

## VIRGINIA WOOLF: LEXICOGRAPHER

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In 1938 Virginia Woolf started to compile her own "Supplement to the Dictionary of the English Language," but gave up after two words. The third entry is simply a question mark, a lexical gap representing "A word for those who put living people into books."<sup>1</sup> The first Supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary* had been published five years earlier, in 1933. Nowhere in the original Dictionary or the Supplement did Woolf appear. Work did not start on the second Supplement of the *OED* until 1957, many years after Woolf's death, and she never knew how she would figure within it, the author or occasion of 239 citations, her writings quoted in and out of context, her style and reception recorded in the entry for *Woolfian*, A and B adj. and n.<sup>2</sup> This paper explores the meaning of dictionaries for Woolf and of Woolf for dictionaries. What do writers, especially Modernist writers, have to do with the systematic ordering of language and sense? In tracing the process by which she was herself "read" for the updated Dictionary,<sup>3</sup> we may come to appreciate Woolf's scepticism but will also find ourselves looking in new and unexpected ways at her actual words and the uses to which she and others have put them.

Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, best known for his editorship of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, was also a principal reader for the first *OED*, selecting thousands of quotations. He is also cited 703 times as an author in his own right. Woolf grew up in an atmosphere of strenuous dictionary-making which left baleful traces throughout her own writing: in the terrifying and ridiculous appearances of letters of the alphabet, uniform volumes and tomes of reference, the accidental contiguities of alphabetical order and the urge both towards and away from defining, docketing and fact-collecting. In *A Room of One's Own*, readers in the British Museum are observed filing away data in alphabetical notebooks, just as some of Woolf's characters organise their thoughts by initial letter. "Where are the Sweeps and the Sewer-men, the Seamstresses and the Stevedores?"; alphabetical order should be democratic, but at Delia's parties "Dons and Duchesses" never rub shoulders with "Drabs and Drones" (*The Years* 404).<sup>4</sup> The alphabetical project is heroic but futile; Mr Ramsay, famously, never reaches the meaning of "R" (*To the Lighthouse* 56-59).<sup>5</sup> Bernard's "methodically lettered" notebook (**B**utterfly powder, **C**ontempt, **D**eath) reaches only "F for fin" before falling to the floor, to be swept away by a providential charwoman: "I have done with phrases" (*The Waves* 209).

Woolf is equally sceptical about the process of definition, particularly the high-flown quibbling favoured by male undergraduates (*The Voyage Out* 82). A courtship founders on the attempt by two young people to define their feelings for each other: Katharine apprehends "a desire, an echo, a sound; she could drape it in colour, see it in form, hear it in music, but not in words; no, never in words." (*Night and Day* 303). Might it be romantic love? "Ah, that's the question. I've never come across a definition that satisfied me," says William, glancing towards the "authorities" in his bookcase (302). In her most explicit public comment on dictionaries, in "Craftsmanship," Woolf figures words as recalcitrant, vagrant, classless and blithely miscegenated while dictionaries are authoritarian and disciplinarian but ultimately futile: "Of course, you can catch them [words] and sort them and place them in alphabetical order in dictionaries. But words do not live in dictionaries; they live in the mind. If you want proof of this, consider how often in moments of emotion when we most need words we find none. Yet there is the dictionary; there at our disposal are some half-a-million words all in alphabetical order." (*The Death of the Moth* 130).

Woolf's reservations echo her father's outrage when a well-meaning colleague presented him with a thesaurus; Roget, constantly enlarged and re-issued, had been a staple of self-improving English households since the 1850s, but was below the dignity of the Stephen family. As Virginia reported it to her brother Thoby: "Mr Payn [the editor of the *Cornhill*] sent father a book which is a great help to him (Mr Payn) in his writings—called the Thesaurus of English Words—Perhaps you can explain Thesaurus—but the object of the Work is to provide poor scant languaged authors, with three or four different words for the same idea, so that their sentences may not jar—This father took as an insult, and accordingly handed it over to me—and I have been trying to make use of it—" (*Letters*, 24 February 1897, I, 5-6). Woolf's ironic "scant languaged" is not in *OED2*: this sense of the participial adjective *languaged* is labelled "?Obs." and has a last citation dating from 1652.

