THE USE OF LITERARY QUOTATIONS IN THE *OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY*

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The *Oxford English Dictionary* is a dictionary constructed from its quotations of historical and current-day texts, with the aim of exhibiting the history and development of the English language. The first edition of this dictionary (1884–1928) drew heavily on literary sources, a practice deliberately maintained, though less intensively, by the editor of the twentieth-century supplement, in accordance with the views on the relationship between language and literature expressed by T. S. Eliot. Johnson's dictionary of 1755 was the first monolingual English dictionary to use quotations, and this article identifies similarities between his methods and those of *OED*, in particular the cultural as well as linguistic consequences of favouring literary quotations. Many questions arise in the use of such sources; these have yet to be discussed by the *OED* lexicographers themselves. The article presents a preliminary analysis of the treatment of literary writers in the first-ever revision of *OED*, the third edition currently in preparation, by surveying relative proportions of some male- and female-authored quotations. It also shows how *OED3*'s new lexical scholarship, often based on non-literary sources, is illuminating the vocabulary of W. H. Auden and James Joyce, highly individualistic users of language who were themselves fascinated by words and by dictionaries (including, in the case of Auden, *OED* itself).

I. Introduction

As T. S. Eliot told a BBC radio audience in 1940, 'the dictionary is the most important, the most inexhaustible book to a writer'. 'Incidentally', he added, 'I find it the best reading in the world when I am recovering from influenza, or any other temporary illness, except that one needs a bookrest for it across the bed. You want a big dictionary, because definitions are not enough by themselves: you want the quotations showing how a word has been used ever since it was first used.'[1] Listeners might have supposed that Eliot was referring to the multi-volume *Oxford English Dictionary*, the *locus classicus* of quotation-based dictionaries, but his widow told the *OED* Supplement editor R. W. Burchfield in 1988 that 'her husband possessed a copy of the *Shorter Oxford* but not of the *OED* itself'.[2]

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1 T. S. Eliot. 'The Writer as Artist', *The Listener* (1940), 773–4.

2 The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* is a two-volume distillation of *OED* first published in 1933. Burchfield raised the matter with Valerie Eliot when he noticed that the title-page of Eliot's *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948) bore an epigraph 'purporting to be the entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* for sense 1 of the word *definition*'. In fact it was from the *Shorter* R. W. Burchfield, *Unlocking the English Language* (London, 1989), 61, 79n.1.

W. H. Auden, a poet steeped in dictionaries who certainly did possess a copy of the *OED*—it is reported that in 1970 he contemplated replacing it since it had become so worn out—once declared that if marooned on a desert island, he would choose to have with him 'a good dictionary' in preference to 'the greatest literary masterpiece imaginable, for, in relation to its readers, a dictionary is absolutely passive and may legitimately be read in an infinite number of ways'.[3] Under the word *dictionary* in the *OED* itself is printed a quotation from Ralph Waldo Emerson: 'Neither is a dictionary a bad book to read..it is full of suggestion,—the raw material of possible poems and histories', a remark recently echoed by the novelist E. Annie Proulx, whose pronouncement that 'Here [i.e., in the *OED*] is the greatest treasure of words waiting to be assembled . . . All the raw material a writer needs for a lifetime of work' was printed as one of the puffs on *OED* publicity material in 2003.

Such observations, by poets and creative writers, could easily be multiplied. In Auden's words, 'A poet is, before anything else, a person who is passionately in love with language', and it seems obvious that literary artists should be interested in language and hence in dictionaries.[4] It is less obvious that lexicographers should return the compliment. The use that literary artists make of language is usually felt to be different from that of non-poets, or non-creative writers of one sort or another—though how, and why, that is or might be so has been a famously complex phenomenon to identify and describe, from Aristotle to the present day.[5] Consequently, it would seem odd—at any rate for contemporary lexicographers— to turn to such writers, especially those using a highly individualistic diction, as sources for illustrative quotations, i.e. representative examples of language use. Many dictionaries published today do not print quotations, and those that do rarely draw them from literary sources.[6] But the dictionary we regard as the most authoritative and complete account of the English language ever to have been produced, the *OED* itself—one of whose most distinctive features is that it is literally constructed from its quotations—takes huge numbers of them from the works of poets or other unambiguously literary (and mostly male) writers such as Shakespeare, Walter Scott, Milton, Chaucer, Dryden, Dickens and Tennyson, quoting from them far more extensively than from any other type of source.

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3 C. Rosen, 'Public and Private', in *W H Auden: A Tribute*, ed. S. Spender (London, 1975), 218–9; W. H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand* (London, 1963), 4, also treated in C. Brewer, *Treasure-House of the Language: The Living OED* (New Haven and London, 2007), 190–7, on which source this article freely draws.

4 *New York Times*, 9 October 1960.

5 For examples of recent linguistic approaches to the relation between language and literature, see R. Carter and P. Stockwell, *The Language and Literature Reader* (Abingdon, 2008).

6 Many contemporary dictionaries are based on electronic corpora which include literary texts (e.g. the *Oxford English Corpus*; see http://www.askoxford.com/oec/mainpage/oec01/ ?view=uk), but these are invariably part of a carefully described and weighted collection of different types of source text.

This great dictionary, conceived in the late 1850s and compiled over the next seventy years, was the product of an age in which it was characteristic to believe, in J. H. Newman's words, that 'by great authors the many are drawn up into unity, national character is fixed, a people speaks . . . such men are, in a word, the spokesmen and prophets of the human family'.[7] The lexicographers' reliance on authors of the (Victorian) literary canon to exhibit the history and development of the English language was therefore entirely natural, and the *OED* has often been figured as the nation's dictionary in a way which assumes unproblematic and self-evident connections between high literary culture, national identity, society and language: for example, as a dictionary 'not of our English, but of all English: the English of Chaucer, of the Bible, and of Shakespeare', or as 'a history of English speech and thought from its infancy to the present day', or 'a history of thought and civilization'.[8]

But is it appropriate to continue to trace the history and development of language by favouring such literary canonical sources today? In 1962, in a report to the Delegates of Oxford University Press on his first five years of employment, the *OED* supplement editor R. W. Burchfield described how he thought it was important to preserve, in his own work of updating the *OED*, the parent-dictionary's function as a 'literary instrument', and he put 'the main literary works of the period 1930-1960' at the head of his reading list.[9] Later he justified this emphasis on such sources on linguistic rather than nationalistic or cultural or purely literary grounds, declaring in 1986, in a criticism of 'scholars with shovels intent on burying the linguistic past and most of the literary past and present . . . those who believe that synchronic means 'theoretically sound' and diachronic 'theoretically suspect', that he 'profoundly believe[d] . . . such procedures, leading descriptive scholars never to quote from the written language of even our greatest modern writers, leave one looking at a language with one's eyes partly blindfolded'.[10] As a result, the *OED* in its second edition of 1989 (*OED2*)—not a revision or re-working of original material but a merging of the first edition (ten volumes first published in 1928) with Burchfield's Supplement of new words and senses (four volumes published 1972–86)—has many thousands of quotations from lexically idiosyncratic writers of high literary standing such as Auden, Joyce and D. H. Lawrence.

OED's fondness for literary sources has not gone uncriticised. Both literary scholars and linguists have noted that some texts, and some periods in the language, have been favoured more than others, and have sounded warnings about

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7 J. H. Newman, *The Idea of a University* (3rd edn, London, 1873), 293.

8 K. M. E. Murray, *Caught in the Web of Words* (New Haven and London, 1977), 312–3; Brewer, *Treasure-House*, 4, 249.

9 Brewer, *Treasure-House*, 164–5.

10 R. W. Burchfield, *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1972–86), Vol. 4 (1986), x.

OED's linguistic reliability. Jürgen Schäfer, the first to conduct an analytic and quantitative investigation of the *OED*, concluded in 1980 that 'the *OED* was clearly conceived as an aid to reading great literature, a fact which has proved a boon for the literary scholar; for the linguist, however, this policy leads to distortion and makes it necessary for him to approach the *OED* with caution'; R. W. McConchie, having studied sixteenth-century English medical terminology, found that 'the *OED* ha[d] led scholarship astray' by encouraging the view of the English lexicon as 'an artefact whose creation was largely in the hands of literary authors'; Dennis Taylor, writing on the relationship between Hardy and the *OED*, identified what he called the 'lexicographical truism' that 'the *OED*'s reliance on literary quotations is problematic because it skews the representative character of the sampling'.[11]

The *OED* is now, for the first time in its history, undergoing revision. The lexicographers at work on the third edition (*OED3*) are re-creating the dictionary almost *ab initio*, reviewing every one of the 231,000-odd main entries and rewriting and revising each component, from spelling and pronunciation through etymology and definitions to the quotations themselves—the last element being in many cases the most important, since a series of new reading programmes directed at areas of language insufficiently covered by the first edition has thrown up thousands of ante- and post-datings of words, and these in turn have enabled the lexicographers to re-configure their semantic analyses. *OED3* started with the letter M and has at the time of writing reached part-way through Q; since 2000 the results have been published in quarterly instalments at www.oed.com. Small as it is in relation to the whole, this portion of the alphabet is sufficient to reveal that *OED3* is continuing to quote, in substantial numbers, both from the works of the traditional literary canon and from highly acclaimed creative writers of the twentieth century.

This article begins by turning to *OED*'s great predecessor, Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), to illuminate specific features of *OED*'s later practice, both linguistic and non-linguistic, and to raise questions about the provenance and treatment of its quotation sources. In attempting to answer these questions and explain their significance, I look at *OED*'s cultural predilection for literary sources, at the justification for (and pursuit of) this continued practice in the twentieth-century Supplement to the *OED*, and at some of the problems of using literary quotations in dictionaries. Finally, I offer some sample figures on the comparative treatment of literary sources in the current revision of *OED*, and review the handling of quotations from Auden and from Joyce, to show that the revisers' updating of lexical scholarship is illuminating canonical literary texts already extensively treated in dictionary. Nevertheless, we

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11 J. Schäfer, *Documentation in the O.E.D.* (Oxford and New York, 1980), 13; R. W. McConchie, *Lexicography and Physicke: The Record of Sixteenth-Century English Medical Terminology* (Oxford, 1997), 9–10; D. Taylor, *Hardy's Literary Language and Victorian Philology* (Oxford and New York, 1993), 6.

continue to await, from the *OED* lexicographers themselves, a full account both of their treatment of literary sources and of the implications of this for the *OED* as a whole.

