On Some China-Related Entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary*

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Inspired by Phil Benson's study on the relations between ethnocentrism and the China-related entries in the *OED*2, this paper attempts to further examine how the image of China, a so-called "peripheral object of Western knowledge," has been (mis-)constructed in the dictionary, particularly its latest 2009 CD-ROM version, into which many laudable updates, including corrections and supplements, have been meticulously incorporated. It argues that (1) although British imperialism was a closed chapter, its vestiges can still be spotted in the dictionary text, not only in the quotations, which preserve historical information rather than reflect the editors' opinions, but also in the definitions and notes, which betray primarily the thoughts of these editors, (2) to an average user, the *OED*, with its legendary philological authority, is very likely to project "historical objectivity" into some problematic contents and thus misleads an innocent and uninformed mind, and (3) if ethnocentrism is an unavoidable component in the *OED*1 and *OED*2, then the editorial team of the *OED*3 in the making would do well to introduce into their work an element of "entholocalism," by which is meant the ideological neutrality as well as the technical accuracy of encyclopedic information about such important peripheral objects as China, the most populous country and a fast growing economy, in the world in which the English language against the backdrop of globalization has firmly established itself as the international *lingua franca* without rival. So long as it is intended to remain a historical dictionary true to its name, the *OED* ought to push forward, in the form of new editions, with the times.

In a four-chapter-long investigation concluding his monograph on the *OED*, Phil Benson proves not only that of all the English dictionaries, the *OED*'s coverage of words associated with China may be the most extensive but that China, albeit a "peripheral object of Western knowledge," actually occupies an important place on the margin of the *OED* (132-33). These facts may serve as a footnote to James Murray's pioneer-consciousness: "I feel that in many respects I and my assistants are simply pioneers, pushing our way through an untrodden forest, where no [. . .] man's axe has been before us" (qtd. in Mugglestone 1) and, more significantly, to the *OED*'s originality, unprecedented and unrivalled. Meanwhile, Benson magnifies some problems with the *OED*'s treatment of China in the light of ethnocentrism, endorsing Richard Bailey's viewpoint that imperialism is one of the essential ingredients of 19th-century British lexicography, ranking above even profit and philology (107).

Nearly ten years have passed since Benson's 2001 case study, which sheds light on

the *OED*'s reconstruction of the image of a remote non-English-speaking country. A decade later, in 2009, OUP released version 4.0 of the *OED* on CD-ROM,[1] in which a number of entries have been updated, and a few additions were drafted as late as October 2008. Yet lexicographical *aggiornamento* does not seem to have cleansed the *OED* of its ethnocentric vestiges. In its debatable representation of China, there are still quotations that might have evoked, as it were, a storm of protest from the PRC propaganda apparatchiks, had they known more English.

For instance, in the entries for *irredenta* and *Khamba*, China is depicted as a foreign invader, driving Tibet's lawful ruler, Dalai Lama XIV, into exile, which is, according to the PRC government, the Western imperialists' premeditated distortion of history:

> **1967** *Punch* 1 Feb. 141/2 They annexed Tibet, but they had argued themselves into the belief that this was ancient Chinese territory, China *irredenta*.
>
> **1973** *Times* 20 Oct. 3/2 The fourteenth Dalai Lama is..now 38 and has lived in exile in the Indian Himalayas since 1959, when Khamba rebels persuaded him to flee from Lhasa with them after their abortive uprising against the Chinese occupation.

These quotations, the latest illustrative examples in their entries, were taken from journalistic sources in the years 1967 and 1973. Both dates fall into the span of the Cultural Revolution, a political catastrophe that tortured the Chinese people for an entire decade (i.e., 1966-76). In those ten years, the conflict between Red China and the West was especially fierce and all-round. So it is quite understandable that since the Tibet problem was so highly controversial, the West could not acknowledge the PRC's claim to sovereignty over Tibet. In garnering quotations of this kind, the *OED* lexicographers, if one thinks on their behalf, were trying to play the role of historians rather than critics.