Did Woolf never consult dictionaries? What were the "authorities" in her bookcase? Unusually, given the well-attested passion of so many writers for dictionaries and thesauruses of all kinds, she seems generally to have avoided looking up specific words, or even browsing for pleasure. She remained sceptical about the usefulness of dictionaries to the practising writer. Leonard Woolf claims, in the preface to his edition of Virginia's *Collected Essays*, that it was he who routinely checked and corrected her spelling. Among the Woolfs' library, apart from the *DNB*, are several foreign language dictionaries and phrase books, and no less than three editions of Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon.<sup>6</sup> There is no Lemprière, though Bart in *Between the Acts* (32) resorts to it to identify a classical reference. In researching *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* Woolf frequently consulted Debrett, Whitaker and the University Calendar; she even jokes about writing an "Ode to Whitaker" in recognition of its help in

tracking down and anatomising the Establishment (*Diary*, 11 January 1938, V, 125). English dictionaries are represented by a tiny, old (1869) edition of Walker and Webster, a cheap Everyman and a copy of the 1918 impression of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, the last well worn and faded, as if left out on a desk rather than shelved, and probably the work on hand for everyday reference. Woolf also refers to the Second Edition of the *COD*, published in 1929.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (COD)* was very different from the *OED*, edited by a separate team, and concentrating on contemporary usage with no historical or literary quotations. Both the definitions and their accompanying "quotations" were the work of the editors, H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, and are notoriously, if sometimes enjoyably, opinionated.<sup>7</sup> A streak of violence and misogyny runs through their inventions. Woolf challenged the Fowlers' definition of "womanly" and "manly," in writing of Kitty in *The Pargiters*:

Ever since she could remember, she had been trained as a woman. And the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, though published in 1929—more than fifty years later—still preserves in its definition of womanliness, in a compact form, [*the ideal*] which governed Kitty's life in 1880: "Womanly . . . having or showing the qualities befitting a woman . . . modesty, compassion, tact, &c." Nor did Kitty question the same authorities' verdict that manliness consists in "having a man's virtues, courage, frankness, &c."<sup>8</sup>

Woolf resists the "authorities' verdict" that Kitty meekly accepts, but both assume the dictionary is an arbiter, not a neutral recorder, of usage. The passage arises out of a particular moment in *The Pargiters*: Kitty's "curious and invigorating" intuition that not all women have to provide restful sympathy or be pleasantly self-effacing comes to her as she stands in front of photograph of Mr Brook's mother. "Mr Brook," as Mitchell Leaska has argued,<sup>9</sup> is a version of Joseph Wright, editor of the great *English Dialect Dictionary*. Wright was something of a hero for Woolf and here inspires her resistance to the demeaning definitions of the Oxford lexicographers. From his biography, Woolf conjures up a vision of Wright, respects his energy and clumsy sensitivity, attributes to the man what she sees as the coarse, sturdy, enduring quality of his volumes. Woolf was particularly struck by the story of Wright's childhood, his love for the mother who supported her family while working as a washerwoman and char. She felt a connection between Wright's respect for women, his background and sympathies, and his commitment to the study of dialect. The man and his work are admirable and compelling, even though they might seem the antithesis of her own cast of mind: "I sometimes would like to be learned myself. About sounds & dialects. Still what use is it? I mean, if you have that mind why not make something *beautiful*? Yes, but then the triumph of learning is that it leaves something done solidly for ever. Everybody knows now about dialect, owing to his dexterity." (*Diary*, 13 July 1932, IV, 115-6).

Woolf draws a distinction between Wright's workmanlike recording of dialect and historical usage and what seems to her to be the attempt on the part of the *COD* to "preserve" an outmoded set of meanings. Sensitive areas of language (obscenity, racial slurs) are nowadays increasingly tackled through usage labels, allowing lexicographers to distance themselves from citations which might cause offence. Woolf, however, proposes a far more radical solution: to root out from the record the "vicious and corrupt word that has done much harm in its day and is now obsolete" (*Three Guineas* 184), thereby ritually destroying the thing itself. The quaint word "feminist" with its atmosphere of high-minded Victorian activism is the first to go. Woolf stops short of tearing up or burning the dictionary (she was writing during the era of Nazi book-burnings) but imagines copying the word out in large black letters and setting it alight. Other words—"Tyrant," "Dictator"—might follow, if they were ever to become obsolete.

