Revisionary Texts. Examining the Editors' Proofs of *OED1*

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ABSTRACT

In 2021, the final Editors' Proofs of the first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* were a surprise discovery in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Signed, dated, and liberally annotated by all four editors, as well as by the compositors and press-room workers at Oxford University Press, these proofs document a liminal stage immediately before publication, detailing the editors' final cuts and the challenges (and compromises) that late-stage editing can reveal. As this article explores, the Proofs represent a substantial contribution to the material history of the *OED* and of the constraints of lexicography in the age of hot metal. Shedding new light on the ways in which, under pressures of space, key questions about expendability and inclusion were negotiated between different communities of practice, the Proofs present a visible testimony of change, substitution, and loss.

Keywords: *Oxford English Dictionary*, late-stage editing, James Murray, Henry Bradley, William Craigie, gender and representation, taboo and language, printing and print process

William Craigie's meticulous entry for **revision** (and related words) was published in *OED1* in June 1908, in the fascicle *Reserve—Ribaldrously*.[1] Spanning four centuries of evidence and some two columns, it centered on a set of shared ideas by which, if something was thereby seen again, the current moment was, in various ways, also linked to the reconsidered and revaluated past. A sense of internal or introspective scrutiny had characterized its earliest English use; as Craigie specified under **revise** ((v.), sense 1), it meant "to look back or meditate *on*, something". In later use, however, revision typically came to require an external and often textual object. A **revise** ((sb.), sense 3), first documented in 1612, hence signified a text in proof that by means of "required [. . .] alterations and additions" assumed a "corrected form." To **revise**, by extension, often came to be seen as an ameliorative process, a means by which one might "re-examine, in order to improve or amend." What is **revisionary** (a usage dated to 1836), revealed similar patterns of presupposition. As Craigie indicates, new directions and newly productive insights might thereby frame (and reframe) that which might earlier have been accepted or received.

A certain temerity can nevertheless attend the suggestion of revisionary narratives and the *OED*. Its history, particularly in relation to the lengthy gestation of its first edition, is both well-known and well-documented. Peter Gilliver's *Making of the Oxford English Dictionary* (2016) provides a masterly overview; Elisabeth Murray's 1977 biography of her grandfather James Murray, who edited *OED1* from its formal connection with Oxford in 1879 to his own death in

[1]The first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* was originally published, in fascicles, under the title *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (Murray et al. 1884–1928). Henceforth *OED1*.

1915, remains compelling in its rich understanding of the "web of words" in which Murray was enmeshed. Articles and chapters engaging with gender, sexuality, or citational range, or with labeling, omission, etymology, European precedents, or descriptive principles abound. Meanwhile, ongoing digital projects[2] document the diverse communities of practice that participated in the making of *OED1*, as well as the personal challenges that marked the project and its realization.

The discovery, in July 2021, of the final Editors' Proofs of the first edition (catalogued since 1929 under the subject heading "Amusements" in the Bodleian Library in Oxford) provides, even so, an intriguing new resource. "Every so often we get lucky, and a long-lost work turns up" as Jack Lynch has commented (2016, 158). If Lynch referred to the unexpected discovery of James Boswell's work on Scottish (also in the Bodleian Library), his comment is equally applicable to the Editors' Proofs. Except for a single volume retained at Oxford University Press, these were long thought to have been destroyed. Instead, as the Bodleian's holdings unexpectedly confirmed, some twenty-two volumes, replete with annotations and in-text correspondence, had been carefully preserved. With pages signed and dated by the individual editors, the Editors' Proofs illuminate, in intricate detail, the final stages of the making of the first edition, shedding new light on working practices before as well as after Murray's death in 1915, and on the distinctive contributions of Henry Bradley, Charles Onions, and Craigie himself. They inscribe, too, a further community of practice in the compositors and

[2]See, for example, The Murray Scriptorium (https://www.murrayscriptorium.org/) and Crowd-sourcing the OED (https://dictionarylab.web.ox.ac.uk/crowdsourcing-oed).

press-workers of Oxford University Press whose in-text communications also mark this intensely heteroglossic text.

The Proofs, on one level, are therefore revisionary texts in the most material sense. We can, for example, track the process of in-text revisions where corrections, annotations, and deletions record the editors' final cuts, while previously unread notes and comments document a set of often dialogic exchanges by which the text took shape. The overt provisionality of many such comments is arresting. "Omit if necessary," "insert if in time," "please alter this *if* it can be done" all illustrate a pattern of in-text annotation, routinely made by dictionary-makers to printing-house. What is "necessary" (or not)—and who decides—can, in turn, reveal interesting permutations. In the complex narratives of closure that the Proofs reveal, linguistic and textual desiderata were by no means always synonymous. The fact that conflicting agendas had the potential to shape the process of last-minute inclusion (and its converse) likewise impacts in critical ways on the evidence that readers eventually see.

Seen in this light, a revisionary *OED* history might, for example, need to accommodate newly competing narratives alongside the awareness that the "last words" of the relevant editor—whether in relation to evidence, etymology, definition, or sense-history—do not always gain entry to the published text. To *revise*, as defined in *OED1* is, as we have seen, typically constructed as positive. But in this respect, too, the Editors' Proofs can offer a number of revisionary possibilities. Change might indeed take place but, as this article explores, a formally "corrected" text can exist alongside processes of elision and erasure that, at times, bring other problematic narratives into view.