II. Johnson

The first monolingual English lexicographer to include quotations in a dictionary was Samuel Johnson, who printed excerpts from the texts of major literary, historical, philosophical, theological and other writers from up to two hundred years previous to his own time. Electronic analysis of his dictionary reveals that he was reliant on literary quotations far in excess of others. Of his seven major sources, between them furnishing nearly half the total number of quotations in his dictionary, four are poets: Shakespeare (15.5% of total quotations), Dryden (10%), Milton (5.7%) and Pope (3.5%)—the other three being Bacon, the Bible and Addison.[12]

Johnson's motives in choosing quotations can be deduced both from his practice and from his various statements on the plan and purpose of his dictionary. In his Plan of 1747, written when he had embarked on but not completed his dictionary, Johnson recognised that 'the credit of every part of this work must depend' on the 'authorities' (i.e. quotation sources) that he would cite to illustrate his analysis of a word. Although this might tempt a linguistically inclined reader to assume that Johnson was seeking empirical evidence of usage in order to justify his inference of what a word meant, such an assumption would be (at least in part) mistaken. In citing such authorities, Johnson explained,

it will be proper to observe some obvious rules; such as of preferring writers of the first reputation to those of an inferiour rank; of noting the quotations with accuracy; and of selecting . . . such sentences, as, besides their immediate use, may give pleasure or instruction, by conveying some elegance of language, or some precept of prudence or piety.[13]

The first and third of these 'rules' indicate that Johnson believed his quotation sources to be important not just because they would illustrate the usage of a word, but because they would provide aesthetic pleasure on the one hand, and moral, political and religious instruction on the other. Such an aim was entirely characteristic of the pedagogic culture of his day and earlier (it is a version of the ancient and much-rehearsed view that one teaches through delight), and many European dictionaries previous to Johnson had used quotations for the same purpose.[14] The function of the quotations, Johnson seems to feel, is cultural

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12 Figures from R. Schreyer, 'Illustrations of Authority: Quotations in Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*', *Lexicographica*, 16 (2000), 58–103, an analysis of the first edition.

13 G. J. Kolb and R. Demaria, *Johnson on the English Language. Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, Vol XVIII* (London and New Haven, 2005), 55.

14 See P. Korshin, 'Johnson and the Renaissance Dictionary', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35 (1974), 300–12.

(aesthetic or didactic) as much as linguistic, and his reassurance to his public that he has followed Pope's advice in selecting his sources makes the point again. 'It has been asked on some occasions,' he wrote in his *Plan*, 'who shall judge the judges? And since . . . a question may arise by what authority the authorities are selected, it is necessary to obviate it, by declaring that many of the writers whose testimonies will be alleged, were selected by Mr. Pope.'[15]

Notwithstanding his primarily cultural purpose, Johnson's decision to support his definitions with quotations brought about a profound change in the linguistic efficiency of English dictionaries. For scrutinizing words as they had been used in examples of real usage—whether their provenance was literary or not—opened his eyes to something new in lexicography: the range of meanings that words could communicate, according to their different contexts and their different grammatical functions. In many instances, words had been only cursorily treated by previous lexicographers, themselves usually reliant on word-lists provided by their predecessors. So while Nathan Bailey's *Dictionarium Britannicum* (1730) found three different senses of the verb 'take', and Benjamin Martin's *Lingua Britannica* (1749) found 17, Johnson identified 66 different senses, together with a further 50-odd senses of this verb when combined with a preposition or used idiomatically. Similar proportions can be found throughout his dictionary.

One consequence was that Johnson included many more quotations than might have been expected by a casual user. He was careful to justify this largesse, and in so doing begins to spell out the linguistic benefits—the enhanced understanding of words and meanings and the (semantic and historical) relationships between them—to which these quotations have paved the way:

> . . . those quotations which to careless or unskilful perusers appear only to repeat the same sense, will often exhibit, to a more accurate examiner, diversities of signification . . . one will shew the word applied to persons, another to things; one will express an ill, another a good, and a third a neutral sense; one will prove the expression genuine from an ancient authour; another will shew it elegant from a modern . . . the word, how often soever repeated, appears with new associates and in different combinations . . . [16]

Over a hundred years later, the main editor (1879–1915) of *OED*, J. A. H. Murray, fully recognized the linguistic significance of the quotations in Johnson's dictionary, which he thought a 'marvellous piece of work'. Its 'special new feature,' he explained in 1900, which 'contributed to the evolution of the modern dictionary was the illustration of the use of every word by a selection of literary quotations, and the more delicate appreciation and discrimination of senses which this involved and rendered possible.'[17] Murray himself was well aware of the lexicographical rewards to

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15 See J. Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, ed. J. M. Osborn (Oxford, 1966), Vol. 1, §389–90.

16 Kolb and Demaria, *Johnson on the English Language*, 97–8.

17 J. A. H. Murray, *The Evolution of English Lexicography* (Oxford, 1900), 43, 38–9. For *OED*'s use of Johnson, see P. Silva, 'Johnson and the *OED*', *International Journal of Lexicography* 18 (2005), 231–42.

be had from close analysis of quotations, since it was *OED*'s development of this 'feature' which (then as now) constituted the grounds for its claim to be 'the definitive record of the English language'.[18] As explained in the Preface to the re-issue of *OED* in 1933, the 'basis' of this great dictionary 'is a collection of some five million excerpts from English literature of every period', forming 'the only possible foundation for the historical treatment of every word and idiom which is the *raison d'être* of the work. It is a fact everywhere recognized that the consistent pursuit of this evidence has worked a revolution in the art of lexicography'. The primary importance of quotation evidence in constructing the *OED* emerges clearly from the several accounts that exist of the lexicographers' editorial methods, which involved intense scrutiny of this material: they would spread the quotations out over tables, chairs, desks, 'even the floor', poring over them in an attempt to piece together the narrative of development and influence from one historical usage to another—or as one of Murray's assistants put it, 'playing chess with the senses'.[19]

Johnson too had hoped that listing his illustrative quotations in their historical order would reveal the semantic development of a word or sense. As he wrote, 'By this method every word will have its history, and the reader will be informed of the gradual changes of the language, and have before his eyes the rise of some words, and the fall of others'. This is a striking adumbration of the theory and methods of the nineteenth-century historical philologists who succeeded him. Herbert Coleridge, the first editor of the *OED* (1859–60), described in 1860 how 'the theory of lexicography we profess is that which Passow [in his 1819 revision of Schneider's *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, recently translated and extended by Liddell and Scott for their own Greek-English lexicon of 1843] was the first to enunciate clearly and put in practice successfully—namely, 'that every word should be made to tell its own story'—the story of its birth and life, and in many cases of its death, and even occasionally of its resuscitation'.[20] Such a narrative was to be found by searching the available texts for evidence of a word's usage over the course of its life. The point was made again by Murray in his Preface to the *OED* (then still called the *New English Dictionary*, or *NED*), in which he explains that the 'facts' presented in the Dictionary are illustrated by 'a series of quotations ranging from the first known occurrence of the word to the latest, or down to the present day'.

In these ways, Murray and his fellow-editors advocated what we now recognize as sound linguistic reasons for basing their new dictionary on empirical facts of usage, as registered in quotations taken from texts covering the historical range of

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18 Front page of http://www.oed.com [accessed 13 May 2008].

19 Murray, *Caught in the Web*, 298.

20 H. Coleridge, 'A Letter to the Very Revd the Dean of Westminster', *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1860), 71–8, at 72; see [Philological Society], *Proposal for a Publication of a New English Dictionary by the Philological Society* (London, 1859), 4; H. Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England, 1780–1860* (Minneapolis and London, 1983), 252–5.

the language—1150 to the 1880s or so—that they set out to represent. As Eliot described in his 1940 radio broadcast, however, dictionary-readers have always valued other, less straightforwardly linguistic, roles played by the quotations. Johnson would have gratified by Eliot's views on the importance, to a writer, of quotations in a dictionary, as we can see from his declared intention in his Plan to 'contribute to the preservation of antient, and the improvement of modern writers'. By recording the language used by great writers of the past, and reproducing this usage in his chosen quotations, he could influence the usage of modern writers.[21] The epigraph from Horace's *Epistles* on Johnson's title page reinforced the notion that his dictionary was to serve as a lexical quarrying ground for writers of the future:

[The good poet] will do well to unearth words that have been long hidden
from the people's view, bringing to light some splendid terms
employed in earlier days by Cato, Cethegus and others
which now lie buried by grimy dust and the years' neglect.[22]

This has certainly been a significant function of the *OED* (and Auden is discussed below as an example of a poet who has turned to *OED* specifically for this purpose).

Another much-valued but non-linguistic function of the quotations in a dictionary is their capacity to exhibit what Johnson called 'a genealogy of sentiments'. Although he had had to jettison his original intention 'that every quotation should be useful to some other end than the illustration of a word', Johnson had not been altogether ruthless in his pruning, and had

sometimes, though rarely, yielded to the temptation of exhibiting a genealogy of sentiments, by shewing how one authour copied the thoughts and diction of another: . . . affording a kind of intellectual history.[23]

Critics such as Robert DeMaria have expertly guided us to understand that Johnson's quotations thus constitute an intellectual and cultural world in themselves. 'As an encyclopedic book of quotations, the *Dictionary* both records a history of knowledge and is itself an important event in that history'.[24] In this respect, as we have seen, Johnson's work participated in a continental tradition of dictionaries that included quotations for the purposes of educating via exposure to morally instructive sentiments. The result is that the quotations help his dictionary function not only as a word-list but also as 'an intellectual history of an

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21 Kolb and Demaria, 57.

22 N. Rudd (ed.) *Satires and Epistles* by Horace (London, 2005), 118. The lexicographer Jacob Grimm also wanted 'to put before the nation the wealth and poetic force of [the German language] so that writers and poets could see and learn what was available' (P. F. Ganz, *Jacob Grimm's Conception of German Studies* (Oxford, 1973), 21).

23 Kolb and Demaria, 98.

24 R. DeMaria, *Johnson's Dictionary and the Language of Learning* (Oxford, 1986), 33.

entire national culture'.[25] In *OED*'s case, too, readers who encounter, again and again, in the rich banks of supporting quotations, the names of Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Tennyson, Carlyle and many others, inevitably come to understand that these chosen authors share a common intellectual, literary and linguistic tradition, so that the *OED* has been called 'the greatest of all literary echo-chambers in our language'.[26] Quite as much as Johnson's dictionary, *OED* 'records a history of knowledge and is itself an important event in that history', and its cultural status literary and linguistic scholarship extends far beyond academic circles (it has recently been identified as an 'icon' of Britain).[27]

The first-edition *OED* lexicographers rarely, if at all, stressed this special cultural function of their linguistically innovatory work (although Burchfield took a different line); in fact, Murray is on record as having told the London Philological Society, the original sponsors of the *OED*, in 1884 that 'the general principle on which we have chosen a quotation for any century has been to take that which was intrinsically the best for its purpose, without any regard to its source or authority: only where intrinsic claims were balanced, have we allowed the question of authorship to be of weight' (here he was defending the first published instalment from criticisms that it had included too many quotations from contemporary newspapers).[28] Instead, the lexicographers recognized that their quotations were the primary linguistic data, or 'raw material' (a phrase they often used),[29] for their dictionary, and it was this quasi-scientific role that was highlighted in *OED*'s own account of its 'revolution in the art of lexicography' quoted above. It was the quotations in which *OED*'s definitions were grounded, along with the identification of historical semantic relationships between senses and sub-senses: quotations were the 'basis' of the linguistic enterprise. The development in lexicographical methodology between Johnson and the *OED* in this respect, so that the primary (announced) role of quotations in *OED* is to supply evidence of usage, instead of, as in Johnson, aesthetic and/or moral example, is representative

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25 P. Korshin, 'Johnson and the Renaissance Dictionary', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35 (1974), 300–12, at 311.