Though she never managed to dislodge any words from the dictionary, Woolf did ultimately introduce some new ones, while reviving, re-using, misusing and unsettling others. During the preparation of the second Supplement that was to become *OED2*, Woolf was mainly "read" by Marghanita Laski, the single most prolific collector of quotations for the new dictionary. Laski found fewer examples than she anticipated, writing to the editor of the Supplement: "I have, as you suggested, been treating V. Woolf as poetry, but still she supplies surprisingly few words. I should have guessed her to be immensely rich in formations, wouldn't you?"<sup>10</sup> Recalling her reading, which included much detective and science fiction as well as Shaw, Beerbohm, Hemingway, MacNeice, Elizabeth Bowen and John Osborne, Laski noted that two writers, Woolf and Greene, lacked what she calls a "distinctive vocabulary"; from Woolf "A few—a very few—cards ensued, of which the most significant was an antedating of the appeal lists' *quite* in the sense 'not quite-quite'".<sup>11</sup>

What was Laski hoping to quarry from Woolf? She mentions at least two, very different and not always compatible, ways of reading: for "distinctive" words, and for the editorial staff's specific *desiderata*. Since dictionaries approach language in terms of individual words and relatively isolated collocations they would seem to serve some writers better than others: those whose style is more immediately apprehended in terms of striking usages than in broader syntactic, rhythmic or generic structures. Woolf's style, immediately recognisable as it is, is not marked by neologism, word-play or "difficult" or exotic vocabulary. Her writer's signature may be discernible in individual words but these are not usually words which draw attention to themselves. Scanning the lists of words quoted in *OED2* from Lawrence or Eliot on the other hand (though not, surprisingly, from Joyce) it would be the work of a moment for any reasonably experienced reader to identify the author (*maidenhair? Gloire de Dijon? defunctive? anfractuous?*).

Readers for *OED2* were also on the lookout for words used in particular ways or by a specified date. Checking the Woolf quotations in the published dictionary against the appeals lists of wanted words I have found, apart from Laski's *quite*, only one item: *War picture*, a special combination of *war* in the sense of a documentary film, which appears in Woolf's diary for 1915 (25 January 1915, I, 28). A dating before 1942 had been asked for.<sup>12</sup>

There was a third kind of reading too: for "ordinary" (and therefore barely noticeable) words. Is there any particular advantage or disadvantage in selecting citations for *at*, VII, 40 (as a preposition before other prepositions or adverbs) from Woolf rather than from yesterday's newspaper? A Woolf letter provides the last instance of sense V.15.a of the preposition *to* ("I am growing old, and want more mustard to my meat"), a colloquial, almost proverbial usage—but no dictionary can classify the most famous "to" in twentieth-century literature: the title of *To the Lighthouse*, with its specially laden and layered meanings of orientation and dedication, energy and elegy. Where the dictionary works by discriminating significations, literary language often works in the opposite direction, by collapsing and re-ordering senses.

The relation of dictionaries to the literary language is complex but rarely explicitly debated. There are two principal points at issue: which literary usages to include and how to gloss them. In his passionately-argued review of *OED2*,<sup>13</sup> Geoffrey Hill lays bare a contradiction at the heart of the first *OED* and its successors: a separation of linguistic processes of definition from those very nuances of meaning for which writers are the best, and indeed only, witnesses.<sup>14</sup> Central to Hill's discussion is the treatment of Hopkins' language in *OED2*, for instance the poet's finely-discriminated meanings of "pitch" ("No worst, there is none," line 1). Hill finds the Dictionary better able to respond to analytical usages and to sequences of significations than to processes of association, assimilation or modification. Lexicographers, on the other hand, may consider poets and "literary" writers unreliable: do writers supply quotations to support definitions or do the quotations themselves demand definition? Are writers' words just echoed back to us in endless loops, turning the *OED*, as Dennis Taylor puts it, into "the greatest of all literary echo-chambers in our language"?<sup>15</sup> Discussing the quotations from W.H. Auden in *OED2*, Charlotte Brewer notes that Auden, an avid reader of dictionaries, derived many of his archaisms and verbal eccentricities from the *OED* in the first place, so completing the circle from dictionary to poet and back again.<sup>16</sup>

In formulating a policy for the first *OED* James Murray announced his intention to record the usages of "great writers." When he came to re-assess his predecessor's approach for the twentieth century, Robert Burchfield aimed to "liberally represent" the vocabulary of modern authors; the Preface to the first volume of his Second Supplement (p. xiv) names Kipling, Yeats, Joyce and Dylan Thomas as established authors and gives examples of entries from Beckett, Eliot, Lawrence and Auden. As reviews of the Supplement began to be published Burchfield was challenged on his treatment of "literary" language. He expanded on his policy

in the 1988 T.S. Eliot Memorial Lectures, where he took the opportunity of discussing Eliot's presence in *OED2*.<sup>17</sup> The Dictionary's citations from Eliot encompass both "paltry inaccuracies" (e.g. *juvescence*) and "lasting contributions to the language." The account of the decision not to include Eliot's famous "etherised" from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" indicates that Burchfield had space for new or revived words, indeed operated a policy of favouritism where they were used by writers of significance, but not for words used significantly by writers where they were already covered by other, or previous, citations. A more comprehensive policy is supported by Burchfield's statement elsewhere that "the language of great writers, including poets, should be registered, even once-only uses, virtually in concordance form."<sup>18</sup> He defends his ambitious reading programme of "literary" texts on the grounds that he was "as much concerned to record the unparalleled intransitive use of the verb *unleave* [in Hopkins' "Spring and Fall"] . . . as Murray was to record Milton's unparalleled use of the word *unlibidinous* . . . or Langland's unparalleled use of *unleese*."<sup>19</sup>

