Liddell and Scott: making and remaking

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In a Colorado courtroom in 1993, battle was joined over the meaning of τόλμημα in Plato's *Laws*: did Plato refer to homosexual copulation as 'shameful' or, less judgmentally, as 'daring' conduct? An expert witness for one side testified for the latter meaning, basing her opinion on what she called the authoritative reference resource, Liddell and Scott. It soon emerged, however, that she was citing the eighth edition of 1897, and that the revised edition of 1940 offered support to the opposing interpretation. This remarkable moment in the history of Liddell and Scott (henceforth LS) encapsulates two themes of this paper: the authority of the Lexicon, and the process of revision since its first edition in 1843.

In the Anglophone world at least, LS is different from most other dictionaries. Its history has been marked not only a process of construction, criticism and revision, but also of a mingled authority and affection – the book has in a sense been mythicised. My title is intended to highlight the interplay of the mythicising of Liddell and Scott and of the text they made, on the one hand, and the material and commercial realities of making the book which carries the text, on the other. The core activity in the making of the Lexicon was of course a matter of exploring classical usage, analysing it, classifying usages and putting that all on paper. But the paper it was put on had to be made or bought, printed on, bound, distributed and sold; and the type used for printing selected, made or bought, and set up for use, and then redistributed, kept standing, stereotyped or electrotyped. In its history the Lexicon has varied in its price, physical size, number of pages and even presence or absence of page numbering. It has spawned two smaller versions, the Abridged in 1843 and the Intermediate in 1889 – both still in print. It has been pirated in the USA and had articles written for its British form by American scholars. It has been pirated in Greece, while being translated into Greek. All these belong to a long and complicated history which has still to be told in full; here I can only highlight a few themes. One of them is apparent in the details given above: the status of the Lexicon as a material object, made to be sold at a profit. In the past, such themes have

rarely been considered in studies of dictionaries; yet a full understanding of a book like the Lexicon is impossible without bringing them into relation with the study of its content.

The Lexicon was accepted almost immediately as the best book of its kind then available. Nor was it long before it began to be referred to in contemporary literature – the beginnings of the myth. The first reference, not surprisingly, was in a work written by an Oxford scholar: Arthur Hugh Clough's *Bothie of Toper-na-fuosich* (1848), a mock-epic account of an Oxford undergraduate reading party in Scotland, written in experimental hexameters. After a few weeks, one of the students proposes that they abandon their Greek texts and travel about:

> Slumber in Liddell-and-Scott, O musical chaff of old Athens,
> Dishes, and fishes, bird, beast, and sesquipedalian black-guard!
> Sleep, weary ghosts, be at peace and abide in your lexicon-limbo!

The 'lexicon-limbo' imagined by Clough reminds us of the curious status of the text of a Greek lexicon, a corpus shaped for reference rather than experience; an artefact reflecting and refracting the original patterns of usage on which it is based. In it the ghosts of a dead language live a half-life which enables them to act as witnesses to their antique selves.

The lexicon reappeared in poetry in 1898, just after Liddell's death, when Thomas Hardy wrote a light-hearted poem on the completion of the original edition of 1843. The poem is cast as a dialogue between the two editors, and at one point Scott says to Liddell,

> 'I almost wished we'd not begun.
> Even now, if people only knew
> My sinkings, as we slowly drew
> Along through Kappa, Lambda, Mu,
> They'd be concerned at my misgiving,
> And how I mused on a College living
> Right down to Sigma,
> But feared a stigma
> If I succumbed, and left old Donnegan
> For weary freshmen's eyes to con again.

(Thomas Hardy, 'Liddell and Scott, on the completion of their lexicon' (1898))

Donnegan's Greek-English lexicon, a worthy amateur effort by an Irish-born medical man, was the market leader before Liddell and Scott appeared.

Hardy's poem highlights 'Kappa, Lambda, Mu…Sigma', but it was the letter Pi which we know alarmed Liddell: in July 1842 he wrote to Scott,

> You will be glad to hear that I have all but finished **Π**, that two-legged monster, who must in ancient times have worn his legs a-straddle, **Λ** else he could never have strode over such enormous a space as he has occupied and will occupy in Lexicons. Behold the monster, as he has been mocking my waking and sleeping visions for the last many months.

In Hardy's poem, Scott continues,

'… how I often, often wondered
What could have led me to have blundered
So far away from sound theology
To dialects and etymology.'