26 Taylor, n. 11.   27 http://www.icons.org.uk

28 On *OED* lexicographers' enthusiasm for newspapers, see Brewer (*Treasure-House*, 118). Murray's attitude towards culturally significant sources is not as straightforwardly linguistic as this quotation would suggest. Fighting with Vice-Chancellor Jowett the year before, over the dictionary's allegedly insufficient quotation from 'great writers', he had defended his editorial practice in terms conceding their importance: 'Give us the quotations from great writers: "O how happy we shall be!"' (undated document headed 'Comments', Bodleian Library Murray Papers Box 5; cf. Murray, *Caught in the Web*, 220ff.). L. Mugglestone (*Lost for Words: The Hidden History of the OED* (New Haven and London, 2005)) gives examples, at the stage of proof corrections, of the preference of quotations from canonical literary over other types of source.

29 H. Coleridge, *A Glossarial Index to the Printed English Literature of the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1859); C. T. Onions, 'How the Dictionary is Made', *The Periodical* 13 (1928), 15–17.

of the changes in intellectual culture between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[30]

Naturally, this meant that the *OED* lexicographers' choice of data—the quotations themselves and the texts from which the quotations were selected—also played a primary role. So the same question arises as with Johnson's dictionary. By what authority were *OED*'s authorities selected? What was their provenance, and how did the lexicographers decide which quotations to select and which to reject? Further questions follow, for example, what precisely is the function of quotations in illustrating and delineating meaning?

III. *OED* and the links between literature and language

There are various ways in which one can try to answer these questions, none of them straightforward (the most obvious resource where quotation provenance is concerned, *OED*'s bibliography, is not sufficiently helpful, since its various versions are avowedly incomplete and give no indication of the rate or proportion of quotation from the texts specified).[31] But we should begin by recalling the cultural and intellectual environment in which the *OED* was produced, briefly gestured at by Newman as quoted above, since this inevitably conditioned the nature and range of its lexical investigations. Although the study of language had been transformed over the 150 years since the publication of Johnson's dictionary, many cultural assumptions remained the same: so that it still seemed natural, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, to turn to great works of literature to exemplify the history, development and usage of the language. Not least, this was owing to the strong connections perceived to exist between a language and the culture of the people speaking it. The growth of empirical language study over the course of the nineteenth century—whether investigations into the origins of language, or into the medieval roots of vernacular languages—was fuelled by nationalism and a desire to understand cultural and historical origins; the Grimm brothers' dictionary, the founding of societies for reprinting medieval texts (the Roxburghe Society, the Early English Text Society, the Société des Anciens Textes Français and many others), the eighteenth and nineteenth-century fascination with the gothic and the medieval (from Thomas Warton to William Morris), were all, broadly speaking, part of the same phenomenon. The American linguist William Dwight Whitney, a distinguished Sanskritist and editor of the influential *Century Dictionary* (an early rival to *OED*), delivered a series of public

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30 See Aarsleff, *The Study of Language*; A. Morpurgo-Davies, *Nineteenth-Century Linguistics* (London, 1998); Taylor, *Hardy's Literary Language*. Richardson's dictionary of 1836–7, which focused on quotations at the expense of definitions, occupies a mid-point; see Murray, *The Evolution of English Lexicography*, 44–5); R. Fowler, 'Text and Meaning in Charles Richardson's New Dictionary of the English Language', in *Historical Dictionaries and Historical Dictionary Research*, ed. J. Coleman and A. McDermott (Tübingen, 2004), 53–62, and pages at http://oed.hertford.ox.ac.uk/main/content/category/12/49/193/.

31 In its various stages, the bibliography can be found in the 1933 re-issue of *OED*, in Burchfield (1972–86), Vol. 4, and on *OED Online*.

lectures published in 1867, entitled *Language and the Study of Language*, which explained the connection between language and literature: 'A great body of literary works of acknowledged merit and authority, in the midst of a people proud and fond of it, is an agent in the preservation and transmission of any tongue, the importance of which cannot be easily over-estimated'.[32] Literature itself was often acknowledged as a cultural 'treasure-house' and recognition of its importance was so embedded in ways of thinking about language and culture that this often went without saying, as George Marsh, the American man of letters who was one of the first volunteers to work on *OED*, explained in another public lecture of the same period: 'The importance of a permanent literature, of authoritative standards of expression, and, especially, of those great, lasting works of the imagination, which, in all highly-cultivated nations constitute the "*volumes paramount*" of their literature, has been too generally appreciated to require here argument or illustration.' He continued, 'All these books have been for centuries a daily food, an intellectual pabulum, that actually has entered into and moulded the living thought and action of gifted nations; and, in the case of the Anglican people . . . their great poets have been more powerful than any other secular influence in first making, and then keeping, the Englishman and American . . . the pioneer race in the march of man towards the highest summits of worthy human achievement.'[33]

Here Marsh rehearses connections between literature, language, culture and nationalism that had been part of educated European consciousness for decades (back to F. W. Schlegel in the first decade of the nineteenth century and beyond), and makes it clear that literature is the supreme expression of a nation's culture and a vital element in its character and unity. The notion that the intellectual and cultural heritage of Englishmen is embodied in its great literary works held strong for many years, both during and after the creation of the *OED*, and played an important role in the establishment of English—and its gradual replacement of Classics—as an academic subject at universities and schools, worthy of study and scholarship and also central to the education of the young. 'Classical Studies may make a man intellectual, but the study of the native literature has a moral effect as well. *It is the true ground and foundation of patriotism*', as Sir John Seeley put it, elected Professor of Modern History in Cambridge in 1869.[34]

It is not always clear, in discussions of 'literature', whether the writers intend the term to convey the sense 'Literary productions as a whole; the body of writings produced in a particular country or period, or in the world in general', the first sense distinguished by *OED* in the relevant section of their entry for this

32 W. D. Whitney, *Language and the Study of Language* (London, 1867), 23.

33 G. P. Marsh, *Lectures on the English Language* (New York, 1860), 17–18l; '*volumes paramount*' refers to Wordsworth's sonnet 'Great Men have been among us'. For the 'treasure-house of literature', see H. Reeve, '[Review of Encyclopædia Britannica, DNB, and N.E.D.]', *Edinburgh Review* 169 (1889), 328–50, at 328.

34 *Report of the* [Early English Text Society] *Committee*, January 1868, 6; cf. G. Sampson, *English for the English* (Cambridge [Eng.], 1921), e.g. 28ff, 107–9.

word, or instead the differentiated meaning given in the second part of the same definition: 'Now also in a more restricted sense, applied to writing which has claim to consideration on the ground of beauty of form or emotional effect'. But it often seems to be the case that, like Pope, who in 1709 had feared that 'such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be', many cultural commentators when deploring the decline of the English language thought of it as the vessel of great works of art (i.e. literature in the second of the two senses identified above). Thus the poet laureate Robert Bridges, speaking for the Society of Pure English in 1925 (of which the four main *OED1* lexicographers, Murray, Bradley, Craigie, Onions, along with the Secretary to the Delegates of the Press, R. W. Chapman and his deputy Kenneth Sisam, all were or had been members and/or contributors), articulated these same bonds between language, literature and the nation. Describing the English race as 'inheritors of what may claim to be the finest living literature in the world', he expressed concomitant fears lest 'our speech should grow out of touch with that literature, and losing, as it were, its capital . . . fall from its nobility and gradually dissociate itself from apparent continuity with its great legacy'.[35]

In this intellectual and cultural climate, it is not surprising that Murray, on the first page of the first volume of *OED*, identified 'all the great English writers of all ages' as the first port of call for quotations, nor that Onions described the two-volume abridgement of the *OED* first published in 1933, the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, as 'a lexical companion to English literature', nor that Craigie and Onions called the bibliography of *OED*'s quotation sources, published the same year in a re-issue of the first edition, a 'guide to English literature'. What we know of the first edition editors' lexicographical methods explains further why authors such as Shakespeare, Milton, Chaucer, Pope, Cowper, Walter Scott, Tennyson and even Walter Scott were quoted so extensively: it was these authors, along with the Bible, whose lexical riches were easily accessible via the glossaries and concordances the lexicographers habitually consulted in order to swell their collection of quotation material and make good its gaps.[36] It is true, as we can see both from the *OED* bibliography and from the book-lists issued by the editors over the years, that the lexicographers also searched hard through many non-literary sources and encouraged their volunteer readers to do the same—not just theological, historical, and philosophical writings, which might be argued to have literary claims, but also those relating to science and technology, commerce and the world of business, and sports, arts, and crafts of many different kinds.[37]

However, following the digitalisation of the *OED* in the 1980s, we can now search the dictionary electronically and actually count up the number of quotations from different sources, to find that the lexicographers did indeed favour

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35 R. Bridges, 'The Society's Work', *SPE* Tract XXI (1925), 4–17, at 5.

36 Onions, 'How the Dictionary is Made', discussed Brewer (*Treasure-House*, 127–8).

37 See Brewer, '*OED* Sources', in *Lexicography and the OED*, ed. L. Mugglestone (Oxford, 2000), 40–58.

works then commonly recognized by the educated classes, without the self-consciousness or self-questioning in which we would engage today, as canonical—not just for English literature, but for the English language in its entirety: the poets and writers widely acknowledged, in the Victorian period, as 'great writers' of the past and present. Correspondingly, *OED* quotes comparatively few women authors (even from the last decades of the eighteenth century, when a third of the novels published were written by women) and fewer sources in general from the eighteenth century, a period not highly valued by the Victorians for its literary quality, while it comparatively under-reports the lexical usage of authors deemed less culturally significant (e.g. Nashe, Wyatt, Malory, William Blake, etc.), and passes over many 'social' documents such as wills and inventories (such texts were often not available to the original editors, as they were not in printed form).[38]

The question, given the nature of the quotation sources which fed into the *OED* as its 'authorities' (to recall Johnson's term), is whether they satisfactorily and adequately represent the history and development of the English language. The important thing to bear in mind here is often forgotten, namely that—as proudly asserted in its 1933 Preface, quoted above—the *OED* is created from its quotations. Murray gives a striking account of the role they played in enabling the lexicographers to identify, discover and discriminate the different senses of a word and the relationships between them: 'You sort your quotations into bundles on your big table, and think you are getting the word's pedigree right, when a new sense, or three or four new senses, start up, which upset all your scheme, and you are obliged to begin afresh, often three or four times'.[39] Would further new senses have started up before the editors' eyes had they been reading a different selection of texts?

IV. Burchfield's supplement and the use of literary sources

When R. W. Burchfield became editor of the second Supplement in 1957 he took the view that *OED* should continue to record the usage of 'significant authors' (as he called them) of the day. By the time he came to write the preface to his fourth

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38 See J. Raven et al., *The English Novel 1770-1829: a Bibliographical Survey* (Oxford, 2000); Brewer, 'Examining the *OED*', http://oed.hertford.ox.ac.uk (2005–) and (for the eighteenth century) Brewer, 'Reporting Eighteenth-Century Vocabulary in the *OED*', in *Words and Dictionaries from the British Isles*, eds J. Considine and G. Iammartino (Newcastle, 2007); J. Schäfer, *Documentation in the O.E.D.* (Oxford and New York, 1980). There are some exceptions to this statement, e.g. *OED*'s intensive excerption of *Cursor Mundi*, scarcely a literary text, quoted over 11,000 times. The comparative scarcity of early Middle English works led to available sources being disproportionately mined; see http://oed.hertford.ox.ac.uk/main/main/content/view/91/235/.

