchange’ (*JJA* 3:586-603)

A. Emil Davies, *The Money, and the Stock and Share Markets* (London: Pitman, n.d.)

—Stamped B.M. 17 July 1909; *The Economic Bulletin* 2:3 (Sep 1909), 299.

‘Advertising’ (*JJA* 3:604-610)

Howard Bridgewater, *Advertising, Or the Art of Making Known: A Simple Exposition of the Principles of Advertising* (London: Pitman, n.d.)

—Stamped B.M. 8 June 1910; *The Economic Bulletin* 3:3 (Sep 1910), 333.

‘Trade’ (*JJA* 3:611-17)

Not found.

As with the ‘Advertising’ section, the precise details included in Joyce’s annotation, and the consistency of his notes with the original texts, confirm that these are the sources of the Joyce’s notes. The purpose of this article is ultimately to reclaim the ‘Notes on Business and Commerce’ for literary study, and the identification of these sources not only disproves the 1906-7 Rome dating, with its concomitant myth of Joyce the dedicated banker, but in some places even allows us to decipher Joyce’s notes for the first time. I will go on to briefly describe Joyce’s note-taking process, and to outline the work that remains to be done so that the use of these notes within Joyce’s fiction can be fully evaluated. With the Rome dating disproved, however, it is first worth considering when these notes might have been taken.

The two other purely commercial ventures in Joyce’s biography are his management of the Volta Cinema in Dublin in 1909-10, and his Triestine agency for Dublin Woollen Co. in 1910-11. The dates of these ventures perhaps make them tempting explanations for the ‘Notes on Business and Commerce.’ Joyce’s letters from Dublin show that he was engaged with most of the practical aspects of the running of the Volta; itemised account sheets from this period, in Joyce’s hand, demonstrate his organisation of such matters as advertising and insurance.¹⁵ However, while certainly more plausible than the impossible Rome identification, Joyce’s Volta involvement still does not correspond easily with the publication date of Bridgewater’s *Advertising*, even if the other books in the Pitman’s Practical Primer

series had already been published when he left Trieste for Dublin on 18 October 1909. The cinema was opened on 20 December, and Joyce returned to Trieste on 2 January 1910 (*JIII* 301, 302, 308). He was informed of his partners' intention to sell the cinema on 18 April 1910, and it was finally sold on 14 June of that year.¹⁶ If, as I have established, Bridgewater's book was most likely published in May-June 1910, it is unlikely that Joyce would have had the time to complete the 'Notes on Business and Commerce' before the Volta was sold—or, since its sale was already decided by the time Bridgewater's book was published, any obvious commercial motive.

Joyce's later work for Dublin Woollen Co., by contrast, is chronologically compatible with Bridgewater's publication. The Cornell Joyce Collection contains six letters and twenty-two invoices from the company to Joyce, dated between 7 November 1910 and 31 July 1911, 'indicating charges for shipments made from Dublin to Trieste for various people.'¹⁷ Yet if the timing fits, the other objections noted in relation to the Rome explanation still apply. It is hard to see what use *The Elements of Insurance* or *The Money, Stock and Share Markets* would have had to an Irish tweed salesman, even if Joyce had been supremely dedicated to this role. And Joyce does not seem to have been an overly assiduous agent. Ellmann notes that Joyce corrected Gorman's dismissive reference to his involvement with the tweed agency, inserting his own footnote: 'He got the agency and did, in fact, succeed in clothing several of his Triestine male pupils in Irish homespuns ordered by them.'¹⁸ However defensive this amendment may seem, it does not suggest any activity that would have required the extensive commercial knowledge to which the 'Notes on Business and Commerce' attest.

The other period in which Joyce had both the means and the motive for his annotation of the Pitman's Practical Primer series is his time teaching in two commercial schools in Trieste.¹⁹ As John McCourt has detailed, in around October 1910 Joyce was employed to teach English in La Scuola Commerciale di perfezionamento. Here Joyce taught English to shopkeepers and shop-assistants, and his colleagues taught such subjects as commercial law and accountancy. Joyce remained in this post until 1913, when he was taken on at another commercial school—La Scuola Superiore di Commercio 'Revoltella'—remaining here (with a six month interruption) until its closure in June 1915.²⁰ At the Scuola 'Revoltella' Joyce taught 'English language and English commercial correspondence,' and picked up a curriculum that taught English through 'works containing narratives and dialogues concerning business and commercial dealings.'²¹ Pitman's Practical Primers are just the kind of books—each serving 'as an introduction to its subject' and 'as an authoritative guide'²²—that are likely to have been available to Joyce and his students in the commercial schools. It may be, then, that Joyce originally took these notes as a teaching aid, although their copiousness makes them superfluous to that task, and his notes are too fragmentary to have been of direct use within the classroom. In any case, whether Joyce took the notes in order to teach, or whether he took them for his own personal edification—to become, perhaps, like Bloom, an 'allround man' (*U* 10.581)—I would resist the implication that they might for that reason be considered distinct from the other more obviously 'literary' notebooks that make up the 'workshop of Daedalus.' For what has not been demonstrated in any concrete way is that Joyce drew upon these notes, both directly and indirectly, in his composition of *Ulysses*.