There had been vigorous debates in the 1820s about the role played by theological agendas in the making of dictionaries of New Testament Greek. Classical Greek lexicography was less contentious, but Liddell and Scott have not escaped posthumous denunciation from those who believe that the King James version of the Bible is alone inspired. In her recent book *Hazardous materials: Greek and Hebrew study dangers*, Gail Riplinger alleges that Cecil Rhodes, who travelled with a copy of the Lexicon in Natal in the 1870s, was corrupted by it. For her, in fact, the Lexicon, as the source of later dictionaries used in Bible study, is 'the

whorish mother of all harlot lexicons'. This is the American religious right in full cry; the quality of Riplinger's scholarship is illustrated by her derivation of the second element in 'football' from the god Baal.

'Our two friends'

As Hardy's poem suggests, part of the book's charm has always stemmed from its being edited by two friends. Any kind of lexicographic collaboration, amicable or not, was in fact unusual, most dictionaries being single-editor books, except in the sense that they were commonly revisions of earlier works. Reading the book, one looks for the editors within it – for human intervention and human interaction. The search for foible and jest some have conducted is surely driven by the sense of a fallible humanity. The best-known (supposed) jest is the claim s. v. συκοφάντης (sycophant, informer) that the derivation from legislation forbidding the import of figs into Attica was 'a figment'. In fact the first four editions call the story 'an invention'; the fifth and sixth editions substitute 'a mere figment'; and later editions revert to the original text – perhaps after the sound of unseemly mirth reached the editors' ears.

Liddell and Scott's relationship stands as an exemplary case of lexicographical amity: their friendship and collaboration led to the indissoluble linking of their names; it has been said that after the lexicon was published, 'they went hand in hand into eternity'. Edmund Morshead, a classical master at Winchester College used to refer to the lexicon as 'our two friends'. Winchester was neutral ground, but when Liddell used the book in his own classroom, as headmaster of Westminster School 1847-55, the question of who wrote what came to the fore. Hence the well-known doggerel offered by one of his pupils:

> Two men wrote a lexicon, Liddell and Scott;
> Some parts were clever, but some parts were not.
> Hear, all ye learned, and read me this riddle,
> How the wrong parts wrote Scott and the right parts wrote Liddell.

Liddell apparently provoked this by his habit, when controverted by pupils who cited the lexicon, of saying 'Scott wrote that part'.

The lexicon also had other contributors, including the Americans Henry Drisler, William Goodwin and Basil Gildersleeve, the German Wilhelm Dindorf and the Scot

William Veitch. In Oxford, an important but shadowy figure was George Marshall of Christ Church, who checked all the references for the first edition, and also produced the Abridged version. Another important – and even more shadowy – figure was the Press's reader Philip Molyneux, whom we shall meet later on.

The vernacular turn

The preface to the first edition of the Lexicon still makes good reading; but it moves into the measured cadences of early-Victorian prose only after two introductory paragraphs which vividly convey the lexicographers' torment:

> We are at length able to put forth this Lexicon. It has cost us several years of labor, and that very heavy, because we had few spare hours to bestow. Events, of which it is needless to speak particularly, threatened more than once to break it off altogether.

The main body of the Preface opens with a defence of the editors' decision to use English and not Latin. In their view, Latin is best suited for critical notes on classical texts, but English is far better equipped to render the 'richness, boldness, freedom, and variety of Greek words'.

The Lexicon in the second half of the nineteenth century: revision and publication

Through the second half of the nineteenth century a cycle of revision, publication and distribution was developed, Liddell keeping a watchful eye till his death in 1897: his biographer reported that '…from its first appearance in 1843 interleaved copies always lay on a high-standing desk in his study for continuous amendment and correction…'. This was complicated by the parallel production of the Abridged lexicon (1843-) and even more by the Intermediate lexicon which appeared in 1889. This was based on the seventh edition of 1882, intended to be the final edition; the Intermediate lexicon has never been revised. In Liddell's lifetime eight editions were published, as the table shows.

Edition	date	pages	copies	price
1	1843	1586	3000	42s
2	1845	?	6000	42s

3	1849	1623	6000	42s
4	1855	1617	8000	30s
5	1861	1644	10,000	31s 6d
6	1869	1865	15,000	36s [standing type]
7	1882	1776	15,500	36s [electro: 1882, 1885, 1890]
8	1897	1776	15,000	36s [electro: 1897, 1901, 1908, 1922, 1928]

As this shows, increasing sales were encouraged by lowering the price, which was stabilised in later editions. This was affected by the move from newly typeset editions, to standing type, to electrotype, which promoted long-term profit while discouraging extensive revision. The nineteenth-century history of the lexicon can be read off from these figures, though not without additional knowledge. Overall though the picture is clear – the rise in page numbers, checked at some points by an increase in page size; an increase in print runs and in intervals between editions; prices rising but tempered by rising sales; the move from ordinary type to electrotype.