39 Murray, 'Monthly Abstract of Proceedings', *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1885–7) ix–x, at x.

volume in 1986, however, he seems to have become aware that identifying a lit-
erary canon, and quoting from its contents in order to illustrate the history and
development of the English language, raised legitimate cultural and linguistic
questions. But instead of explaining his choice of literary authors, and addressing
the relationship between literature and the lexicon in order to defend his own
position, he responded with counter-attack (the remarks on linguistic burial par-
ties quoted in the Introduction). If the *OED* 'had room' for eccentric usage of the
past, he concluded,

> it could, and must, admit the vocabulary of Edith Sitwell and Wystan Auden. Of course,
> the structuralists and other scholars at one or two removes from the work of Ferdinand de
> Saussure could not see this, and they probably never will. But *OEDS*, like its parent work,
> has been hospitable, almost from the beginning, to the special vocabulary, including the
> once-off uses, of writers like T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, and others.[40]

Burchfield also asserted that his quotation from the special usage of canonical
literary authors formed 'only a tiny fraction of the vocabulary presented here' and
had not disturbed the 'balance' of his record of the language. Elsewhere he refers
to such quotations as 'golden specks' in the dictionary as a whole, and describes
how he smuggled them into the Supplement against the inclinations both of his
'publishing overlords within OUP' and his staff—'my staff . . . have a genuine
horror of poets. I love poetry and poetical use has been poured into the
Supplement, because it is my own preference compared with that of my collea-
gues'.[41]

There is an inconsistency between these two views, neither of which is pre-
sented in any detail. On the one hand, the distinctive usages of literary writers are
intrinsic to the development of the language, and one cannot ignore them in
constructing a historical dictionary of English. On the other, they are 'golden
specks' which (as Burchfield later explained) he deliberately concealed from critics
of his pre-publication specimen entries by flooding the dictionary with a wealth
of quotations from non-literary sources.[42] But what is the relationship between
these usages and that of the English lexicon as a whole, which (however defined
and differentiated) it must be *OED*'s primary job to record? Murray's co-editor
Henry Bradley had discussed the issue in 1904, in a much reprinted book called
The Making of English, to conclude that 'there is no constant relation between a
writer's literary greatness . . . and the extent of his influence on the language in
which his works are written'. He may have been implicitly contesting the view of
Newman and others that the 'sayings' of 'a great author . . . pass into proverbs

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40 Burchfield, *A Supplement*, Vol. 4, xi.

41 Burchfield, *Unlocking the English Language*, 12, 282; Burchfield, 'Aspects of Short-Term
Historical Lexicography', *Proceedings of the Second International Round Table Conference on
Historical Lexicography*, eds W. Pijnenburg and F. de Tollenaere (Dordrecht, Holland and
Cinnaminson, 1980), 271–9, at 282.

42 Burchfield, *Unlocking the English Language*, 12.

among his people, and his phrases become household words and idioms of their daily speech, which is tessellated with the rich fragments of his language'.[43] While this was true of some writers, Bradley argued (instancing Lydgate, Malory, Caxton, Spenser, Shakespeare, Pope, Johnson and Walter Scott, among others), it was not true of all (or at least, not in clearly demonstrable ways); as counterexamples he suggests Chaucer, Milton and Carlyle.[44] The difficulty for linguists examining the question now, is that the primary court, in which one tests the claim that a writer's usage has been influential, is the *OED* itself. This is the single lexical authority which tracks the use of words and senses through time; yet it is this authority whose assumptions and practice we need to assess in its turn.

Burchfield often described his pleasure and pride in including the *hapax legomena* and individualistic usages of literary writers—Beckett's *athambia*, Joyce's *impotentizing*, Woolf's *scrolloping*, Edith Sitwell's *Martha-coloured*—'the result of a personal memory . . . As a child, I had a nursery maid called Martha, who always wore a . . . gown . . . exactly the colour of a scabious', Hopkins's *unleaving*, etc. He writes,

I can best illustrate my own attitude towards literary English, and its preciosities, in the following manner. I have been as much concerned to record the unparalleled intransitive use of the verb *unleave* ('to lose or shed leaves') in G. M. Hopkins's line:

> Margaret, are you grieving
> Over Goldengrove unleaving ('Spring and Fall', ll. 1–2)

as Murray was to record Milton's unparalleled use of the word *unlibidinous*:

> But in those hearts
> Love unlibidinous reign'd (*Paradise Lost*, Bk V l. 449)

or Langland's unparalleled use of unleese 'to unfasten':

> Seruiantz . . . nauʒt for loue of owre lord vnlese here lippes onis
> (*Piers Plowman*, B-Text, Pro 213)[45]

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43 J. H. Newman, *The Idea of a University* (London, 1873), 292–3.

44 H. Bradley, *The Making of English* (London, 1904), chapter 6. Bradley's point, where Chaucer was concerned, was that study of ME lexis was so dominated by Chaucer that one could not be sure usages ascribed to this poet might not be antedated in texts as yet unread. Similar criticism has been applied to the documentation of Chaucer in the *MED*, which may over-represent Chaucer's vocabulary. Clearly some of Carlyle's usages, e.g. *gigman* and its derivatives, penetrated general usage, as *OED*'s entry (written by Bradley) attests; the same is true of Milton, to whom *OED* (in another entry written by Bradley) ascribes invention of the word *sensuous*.

45 Burchfield, *Unlocking the English Language*, 173–4. The 'unparalleled use of unleese' is found in only five MSS of *Piers Plowman* and has been rejected as a scribal error by recent scholarship (e.g. George Kane and E. T. Donaldson, *Piers Plowman: The B Version* (London, 1975), 239). *MED* cites this instance (from the Laud B-MS, used by Skeat for the edition of the poem from which *OED1* quoted), plus one other (ca. 1350), as the only evidence of the word's existence.

By definition, these usages have not influenced the language in any perceptible way—otherwise they would not be *hapax legomena*; all are evidenced by the one quotation in *OED*—or, in the case of *scrolloping*, six quotations.[46] (That is not to say that the words cannot necessarily to be found in many printed or internet contexts. Typing *athambia* into google yields over 6,000 hits, many of them related to Lucky's speech in *Waiting for Godot*, and the same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of *scrolloping*, *unleaving* and *unlibidinous*—though not *Martha-coloured*). But while Burchfield clearly believed, with Eliot and Newman, that the diction of great writers, 'in proportion to its excellence and vigour, affect[s] the speech and sensibility of the whole nation', he never grappled with the paradox that such writers, in varying ways and to varying extents, often choose to deviate from, rather than exemplify, the 'dialect of the tribe'.[47] Nor did he do something more immediately pressing for an editor of *OED*, that is, explain his choice of which writers to read, or which of their unusual usages to record—for it would have been impossible to record them all.

Applying electronic searches to the *OED* reveals Burchfield's literary canon to be more eccentric than that of his predecessors. His favourite male authors were Joyce, Wodehouse, Lawrence, Aldous Huxley and Auden (all quoted c. 750–2000 times),[48] while female authors, cited far less often, begin with Ngaio Marsh (the crime writer), Dorothy Sayers and Agatha Christie, at around 450 quotations each, followed at some distance by more literary writers such as Elizabeth Bowen and Woolf (c. 340 and 230, respectively).[49] It seems much more likely that these figures and proportions tell us about Burchfield's (or his readers') cultural and literary preferences, than about the respective contribution of the named writers to the history and development of the English language.

Burchfield was well aware of his dependence on readers in this respect; as he wrote, 'to a large extent the preparation of the final copy for press was governed by the choice first made by the contributors'.[50] Inevitably, his coverage even of his favoured authors was variable. It is inexplicable to us now that Burchfield should (by his own account) have made a special case for including T. S. Eliot's *loam feet*, quoted from *Four Quartets*—'Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes, Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth'—while omitting *etherised*, surely one of the most famous of modernist poetry usages.[51] And what could be the claim for Sitwell's

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46 See Brewer, 'The *OED* as "Literary Instrument": Its Treatment Past and Present of the Vocabulary of Virginia Woolf', *Notes & Queries*, 2009.

47 Eliot, 'The Social Function of Poetry', *On Poetry and Poets* (London, 1947), 15–25, at 22; *Little Gidding*, II; see the valuable discussion by Taylor, *Hardy's Literary Language*, 48–55.

48 Burchfield also inserted many quotations from Shaw, Kipling, Twain and William James; see further http://oed.hertford.ox.ac.uk/main/content/view/37/167/.

49 Figures from http://oed.hertford.ox.ac.uk/main/content/view/57/140/.

50 Burchfield, *Unlocking the English Language*, 84; cf. similar remarks, 13, 89.

51 See Burchfield, *Unlocking the English Language*, 11–2, 75, where he explains his omission of *etherised* was due to post-1800 examples already existing in *OED1*. He updated countless other such entries.

'Martha-coloured scabious' which would simultaneously exclude her 'Emily-coloured primulas', a formulation unrecorded by Burchfield despite having been dignified by critical discussion (unlike 'Martha-coloured') in *Essays and Criticism* in 1952 (between Geoffrey Nokes, who strove to defend it as an intelligible poetic locution, and Kingsley Amis, who thought it absurd)?[52] Such examples will be replicated by anyone studying the representation of an individual author or work in *OED*, whether the first edition or the Supplement. As R. W. McConchie concluded from his work on the former, 'sources already scrutinized, and even relatively thoroughly excerpted, may nevertheless be productive of much more material'; 'the fact of a book's having already been read is simply no guide to what useful data might still be found in it, unless it can be shown to have been exhaustively excerpted as in the case of Shakespeare'.[53]

V. Problems of using literary sources for quotations

A hundred or so years onwards from the compilation of *OED*, we no longer share the cultural and literary assumptions of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In the aftermath of the birth of linguistics as an academic discipline at the beginning of the twentieth century, literary writing is not regarded as the epitome of the language (though this view is implicitly present in early descriptive linguists, for example Jespersen, who is happy to refer to literary sources—Chaucer, or Shelley, Byron, Tennyson, Dickens, Swinburne, etc., to illustrate his analyses of language, as in the first chapter of his seminal *Growth and Structure of the English Language* (1905), in which he warmly acknowledged his debt to the *OED*). Additionally, it is clear to us that the concept of a literary canon is in itself problematic, as would likewise be the task of identifying an agreed body of creative writers from whom to excerpt quotations as evidence of contemporary usage.

Notwithstanding these considerations, no educated literate person would wish the *OED*'s wealth of quotation from literary sources to be reduced. We consult the *OED* not only to ascertain a word's definition, its etymology, and its first and last usages—on all of which features we expect to see definitive and authoritative information[54]—but also, in Eliot's words, for 'the quotations showing how a word has been used ever since it was first used'. It is the quotations, in their provision of contextual information about a word, that reveal its connotations and nuances; and if we are lucky the *OED* entry will also give us a sense of the type of source in which it has been found and of its relative currency. That many

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52 *Essays in Criticism* 1952 II: 338–47.