In affiliating himself with Murray, and linking Hopkins with Milton and Langland, Burchfield highlights the continuities in the treatment of literary language in *OED* and *OED2*. There are important differences, however, both in the nature of the words themselves and in the social and theoretical context in which the lexicographer's decisions are made. The languages of literary Modernism (what Burchfield calls "preciosities" of style) are seen increasingly as a challenge rather than an aid to definition. There is a tension between writers as the "best," and therefore most exemplary users of words, and the indulgence they are granted for inventive or even aberrant linguistic behaviour; among "the greatest modern writers" *OED2* pledges to accommodate "even" Dylan Thomas and James Joyce ("except for most of *Finnegans Wake*").<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, synchronic linguistics and some modes of literary theory resist hierarchical categories of "literary" and "non-literary" language and users of dictionaries continue to argue that some words and usages are more valuable or important than others. Geoffrey Hill, deploring the omission of Hopkins's stupendous "unchancellor" (*The Wreck of the Deutschland*, stanza 21) argues that the word has at least as strong a claim to inclusion as, say, *tofu*; another reviewer argues that, since literary coinages will continue to be recorded and annotated elsewhere, non-literary "transitory vocabulary" (e.g. the argot of California shopping malls) should take precedence in dictionaries.<sup>21</sup> All things being equal, writers' words may sometimes have enjoyed preferential treatment in *OED2*; one of the editors recalls Burchfield's allowing a single literary example to clinch the inclusion of a word, where other candidates might require five or six supporting citations.<sup>22</sup> Burchfield himself describes presenting his first specimen pages to the cost-conscious Delegates of the Oxford University Press and championing Eliot's "loam feet" (*East Coker*, I, 37) in the lemma for *loam* on the grounds that

his impartial acceptance of all types of vocabulary and usage justified the inclusion of such a "golden speck."<sup>23</sup>

Among "the greatest modern writers" read for the Dictionary Burchfield numbers Woolf, though without further elaboration. Because the "cards" (4" X 6" index cards with quotations recorded in standard form) were filed alphabetically by headword, it is no longer possible to discover how many accumulated for individual authors before the editorial process of selection began. The words sent in by Marghanita Laski are recorded in her five loose-leaf notebooks, now in the OUP Archives; again, these are arranged by word, with date of publication but no attribution to author. In the event, 239 quotations from Woolf were included in *OED2*, illustrating 209 headwords. (This compares with 1,838 quotations from Joyce, 1,598 from Lawrence, 555 from Eliot, 455 from Agatha Christie, 355 from Elizabeth Bowen, 79 from Sylvia Plath and 39 from V. Sackville-West.) Just over half of the Woolf quotations are from her fiction; the rest from letters and diaries, literary criticism and journalism, memoirs and other non-fictional writing. The complete editions of the letters and diaries were not available until late in the editorial process and some citations were therefore added at proof stage. A welcome feature of *OED2*'s reading programme was the attention paid to published drafts, Eliot's *Waste Land* manuscripts for instance. One quotation from Woolf's earlier version of *The Years*, "The Pargiters" (though not her use of the word *pargeter* itself) was selected for the Dictionary.

To begin with Woolf's coinings, *hapax legomena* and idiosyncratic usages: ten words or senses in *OED2* have a first citation in Woolf's writing. The only one with a claim to permanent adoption into the language is *masculinist*, to which I will return. The most celebrated, because most characteristic, even self-descriptive, are *vagulous* (labelled "nonce-wd.") and *vagulate* ("v. rare"), quoted from her diary and letters, though not from their best-known context in *Mrs. Dalloway* (130). *Vagulous* is described as a "Fanciful formation," found "Only in the writings of Virginia Woolf"; the verb form is defined as "To wander in a vague manner; to waver." *Scrolloping*, with six quotations in *OED2*, is labelled "Fanciful portmanteau formation by Virginia Woolf, prob. combining *scroll* n., *lollop* v., etc." It is a marvellous word, an expandable portmanteau accommodating both sinister fecundity and heartless elaboration. Woolf's composite Victorian paterfamilias, Eusebius Chubb, is driven to suicide by the choking profusion of nineteenth-century England, where "cucumbers came scrolloping across the grass to his feet." (*The Waves* 208). Bernard in his final soliloquy opts for "bare things," scoffing at "the floridity and absurdity of some scrolloping tomb" (*The Waves* 210, 200). Other composite forms use a prefix or suffix in a new way, as in the first recorded instances of *impurist*, *irreticence*, *haphazardry* and *nib-ful*. Some words, especially from the letters and diaries, are just Woolfian jokes, and quickly deflate out of context: "the tire punctured: we had to jackal in