The revision process was a delicate and dynamic one involving issues of linguistic definition, exposition and organisation, composition and page layout, printing techniques and paper selection, composition and proof-reading, and decisions on print runs, pricing, advertising and marketing. Some of the issues involved can be seen from Liddell's correspondence with Bartholomew Price, secretary to the Delegates of OUP, about the preparation of the seventh edition, published in 1883. In 1877 a deal was struck with Harper Bros of New York to publish the lexicon in the USA. Because this made future sales levels unpredictable, it was decided to electrotype the next edition. This meant that the printing plates would be durable and unit costs lower, but the text would not be revisable except in small details. The revision process preceding electrotyping thus became crucially important. In July 1878 Price wrote to Liddell:

> I send herewith copies of the first 4 pages of the Lexicon, made up to the proposed size, and printed on paper of the proposed size viz. the ordinary demy 4to; also with the new type and letters altered as suggested. It has been composed three times with the Copy, the last time by Molyneux, and he has also read it 'by the eye', i.e. as an Editor would…

(In other words, for meaning rather than form – words rather than letters.)

> Three years later, the revision was still in progress, and Price wrote in October 1881:
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> ... I am sorry that so few sheets of the lexicon should have reached you of late. ...the main reason for the short supply has been the illness of Molyneux who caught a cold which settled on his stomach and entirely incapacitated him for work. He has however returned this morning, but he looks very ill and weak altho' his Doctor pronounces him well. We find him nearly indispensable to the progress of the lexicon.
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> The [...] stock of the 4to lexicon now consists of only 650 copies, so that we must print the new edition as quickly as possible.

Some of the points raised by Price's letters deserve comment. First, in the ongoing and not always predictable cycle in which one edition was being sold as the next was bring prepared, a check in the warehouse sometimes led to alarm and acceleration. If copies ran out before the revised edition was ready, sales and reputation suffered. If a new edition was issued before stocks of its predecessor were exhausted, a lot of books suddenly became almost unsaleable.

Continual revision was accepted as a fact of life for the first few editions of the Lexicon. For the early editions, the type was redistributed after publication and set up anew for the next edition. The first change in this system came with the sixth edition (1869), for which the type was left standing. This cut costs by facilitating speedy reprinting, and allowed for revision, as long as it was not radical. This was in fact planned to be the final revision, and the increased print run of 15,000 was designed to last for 11 years. Fourteen years later the seventh edition appeared; this time it was electrotyped, which as I've mentioned made it impossible to make more than minor revision. Hence the eighth edition of 1897 incorporated only the minor changes which could be made on the plates, and relegated other changes to a short appendix. The first word listed there was ἀγαθοδαιμοναστaί: those who at a symposium toasted only the good spirit, the ἀγαθός δαίμων, hence, moderate drinkers. Liddell had new inscriptional evidence to report, but it could not be inserted in the electroplate, so he wrote on the proof 'Add at end'. This was printed in error in the appendix, where ἀγαθοδαιμοναστaί: is glossed, 'Add at end'.

Second, as the lexicon was revised, new words were found and old words were found to have been omitted, and it got not just better, but bigger. Revision was a scholarly duty, but

it threatened to increase costs. The solution was to increase page size (the 7th edition was about ¾" taller and wider than the Sixth, but about 90 pages shorter). In the twentieth century, the pages of the ninth edition (Liddell-Scott-Jones) were reorganised to reduce the number of separate headwords – thus making life harder for the reader – and in some cases material was cut.

Finally, the correspondence throws light on the usually obscure process of composition and reading. OUP employed dozens of readers, but the best of them tended to be confined to jobs suited to their special aptitudes. Among them was Philip Molyneux, who checked the proofs of the Lexicon from the late 1870s into the 1900s, and whose illness, as we have seen, brought printing to a halt in 1881.

Material for revision came in from several sources. Readers sent in corrections to the current text. Scholars were contracted to supply articles – among them the Americans I've already mentioned. In September 1879, Harper Bros sent Price the final proofs of Basil Gildersleeve's articles on οὐκ and μὴ οὐ for the seventh edition, promising that ὅπως would follow shortly. Reviewing the eighth edition in 1898, Gildersleeve commented that

> Liddell and Scott were even greater sinners than the average lexicographer, and complaints enough were heard in their lifetime. In the seventh edition they not only kept in mistakes of their own, but spoiled other people's work … and my article on μὴ is no exception to their arbitrary processes.
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> ('Brief mention', *AJP* 19 (1898) 233)

A new beginning?