PROOFS AND THE PRACTICE OF REVISION

"The great dictionaries of the 18th and 19th centuries were created using basic technologies; pen, paper, and index cards for the lexicography, hot metal for the typesetting and printing," write Michael Rundell and Adam Kilgarriff (2011, 258). Proofs and proof-work provide an interesting exception. *OED1*, for example, might begin in the thousands of handwritten "slips" generated by various reading programs as the "raw material" of the *Dictionary*. Nevertheless, Murray's fondness for editing in proof—and a process of revision he saw as facilitated by placing pen and print in symbiosis—was an early, if expensive, feature of editorial practice. "The renewed consideration of it in print, with the greater facility of reading and comparison which this afforded, led to the entire pulling to pieces and reconstruction of the edifice," as Murray commented (1884, 510) on editing **art**. Extant first and second proofs, first (and sometimes second or third) revises, as well as multiple iterations sent to external readers for their own contributions and comment, provide an evolutionary history for *OED1* in which pen and print routinely combined.[3]

In principle, the Editors' Proofs or "finals" were, however, different. Liminal or penultimate versions of the final text, they depended on the process of correction that can be documented across these antecedent versions, while requiring the editorial (and in-house) correction of remaining minor errors before being passed "for Press." "Send to foundry" is a frequent annotation, dated and signed by the relevant editor. Instructions to "electro" ("used *colloq*. as an abbreviation for [. . .] ELECTRO-PLATE," as the relevant entry confirms),

[3]Many of the extant proofs remain in the OED Archives at Oxford University Press. For their contributions to our knowledge of *OED1*, see Mugglestone 2005.

alongside injunctions to “proof before plating”—referring to the process of making a stereotype or electrotype plate of type (see **plate** (v.), sense 4)—inscribe other reminders of the historical conditions of production. The fact that pagination had, by this point, been imposed (such that each individual fascicle was aligned with preceding and concurrent sections) served, by intention, to preclude extensive change. So did the fact that each page consisted of three tightly printed columns which, if “eloquent to the eye” (Murray 1888, vi), deployed up to twenty-one different fonts. Change was time-consuming and expensive; the textual economy of the individual page was to be disturbed only as a last resort.

Theory and practice can nevertheless routinely divide. In the material history that the Proofs attest, the process of fixing the text—whether in relation to the forms of remediation that appear, or the intended stasis of its published form—was a highly complex act. Contemporary print manuals (e.g., Ford 1854, 39) categorized proofs on a scale from those deemed “good, respectable” (requiring minimal correction) to those which were, in contrast, “very foul” and, as such, characterized by the presence not only of “literal errors” but “numerous insertions, and omissions” and “alterations from copy.” The Editors’ Proofs, at a range of points, undeniably inclined to the latter. A rare “all right” in Murray’s neat hand can, of course, occasionally appear. Likewise, the erroneous printing of “lack” (“the lack guillemot”) instead of “black” under **diving-pigeon** mars what is an otherwise pristine page. Yet elsewhere, emendations in different hands litter the text while new information, or more extensive corrections (in pen, type, or both), are pinned or pasted in the margins. “I regret these alterations. Information has been difficult to get, and after many weeks of inquiry has only this morning reached me; and now is difficult to get in,” as a marginal note from Murray records, for example, alongside **officiary**, drawing attention to a set of changes that were, he decided, now required for its proper elucidation as

noun, adjective, and verb. "I am sorry to have to alter this so late, but it must be done; I have written it clearly, and do not want to see it again," another apologetic note in Murray's hand affirms, placed alongside a set of etymological revisions deemed essential for **brickle** ("liable to break, easily broken").

While the existence of a text in proof, as Sullivan (2013, 4) notes, inevitably "implies the possibility of the text being fixed in some material form," in-text exchanges of this kind instead repeatedly remind of the flux of language, whether in relation to evidence and its unpredictable arrival at the various dictionary offices, or the opportunities for textual or linguistic reassessment (or both) that revision might afford. *Proof-reading* (and related forms) was, in this light, an ironic absence from the printed text of *OED1*. Behind the scenes, its processes were pervasive. Securing "dictionary order" could, for example, remain surprisingly problematic. "Tr." for "transpose" features in many marginal asides, requiring the compositors to reimpose alphabetic order such that **distrainor** followed **distrainment** (rather than vice-versa), and **brathel** ("a wretch, worthless person") preceded rather than, as in the Editors' Proofs, followed both **brathful** and **brathly**. **Denourishment**, which erroneously followed **denunciatory**, rather than following **denouncing** four pages earlier, was another obvious "misplacement"—even if, as another in-text communication indicated, this was impossible to rectify.[4] As Murray was informed, his corrections had arrived at the press room only after the relevant sheets had been set. Even in the "corrected" reprint of 1933, the disrupted order remains in place.

Rectifying the presence of inadvertent temporal disjunctions was equally important, not least given the historical principles on which the *Dictionary* was based. "Should have been put in

[4]Hand-written note, dated January 14, 1895, pasted onto D proofs, p.197.

according to date," Murray instructs alongside the entry for **beholding** where, in the Proofs, evidence from Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, dated 1598, unaccountably came after that from Henry More's *An Antidote Against Atheisme* of 1662. Likewise, a quotation from Marryat in 1839 followed one from Thackeray in 1849 (under **on**, sense 20), and the first citation under **brake** (sense 5) post-dated the next by some seventy years. In each case, painstaking compositorial adjustment was required. Elsewhere, a range of residual errors had the potential to compromise the dictionary's authority (and authoritativeness) in equally substantive ways. A marginal note by Charles Balk (a long-standing assistant on *OED1*) guiltily acknowledged that "a slip of the pen of myself" might lie behind the erroneous title of *Faiths Worlds* (rather than *Faiths World*) that had been set in sense 2 of **omer** ("a sheaf").[5] Other late-stage emendations drew attention to the fact that *Wuthering Heights* was not written by "E. and A. Bronte," as the Editors' Proofs of **fashion** (v.), sense 5 asserted, or pointed out that the evidence from "recent writers" that Bradley had used for **every** (sense 13) derived not from the *Daily Mercury* but the popular journal *Once a Week* (and was, in reality, dated November 26, 1865 rather than, as set in proof, February 15, 1864). Under **lowest**, another handwritten emendation hastily records that what had been assumed to be an invented quotation (duly labeled "Mod.") derived from the *Building News* of 1862. Other problems stemmed from the reading program, and even earlier stages of the *Dictionary*. "Found at the Bodleian today," an in-text note (by George Sykes, one of the editorial staff) triumphantly declared. What had been assumed to be early evidence for

[5]The text in question was James Gardner, *The Faiths of the World: An Account of All Religions and Religious Sects*, published in Edinburgh in 1860. A corroboratory slip, confirming Balk's error, is also pasted on the Proofs.

flump (taken from Isaac Barrow's *Sermon upon the Passion* (1677)) was now revealed as **slump**. Based on a misreading of long-tailed <s> as <f>, it needed to be removed from the *F* proofs as quickly as possible. Lexical history was reassessed at the same time. **Flump** ("To fall or move heavily with a dull noise") was, given the remaining evidence, suddenly post-dated to 1816.