53 McConchie, *Lexicography and Physicke*, 155, 177–8.

54 Since much of the edition currently in print (*OED2*) is reproduced unchanged from the first edition (1884–1928), the scholarship is sometimes out-of-date—but nevertheless often the best easily available.

of *OED*'s quotations derive from canonical literary sources is often all to the good, especially if we are investigating the usage of a word in literary works over the whole period of English, in a tradition whose constituent authors were often well-acquainted with the writing of their forebears (a point of considerable interest to Eliot, as his writings variously attest). Johnson's 'genealogy of sentiments' comes into play here.

One example (more can be found on almost any page) will show both the extent and the limitations of *OED*'s quotation evidence in this respect. Suppose that on reading Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale* we wish to know the connotations, in early nineteenth-century English, of the word *darkling* ('Darkling I listen; and, for many a time, I have been half in love with easeful Death')—that is, whether at the time Keats wrote, *darkling* could be neutrally employed as an adverbial phrase meaning 'in the dark', or whether it had the poetic associations it carries today. The *OED* entry contains no editorial label or comment to steer us (contrast remarks s.v. *academe*, *sire* n.6, *thorough* B.I. prep., and *passim*), and we must look to the quotations to guide us. These include one from *Paradise Lost*, 'The wakeful Bird Sings darkling, and in shadiest Covert hid Tunes her nocturnal Note'. Turning to the Longman Annotated Text edition of Keats by Miriam Allott, we find that the poet had marked his copy of *Paradise Lost* at this very point, so that it is irresistible to suppose that the two nightingales are connected. Elsewhere in the *OED* entry, Matthew Arnold is quoted for the adjectival use of *darkling*, reminding us of another canonical use of the word, although not recorded in *OED*: Dover Beach's 'we are here as on a darkling plain: Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight'. In turn, this usage catapults us to Hardy's 'Darkling Thrush', again not quoted (the poem was published in 1902, after *OED1* had edited D, and the entry was not updated by Burchfield) but surely in dialogue, one way or another, with Keats's and therefore with Milton's nightingale. Further echoes of the word rebound in *OED*'s quotation from Helena in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 'O wilt thou darkling leaue me?', reminding us of Lear's Fool's unquoted 'So out went the candle, and we were left darkling'.

Although *OED* provides no comment on usage, the poetic provenance of many of the quotations, along with the associations the quotations trigger in dictionary-readers, give us the answer we were looking for.[55] The entry is typical both for the richness of associative information it provides (extending well beyond the sketch given above) and for its selectiveness. Excellent as *OED* is as a literary dictionary, it could not possibly be comprehensive, and as we have seen, Murray resisted pressure from the OUP Delegates to favour literary quotations when they were inferior to others—that is, when they were less useful in illustrating the meaning and usage of a word (in this particular instance, the *Lear* instance of *darkling* appears more illuminating than that of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, but the point still stands).

55 Though Alastair Fowler's note on *darkling* in his Longman Annotated Poets edition of *Paradise Lost* (1968, 563) states it was 'not yet a specially poetic word'.

In fact, Murray could be scathing about writers and their use of language. He complained that Robert Browning 'constantly used words without regard to their proper meaning', and had therefore 'added greatly to the difficulties of the Dictionary' (Browning had earlier told Murray 'that he found the Dictionary "most delightful" and intended to read every word of it'). The same attitude can be found in Burchfield, who said of T. S. Eliot's use of the word *opherion* in a draft of *The Waste Land*, 'it would appear that Eliot's word is simply an error for *orphar-ion*, a large musical instrument of the lute kind, much used in the seventeenth century. It is a classic example of the kind of linguistic flaw found in the work of most major writers'. Elsewhere, he remarked that 'Auden was not a scholar and often didn't know what words meant'.[56]

What is striking in these complaints, as in Burchfield's accounts of his love of poetry and the importance of great writers in *OED*'s picture of the English language, is that they display no acknowledgement of the way that poets (and to some degree, all language users) choose to use words for reasons that go well beyond their superficial, or immediate, semantic meaning. Far more than occasional ignorance on the part of writers, it is this characteristic of poetic language that creates significant problems for lexicographers who wish to quote from it as evidence for the stable meaning of a word or sense. It is a truism that poetry often exploits specifically contextual nuances of language (not to mention their sound-elements), as well as the reader's sense that a poem's words and meanings can be highly labile and far-reaching. In other words, poetry often relies on the connotatory as well as the denotatory sense of words—as do many other types of text. But dictionaries have to confine themselves to telling us what words denote, not (except in clearly limited ways) what they connote—otherwise they would become unmanageably, perhaps impossibly, large.[57]

As W. H. Auden and C. Day-Lewis described in the 1927 edition of the journal *Oxford Poetry*, there is a

logical conflict, between the denotatory and the connotatory sense of words . . . between, that is to say, an asceticism tending to kill language by stripping words of all association and a hedonism tending to kill language by dissipating their sense under a multiplicity of associations (Preface, pp. vi–vii).

William Empson quoted this remark in his *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930).[58] He goes on to say, 'The methods I have been using [sc. in this famous study of ambiguity in poetry] seem to assume that all poetical language is debauched into associations to any required degree; I ought at this point to pay decent

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56 See further Brewer, *Treasure-House*, 195, 204–5; Burchfield, *Unlocking the English Language*, 70.

57 Labelling is one device used by lexicographers to communicate connotatory information about words; it is still not consistently deployed in *OED* (Brewer, *Treasure-House*, 244–9).

58 W. Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London, 2004), 234.

homage to the opposing power'—in effect, to the denotatory technique exempli-fied in dictionaries.'[59] In poetry and other sorts of creative writing, the relation-ship between the denotation of a word—what the dictionary sets out to analyse and define—and the connotations of that same word, may be much less stable than in other types of text. But the *OED* method of printing short quotations as evidence of a word's meaning and usage inevitably dislocates poetic usage from the mooring, i.e. the immediate context, on which its meaning depends. The relationship between connotation and denotation is thus further destabilised. At the same time, it can be very difficult for the dictionary reader to understand quotations from poetic usage once these quotations have been divorced from their context and put into the *OED* (the same can be true for quotations from any kind of source).[60]

None of the *OED* lexicographers, however, acknowledges the difficulty of quot-ing literary works out of context, which becomes particularly acute when the meaning of the word that the quotation is supposed to illustrate does not readily appear from the quotation itself. So *loam-foot*, for example, is not much eluci-dated by 'Come with me by the self-consuming north (The North is spirit), to the loam-foot west And opulent departures of the south', quoted from Donald Davie as an adjunct to Eliot's earlier use. Equally opaque is Auden's 'How will you answer when from their qualming spring The immortal nymphs fly shrieking', quoted without comment from *Nones* (1951) as the sole example since Milton (1644) of *qualming* (*ppl. a.*; 'Of the nature of a qualm; characterized by qualms'); or E. Blunden's 'tender amaranthine domes Of angel-evenings', to illustrate the attributive use of the noun *angel*. To understand all these quotations (so far as mere denotation goes), one needs advance knowledge of the definition supplied by the *OED*: in other words the quotations depend upon, rather than support, the definition. (The connotations, which may interact significantly with the word's dictionary definition, are impossible to divine without going back to the original text from which the quotations have been excerpted).

This is a peculiar feature, given that, according to the *OED*'s own account, the quotations in this great work are supposed to be constitutive rather than illustra-tive of meaning: that is, the lexicographers deduce the meanings of words from their quotations (rather than deduce the meanings of their quotations from their pre-determined definitions). Clearly these quotations and definitions are func-tioning quite differently, and their inclusion in the *OED* looks to be the result of

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59 Empson was discussing the shortcomings of 'the NED method of listing different uses of a word' with I. A. Richards as early as 1930; see Empson, *Selected Letters of William Empson*, ed. J. Haffenden (Oxford, 2006), 34, and references to *OED ibid.* (with thanks to J. Baines); also Brewer, *Treasure-House*, 75, 166 &nn. The relationship between connotation and deno-tation has subsequently been extensively studied by Barthes and other semioticians.

60 Such dislocation is an endemic feature of *OED*'s method. For a discussion of its con-sequences in quotations from political and philosophical texts, exacerbated by mistran-scription, see J. Schmidt, 'Inventing the Enlightenment: British Hegelians, Anti-Jacobins, and the *OED*', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 (2003), 421–43.

cultural not just linguistic intention on the part of the lexicographers, deriving from assumptions of the kind articulated by Burchfield, that not to consider such examples of usage 'leave one looking at a language with one's eyes partly blind-folded'. As literary-minded readers, we may choose to be grateful for such quotations, and to turn a blind eye both to rampant inconsistencies and to (what can seem) arbitrary selectiveness, at the same time tolerating the absence of any explanation, from the lexicographers themselves, of the role of such quotations in the dictionary and their relationship with other, apparently more straightforward quotations. But is this really what one should accept from 'the definitive record of the language'?

VI. *OED3*

The question has been implicitly raised, though not yet answered, by the lexicographers currently at work on *OED3*. The online Preface (2000) to this work states, 'The Dictionary has in the past been criticized for its apparent reliance on literary texts to illustrate the development of the vocabulary of English over the centuries. A closer examination of earlier editions shows that this view has been overstated, though it is not entirely without foundation'.[61] By contrast, this first-ever revision of *OED* 'makes use of many non-literary texts which were not available to the original Victorian readers and their immediate successors'. Elsewhere on the website, *OED3*'s editor John Simpson explains that

The original Dictionary relied heavily on a small number of authors (notably, of course, Shakespeare) for its coverage of Early Modern English (1500–1700). Today, readers systematically survey a much broader spectrum of texts from this and other periods. A separate Historical Reading Programme has been created to serve this function. . . . In addition to the 'traditional' canon of literary works, today's Reading Programme covers women's writing and non-literary texts which have been published in recent times, such as wills, probate inventories, account books, diaries, and letters. The programme also covers the eighteenth century, since studies have shown that the original *Oxford English Dictionary* reading in this period was less extensive than it was for the previous two centuries.[62]

The implication is that expanding the range of sources in this way, i.e. beyond literary texts, will improve the accuracy and comprehensiveness of *OED*'s treatment of language—and the productivity of social documents in supplementing the *OED*'s original evidence is clearly demonstrated in separately published accounts written by Simpson's co-editor Edmund Weiner.[63]

61 http://oed.com/about/oed3-preface/documentation.html#documentation.

62 http://www.oed.com/about/reading.html

63 See E. S. C. Weiner, 'Local History and Lexicography', *The Local Historian* 24 (1994), 164–73; Weiner, 'The Use of Non-Literary Manuscript Texts for the Study of Dialect Lexis', in *Englishes Around the World*, ed. E. W. Schneider (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1997); Weiner, 'The Language of Probate Inventories', *When Death Do Us Part*, eds T. Arkell, N. Evans and N. Goose (Oxford, 2000), 255–67, and cf. pages at http://oed.hertford.ox.ac.uk/main/content/category/10/39/148/.

