A Writing Life

Weintraub, Stanley

Published by ELT Press

Weintraub, Stanley.
A Writing Life: Revisiting the Past.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/77280.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/77280

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=2679627
OED Citations by Stanley Weintraub

Samuel Johnson in the first English dictionary (1755) recognized as the standard for understanding and practice, credited earlier authors and those of his time for examples of usage. A curious aspect of a lifetime of publication has been the often inadvertent coinage of new words, or new usages of familiar words. The results insert one into the multi-volume Oxford English Dictionary, the gold standard for language, for creating new words, new nuances for existing words, and further usages for words. The OED staff includes readers who survey new publications—obviously a hit-and-miss opportunity among millions of new pages—for examples newly enriching language. The OED cites thirty-odd (some truly odd) examples under “Stanley Weintraub,” and their published sources. For example, “concretize,” to make something substantial. Or “Whistlerian,” evoking his fog-shrouded night-scenes.

Wartime involvement can result in citations from medals to campaign ribbons. His Korean War experience resulted in a Bronze Star and four campaign ribbons. OED citations are the word equivalent of campaign ribbons. Some of his books have earned twenty-eight citations, in the company of earlier writers. Victoria, which received much attention in the media, apparently caught the eye of the OED editors.

Here, then, in alphabetical order, are OED citations from his writing life:

- **communize**: to bring under communist control. Here he joins such examples as Bernard Shaw and the journals Blackwood’s and New York Review of Books. The citation is from 15 Stars (2007): “Ernest Bevin, for Britain, agreed that the abandonment of Berlin could lead to the communizing of Western Europe.”

- **concretize**: to render concrete, firm. Rarely used before, notably in the English journal Athenaeum (1884) and in a book in 1952 by publisher Victor Gollancz. The citation is from Private Shaw and Public Shaw (1963): “The surviving manuscript shows stylistic changes in G.B.S.’s hand—mainly in his concretizing T. E. [Lawrence]’s diction.”

- **country seat**: a country estate belonging to gentry or nobility; here in the company of Addison (1711) and Trollope (1866); the citation is from Vic-
toria (1987): “Old, red-brick Kensington Palace, once the country seat of William and Mary, proved unready for occupancy.”

crack-up: a crash, a collapse. Charles Lindbergh as flyer wrote of his first crack-up; F. Scott Fitzgerald of his personal crack-up. In Private Shaw and Public Shaw, he wrote of T. E. Lawrence in an R.A.F. rescue boat speeding “to the scene of a crack-up on the water.”

lining: to mark with a line or lines. Shelley wrote of “cares” that “had lined his narrow brow”; and Dickens in Pickwick Papers (1837) of an “entry ... afterwards lined through.” In Private Shaw and Public Shaw, “G.B.S. ... both edited and altered the language of the contract ... boldly lining out large passages and inserting new ones.”

marquis or marquess: as a title prefixed to a place or surname. The use of “marquess” seems to date in Britain in various and curious spellings (even “markys”) from 1399, but in the usage which he employed in Victoria, only from 1910: “Lord Grosvenor had been made Marquess of Westminster.”

memorandum: a note or record for future use, with a contractual implication. In 1591 Shakespeare's contemporary referred to “a memorandum drawen in some legall forme.” In Victoria, he wrote that “The Duchess permitted Conroy to draw up a memorandum defining her new powers over the Princess.”

misappropriation: to appropriate for a wrong use. Edmund Burke in the House of Commons in 1794 used the term in a speech. Rarely used thereafter, it was employed by Anthony Trollope in 1874 and by James Joyce in 1922. In Victoria he wrote that turning to the Princess's mother, the Duchess, William IV warned her that “He had seen her misappropriation of space in Kensington Palace.”

mistaken: as “wrongly conceived.” First used in a letter by Thomas Wyatt in 1540 in “a mistaken certainty.” In Victoria: “The tough constitution of the Duke [of Kent] began to give way under the mistaken medical practices of the day.”

naming: when giving a name to a thing. Rarely employed as a participle, as in chemistry in 1964: “The simplest method of naming the compounds is to call them alkyl cyanides.” In Victoria: “The Princess was given the honors of naming the new bridge over the Dee.”

new-laid: especially of a freshly laid egg. As early as 1528 in “newe layde eggges.” In Victoria: “The simplest gift reported was two new-laid eggs sent for the Queen’s breakfast by an Irish farm woman.”