Fallible attempts to "follow copy" during earlier iterations of the text were, perhaps inevitably, the source of other ongoing corrections. **Get**, sense 65, "should read 'things: to go out of (fashion)' not 'out (of fashion)'," Bradley instructed the relevant compositor. Here, the misplaced parenthesis was easy to correct but it affected semantic exegesis in critical ways. "Correction has been misunderstood," he noted to similar effect under **ellipsis**, patiently rewriting the entry again in the bottom margin. In related ways, **deteriorate** (v.) in the Proofs had acquired an unexpected form of nominative determinism. What was supposed to be an antedating for sense 1 ("to make worse"), taken from John Maxwell in 1644, now erroneously appeared as the final quotation under the previous entry (where **deteriorate** instead represented an adjective confined to Scottish use). "Correction has been misunderstood by Compositor," a handwritten slip pinned to the margin pointedly observed; extensive resetting was again required. Correcting, as Graham (1848, 39) reflected, "is the most disagreeable part of the compositor's business." In the making of *OED1*, the complexity of earlier proof sheets, with annotations and emendations densely crammed onto available space, did not make the process any less unpleasant. The fact that errors were at times introduced rather than eliminated was scarcely surprising.

Meanwhile, the decision to insert new revisions (as in, say, reassessing the order for the senses in, for example, **banquet** (*sb*^{2}), **oblige**, or **over and above**, or revising ten lines of text

under **lever** with a corrected version pasted on the side) brought yet more challenges once the relevant "copy" was returned to the Press. "I shall be glad if the enclosed alteration can be made on the latest final," Craigie wrote, for example, on the proof sheet for **quandary**. Revision brought a useful opportunity for reassessment—but also required the compositor to remove, by hand, the attributive senses that, previously included, were now deemed unnecessary while amalgamating the existing evidence at other points so that the entry occupied the same space. That his decision to include a late-stage entry for **delicatude** ("deliciousness") would be "rather a squeeze, I fear" was, in similar ways, acknowledged (here by Murray) but was also made a matter for the Press and press-workers to resolve. As the print text confirms, the "squeeze" did not allow in full the supporting evidence that Murray supplied (even if a one-line entry was accommodated). The Proofs therefore present the only extant evidence for Murray's intended emendation. As working documents, the Editors' Proofs hence routinely illuminate Murray's sense (1881, 129) that the "perfection of the Dictionary in its *data*" was of vital importance. But they also confirm the extraordinary challenges of such perfection and the collective effort it required from the readers at the Press, editorial assistants in the relevant dictionary office (or the Bodleian or the British Museum), as well as from the individual editors as they checked and rechecked the text and its accompanying evidence one last time—alongside, of course, the work of the hapless compositors on whom such "perfection" ultimately devolved.

MEANING, CORRECTION, AND CONSTRAINT

At proof stage, the text, as Sullivan (2013, 5) suggests, is perhaps inevitably a site of friction, marked by the ongoing tension between "possibility and constraint." Revision, on one hand, remains "tantalisingly possible," offering a range of opportunities for correction and change. On

the other, as she observes, it is often pragmatically disfavored. In the making of *OED1*, determining the precise limits of the definitional or evidential changes that might be incorporated at proof stage can be difficult to judge. Some, as we will see, were readily accepted in spite of the textual disruption they necessitated. For others, in contrast, textual pressures prove obdurate such that evidence or analysis was compromised in potentially problematic ways. As for **denourishment** and, indeed, **delicatude**, what can—or cannot—be accommodated can readily reveal the play of different agendas and desires, as well as the different communities of practice that this involved.

What Johnson (1755, B2^{r}) described as "the rigour of interpretive lexicography" is a case in point. While many entries in the Editors' Proofs remain semantically stable, the sense that further revision might yield greater clarity or semantic perspicuity is evident on many pages. Last-minute decisions to remove loose definitions, such as **nut** (n.) "Some part of the pluck of an animal" or **lang-kale** (n.) "Some kind of kale," clearly produced new and beneficial specificities (respectively, "The pancreas; also part of the caul"; "A variety of borecole, sometimes called 'Scotch kale'"). Other late-stage revisions focused on factual problems where definition remained conspicuously awry. Craigie, for example, belatedly realized that **quick time** (sb.) was not, as the Editors' Proofs had hitherto attested, "A rate of marching which in the British army now consists of 120 steps of 33 inches each in a minute" but, as a handwritten annotation now confirms, "128 paces of 33 inches or four miles an hour." It demanded swift rectification before the text went to press, as did other aspects of the accompanying historical information. Entries such as **leg before wicket** revealed other potential howlers; a revised in-text version now confirmed that this was "the act of stopping with the leg or other part of the person a straight-pitched ball which would otherwise hit the wicket" (rather than, as the uncorrected Editors'

Proofs had stated, the leg alone being the critical factor by which a ball might be arrested). Craigie had another moment of delayed semiotic insight under **quarry**, realizing just in time that this was not "The note sounded on the horn to call the hound to the quarry" but instead part of an established collocation in hunting (*to blow the quarry*). He wrote an emended definition ("to sound a horn to call the hounds to the quarry") in the adjacent margin. The good dictionary-maker had to be a "universal enquirer on every thing under the Sun," Murray reflected in 1910 (he had, as he confirmed, been driven to contact botanists, poets, merchants, astronomers, and historians, among others, in search of the requisite information). Yet, as emendations on the Editors' Proofs frequently confirm, this was a process shared by the other editors and their assistants, and often manifest until the very last point at which the relevant fascicle went to press.