OED3 is still in its early stages, and until a larger swathe of work has been done, editorial practices and rationales will not have settled into well-tried and established patterns. As yet, therefore, the lexicographers have published no bibliography of the new sources, nor any account of the grounds for their choice, the relative frequency of quotation from them, the reasons for preferring one quotation to another, or how the revision is dealing with the legacy of the two main previous stages of compilation—that of *OED1* and of Burchfield's Supplement—namely, a policy of pervasive quotation from the editors' favoured literary texts. This policy is one of the most cherished aspects of the original *OED*, but it is not obviously consonant with the aim to present an impartial linguistic record (so far as such a thing is possible) of past and present usage. Part of the problem is that the *OED* contains so very many quotations from some literary sources rather than from others. Jettisoning them would seem an outrage—and a pointless waste of lexical data; equally, building up equivalent banks of quotations to 'balance' the sources appears an impossible (or at any rate impracticable) task.

Some comparative data, limited to individual literary sources, will make the point (venturing beyond investigations of individuals is too difficult for a sole researcher). These figures are produced by searching *OED2* and *OED3* for quotations from the same author or work, and comparing the results over the range of alphabet which has so far been revised (i.e. *M–quit shilling*)—a complex procedure, and one that has become more difficult since 15 March 2008 when *OED3* began a new process of revising items taken from across the alphabet, not just in sequence from the letter *M* onwards.[64]

Bearing in mind that *OED3* has recognized that its predecessors scanted the work of female writers, how have such writers so far fared, compared to equivalent male writers, in the new edition? If we count up quotations from the work of some nineteenth-century females over the revised portion of the dictionary (perhaps a fifth of the entire number of quotations), we will find that Jane Austen's total has gone up from 150 in *OED2* to 580 in *OED3*, a big increase both in absolute numbers (430) and by percentage (287%). Fewer quotations have been added for the previously highest quoted female source, George Eliot, who has risen by 300 quotations from 523 in *OED2* to 823 in *OED3*. One begins to form the hypothesis that the lexicographers are putting deliberate effort into realigning proportions of quotations (and are finding many usages from female authors worthy of citation)—until one sees the contrast with Dickens' new total, 1,815, which has been achieved by adding 551 new quotations in *OED3* to the 1264 originally in *OED2*. Other female authors have had far fewer extra quotations added, e.g. Gaskell (up 157 quotations from 135 to 292), Yonge (up 55 quotations from 253 to 308), E. B. Browning (up 28 quotations from 226 to 254), while Braddon has lost 34 from her *OED2* total of 218 and Martineau 7 quotations from her *OED2* total of 256. Do these proportions reflect linguistic features of

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64 Figures derive from searches made 5–6 March 2008, i.e. before the change. For search procedures, see http://oed.hertford.ox.ac.uk/main/content/category/11/43/161/.

the respective authors, or the (continued) preferred reading of *OED* contributors and lexicographers? It is impossible, at this stage, to be sure.

The eighteenth century is one where I have compared the treatment of male and female authors over a wider sample, again restricting searches to the revised portion of the dictionary.[65] But despite *OED3*'s fresh attentions to the work of Frances Burney (up 230 quotations, from 335 in *OED2* to 565 in *OED3*), Maria Edgeworth (up 114, from 235 to 349), and Mary Wollstonecraft (up 125, from 17 to 142)—to pick female writers in which we can see the biggest increases—it is impossible for the new totals for these authors, of around 2200, 1200 and 700 respectively over the whole alphabet range, to compete with those already existing in the first edition of *OED* for their male counterparts. Pope and Cowper, for example, were quoted in *OED1* just under 6000 times each; Swift, Defoe and Addison over 4,000 times. Existing disproportions (or apparent disproportions) are exacerbated by the fact that *OED3* is still adding new quotations for male authors, in some cases many more than for female (e.g. Defoe has 437 extra quotations over the revised portion, increased from 689 in *OED2* to 1126 in *OED3*, and Fielding has 466, increased from 340 to 806).

We may find it surprising that literary texts are receiving this sort of attention at all, given that *OED3* is by its own account seeking to increase relative quotation from non-literary sources. However, the extra documentation of female authors, commendable as it is, has little chance of shifting existing proportions of male to female quotations in the dictionary—and so we are left with the impression, in *OED3* as in previous editions, that male literary writers have contributed far more than female to the history and development of the language. This may or may not be true. But we know enough about the circumstances under which the first *OED* was created to be sceptical about trusting *OED*'s witness in this matter without extensive further research. *OED*'s characteristic resistance to using quotations from female-authored sources was spelled out in 1883 when H. H. Gibbs, a major contributor, objecting to their use, explained that the dictionary was 'not meant to be a record of the progress of the Emancipation of women but of the birth and life and death of words'. Whether emancipated or not, women must always have contributed to "the birth and life and death of words", especially over periods such as the late eighteenth century, during which, as recent bibliographical study shows, the number of women writers rose steeply (and in which it is comparatively easy to find, in female authors, usages unrecorded in the *OED*). *Prima facie*, it would appear important to document both types of sources.[66] On the evidence of the figures quoted above, *OED3* still has a long way to go.

65 Brewer, 'The *OED*'s Treatment of Female-Authored Sources of the Eighteenth Century', in *Current Issues in Late Modern English*, eds. I. Tieken Boon van Ostade and W. van der Wurff (Bern, 2009).

66 See further Raven, *The English Novel 1770-1829*; Brewer, 'The *OED*'s Treatment of Female-Authored Sources of the Eighteenth Century' and (for nineteenth-century English) http://oed.hertford.ox.ac.uk/main/content/view/96/197/. *OED* does not tag quotations by gender of author, so investigation of this question is difficult.

Clearly, raw figures of this kind are unsatisfactory. We cannot be sure of their significance in the absence of detailed analysis of the quotations themselves, the use to which the *OED* puts them, and *OED*'s rationale more generally for selecting quotations—and on such matters *OED3* has yet to pronounce. Just as importantly, without information from *OED3* itself, we cannot know whether the overall ratio of literary to non-literary sources has substantially changed over the portion of the dictionary so far revised. Here it is impossible for an independent investigator to make any headway other than by individual random searches, yielding results whose representative nature one can only guess at but which look significant (e.g. the addition of over 4,500 new quotations from the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, the journal of scientific writing published from 1665 to the present).[67]

But it would be extraordinary if literary quotations were not now occupying, proportionally, less space than before in the *OED* as a whole. Revolutionary changes have taken place in the last twenty years in *OED*'s methods of gathering evidence: instead of reading works laboriously by hand, the lexicographers can skim, in seconds, vast electronic databases of texts both past and present—from *Early English Books Online* to OUP's own two-billion-word Oxford English Corpus (less than 25% of which comes from literary sources). The all-encompassing nature of these databases must be systematically eroding, for today's lexicographers, the literary bias of their Victorian and Edwardian predecessors.[68] This makes the results of the searches of individual literary authors reported above look even more curious, since they are out of line both with the preferences indicated in *OED Online* and with the resources which we know the lexicographers have to hand.

Unfathomable, in these respects, as the processes of revision appear to outsiders, the results have been outstandingly interesting for literary scholarship: some of the beneficiaries are just those canonical authors we might have expected *OED3* to be more chary of. In the final section of this article, I look at examples from Auden and from Joyce, especially at those in which *OED3*'s new evidence demonstrates that vocabulary previously identified as eccentric, or unique, is on the contrary embedded in demotic usage.

VII. Auden

Despite his later-expressed reservations about Auden's lexical scholarship, Burchfield put considerable effort into recording the poet's vocabulary. In 1959, two years after his appointment as *OED* editor (though thirteen years before the first volume of his Supplement, covering the letters *A-G*, appeared), he reported

67 Search made 8 December 2008. See further J. E. Simpson, 'The *OED* Today', *Transactions of the Philological Society* 102 (2004), 335–81.

68 For *OED3*'s use of electronic sources see further http://oed.hertford.ox.ac.uk/main/content/view/157/148/.

to the *Sunday Times* (1 Feb, p. 8) that the reading for Auden was 'well advanced'. Over the following years, both during and after the publication of the Supplement, Burchfield several times identified Auden as among the major writers whose work he thought should be given special attention, and even indexed for inclusion.[69] In the event, Burchfield's Supplement bears an inconsistent and incomplete record of Auden's language—though this is hardly surprising, given the problems identified above of relying on material sent in by readers, and Auden's continued productivity over the time that the Supplement was compiled.

The 766 quotations from Auden in the Supplement are for an interesting range of words, representative of the poet intellectually and biographically. Everyday lexis, some with US associations (*clambake, climate of opinion, cocktail shaker*) jostles with colloquial or slang words (again, many of US provenance, e.g *biggie, hooey, orneriness, shagged*—i.e. 'exhausted', of which Auden is recorded as first user) and with dialect vocabulary (*faffling*, *mim*, *oxter*, *pudge*). There is a good sprinkling of learned classical words (*acedia, agape, agora*) and of scientific, technical and technological words (*cerebrotonic, cyclotron, entropic, eutectic*), as well as European loanwords, often relating to the arts, e.g. *acte gratuit, cabaletta, coloratura, Geheimrat*. Unusual words deriving from abstruse reading also feature (*apotropaically*, *baldachined*, *dedolant*) as do a smaller number of *hapax legomena* or so-called noncewords, e.g. *ingressant, dispersuade, metalogue*.[70]

Burchfield's treatment of Auden often yields interesting information. For example, he adds, from the poem 'Under Sirius', quotations for *baltering* and *soodling* ('The baltering torrent Shrunk to a soodling thread'), which are the only recent examples of usage. Auden's use of *baltering*, following on from a previous *OED* quotation of 1500, is labelled 'an isolated later example', while that of *soodling*, following on from quotations from John Clare dated 1821 and citation in dialect glossaries of 1854, is said to be 'poet., rare'.

The implication for anyone familiar with Auden's love of *OED* is that he came across both words while reading his copy of the first edition, meaning that the words have re-entered the *OED* as a result of the productive, if incestuous, relationship of writers with dictionaries. Auden's interest in *OED* is well-attested. Words from this dictionary appear in his poetry at all stages, and visitors to his homes at New York and Austria remarked on its battered appearance on his shelves, missing one volume which he used as a cushion to sit on when at table. His chances of entering the *OED* himself, as a cited author, must have been considerably enhanced by his personal acquaintance with Burchfield.

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69 See Brewer, *Treasure-House*, 187.

70 Burchfield follows *OED1* in annotating such solely attested words in two different ways, not clearly differentiated: '*nonce-word*' (a term invented by Murray), and '*rare*$^{-1}$' (*rare*—^{0} indicates that the word is found only in a dictionary or word-book and not in 'real' usage). See Burchfield, 'The Treatment of Controversial Vocabulary in the *O.E.D.*', *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1974), 1–28, at 7–9.