Prerequisite to the detailed critical study of Joyce's use of these notes in his fiction is the study of Joyce's note-taking process—what he has recorded, what he has adapted, and

even what he has ignored. Joyce's annotation across the 'Notes on Business and Commerce' is generally linear, although he occasionally interrupts his sequential notation by turning to a different section of the book and working backwards. This irregularity is particularly prominent in the 'Banking' notes, taken from Gandy's *The Elements of Banking*. The contents of chapters I-V are recorded in the order they appear, but on the eleventh page of Joyce's notes, he skips forward seventy pages in Gandy's book and begins copying from the final chapter (XVIII). He records the contents of this chapter in order, and then skips back fifteen pages to chapter XV, which he again follows through sequentially until the end of chapter XVI. He then skips back and copies chapter VII, skips forward again to XVII, back to XIII, back again to chapter X, back to chapter IX, forward to chapter XII, and finally returns to the original break point and finishes copying chapter VI. The result is that Joyce annotates the entire book, but in an apparently erratic order. I can find no explanation for these deviations in the content of the sources, or the material noted.

Joyce generally condenses and paraphrases the source text, sometimes substituting his own synonyms. A distinctive example is his substitution of the word 'fire-dogs' for Bridgewater's 'Andirons'²³—distinctive at least to a reader who did not know one word for the utensil, let alone two. Joyce also sometimes interpolates the source material in a way that—if in most cases retaining the basic argument—is not strictly accurate, as with his approximation of the annual *Financial Times* figures from the half-year figures referred to above. Joyce also at times inserts his own comments or annotations within the notes; for instance, in *The Elements of Banking*, Gandy writes: 'Country notes, *i.e.* the notes circulated by the country banks which have a right of issue, under the Bank Charter Act of 1844, are for amounts not exceeding £100.'²⁴ Joyce condenses the sentence into 'Country Notes: allowed up to £100,' but includes his own parenthetical comment: '(never seen in London)' (*JJA* 3:478). This does not appear in Gandy's text, nor would it make much sense there; it is presumably Joyce's reflection upon his own (at this time very limited) pecuniary experience in the capital.

It will take some time to make a full analysis of Joyce's note-taking process in the 'Notes on Business and Commerce.' For a start, the lengthy source texts need to be read as carefully as Joyce's annotations, because what he leaves out of his notes is often as interesting as what he includes. For instance, the fact that Joyce ignores Bridgewater's reference to the Irish advertising market, and more or less skips a section on the disreputable origins of the 'Bill-posting Industry,'²⁵ perhaps suggests that the 'Advertising' notes were not taken while Joyce was very far into writing *Ulysses*; such details would otherwise presumably have been useful in filling out Bloom's career, or the activities of 'Boylan, the billsticker' (*U* 16.199). On the other hand, as I hinted above, Joyce demonstrably drew some of the 'Notes on Business and Commerce' into the novel. To give just one concrete example, J. J. O'Molloy's comment in the 'Cyclops' episode of *Ulysses*—'the truth of a libel is no defence to an indictment for publishing it in the eyes of the law' (*U* 12.1048-9)—can be traced directly to a note in his section on 'Trade': 'Belief in truth no excuse in libel action' (*JJA* 3:616). The 'Trade' section is one of the two for which I have not yet located a source, but the fact that Joyce drew upon these notes in his fiction, even if they were initially taken for another purpose altogether, justifies the labour involved in transcribing and analysing these notes and their sources.

Even this preparatory manual work, however, is not necessarily sufficient for the full evaluation of Joyce's fictional adaptation of these notes. The Pitman's Practical Primer series may be non-specialist, but these guidebooks nevertheless treat complex and specialised subjects, and in certain cases it takes some understanding of their historical context to be able to detect Joyce's fictional use. To give, again, just one example, Bridgewater's advertising guide draws heavily upon the psychological theories of Walter Dill Scott's groundbreaking *The Psychology of Advertising* (1908), and a number of the points that Joyce records from Bridgewater's text indirectly reflect the changes in advertising theory that Scott had in many ways initiated. The most significant of these changes is the shift from the classical nineteenth-century model of the consumer as a rational agent, making conscious decisions in response to the appeal of advertisements, to a model of the consumer as irrational and therefore open to unconscious persuasion. Even aside from Joyce's more direct inclusion of these notes into *Ulysses*, a passage such as Bloom's musing upon the 'infinite possibilities hitherto unexploited of the modern art of advertisement [. . .] to arrest involuntary attention' (*U* 17.580-84) indirectly reflects the new psychological theories to which Joyce was exposed in his study of Bridgewater. Without some contextual knowledge of the history of advertising theory, such indirect or diffuse adaptation would be missed. I am close to finishing an extended essay on this subject, tracing Joyce's direct and indirect use of Bridgewater's *Advertising* in *Ulysses*; Jaya Savage at Cambridge University is working on a similarly detailed account of the 'Insurance' section. Ultimately, a full critical analysis of the 'Notes on Business and Commerce' will require not only transcription and genetic analysis, but some historical understanding of the practices that Joyce has studied.