Elsewhere, however, the Proofs illuminate a range of ongoing critical dissatisfactions where the elucidation of meaning had, in various ways, proved intractable. Given the flow of information to the *Dictionary*, and Murray's enthusiasm for the postal service, there is, for example, a certain irony in his strenuous grappling with **delivery** (n.), sense 4:

> The action of handing over, or conveying into ∧ **the hands of** another~~'s possession or keeping~~; esp. the action of ∧ **a carrier in** delivering letters or goods, ∧**entrusted to him for conveyance to a person at a distance**.[6]

Visible, too, are Bradley's self-evident struggles with **estrapade** (set, in proof, as "The action of a horse when, to get rid of his rider, he rises before, and at the same time kicks furiously with his hind legs"). Revision in the margin now produced the much improved "The attempt of a horse to get rid of his rider by rearing and kicking." **Glaciarium**, previously defined as "a skating-rink

[6]Superscript text in bold represents insertions made in Murray's hand.

with artificial ice," likewise benefited from a set of handwritten changes which made unambiguous the fact that, while artifice was indeed involved, this rested in the means of production rather than the ice itself ("A skating-rink with ice artificially produced"). Last-minute remediation of this kind was both targeted and, in some ways, surprisingly prevalent.

Even so, the question of where revision could or should stop remained problematic. The urge to adjust or tinker with meaning one last time could be difficult to resist. Craigie, as the Proofs attest, was an inveterate rephraser, deleting, for example, "noodle, simpleton" in favor of "thickhead, dolt" in revising **numskull**, and amplifying the already expansive definition of **narrow-minded** ("lacking in breadth of mind; illiberal, bigoted, prejudiced") by adding "incapable of broad views" as well. At other points, the Proofs can, however, reveal a complex narrative of change, alongside problems (and conflicts) of a different kind. For example, a revised and typeset entry for **clitoris**, shown in Figure 1, is intriguingly double-voiced.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

On the left of the relevant page is Murray's original definition ("A homologue of the male penis present in the females of many of the higher vertebrata")—a form of words that drew on Thomas Huxley's *Manual of the Anatomy of Vertebrated Animals*: "In the female sex, the homologue of a penis frequently makes its appearance as a *clitoris*" (Huxley 1871, 111). Murray's final citation under this entry ("In some few mammals (e.g. *Lemuridae*) the clitoris is traversed by a urethral canal") derived from the same text. Yet, carefully pinned to the right-hand side of the page, was a revised and far more female-centered interpretation in relation to both definition (the clitoris was re-identified as "part of the female generative organs in the mammalia") and the

accompanying evidence. “The clitoris lies in the upper part of the vulvar fissure,” a new citation from the 1859 edition of Todd’s *Cyclopaedia of Anatomy and Physiology* now attested, in ways that—in contrast to Murray’s concluding quotation—made the link to female anatomy explicit. “Please make correction to final,” states a handwritten note by Balk. As this annotation confirms, it was, at least within the dictionary offices, this revised version that claimed preferential status for the fascicle *Cast-Clivy*, due to be published in November 1889.

Sullivan’s sense (2013, 4) of the residual tensions between “constraint” and “possibility” that characterize the text in proof, alongside the “balance between what changes and what stays the same,” nevertheless played out in distinctive ways in this respect. On one hand, as Balk’s comments indicate, the suggested emendations make clear a revisionary history of their own. On the other, as the subsequent history of *OED1* confirms, it was Murray’s earlier definition and evidence that was, in fact, to be reproduced, not only in the first edition (and the reprinted text of 1933), but also in the second edition of 1989, edited by John Simpson and Edward Weiner. “The iconic dictionary’s misogynist descriptions of female genitalia were ripe for revision,” Emma Rees and Ellie Stedall announced in 2019, recommending changes that targeted Murray’s original text (alongside new forms of exegesis appropriate to the twenty-first century). Meanwhile, the alternative and intentionally revised history of **clitoris**, drafted a century earlier (as the date-stamps on the annotated Editors’ Proofs confirm) has hitherto remained both silent and unknown.

Whether textual pragmatics or ideological resistance (or, indeed, both) drove this particular narrative of omission remains unknown. The Proofs provide only part of the story. Did Balk act independently, prompting Murray’s resistance (which seems unlikely)? Did editor and editorial assistant concur, only to meet resistance from elsewhere in the print process?

Compositorial resistance to setting material deemed transgressive was not unknown in Victorian Britain (see Mugglestone 2007, 1–22). Members of the Philological Society when consulted by Murray had likewise recommended the suppression of taboo words such as *cunt* and *condom* for the *Dictionary* in ways that attest other pressures, and constraints, under which editorial decisions were made (Mugglestone 2005, 84–88). ***Condom*** was first added, by Robert Burchfield, in the 1972 *Supplement*, as was ***cunt***. Evidence from elsewhere in the surviving Proofs can, for example, suggest the operation of cultural as well as textual constraints in the text as finally printed. As under **lap**, edited by Bradley, pragmatic textualities (and a need for space) formally drove the excision of "Lap it hot about the privy parts," a citation taken from Gervase Markham's *The English Housewife* (1615). Yet the fact that other supporting evidence within this entry remained intact (from, e.g., Hakluyt, Goldsmith, and Swift, among others) also suggests the operation of patterns of preferential deletion, informed by notions of textual decorum. Similar is the decision, again visible in the Proofs, to retain the circumspect silencing of the relevant evidence for **well-hung** in the sense "Furnished with large pendent organs." While the entry hence retains headword, definition, and an embedded reference to Pierce Egan's revised edition of *Grose's Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1823), the latter was nevertheless decoupled from the illustrative evidence (and colloquial physicality) to which it referred.[7] In the Editors' Proofs, Murray's attempts to satisfy both sense and the requisite sensitivities in defining **cock** (sense 20 = 'penis'), some fifty pages after the disputed material for **clitoris**, were part of the same pattern. His earlier references to stereotypical social coding,