mid road" (*Diary*, 6 April 1940, V, 278) is cited at *jackal v. intr* with a solemn, and surely mistaken, definition. *Revivication* ("Last night we had a terrific revivication; the resurrection day was nothing to it") is classified as "erroneous form, perhaps mispr. for *revivification*." *Poop* (short for nincompoop) and *rabbit's ear* (for lamb's ear, the plant) represent the private language of her family and friends. One word is recorded because of its unusual spelling: various forms of *necrophilia* ("nekrophilus" etc.) with an editorial note in the etymology field to the effect that "Virginia Woolf preferred to Græcize to nekro—." The only Woolf citation to earn the dictionary's special sign ¶ [small paragraph sign] which marks "catachrestic and erroneous uses" is *who*, in the unexceptionable colloquial usage "Who was she looking for?" (*Between the Acts* 101).

What strikes us in looking at the rest of the words cited from Woolf? Some belong to a literary register: *veneratingly*, *heart-shaking*, *leaf-encumbered*. Several are yoked opposites or negatives, including *old-young* (but not "absent-present"), *worst-seller*, *non-writer*, *unchildish*, *unvisual*, *unoriented* and *unfeelings*. Her special combinations and attributive uses evoke a subtly-shaded palette of colour-words, from which *OED2* picks out *fire-red* windows, *flamingo* clouds, a *moth-coloured* scarf, *pearl-grey* women and a *pearl-white* road, a *purple-dark* hill, a *red-yellow* glow, *red-flushed* clouds, the *red-blood* [opposite of "high-brow"] public, *rust-red* wings, *snail-green* eyes and a *yellow-slashed* sky. A particular quality of her vocabulary of colour is its *opaque*, *translucent* and *semi-lucent* effects: an *opal-shelled* crab, *water-coloured* rings, *sun-blazoned* windows.

All the quoted combinations are presumed to be self-explanatory within the context of a surrounding phrase or sentence, without further definition. That this is not always the case may be seen in an example illustrating *road*, 12: "I cannot without more labour than my *roadrunning* mind can compass describe the queer impression of sunny impersonality." (*Diary*, 9 May 1934, IV, 219). The original context is a visit to New Place, Shakespeare's house in Stratford-on-Avon. We may guess that Woolf means something like mundane or predictable or limited; the sense is quite different from that of the surrounding citations, yet no definitional help is offered.

Several Woolf quotations in *OED2* illustrate terms of social usage or stratification in an acutely-attuned socio-historical register, unconscious or deliberate markers of class and status like the "quite" Marghanita Laski recorded: "Mr. Perrott . . . knew that he was not 'quite', as Susan stated . . . not quite a gentleman she meant" (*quite*, adj. IV.9; *The Voyage Out* 159). The affectedly genteel pronunciation of "refined" is illustrated under *refained* with an example from *Between the Acts*: "The old lady . . . looked too refined. 'Refeened'—Mrs. Manresa qualified the word to her own advantage" (122). The *ain't* of Woolf's letters is also included, its ambiguous status noted by the editors as part Cockney, part a "somewhat outmoded upper-



class colloquialism." Other specimens for which Woolf helps to pinpoint the social connotations include *small* shopkeepers on the "other" [i.e. South] side of the river, the hordes crossing Waterloo Bridge to catch the *non-stop* to Surbiton, a dapper *city* gent and *hockey-playing* young women in Wiltshire. The least socially confident voice in *The Waves*, that of the Australian Louis, cannot help but *finick* about his background (76). As Woolf's Mary Carmichael realises in an adroit use of the adjective *shoddy*, the time is not yet ripe to loosen "the shoddy old fetters of class on her feet" (*A Room of One's Own* 133).