While Auden was professor of poetry at Christ Church, Oxford, Burchfield was a lecturer at the same college; he later described how Auden would press him to put words into his Supplement, either instances of what he took to be new usage or examples of words in his poetry that he had found while browsing *OED*'s pages.[71]

This relationship surfaces in a chain of quotations buried away in Burchfield's huge entry for the combinatorial forms of the adjective *plain*, where he prints a 1969 quotation, from a review by Auden of J. R. Ackerley's autobiography, as the first example of a sexual sense of *plain-sewing*, 'a particular kind of homosexual behaviour in which masturbation or mutual masturbation takes place'. The next quotation, dated 1971 (from the *Observer* magazine), reads, 'One of my [*sc*. W. H. Auden's] great ambitions is to get into the *OED*, as the first person to have used in print a new word. I have two candidates at the moment, which I used in my review of J. R. Ackerley's autobiography [i.e. as in the first quotation]. They are 'Plain-Sewing' and 'Princeton-First-Year'. They refer to two types of homosexual behaviour.' The final quotation in the sequence, again from the *TLS* (21 March 1980), offers an explanation of the term: 'I suspect 'Plain-Sewing' to be Auden's own invention, but its meaning is fairly clear, as it involves a pun on 'sowing' (seed or semen) and a reference to the two-and-fro [*sic*] action of the hand in sewing'. As an exhibition of 'genealogy of sentiment', this is quite impressive.

Comparing the figures for quotation from Auden between *OED2* and *OED3* would seem to tell one that little additional work has been done on Auden by the current revisers of the dictionary: the 766 quotations have expanded to 774.[72] But the numbers seriously mislead: many quotations have been omitted (e.g. for *madam, Matric, Minotaur, Mittel-Europa, monolith* and others), and consequently far more than eight added (e.g. for *maltalent, megrim, menalty, metronome, middle earth, midwife, might-have-been, mild, Millerite, mimesis*). Two of these, *maltalent*, 'an ill-tempered person', and *menalty*, 'the middle class (of society)' are new examples of what one might call Auden's 'dictionary usage', and *OED3* clearly identifies them as such with a note suggesting that they have been 'revived by W. H. Auden from dictionary record.' One gets the same initially misleading results if one searches for *OED2* and *OED3* to compare the number of words for which Auden is the first cited example: 22 in each case. But changes have taken place in this list too. Auden's 1959 use of *neotene* (describing a human being who retains juvenile characteristics in later life), a *hapax legomenon* in *OED2*, has been extensively contextualised in *OED3* with scientific examples, both earlier and later, referring to animals, while *numéro* (as in 'George, you old numéro'), has been antedated from Auden's example of 1944 to one of 1924. Consequently both terms have lost the individualistic status given them in Burchfield's Supplement. To compensate, *OED3* now has Auden down as the only person to use the term *opera magica* ('Opera with a fantastic or supernatural subject'), and the first person

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71 Brewer, *Treasure-House*, 194–5.

72 A number of these are from works written jointly with Isherwood, Kallman and MacNeice.

to use *unseasonal* in the sense 'Not in accordance with, the time or occasion, untimely'—a now unexceptional usage. Both these latter examples had escaped Burchfield altogether.[73]

However, there are still words in Auden's poems that go unexplained in the alphabet-range so far treated by *OED3*, e.g. *mawk*, as in 'Lip-smacking Imps of mawk and hooey Write with us what they will'—though Burchfield included this very quotation in *OED* s.v. *hooey*, where it remains.[74] And the revisers have passed over a number of opportunities to record Auden's revived use of words or senses whose latest date in *OED3* is given as nineteenth century or earlier: e.g. the noun *manage* (as in 'the carnal territory/allotted to my manage') last instanced in *OED3* in 1756, or the verb *mew* ('shut away, confine', as in 'In barrels, bottles, jars, we mew her [Mother Earth's] kind commons'), last instanced—in R. Browning—in 1887. Whether *OED3* will include the host of other Auden words, or Auden resurrections, at present missing from *OED* over the alphabet-stretch remaining to be revised—e.g. *eutrophied*, *false* (vb.), *fit-sides*, *flosculent*, *frauded*, *halcyoned*, *rundle* 'object of circular form' and many others—we must wait and see. It is difficult not only to predict whether they will, but to judge whether they should. It is surely impossible for this dictionary to record every individualistic usage, however interesting and deserving of merit, from literary writers, even great ones like Auden— or is it? The *OED3* lexicographers themselves need to spell out their policy in this respect, and their reasons for favouring one usage (and one writer) over another.

The raw quotation figures also obscure how *OED3* is changing the shape of individual entries. If we turn to the combinatorial forms under *plain*, we can see that they have tidied up this baggy category and made it far more 'eloquent to the eye' than previously (by introducing varied type-faces and better paragraphing), and that the second of the two Auden quotations, the one in which the poet confessed his ambition to get into the *OED*, has been removed.[75] So has the *TLS* one, to be replaced by an apparently less satisfactory substitute (a letter later in the *TLS* correspondence, by Derek Attridge, 18 April 1980), 'Auden..once boasted to me..of his having been the first to use 'Plain-Sewing' in print, and explained it as a sailor's term for mutual masturbation.'

This would seem a pity: we have lost both the reference to Auden's *OED* ambition and an etymological hypothesis. But elsewhere in the new entry the term is antedated to 1932, with a quotation from Robert Scully's *A Scarlet Pansy*: 'One

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73 *opera magica* is supported with two quotations, 1956 (written with Kallmann) and 1962. This sense of *unseasonal*, i.e. to mean 'unseasonable', was first recorded in the *OED Additions* volume of 1997 (J. A. Simpson, E. S. C. Weiner and M. Proffitt, *OED Additions Series*, Vols 1–3 (Oxford, 1993–7).

74 From 'The Cave of Making'; the word perhaps means *mawkishness*. Fuller, *W.H. Auden: A Commentary* (London, 1998) discusses the imps but does not explain further (p. 488).

75 On Burchfield's fondness for combinatorial forms, see Brewer, *Treasure-House*, 182–4. 'Eloquent to the eye' is Murray's term (Preface to *NED*, Vol. 1 (1888), vi).

comes to believe almost anything [is] possible, especially after seeing the two Frenchmen osculate each other. Honest-to-Gawd, dearie, the way they kiss is just nobody's business. Your Aunt Mary [*sc.* a homosexual man] is too busy these days to do aught but plain sewing.' Well-read and lexically knowledgeable as he was, Auden turns out to have been quite wrong to think he was the first to use this term in print.[76]

VIII. Joyce

Joyce was another dictionary-reading writer to whom Burchfield paid special attention. As reported by Vincent Deane, 'so far there is direct evidence for two occasions when Joyce made use of the complete *OED*,' in both cases 'not to harvest new words, but to gather additional information about words already selected'. Stephen Daedalus, on the other hand, 'read Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary* by the hour', and the etymological playfulness of Joyce's adaptations and coinages makes it highly plausible that the bigger dictionary's etymologies would have beckoned regularly to Stephen's creator, not to mention the wealth of quotations and *OED*'s treasure-store of extraordinary as well as ordinary words.[77] One of the Supplement volunteer workers, R. A. Auty (d. 1967), a retired schoolmaster from Faversham in Kent, undertook the whole of Joyce's works apart from *Finnegans Wake*, and 'like a medieval scribe... copied in his own handwriting many thousands of 6×4 inch slips on which he entered illustrative examples for any word or meaning that occurred in Joyce and was not already entered in the Dictionary'.[78] That 182 of the Supplement's eventual 1749 Joyce quotations are from *Finnegans Wake* indicates that other readers must have sent in quotations for this writer, though how and why Burchfield selected which words to quote from the embarrassment of available riches is baffling. Notoriously, he recorded the (highly connotatory) first word in *Finnegans Wake*, with the first sentence as the illustrative quotation: 'Riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs' (in the original, *riverrun* has a lower-case 'r'). Yet he left *vicus* untreated in the Supplement, and those puzzled by *commodius/commodious*

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76 *A Scarlet Pansy* was much read in Chicago in the early 1930s: see Heap (2005): 471. Cited only for this lemma in *OED3* (as of 8 December 2008), it contains much valuable lexical evidence, e.g. an antedate for *OED3*'s record for *mantee*, 'A lesbian having a masculine manner', and an earlier example of a sexual sense of *oncer*. Many thanks to J. Green for this information (cf. J. Green, *Green's Dictionary of Slang on Historical Principles* (Edinburgh, forthcoming).

77 V. Deane, 'Looking after the Sense', *A Collideorscape of Joyce*, eds R. Frehner and U. Zeller (Dublin, 1998), 375–97; J. Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, ed. T. Spencer (London, 1944), 20; see further S. Whittaker, 'Joyce and Skeat', *James Joyce Quarterly* 24 (1987), 177–92. Deane believes that 'Joyce's vocabulary is objectively-derived and that even the farthest reaches of his text have a basis in public-domain written sources' (p. 16), a view substantiated by much of *OED3*'s new evidence.

78 Burchfield, *Unlocking the English Language*, 8.

will find *OED1*'s entry (not updated by Burchfield) unhelpful, not least since the most recent quotation is dated 1846.

Many other unusual locutions in Joyce's work (whether or not submitted to Burchfield) went unrecorded at this stage in the *OED*, a lack that *OED3* appears at first sight to be enthusiastically remedying, perhaps aided by the concordances now available: the 1749 quotations have now risen to 2149, a remarkable increase that far exceeds that for the unconcordanced Auden and for many other sources. As of early June 2008, 266 quotations have been added from *Ulysses* alone.

What is *OED3* doing with Joyce's works, and why? As with Auden's quotations, many Joyce quotations inserted by Burchfield have been shed in the revised *OED*, although counting up numbers will not tell you this. *OED3* has 183 quotations from *Finnegans Wake* and *OED2* 182, but comparing a print-out from each edition side-by-side reveals that just short of 40 quotations have disappeared and the same number (plus one) been added. Among those dropped is that for *postlude*, from *Finnegans Wake*: 'As the wisest postlude course he could playact, collaspsed [*sic*] in ensemble and rolled buoyantly backwards'. This does not appear in *OED3*, despite the fact that the new entry has no other example of *postlude* used as an attributive noun. Why has it gone? Eccentricity cannot be the reason, given the retention (and addition) of many similarly bizarre usages; although none of the new *Finnegans Wake* quotations are for *hapax legomena*.

Many of the new Joyce quotations, in fact, are for superficially unremarkable use of language, to supply evidence of twentieth-century usage for words that Burchfield did not update in his Supplement. (There is an enormous number of such entries in *OED3*, for Burchfield's job, in compiling the Supplement, was only to print quotations for contemporary words or senses absent from the original *OED*. As a result, much twentieth-century usage goes unrecorded in his Supplement and therefore in *OED2*).[79] In other words, these new *OED3* quotations from Joyce are 'bread-and-butter' quotations—that is, quotations which give evidence, in a relatively neutral way (so far as that can ever be said of Joyce), of the twentieth-century usage of a word or sense already treated in the first edition: *make* (as in 'make for', i.e. set out for), *manner* (as in 'to the manner born'), *manufacturer*, *marvel*, *matronly*, *maul*, *me*, *measure* (used of alcoholic drink), *meek*, *mend* (as in 'mend matters'), and scores of others. Why usage of this kind should be instanced from Joyce, given the ready availability of such vocabulary in non-literary works of the same date, is unclear. (It raises the suspicion that the lexicographers are continuing to take the view expressed by one of the OUP publishers in 1932: 'I should have thought any words in R. L. Stevenson's Letters which were not purely freakish or native would be at least worth consideration, *for an important author must always have a preference*').[80]

79 See further Brewer, *Treasure-House*, 178–9, 242.

80 Kenneth Sisam, heavily influential on *OED*, writing to the volunteer G.G. Loane 9 March 1932 (*OED* archives: Misc/393/54; italics added).