[7]See Egan (1823) s.v. **well-hung**: "The blowen was nutts upon the kiddey because he is well-hung; the girl is pleased with the youth because his genitals are large."

alongside a descriptive acknowledgment of contemporary language attitudes ("Only in low vulgar use, and considered indecent") were now deleted. Instead, Latinate indirection and overt cultural proscription took their place. "*Pudoris causa*, inadmissible in polite speech and literature," Murray concluded, consolidating still other forms of silence for future readers of *OED1*.

JUSTIFYING THE TEXT: CUTS, CONSEQUENCES, CASUALTIES

Justification, in the Editors' Proofs, can hence play out in two distinct but interconnected directions. In one, and in accordance with *OED1* sense 3b, we can direct interpretative scrutiny to the "justifying circumstances" for something, seeking to explain the underlying reasons for the changes that we see~~,~~ and the form the text assumes. Conversely, in accordance with **justification** (sense 6), we can direct attention to the textual environment and "the action of adjusting or arranging [text] exactly" so that the requisite neatness is secured at the end of a line, column, or page. "Too slack" Balk instructs, for example, against **diss** (sb.), censuring its unduly loose spacing. Murray recommended a further set of changes in response; his newly expanded definitions for **diss** and **disruptive**, written by hand in the adjacent margins, were a device to secure the requisite textual balance in the column as a whole.[8] Murray's views on the "obnoxious" setting of **buttermilk** (n.), here within an in-text annotation on the relevant page, prompted similar forms of recalibration, confirming the ways in which, as the Victorian

[8]Murray added "breaking asunder" to **disruptive**, sense 1, such that the definition required an extra line, and *** to **diss.**

compositor John Graham (1848, 42) indicated, “bad spacing” could indeed be “disagreeable to a delicate eye.”

As the Proofs widely attest, however, these two dimensions of justification could, in practice, often intersect. As this section explores, changes that were introduced for (and justified) by compelling linguistic reasons can therefore impose further textual adjustments by which other material had to be deleted or compressed, not least when space is tight—a process known as substitutive revision. Conversely, textual justification—and the press-room desiderata that this reveals——can, as we will see, motivate other forms of lexicographic compression, here in ways that disregard the linguistic salience such material might earlier have claimed in favor of the setting the text required. In each case, the Proofs reveal the underlying narratives, alongside the visible compromises that result.

Antedatings—and the creation of an improved lexical biography for individual words and senses—are a case in point. A robust historical lexicography, as Richard Chenevix Trench stressed in his foundational lectures for the “new dictionary” that would become the *OED* (1857, 23), was dependent on determining, as far as possible, the date of the birth of a given word or sense. “Quotations illustrating the first [. . .] appearance” of a word or sense were primary requisites of modern philology, Murray (1900, 46) affirmed. In the Editor’s Proofs, the appearance of earlier evidence, written in the margin or pasted on newly arrived slips, had, in this light, obvious linguistic salience. Edward Hall’s *Chronicle* of 1548, John Florio’s *World of Words* (1598), and Shakespeare’s *Timon of Athens* all generated antedatings at this late stage of the text. **Tithed** (“Subject to, charged with, or liable for the payment of tithes”) hence had its life-history extended backward by 238 years, courtesy of *Timon of Athens*. A new quotation from Mulcaster’s *Positions Concerning the Training Up of Children* meanwhile extended **gay** as a

verb to 1581 (from a previous first use in 1641), and evidence from Erskine's *The Barber* (1778), newly inscribed alongside **blowzy**, likewise affirmed the fact of eighteenth- rather than nineteenth-century use. An antedating of some 500 years divided the evidence for **twelfth-night** as originally printed in the Editors' Proofs from that which appeared in the published text.[9]

Antedatings typically assumed the status of obligatory changes. Nevertheless, the Proofs make strikingly overt that, at this stage of the text, the decision to include new matter could be sanctioned only by taking the equivalent space from elsewhere. "Substitute for 1615," a note alongside **lath** (sb.), sense 3, attests, for example. If a new citation dated 1545 (and taken from *The Rates of the Customs House Bothe Inwarde and Outwarde*) was recommended for inclusion, it must, as the marginal annotation makes plain, also now displace that from George Sandys's *Travels, Containing an History of the Original and Present State of the Turkish Empire* (1615), which had previously established **lath**'s earliest use. Craigie's "Please substitute the following," written in a marginal note (dated March 1912) alongside **smear** (sb.), likewise drove the insertion of evidence from Randle Cotgrave's *Dictionarie* of 1611—and the compensatory deletion of that previously selected from the lexicographer Robert Ainsworth in 1736. Across the Proofs, the process of substitutive revision is a wholly conscious part of crafting print lexicography on the page. The revision of **tithed** (discussed above) was similar. New evidence from *Timon of Athens* might indeed now be inserted, securing a revised date of birth. Yet at the other end of the entry, an 1884 citation from the *Manchester Evening News* (referencing "the

[9]New evidence from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* took usage back to *c*.900 from a previous first use *c*.1400, as documented in the ME romance *King Alisaunder*.

heavily rented and tithed British farmer") disappeared in compensation as push, in effect, came to shove.