Woolf quotations help to define institutions and affiliations (*Oxbridge*, *Apostles*, the parti-coloured *button* of a suffrage society), social manners (*help* the pudding, *dressed* [formally]), clothing (*crepe* soles, *elastic* stockings) and interior decoration (*blue china*, *Morris* wall-papers). The most famous dinner party in modern literature is enshrined in the dictionary under *Bœuf en Daube* (*To the Lighthouse* 125). But Woolf was also comfortable with the homely registers of the Victorian nursery and sickroom, the precise women's language of "hush and clean bottles" (*Jacob's Room* 29). *OED2* records "He was a little flushed, a little, as nurses used to say, 'above himself'" (*OED2*, *above*, B.10; *The Years* 282) and "Aunt E. cheerful, though twingy, she says." (*The Voyage Out* 120). Her rather stilted desire to be at ease with the language of bodily functions is illustrated in her use of the verbs *wet* and *pumpship* [urinate] and the noun *bumf* (the latter a word with a chequered lexicographical history, the site of an exchange between Henry Bradley and H.W. Fowler over its inclusion in the *Pocket Oxford Dictionary*).<sup>24</sup> Woolf's categories of sexual orientation in *OED2* are the coterie term *Sapphist* and the "coarse slang" *sod* n. 1 [male homosexual]: "how far can one say openly what is the relation of a woman and a sod?" (*Letters*, 24 January 1934, V, 273). But she also tries out new words to re-draw sexual-political boundaries: Milton was "the first of the *masculinists*" (*OED2*'s first recorded use; *Diary*, 10 September 1918, I, 193). Where Lawrence provides the dictionary with half-a-dozen quotations each for the essentialist categories *man* and *woman*, Woolf offers an androgynous alternative under the headword *man-woman*: "it would be well to test what one meant by man-womanly" (*A Room of One's Own* 148).

One of the most interesting types of quotation, from a literary point of view, comprises those words which Woolf used in talking about books and reading, or in describing her own process of writing. Though *OED2* does not include her own word for *To the Lighthouse*, which would have enlarged the definition of "elegy," it records her conception of *The Waves* as a *playpoem*. The physical sensation of composition, the tactility of style is caught up in the "*laval* flow of sentence into sentence" which Bernard longs for (*The Waves* 84; the less fluid "lava flow" appeared in the American edition). In her diary, her "*blankfaced* old confidante", Woolf can *canter* her wits, *uncramp* her thoughts, but also, poignantly, evoke "a whole nervous breakdown in miniature": the "loss of the power of *phrase-making*. Difficulty in writing." But the

dictionary also records the triumphant completion of *The Waves*, its last sentence written "with this very *nib-ful* of ink" (*Diary*, 29 April 1930, III, 302). Other entries reveal her thinking about the current state of *prose fiction*, promoting *character-reading* and enjoying *close reading*. She endorses the purchase of books to stave off *mind-hunger* and notes whether people are *book-fed* or *book-shy*. Her judgements on the profession of literature are directed to Grub Street *penny-a-lining*, the Duchess of Newcastle who *similised* too much, Goldsmith's *sign-board* characters, Byron's *album* verse, Meredith's *thigh-slapping* tone and *reach-me-down* characters and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *high-piled* metaphors. Two quotations from Woolf's 1924 essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" illustrate *Georgian* (A.adj.1.b and B n.), a label she applies to group of writers including Forster, Lawrence, Joyce and Eliot—in other words, to those writers usually defined in opposition to the term "Georgian" as now generally understood.

Four of the quotations refer to the cinema, which Woolf saw as technically proficient but artistically void, and, paradoxically, ultimately unvisual. The words illustrated are *picture-maker* and *picture-making*. The context cannot be recovered from the cropped quotations but Woolf was in fact denying cinema any power of visualisation; thoughts and words, rather than film, possess "the picture-making power" ("The Cinema," *The Captain's Death Bed* 169).

Certain words resonate because of their use by other writers; a family reunion takes place in the dictionary entry for *semblable*, where a Woolf quotation from *Between the Acts* joins quotations from *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*. *Dissemblable*, keeping different company, is quoted from Florio and Puttenham, and then with a break of more than three centuries, from *Orlando*. As with Eliot's revival of *concitation* in "Gerontion," where *OED2*'s citations jump from 1656 to 1920, Woolf's inkhorn term, a deliberate Elizabethanism, disrupts the diachronic logic of the lemma. A search for Woolf words other than *dissemblable* which have no previous quotation later than, say, 1660, uncovers four rather miscellaneous items—*sluggardry*, *sordidity*, *tend* (as a noun) and *wormish*—all of which may have been re-invented rather than resuscitated. Some archaic-sounding words, like *orgulous* and *disparition* (both with quotations from Woolf and Joyce) in fact turn out to have been in continuous use, with an even spread of dates throughout their entry. Something different happens with a word like *ort*, which leads a double life in the *OED2* quotation field: as a surviving dialect word in a Lawrence poem ("orts and slarts"), or as a literary allusion, a Shakespearean echo, in Woolf's "orts and fragments."