Liddell's death in 1898 prompted reflection at the Press. What was to be done next? Liddell's biographer might loyally proclaim that 'it has never become out of date', but it was widely known that this was not so. As the *Athenaeum* pointed out, 'It is notoriously so … in more ways than one, and a thorough revision, without the limitations imposed on the last recension by "electrotype plates", is sadly needed.' The matter was made more pressing by the publication of new papyrus material in the 1890s: Aristotle's Constitution of Athens, Herondas, Bacchylides, and in 1898, the year of Liddell's death, the first volume of the Oxyrhynchus papyri. Richard Garnett of the British Museum protested in 1899 that

> The purchaser of the latest edition of Liddell and Scott's monumental work, issued from the University Press in 1897, may be surprised to learn that, except for three and a half pages of additions and corrections at the end of the volume, he is hardly better off than if he had bought a second-hand copy of the edition of 1883, since which date, these meagre addenda excepted, hardly any improvement has been made. It is nevertheless understood that up to the close of his long life Dean Liddell was intent upon the revision of his work.
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> (R. Garnett, 'On Some Misinterpretations of Greek Astrological Terms', *CR* 13 (1899) 291-3)

After some dithering, in 1903, the Press persuaded the 63-year old Oxford Greek scholar Arthur Sidgwick to edit the new edition of the lexicon. But very little progress was made, and in 1911 Sidgwick resigned, to be replaced by Henry Stuart Jones, one of the most talented and versatile scholars of his generation. He worked on the ninth edition (published in ten fascicles 1925-40) till his death in 1939, just before the final fascicle appeared. From 1920 he was helped by the comparative philologist Roderick McKenzie, who died in 1937. Work had been proceeding before Stuart Jones's appointment, despite Sidgwick's inactivity. In the spring of 1905 a Balliol graduate, Richard Greentree, was hired. He was described as 'a broken down 1st class man', and we might see him as a member of the pool of social inadequates and reprobates, including defrocked clergymen, who were so useful to learned presses well into the twentieth century.

In 1920 a letter was published in the *Classical Review* from F. M. Cornford of Trinity College, Cambridge, asking if there was a permanent body to which corrections and additions could be sent. This drew a response from Stuart Jones, announcing the imminent appearance of the first fascicle and welcoming comments. The editor of the *Review*, Cornford's Trinity colleague Ernest Harrison, kept a watching brief; and having offered suggestions both in reviews of fascicles and in private letters to OUP, he allowed a minor note of discontent to creep into his welcoming review of the final part in March 1941. He had been thanked by the editors for his comments, he wrote, but 'I must mention a few of the words on which I appear to have written in vain' (*CR* 55 (1941) 28-30). Next year another critic suggested that a process of 'reluctant revision' had taken place, as hinted at by Stuart Jones's own reference to 'revision rather than rewriting'. By this time, reprinting was under way, and no further

changes were made for the reissues of the late 1940s and 1950s. In a sense, the situation of the lexicon recapitulated that of the eighth edition of 1897: the logistics and economics of book publishing made it impossible to incorporate revision, except by publishing supplements – which appeared in 1968 and 1996.

Conclusions

'Liddell and Scott' was made by Liddell and Scott. In this paper, I have tried to tease out some of the implications of this editorial plurality, which made their lexicon both authoritative and yet also in a sense reassuringly fallible. The author (or here, editor(s)) does not disappear, but his/their relationship to the published text is no longer straightforward. To consider the book as the material product of a process of printing and publishing further complicates its identity: the 'text' is realised as an impression made by specific types of specific paper, chosen and costed to make a profit for a press which had one foot in its university and another in an international commercial market.

Editorial plurality co-existed, in the history of the Lexicon, with the collaboration of a wider community: not just other scholars, British, German and American, but also the unsung heroes (I've mentioned Marshall, Molyneux and Greentree) without whom the published text would not have seen the light. Yet this was not simply a republic of (Greek) letters: the editors decided what was to be printed, subject to technological constraints, and the evidence cited above shows that neither contributions nor corrections could be guaranteed to find a place in the revised text. LS is thus a complex phenomenon; it is implicated in questions of lexical meaning and lexicographic technique, but it also belongs to a history of social relations, links with other lexica, economic calculation and the mythicising of scholarship. I've had no time to explore some of the many facets of its history – for example, the use of English rather than Latin – but I hope to have shown that such books have a complicated history which has to do with more than lexicography.