We can see a similar process of exchange under **blowzy** (sense 2: "Of hair, dress: Dishevelled, frowzy, slatternly"). If new evidence from Erskine was, as we have seen, used in revising the date of its first appearance in English use, the compensatory excision of the citation from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* with which the entry had originally begun ("her hair was so untidy, so blowzy") is a further part of the substitutive revision that the Proofs reveal. Evidence originally selected from Austen's *The Watsons* (1804) would fall victim to identical pressures under **full** (sense 1a: "Having within its limits all it will hold"). The deletion of Austen's "quite as full as ever … there seemed no vacancy whatever" was driven in this instance by Bradley's decision to include an antedating of 1618 under **full** sense 1e ("Of an animal: Pregnant. Of a fish: Charged with roe") instead.

Methods of this kind were commonplace. If, in the relevant editor's judgment, a particular citation now claimed a space it had not previously possessed, a similar exercise was, in each case, required to determine expendability somewhere else. More space was not forthcoming while the limits of the paginated text had to be observed. Across the Proofs, substitutive revision could, as under **full**, therefore affect adjacent senses or, as under **legitimacy** and **legister**, place pressures on adjacent entries. "If necessary to save line," Murray wrote alongside the former, for example, excising a quotation from the *Contemporary Review* in 1885 while giving precedence to new evidence that he inserted under **legister** instead. On one level, these changes are merely opportunistic, a means of negotiating available space within the confines of a particular column. On another, seen collectively, the process of attrition can reveal patterns of its own. As under **full**, for example, a cut—given the constraints of substitutive revision—had to be made in one

direction or another. Nevertheless, as the Proofs confirm, Austen was by no means the only viable option. Excision could, in principle, have taken place at any point in the relevant column to secure the space that Bradley now required. Seen in this light, arguments about the presence or absence of, say, Austen citations in *OED1* (see, e.g., Brewer 2012) perhaps acquire additional force.

The visibility afforded to relative judgments of expendability is a significant aspect of the interpretative value of the surviving Proofs, while presenting an overt history of change, attrition, and displacement. In the transactional processes that are thereby revealed, a mid-entry quotation from Colley Cibber's *The Careless Husband* (1704) was, for example, deleted under **gather** in favor of an antedating from George Gascoigne's *The Steel Glass* (1576). As under **loo** (sb., sense 4 'a game of cards'), the selective loss of a quotation from the merchant seaman Frank Bullen's autobiographical *With Christ at Sea* (1900) was triggered by a new antedating from Horace Walpole that Bradley chose to introduce in the previous sense ("Party. Set," in the idiom *for the good of the loo*). Other relative judgments governed the decision to truncate (by thirteen words) the citational evidence from the Victorian novelist Captain Marryat as previously used under **breech** (v.). "2 lines may be gained by reducing the Marryat," an in-text annotation in Murray's hand confirms. An antedating from 1757 was given the space instead. In similar ways, a mid-entry citation from the poet Gavin Douglas, inserted in the Proofs under **dwell** (v.) sense 5, was, as Murray acknowledges, facilitated only by the deletion of another mid-entry citation, in this instance from Robert Burns's "Highland Mary" of 1792. "This would be a useful change if not too late," he affirms in a note pasted onto the bottom margin. Editorial fluencies in the praxis and metalanguage of omission were conspicuous.

Antedatings were, for obvious reasons, a prime driver of revised patterns of representation of this kind. Nevertheless, as the Proofs make plain, no single process had a monopoly on substitutive revision or its operation (and results). Instead, similar reciprocities of gain and loss were triggered by, say, the decision to add new entries or senses as under **oozily** and **long-coat**, or to expand others as under **licentious,** or to revise and expand the etymology, as under **oast** (sb.)—to be done "if space allows," as a note alongside the latter confirms. If Bradley required an extra line for his reworked definition of **licentious** (sense 3**)**—"libertine," he added, amplifying the negative charge already contained by "lewd, lascivious"—this was, as he recognized, to be secured only by a corresponding decision to cut existing evidence from William Paley's *A View of the Evidences of Christianity* (1794) later in the same entry. Revision under **oozily** and **oozy** displayed similar textual symbiosis. Bradley's decision to provide a new entry for the former (added by hand in the relevant margin) brought visible reduction in the definition he had previously supplied for the latter. "To make room for **oozily**" a note in Bradley's hand explained, setting out the requisite cuts and consequences. In each case, the specific trajectories of cause and effect, as well as the underlying politics of choice, are plain.

Canonical and non-canonical evidence alike participated in changes of this kind. Antedatings, in particular, displayed marked heterogeneity, leading to, say, the inclusion and representation of texts such as John Foster's *An Essay on the Different Nature of Accent and Quality* (1762) or Christopher Simpson's *Brief Introduction to the Skill of Music* (1669). Evidence from Keats (deleted under **bird-lime** in order to make room for a new quotation from Longfellow as inserted under **birdlet**) or from Shakespeare (deleted under **leopard** and **twelfth-night**) or from Tennyson (a citation from *In Memoriam* deleted under **sign**), as well as Austen's visible attrition, reveal the other side of the process. "The literary merit or demerit of any

particular writer, like the comparative elegance or inelegance of any given word, is a subject upon which the Lexicographer is bound to be almost indifferent," Herbert Coleridge, the *Dictionary*'s first editor, had affirmed. The "functions of the Lexicographer and the Critic are in no way compatible," he added (OED/B/1/12 [c.1858], 'Report', 2): "the mere merit of a word in an artistic or aesthetic point of view is a consideration, which the Lexicographer cannot for a moment entertain."