Some of the entries with new Joyce quotations are entirely new, for example that for *macfarlane*, defined as 'A type of overcoat incorporating a shoulder cape and with slits at the waist to allow access to pockets, etc., in clothing worn underneath'). *OED3*'s display of quotations (albeit not explaining the 'slits' in the definition), is wonderfully illuminating, implying as it does that the garment is old-fashioned, perhaps disreputable, and raising questions about a line of influence from Wharton through Joyce to Beckett (a will o' the wisp?):

1920 E. WHARTON *Age of Innoc.* xvii. 156 The overcoats were in fact the very strangest he had ever seen under a polite roof...One was a shaggy yellow ulster of 'reach-me-down' cut, the other a very old and rusty cloak with a cape—something like what the French called a 'Macfarlane'. 1925 L. P. SMITH *Words & Idioms* ii. 39 France has acquired from England the *mackintosh*, the *macfarlane*. 1928 *Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dict. Eng. Lang.*, *Macfarlane*. 1939 JOYCE *Finnegans Wake* 180 A scrumptious cocked hat and..a coat macfarlane (the kerssest cut, you understand?). 1959 S. BECKETT *Embers* in *Evergreen Rev.* Nov.-Dec. 30 Hands behind his back holding up the tails of his old macfarlane.[81]

Other new quotations are for words or usages which look distinctly Joycean: *Mahound* (for which the quotation from *Ulysses* is the last), *maladroit* (of silk hats), *mandement* ('commandment'; the Joyce quotation, from *Ulysses*, is the first since 1785), *mastodontic* (as in 'the mastodontic pleasureship'), *masturbate, mavourneen, merciable* (only Joyce and Pound are cited for post-sixteenth-century usage), *miniated* ('rubricated'), *monitrix* ('A female guide or mentor'; the *Finnegans Wake* instance is the first since 1727), *monomyth* (the *Finnegans Wake* quotation is the first of five), and many others.

In some of these cases, where there is a big gap between Joyce's quotation and the date of the preceding one, it is tempting to assume that Joyce's usage, like Auden's in similar instances, is dictionary-derived. *OED3* suggests this for three words only, all for usages already included by Burchfield: *muskin*, 'A strange or eccentric person', *nan*, 'a serving maid', and *peccaminous*, for which the two quotations are from *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* respectively: 'A volume of peccaminous pornographical tendency entitled *Sweets of Sin*', and 'To put off the barcelonas from their peccaminous corpulums'. The second of these quotations is opaque, not least because neither *barcelona* nor *corpulum* is explained elsewhere in *OED* (presumably both words will be dealt with in due alphabetical course by the revisers, along with other unexplained items occurring in the quotations from Joyce, such as *exegious*. This turns up in one of the new *Finnegans Wake* quotations, that for *perennious*, of which Joyce's usage is the only example quoted since 1742). Of *peccaminous*, Burchfield had commented, 'It is the kind of word that Joyce may have picked up from the *O.E.D.*', a unique label appropriately excised in *OED2* and now replaced in *OED3* with the comment 'App. revived...from dictionary record'. (*OED3* has found a further quotation for *peccaminous* of 2003, from the

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81 'kerssest' (= 'cursedest' or 'closest'?) has yet to enter *OED*; for the suggestion that it refers to a specific individual see s.v. at *The Finnegans Wake Extensible Elucidation Treasury Website*. <http://www.fweet.org/>, ed. R. Slepon.

Harvard Book Review), an instance perhaps the result of dictionary-reading or of Joyce-reading).

Some of Joyce's vocabulary continues, in its treatment in *OED3*, to look as unique as it did in the Supplement. But in many cases, *OED3* is making remarkable changes. This can be seen by searching for *hapax legomena* in a single work in *OED2* and *OED3* and comparing the results.[82] For *Ulysses*, we will find (as of early June 2008) 54 *hapax legomena* listed in *OED2* and 44 in *OED3*. This difference in numbers is to be ascribed not to *OED3*'s omission of individualistic usages, but to fresh lexical scholarship. Eleven of Burchfield's identified *hapax legomena* have been re-classified, since the revisers have found other quotations which show that the words were less unusual than Burchfield had supposed. Conversely, the revisers have newly assigned nonce-word status to *obstropolos*, as in 'Hark! Shut your obstropolos' (quoted by Burchfield but treated under *obstreperous*, i.e. as 'an obstreperous mouth'). Finally, *OED3* has taken Burchfield's *pronosophical*, explaining that this was derived from a post-1922 edition of the novel, and corrected it to the 1922 edition's *pornosophical*. Correspondingly, and comically, *OED3* corrects Burchfield's definition, from 'Having the wisdom of foresight; previsionary', to 'App.: of or relating to the philosophy of the brothel'.[83]

Two further examples will illustrate the fruits of *OED3*'s labours on Joyce. First, the disappearance of the verb *plotch* from the list of *hapax legomena* in *Ulysses*, used by Molly Bloom in her final monologue, 'All the mud plotching my boots'. It has re-surfaced under *platch*, a word treated in the first edition which has now had many more details sketched in. Molly's usage is quoted under sense 2:

2. *trans*. To splash or mark with drops of water, etc.; to besmear. *Sc. National Dict*. s.v. *platch* v.[1] records this sense as still in use in Shetland and Banffshire in 1966.

*a*1838 J. JAMIESON *Etym. Dict. MSS* (National Libr. Scotl.) XII. 162/2 *Plotch*, to splash. **1866** W. GREGOR *Dial. Banffshire* 128 *Platch*, to cover with spots; as, 'He platch't his face wee ink.' **1922** J. JOYCE *Ulysses* III. 711 All the mud plotching my boots. **1923** G. WATSON *Roxburghshire Word-bk.* 236 He platch't the ink owre 'is copy. They platch't 'im wi' glaur.

What we might have thought to be a nonce-word turns out to be firmly grounded in dialect—or at any rate, in dialect dictionaries

The second example illustrates the powers of electronic databases and the virtues of persistent searching. As often, Burchfield in his Supplement chose to expand significantly the combinatorial forms for the word *peanut*, and included the following example for *peanut-brained*: '**1922** JOYCE *Ulysses* 421 Come on, you doggone, bullnecked, beetlebrowed, hogjowled, peanutbrained, weaseleyed four-flushers, false alarms and excess baggage!'. This instance of what has been called 'Joyce's Americanese altar call parody' has disappeared from *OED3*, since the revisers—in this case, the associate editor Peter Gilliver—discovered *peanut-brained* in a similar, if less colourfully extensive, chain of adjectival phrases in an

82 For techniques, see http://oed.hertford.ox.ac.uk/main/content/view/36/166/.

83 Cf. Deane, 'Looking after the Sense', 87.

online database. The Iowa *Mirror* of 1907 reported a speech of the evangelical preacher Billy Sunday (1862–1935) and quoted an extract: 'Anybody who disagrees with us is a beetle-browed, hog-jowled, peanut-brained son of perdition'.[84] By whatever route, this speech must have been Joyce's source, and the Iowa *Mirror*'s quotation trumps *Ulysses* as the first identified use of the *peanut-brained*—so the *Ulysses* example drops from the *OED* record.

Is this the right decision? There can be no doubt that Billy Sunday deserves his place as first cited user (that is, until *OED3* finds an earlier example). But it is a pity to lose the Joyce quotation on linguistic, not just literary, grounds: *peanut-brained* is now illustrated by only one subsequent usage, dated 1990. Isn't the *Ulysses* usage a valuable record of interim usage? When antedating Joyce's *pluter-perfect* (illustrated by Burchfield with two quotations only, both from *Ulysses*) with a quotation dated 1909, *OED3* retained one of the *Ulysses* examples (to which they were able to assign a date of 1918, since it appears in one of the extracts published in the *Little Review*) and added two others (1956 and 1983). *peanut-brained* must surely be a more common locution than *pluterperfect*, and certainly more common than two quotations in a hundred years would suggest (it can be discovered in a journal of 1942, as well as a number of more recent works, in a two-minute search on Google Books).

Another lexicon-loving writer, Hugh MacDiarmid, wrote a memorial to Joyce in which he strongly advocated 'adventuring in dictionaries . . . Among the débris of all past literature/And raw material of all the literature to be' (perhaps an echo of the Horatian instructions to writers which Johnson had quoted on his title-page); MacDiarmid had begun his own adventuring with Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* (cited under *platch* above), another quotation-rich dictionary that inspired many literary-minded fellow-Scots, including the *OED* lexicographer and fellow-Scot W. A. Craigie.[85] By reading both dictionaries and literature, MacDiarmid enacted his continuous concern 'with what Mr. T. S. Eliot has called "the living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written"', a quotation he repeated in his Joyce tribute, a 'hapax legomenon of a poem', which spills over with dictionary and other rare words, from a wide range of registers, mostly untreated by *OED*.[86]

84 P. Gilliver, 'Billy Sunday: A New Source for "Oxen of the Sun"', *James Joyce Quarterly* 44 (2006), 133–5.

85 H. MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems*, eds W. R. Aitken et al. (Manchester, 1993–4), Vol. 2, 823; MacDiarmid, *The Thistle Rises*, ed. A. Bold (London, 1984), 224, 247–8; *Oxford. . .speeches delivered in the Goldsmiths' Hall* (1928, 15). For Jamieson's influence on Scottish writers see A. Bold, *MacDiarmid: Christopher Murray Grieve, A Critical Biography* (London, 1988), 145.

86 MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet* (London, 1943), xxii; MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems*, Vol. 2, 738, 755. For MacDiarmid's use of Chambers's dictionary, see M. Whitworth, 'Hugh MacDiarmid and Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary', *Notes and Queries* 55 (2008), 78–80. *OED3*'s work on MacDiarmid would repay close study; as of June 2008 it has increased Burchfield's quotations from his work from 44 to 116, many for unusual words, e.g. *misericordious*, *moliminous*, *multivious*, etc.

Nevertheless *OED*'s own pages, both past and present, quite clearly subscribe (albeit unevenly) to the view articulated by Eliot, that 'the greatest poets . . . by exercising a direct influence on other poets centuries later . . . continue to affect the living language': or in other words that literature and 'ordinary' language, however defined, are fundamentally inter-connected.[87] To date, the revision of *OED* significantly illuminates the vocabulary of Auden, Joyce and no doubt hundreds of other poets and writers whose works it quotes: not least, this is a result of the lexicographers casting their nets far wider, over non-literary as well as literary texts, than was ever possible for (or thought proper by) their predecessors. In this way they are significantly enhancing their predecessors' illustration of the second part of Eliot's dictum, that 'a poet must take as his material his own language as it is actually spoken around him'.[88] While awaiting *OED3*'s own account of its treatment of literary sources and their relation to the lexicon more widely, we can be grateful for the immense richness of lexical investigation to be found in the entries it has re-written so far.

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87 Eliot, 'The Social Function of Poetry' (1947), 22.

88 Ibid.; cf. earlier formulations of the same idea in Eliot, 'The Writer as Artist' and *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London, 1933).