Lastly, Woolf is present in the dictionary in other people's words, for instance as the recipient of letters from Lytton Strachey containing the word *unvictorian*. She may be commended as a critic: "Virginia Woolf can still show herself to be one up, in literary judgements, on most current criticism" illustrates *one*, numeral a., pron., etc. B. VIII. 30. c. Alternatively, she figures as the subject of criticism; a partial history of the reception of her work can be put together from the entries for *donnée*, *mythopoetic* and *stream of consciousness*.

Continuing confrontations over biographical issues, especially sex and class, surface in the quotation illustrating *scrutineer*: "The scrutineers have taught generations of British students that Virginia Woolf was a snob" (Jane Marcus, in the *TLS*); while under *uppity* a reviewer in the *Listener* asks "who was Virginia Woolf to talk . . . of 'uppitness'?" Quentin Bell's mention of a forthcoming study of Woolf's "mental illness" supports the definition for *pathography*, and under *sexual*, 2 adj., Leon Edel suggests that "after it was clear that a sexual relationship was impossible he [sc. Leonard Woolf] sublimated his sexual drives in work."

By 1936 the adjective "Woolfian" had appeared in print, later to be included in *OED2* with the formulaic definition "Of, pertaining to, or characteristic of Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), English writer, or her work.". The rarer noun form *Woolfian* B. n., signifying "an admirer or devotee" of Woolf is first recorded in 1944. (Although Marghanita Laski sent in the word "Woolfiana" it is not one of the eighteen plural nouns in -iana relating to writers which *OED2* chose to record.) We can see how Woolf's words have passed into the language in a citation from the 1970s: "I don't think I'd ever used the word 'lark' like that before. It was something I'd picked up in my Woolfian researches." *OED2*, however, has not picked up Mrs Dalloway's famous "lark" (*lark* n. 2.1 has no twentieth-century citation) and only a Woolfian reader will trace it to its source.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Monks House Papers, University of Sussex: MH/B4.a. The words are "straddlebug" and "peeker." Another word, "ring-the-bell-and-run-away-man" (a person who surreptitiously uses words to hurt), is coined in *Three Guineas* (185 and 311, note 11), where "A supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary* is indicated."

<sup>2</sup> Headwords and subordinate headwords in the Dictionary are indicated in this paper by italics. For layout and terminology see Donna Lee Berg, *A Guide to the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> The second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED2*) was produced by electronically merging the original *OED* with its two Supplements. For details of this process and the history and scope of *OED2*, see Charlotte Brewer, "The Second Edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*," *Review of English Studies* n.s. 44 (1993): 313-42; on the collection and use of

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quotations see Brewer, "OED Sources," *Lexicography and the OED: Pioneers in the Untrodden Forest*, ed. Lynda Mugglestone (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 40-58. My own study of Woolf was carried out in *OED2* on CD-ROM, using standard search menus supplemented by simple programs written in the query language; for a more technical account of quotation searches see the Appendix to my "Robert Browning in the *Oxford English Dictionary: A New Approach*," *Studies in Philology* 95 (Summer 1998): 169-83. Since March 2000 the third edition of *OED* (*OED3*) has begun publication online, with revisions to be added at intervals over the next ten years. The first three revised instalments, from *M* to *march stone*, include twenty-two new Woolf quotations, an early indication of her importance in the dictionaries of the future.

<sup>4</sup> Woolf quotations in *OED2* are usually, not invariably, from the first Hogarth Press edition of Woolf's texts in book form; my references are to these editions, unless otherwise stated. Woolf's diaries and letters are quoted in *OED2* from a variety of sources; references in this paper are to the following editions: *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (London: Hogarth Press), Vol. I, 1888-1912 (1975); Vol. II, 1912-1922 (1976); Vol. III, 1923-1928 (1977); Vol. IV, 1929-1931 (1978); Vol. V, 1932-1935 (1979); Vol. VI, 1936-1941 (1980); *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (London: Hogarth Press), Vol. I, 1915-19 (1974); Vol. II, 1920-24 (1978); Vol. III, 1925-30 (1980); Vol. IV, 1931-35 (1982); Vol. V, 1936-41 (1984).

<sup>5</sup> By a quirk of fortune the *OED* acknowledges the assistance of a "Mr. J.A. Ramsay, MA" in the preparation of letters Q and R. See the preface to Vol. 8, pt 1 (Q & R); rptd. in Darrell R. Raymond, *Dispatches from the Front: The Prefaces to the Oxford English Dictionary* (Waterloo, Ontario: Centre for the New Oxford English Dictionary, 1987).