Even so, when the various cuts and consequences in the Proofs are aggregated, certain types of evidence undeniably seem more vulnerable. Under **quartered**, for example, the *Daily News* (in a citation from 1900) makes way for the preferential inclusion of Wordsworth, just as evidence from *The Times*, originally used in concluding the entry for **tourmaline**, was displaced by a new citation from William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, added as an antedating under the following word. In similar ways, evidence from the *Leeds Mercury* in 1887 disappears under **fleeting** (here, as prompted by the decision to include an antedating from Sir Thomas Smith), a citation from *Harper's Magazine* in 1887 disappears under **burgraviate** (sb.), displaced by one from 1762, taken from Patrick Murdoch's translation of *A New System of Geography*, and a citation from the *Nation* in 1892 disappears under **give** while adjacent evidence from Scott, Thackeray, and Wilkie Collins remains intact. "Please make this correction if not too late," as an accompanying note from Bradley confirms.

In some ways, transactional shifts of this kind are, of course, merely a matter of text pragmatics. The fact that recent evidence, especially that deriving from newspapers and popular periodicals, often fell at the end of a word or sense undeniably rendered it easier (and cheaper) to cut. Invented citations labeled "Mod[ern]." (often used to supplement evidence when attributed citations were lacking) were related casualties, as in the pithy "Get your breakfast, child, and

don't talk," deleted in the Proofs under **get** (*OED1*, sense 23). Murray likewise cuts a modern citation deriving from his own work (1872, xxxix) under ***duan*** ("a poem or song"), here as triggered by the preferential inclusion of an antedating from James MacPherson's *Works of Ossian* (3rd edn., 1765). Nevertheless, as in the contrastive trajectories of evidence from, say, the minor Anglo-Caribbean novelist Annie Holdsworth (deleted) and Sir Walter Scott (inserted) under **name** (here, alongside a further newly-inserted citation from Lockhart's *Life of Scott*) or, as under **bartizan,** the evidence from Scott's *Eve of St John* (inserted) versus that from Surtees (deleted), it can be difficult to avoid the suspicion of certain evaluative hierarchies in the choices that appear. Across a range of entries, for example, it seems evident that substitutive revision not only forced the dictionary-maker to weigh the value of one piece of evidence against another but, in the resulting patterns of revision, routinely reinforced Scott's numerical prominence in *OED1* (even as that of other writers was eroded).[10] As under **neighbourly**, a new citation from Scott's *The Fortunes of Nigel* hence claimed a space previously allocated to Charles Spurgeon's *The Treasury of David* (1874); under **dine** new evidence from Scott's *Guy Mannering* was inserted while a citation from George Meredith was marked for deletion (even if Meredith was later reprieved, and evidence from the *American* in 1884 deleted instead). Likewise new evidence from Scott's *Rob Roy*, inserted in final position under **spinster**, triggered the compensatory clipping of evidence (under **spinous**) here as previously recorded from the *Proceedings of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club* in 1854.

[10]Scott was, after Shakespeare, the most cited individual writer in *OED1*, a statistical prominence which, Brewer (2005–23) notes, "deserves a full study."

The extent to which minor non-canonical writers, alongside ephemeral texts, do systematically bear the brunt of these transactional shifts is therefore an interesting avenue for further exploration. As in Craigie's re-editing of **nameless**, for example, evidence from Pope, Cowper, Tennyson, and Ruskin was, expansively, retained in full while, in order to satisfy the need for space, that from Adelaide Procter's *Legends and Lyrics* (1859) was instead reduced to the sharply truncated "Over [. . .] a nameless grave." Likewise, in reassessing **cyclopean** (sense 3)—here in order to find space for new material he wished to insert under **cyclops**—Murray clearly decided that evidence from Anna Jamieson's *Legends of the Monastic Orders* was more expendable than, say, that from Newcomb's *Popular Astronomy* (which, two senses earlier, also occurred in final position with a similar patterning of evidence in relation to both date and space). In parallel ways, Edward Bulwer Lytton was clearly deemed of greater salience under **bulky** than the evidence (from the *Scotsman*) that Murray now deleted under the adjacent **bulking** while, under **object**, it was Frances Anne Kemble's *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation*—now recognized as a key text within the literature of American slavery—that was deleted (also by Murray) while evidence from J. H. Newman and Mark Pattison remained intact. Substitutive revision was, as we have seen, undeniably opportunistic, motivated by textual exigencies that emerged within the conditions of late-stage change. But, even so, the clustering of cuts in particular texts and text-types as attested by the Proofs undoubtedly directs attention to the preferential patterning (and other forms of motivation) that this process might reveal. That "quotations illustrative of modern literary words" were to "be taken from great authors, and those from newspapers to be as few as possible" had, for example, long existed as part of a detailed set of "Suggestions for Guidance" issued by the Delegates of Oxford University Press for the benefit of the *Dictionary* (MP/18/4/1883). "Should not famous

quotations as far as possible be given under the words contained in them," another question had demanded; "should not common uses of words be illustrated by a few striking quotations, if possible, from great authors?".

THE BALANCE OF PROOF

As a hand-written note from Murray acknowledged alongside **dweomercraeft** (an obsolete word meaning "Jugglery, magic art"), the need for "1 line more," was the net result of a decision, made in the Proofs, to expand the etymology. However, "1 line less" had, he added, resulted from his decision to cut that of **dwelth** in compensation, in the entry immediately above. As here, keeping the text in line could be made into an elaborate balancing act, requiring precise editorial calibration in relation to available space. Murray's comments served to reassure the compositor not only that balance was duly restored, but that the overall length of the column remained the same. A similar transactional exchange can be seen in the Proofs of **dashedly**, where illustrative evidence from William Norris's novel *Matrimony* was sharply truncated, as Murray explained, "to make room for the line above," while a new entry for **dash-buckler** was given the space instead.