I have shown that Joyce could not have taken these notes earlier than mid-1909, and almost certainly only completed them after mid-1910. If we accept the commercial school hypothesis, he could have recorded them any time before June 1915, when the Scuola 'Revoltella' was closed, and Joyce left Trieste for Zürich. Even with the earliest estimates, therefore, by the time Joyce recorded these notes he would already have written the first three chapters of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. With the later estimates, Joyce would have published *Dubliners*, finished *Portrait*, and even have written the first chapters of *Ulysses*. Wherever we place them in this important period of Joyce's life, it is clear that these are the notes of a blooming writer, not an apprentice banker. With these notes thus restored to the genetic corpus, the real work on the 'Notes on Business and Commerce' can begin.

- 1 Coincidentally, a paper I gave on the 'Advertising' section of these notes at the XXIII International James Joyce Symposium in Dublin, June 2012, was immediately followed by an excellent paper given on the 'Insurance' section by Jaya Savige, of Cambridge University, Christ's College. This is a pleasing synchronicity: as I argue below, the proper analysis of the 'Notes on Business and Commerce' all but demands collaboration.
- 2 Robert E. Scholes, *The Cornell Joyce Collection: A Catalogue* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1961) 17.
- 3 Franco Onorati, 'Bank Clerk in Rome,' *Joyce in Rome: The Genesis of Ulysses*, ed. Giorgio Melchiori (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1984) 24-31: 27. Onorati does not explain how he has reached this precise dating, but it is presumably by calculating the months between Joyce's spotting of the job advertisement on or around 11 May 1906, and his arrival in Rome on 31 July.
- 4 Mark Osteen, *The Economy of Ulysses: Making Both Ends Meet* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995) 13.
- 5 Onorati, 'Bank Clerk in Rome,' 28.
- 6 Howard Bridgewater, *Advertising, Or the Art of Making Known: A Simple Exposition of the Principles of Advertising* (London: Pitman, n.d.).
- 7 Bridgewater, *Advertising*, 74.
- 8 *The Economic Bulletin* 3:3 (Sep 1910) 333. See also *Journal of Political Economy* 18:8 (Oct 1910) 647.
- 9 Bridgewater, *Advertising*, 24.
- 10 *JJA* 3:605; Bridgewater, *Advertising*, 18.
- 11 *JJA* 3:608; Bridgewater, *Advertising*, 48. The 'Bubbles' advertisement is frequently cited as one of the most influential advertisements of the nineteenth century, and Joyce's independent awareness of the advertisement is indicated by his own insertion of the artist's name, which does not appear in Bridgewater. This advertisement predated the equally famous Pears' slogan included by Joyce in *Ulysses*, 'Good morning, have you used Pears' soap?' (*U* 5.524-5).
- 12 *JJA* 3:606; Bridgewater, *Advertising*, 29-30.
- 13 Bridgewater, *Advertising*, Preface, v.
- 14 Bridgewater, *Advertising*, Catalogue B, 12.
- 15 The expenses for Dec 1909, Jan 1910 and Feb 1910 are held in the Cornell Joyce Collection, Box 3, Folder 14. For a summary of some of the items on the February list, see Luke McKernan, 'James Joyce and the Volta Programme,' *Roll Away the Reel World: James Joyce and Cinema*, ed. John McCourt (Malta: Cork University Press, 2010) 15-27: 21. I am grateful to Luke McKernan for generously bringing this information to my attention.
- 16 John McCourt, *The Years of Bloom: James Joyce in Trieste 1904-1920* (Bodmin: Lilliput, 2000) 147.
- 17 Scholes, *The Cornell Joyce Collection*, 210.
- 18 *JJII* 772; Herbert Gorman, *James Joyce: A Definitive Biography* (London: John Lane, 1941) 200.
- 19 I am very grateful to John McCourt for suggesting the commercial schools as likely locations for Joyce's exposure to these books.
- 20 McCourt, *The Years of Bloom*, 172-3, 207-8, 242-5.
- 21 McCourt, *The Years of Bloom*, 208.
- 22 Davies, *The Money Stock*, Catalogue A. N. pag.
- 23 *JJA* 3:608; Bridgewater, *Advertising*, 48.

24 Gandy, *The Elements of Banking*, 7-8.

25 Bridgewater, *Advertising*, 55, 73.