<sup>6</sup> Many readers have noted the importance of the Greek dictionary in Woolf's writing, and in particular the image of the flower pressed between its pages; see for instance my "On Not Knowing Greek: The Classics and the Woman of Letters," *Classical Journal* 78 (1983): 337-49. For a partial listing of books the Woolfs owned, see *Catalogue of Books from the Library of Leonard and Virginia Woolf* (Brighton: Holleyman and Treacher, 1975). For their help and advice and for allowing me access to books from the Woolfs' library I am grateful to Leila Luedeking and Laila Miletic-Vejzovic of the Department of Manuscripts, Archives and Special Collections, Holland Library, Washington State University, Pullman.

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<sup>7</sup> See Robert E. Allen, "A Concise History of the COD," *Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science: Studies in the History of the Language Sciences*, Vol. 40, ed. R.R.K. Hartmann (Amsterdam, 1986) 2-11.

<sup>8</sup> Mitchell A. Leaska, ed., *The Pargiters by Virginia Woolf: The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years* (New York: New York Public Library, 1977) 151-2.

<sup>9</sup> *The Pargiters* xiii: "Mr Gabbit, Sam Hughes, and Mr Brook are all disguised versions of Wright." Leaska demonstrates that Woolf's reading of Wright is bound up with her composition of *The Pargiters*, where her notes on Wright are incorporated into the fifth and sixth essays. The bulk of these notes are in Woolf's reading notebook Berg RN 1.10 (New York Public Library, Berg Collection: Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations); see Brenda R. Silver, ed., *Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1983) 121.

<sup>10</sup> ML to R. W. Burchfield, 30 August 1961, OUP Archives, OED92; quoted by permission of the Secretary to the Delegates of the Oxford University Press.

<sup>11</sup> Marghanita Laski, "Reading for OED," *TLS*, 11 January 1968: 37-39.

<sup>12</sup> See *The Periodical*, 34 (Autumn 1961), supp. p. 4. Thirteen lists were issued, in alphabetical order, in special supplements to the OUP house magazine, *The Periodical*, between autumn 1958 and autumn 1961. Appeals for antedatings were also published in *Notes and Queries* and *The Review of English Studies*.

<sup>13</sup> "Common Weal, Common Woe," rev. of *The Oxford English Dictionary: Second Edition*, *TLS*, 21-27 April 1989: 411-14.

<sup>14</sup> On poets as "witnesses" of language see John Willinsky, *Empire of Words: The Reign of the OED* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994) 59.

<sup>15</sup> *Hardy's Literary Language and Victorian Philology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 6.

<sup>16</sup> Brewer, "The Second Edition of the *OED*" 328. On the relation of quotation to definition see also Penny Silva, "Time and Meaning: Sense and Definition in the *OED*," *Lexicography and the OED*, ed. Mugglestone 75-95.

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<sup>17</sup> Reprinted in *Unlocking the English Language* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989) Part 1.

<sup>18</sup> Robert W. Burchfield, "The *Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*: The End of the Alphabet," *Dictionaries of English: Prospects for the Record of Our Language*, ed. Richard W. Bailey (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 18. Other dictionaries take a different approach; the current Webster, for example, avoids the problem by only using "literary" quotations where they clearly illustrate a particular definition. (Webster has 229 quotations from Woolf.)

<sup>19</sup> "The Oxford English Dictionary," *Lexicography: An Emerging International Profession*, ed. Robert Ilson (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1986) 17-27.

<sup>20</sup> Burchfield, "The Oxford English Dictionary" 24; in fact 185 citations from *Finnegans Wake* are included.

<sup>21</sup> Peter S. Baker, rev. of Se-Z, *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 35 (June 1988): 148-54. See also Barbara M.H. Strang, rev of A-G, n.s. 21 (January 1974): 2-13, and of H-N, n.s. 24 (October 1977): 388-99; M.L. Samuels, rev. of O-Scz, n.s. 30 (December 1983): 483-7.

<sup>22</sup> John Simpson, interviewed by John Willinsky, "Cutting English on the Bias: Five Lexicographers in Pursuit of the New," *American Speech* 63 (1988): 44-66.

<sup>23</sup> *Unlocking the Language* 11.

<sup>24</sup> When a correspondent suggested the inclusion of the word "bumf" in the *POD* Bradley wrote from Oxford to Fowler: "I never heard the word myself; no doubt if I had served in the army through the war I should have been familiar with it . . . ." Fowler was made of sterner stuff, and had served in the army; the word went in (Allen 5-6).