occupancy: the fact of occupying something. In Blackstone’s Commentaries on the law (1767), taking possession “is the true ground and foundation of all property.” Cited earlier in Victoria for another usage: “Old, red-brick Kensington Palace, once the country seat of William and Mary, proved unready for occupancy.”
patron saint: when used ironically for protector, as when Ralph Waldo Emerson called Sir Philip Sydney “one of the patron saints of England.” In Victoria: “Saint George, the dragon-slaying patron saint of England.”


porphyria: shortened form of haematoporphyria, a metabolic disorder described in Lancet (22 July 1961) and the New England Journal of Medicine (18 April 1968). In Victoria: “Possibly suffering from porphyria, the same malady that had enfeebled his father, he [George IV] was losing his sight.”

postscript: a passage written following the signature in a letter; an afterthought. As early as 1551, spelled as “post script.” In Francis Bacon (1625) “Post-script” and in Richard Steele (1711) “Postscript.” In 1925 in The Professor’s House, Willa Cather conflated the noun to “postscript.” In Victoria: “The Duke’s equerry, the letter added in a “postscript, would be sent ahead to handle all details.”

precedence: priority; going before. Earliest usage is as “presidence” (1484). In Shakespeare’s Love’s Labour’s Lost (1598) it is “presedence” but in Antony and Cleopatra (published 1623) it is “precedence.” In Victoria: “She complained about proper precedence being ignored in her seating.”

princess: often capitalized even when not used in a title; however, in Chaucer’s Knight’s Tale (c. 1385): “To speke of roial lynage and richesse / Thogh that she were a queene or a princesse.” In Victoria: “An old gentleman who had been a political radical when Victoria was still a princess....”

proxy: as a verb, substitute for. A rare usage for a noun, as in The London Yankees, where “when [Harold] Frederic was unable to go to a premiere on which he was to report for The Times, Ruth would wear her hair up, put on evening clothes, and proxy for her father, who would compile a dispatch from her notes.”

quarrelsomely: first used as an adjective in 1582 but rarely thereafter. In Victoria: “Queen Caroline, from whom George IV had been quarrelsomely separated for twenty-five years, unexpectedly died.”

rabble: a noun usage as a quantification, first employed in c. 1400 but rarely thereafter. In Victoria: “Viscount Melbourne ... blamed all discontent upon a rabble of agitators, most of them Irish.”

rare: as adjective and adverb since c. 1400. In Victoria: “She was an elderly lady and wore the traditional black of her generation, giving way to display only on rare, great occasions.”

regrets: as plural noun, in use since c. 1500. In Victoria: “Reluctantly, the Duke’s brother gave in ... but noted his regrets that such an inexpedient journey was to be undertaken by the Duchess.”

road race: first used in 1835, the term pre-dates the automobile. In The London Yankees it appears in a letter in 1904 from Joseph Pennell to
newspaper editor W. J. Fisher: “I am anxious to do nothing to discourage motoring, and I do not at all object to this road race.”

royalist: as noun and adjective the term dates back to 1605. It was much employed during the English civil strife, 1640–1660, continuing afterward. In General Washington’s Christmas Farewell (2003): “New York and Long Island [were] the last major enclaves of enemy troops in the former colonies and home to resident and refugee royalists from Maine.”


urtext: first employed in 1932, capitalized and italicized, to refer to the earliest version of a text. In Private Shaw and Public Shaw (1963), it is lower-cased and Romanized, as “The earlier version still retains advocates, because of its more complete, ur-text quality, and the comfortable feeling that no Procrustean games were played with its vocabulary and sentence structure.”

Whistlerian: adjective, referring particularly to the impressionistic quality of the artist’s waterscapes and cityscapes. Although OED cites the 1979 The London Yankees, as “His [sc. Sargent’s] icily elegant and Whistlerian portrait … of Madame Judith Gautreau,” the words “Whistlerian nocturnes” appears earlier in Whistler. A Biography (1974), in which, also, James A. McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) is quoted as using the term himself, satirically, in a letter to his wife, Trixie, in 1895: “There! I can’t go on—it was like a sort of hideous Whistlerian chaos.”

Someday he might gain one more accidental OED ribbon for jepeed, which is cited in the OED only four times, and never in this past tense form, and appears in this manuscript (in Korea) as “I jepeed out again in April.” His first use of jepeed, though, was in 11 Days in December (2006), where he used this verb five times, including writing that General “James Gavin … had jepeed south to ‘issue General McAuliffe his orders in person’” (p. 45).“

All but four of the OED attributions to “S. Weintraub” are to “Stanley Weintraub.” The others (unrecorded above) are to a “Sidney”—who, as Professor Weintraub would no doubt say, is welcome to them.