Nevertheless, the fact that the same processes of both loss and compression could be triggered by the exigencies of the Press itself—and, specifically, by the desire to secure the requisite neatness of the bottom margin across a given page—is arresting. Press-room annotations by which a given column was marked "long" (or, more rarely, "short") were unambiguous directives for further change, requiring the dictionary-maker to compress or expand accordingly. Under **narratively**, for example, the appearance of "short" at the end of the relevant column clearly afforded Craigie a rare opportunity for legitimate elaboration without

substitutive revision being required. Marginal annotations ("In a narrative manner; ~~after the style of~~ also considered as a narrative") still record his careful crafting of a definition for a word that, under the operation of earlier textual constraints, had been left undefined. Bradley's expansion under **warrant** (v.) sense 11 had a similar motivation such that the original text ("Of a person. To countenance by one's action") was revised to "[. . .] one's action or example," while also gaining a new frequency label "Obs.?" in order to fill up the extra line that the press-room now required.

The annotation "Long," however, required the dictionary-maker to identify new forms of contraction and loss. "For line long," Murray explained, for instance, under **dygre** (a variant of *degree*), obediently truncating the information that he had hitherto desired to include on its variant forms. "Taken out," Bradley stated to similar effect on page 557 of F. The "long" inscribed at the bottom of the relevant column meant that a vivid citation from Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (used in illustration of **frizzle**) was now reduced to its final five words: "~~Nothing was left of my respected predecessor, save an imperfect skeleton …and~~ a wig of majestic frizzle." A range of citational compressions ("~~His spontaneous emotion is~~ the result of two over-night brandies" (under **overnight**); "~~A somewhat uncommon variety of the verruca simplex is~~ the subungual wart" (under **subungual**), "~~Their heads were full of~~ the languid dreams of commentators" (under **languid**), or "~~When He healed the sick…~~that was an earnest of a sickless state" (under **sickless**)) were all casualties of the same process. Seen in functional terms, usage was, of course, still illustrated. But in each case, what we might see as the literal power of the Press trumped the text as originally crafted, and the lexicographical desiderata that it had revealed.

Practical dictionary-making, as the Proofs make plain, took place at the nexus between different communities of practice and in complexities that the final print text can, as a result, obscure. With hindsight, it is, for example, clear that an inscribed compositorial "long" underpins a range of problematic linguistic decisions, driving not only the processes of citational attrition discussed above but the attrition of labels such that a line might thereby be saved with minimal textual change, alongside the loss of entries in entirety. The cutting of single-line entries for **eir** and **leyffven** (both of which had recorded minor and variant forms) is**,** for instance, representative of late-stage deletions of this kind, as is the decision to omit **blancmanger** (an obsolete form of *blancmange*) and **sider** (an obsolete form of *cider*) from the published text. "Line saved," Murray likewise announced in response to a similar press-room injunction, clipping etymological details under **once** that had originally been seen as integral to the historical exegesis that *OED1* should provide. Similar was Bradley's decision to curb the historical information previously given under **ginger** or to reduce the semantic elaboration he had earlier provided under **silliness** ("A silly thing, act, ~~remark~~") and **silly season** ("the months of August and September, when newspapers supply the lack of ~~parliamentary and society~~ news by articles and discussions on trivial topics"). The in-text elision of the label *nonce* from **siest** (v.) "To take a siesta" and *dial*. from **squatmore** (a type of poppy) took place under identical textual pressures. "Omit *Obs*. if necessary," Murray likewise suggested under **treat**, having already deleted *rare* in order to achieve the savings that the press-workers prescribed.

Craigie's coding of *revision* as a process of wholly beneficial reassessment can, as such, suggest problems of its own. Being too "long" in relation to available space could, of course, force the excision of semiotic redundancy, beneficially sharpening, for example, **loosely** ("without being confined or restrained ~~by anything; unconfinedly, without restraint~~") and **lone**

where the definition "without company~~; unaccompanied~~" was visibly condensed in order to save a line. Yet elsewhere the sense of compromise (and the erosion of editorial autonomy) is conspicuous. Under pressures of space, a forcible contraction attends, for example, the redefinition of **outwittal** as "the point of outwitting" (from the earlier "outdoing or frustrating by trickery") or dictated the appearance in print of "to preach above and beyond" (under **overpreach** (v.) sense 1) instead of the earlier (and more specific) "To preach above or beyond (a person's capacity)". Craigie's decision to compress "The study of the clouds as a branch of meteorology" to "The study of the clouds" (under **nephology**) was part of the same process (and likewise dictated by a column-final "long"). Troubling, too, in relation to the wider gender prosodies of the text, were other forms of textual change by which changing "a person's" to "his" (under **shake**), or "a person" to "him" ("to press (a person) hard" > "to press him hard," under **short**) resolved similar spatial challenges while bringing other representational consequences (and problems) in their wake. Such instances can seem like a formal ceding of lexicographical control in which the compositor gets the final say. But they also demonstrate a compelling awareness, evident across the making of *OED1*, of print lexicography as something that takes place within a shared enterprise—and one informed, at almost every level, by the pull of different agendas and the compromises that in turn emerge.

A VARIORUM *OED*?

These are, of course, merely provisional conclusions from a year-long project to examine the Editors' Proofs following their initial discovery. Much remains to be done, in relation to both collation and analysis. Only gradually have the over-arching patterns of change and revision (and their complex textual calibration) come into view, alongside the salience of substitutive revision

on this strikingly material text. Significant shifts in data, representation, and analysis within the individual entries (not least in the distribution—and redistribution—of evidence) are, in this, already perceptible. But, as this preliminary study confirms, the late-stage text in proofs resists purely atomistic enquiry, instead requiring change in one entry to be examined in relation to a perceived excess (or absence) of matter in the wider textual environment, and the patterns of prioritization that result. A new project (*Variorum OED: Retelling the Story*) will, from mid-2023, begin the work of examining print text and proof text in a comparative framework supported by an underlying database (funded by the John Fell Fund at Oxford University Press), while exploring a range of thematic, linguistic, and textual issues. This will, in time, enable a robust and critical overview of the Editors' Proofs as a distinctively "revisionary" text, while documenting the working and collaborative practices of editors, assistants, and press-workers, both in relation to marginalia (and their far from marginal significance) and the in-text epistolarities which offer other forms of illumination across the surviving text.

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