Nevertheless, in the definitions of lemmas like *McMahon*, *moutan*, *pheasant*, *rhubarb* [n.], and *white-ear* [n. and a.], China and Tibet are often represented as two adjacent but separate states:

> **McMahon line**, a line proposed by the British under Sir Henry McMahon at the Simla Conference (1913–14) as the frontier between Tibet and the North East Frontier Agency.
> The demarcation was accepted by Tibet, but not recognized by China.
>
> The tree peony, *Pæonia suffruticosa*, of the family *Ranunculaceæ*, a large shrub bearing pale pink flowers, native to China and Tibet, the parent of many garden varieties producing single or double flowers of many colours.
>
> **eared p.**, of China and Tibet, any species of the genus *Crossoptilon*; [. . .] **gold** or **golden p.**, of China and Tibet, *Thaumalea picta* or *Chrysolophus pictus* [. . .].
>
> **1.a** The medicinal rootstock (purgative and subsequently astringent) of one or more

[1] In this paper, this version, unless otherwise specified with a number in the end, is the only source for citations from the *OED*.

> species of *Rheum* grown in China and Tibet and for a long period imported into Europe through Russia and the Levant, but since 1860 direct from China; [. . .].
>
> ***white-eared pheasant***, an eared pheasant, *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*, found in forest regions of eastern Tibet and neighbouring China.[2]

Obviously, the *OED* lexicographers are very clear about the status quo of Tibet, which is not yet a member of the UN. What adds to the dubious objectivity that they have intended to infuse into their opinion is the fact that except the *McMahon* one, all the definitions quoted above are of animals and plants, topics of the natural sciences. Similarly, in the entry for *panda*, the animal is "native to limited, mountainous areas of forest in China," whereas in the *OED*-online entry for *panda* [n.[1]], whose revision was finished in June 2008, it is "native to a few mountainous areas of forest in China and Tibet." Apparently more accurate in technical detail but objectionable to the said propaganda apparatchiks. On the other hand, although whether Tibet ought to be regarded as a sovereign state or an integral part of China remains a moot point among many politicians, David Miliband, on behalf of the UK Government, has recently made clearer in public that "we do not support Tibetan independence. Like every other EU member state, and the United States, we regard Tibet as part as part [sic] of the People's Republic of China" (Great Britain, House of Commons 79).

As regards the entry for *McMahon*, nearly all the information in it is about the McMahon line, which was proposed at the Simla Conference (1913-14). The entry was not included in the *OED* until 1997, when the turbulent 20th century was at its tail-end, and the UK formally handed its little-dragon colony, Hong Kong, to the PRC. In the same year, a popular Chinese festival found its way into the entry for *moon* [n.[1]], which suggests that the *OED* lexicographers keep close watch over China in the UK-centered perspective:

> Add: **[16.] Moon Festival**, in China and Hong Kong and in Chinese communities elsewhere, a festival celebrated in mid-Autumn, on the fifteenth night of the eighth moon of the Chinese year (cf. *moon-cake* above), orig. a family gathering after completion of the harvest.

The juxtaposition of China and part of China on an equal footing again. What is more, in the 2001 addition to the entry for *dragon*, Hong Kong, the PRC's first SAR (i.e., special administrative region), is listed plainly as the country most representative of South-East Asian economic boom:

> Any of a number of newly industrialized South-East Asian countries (esp. Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea) characterized in terms of economic success.

By contrast, in the 1993 addition to the entry for *tiger* [n.], the wording of the definition: "[a] nickname for any one of the more successful smaller economies of

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[2] A search in the *OED* online shows that although these entries have been revised, the semantic juxtaposition of China and Tibet as two equal political or geographical entities remains in all of them, except in *pheasant*, which does not have the derivative "eared p." any longer.

East Asia, esp. those of Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea" is perfectly acceptable to every Chinese, apparatchik or man of the street.

Perhaps, a few Westerners cling to their antiquated geopolitical standpoint about Far East, having little faith in a win-win return of Hong Kong to communist China. Such pessimism is aptly summarized with a quotation in the entry for *count* [v.]:

> **1981** *N.Y. Times* 2 Aug. iv. 21/1 Hong Kong is more important to China than vice-versa—a fact that the free port relies on as it counts down to 1997.

Admittedly, over the baker's dozen years, reports have never been few and far between about massive protests staged in the Pacific-Rim cosmopolis against the incumbent local administration and its Peking leadership. But to the UK, unlike the ticklish Tibet issue, for which the influence and interest of a triad: China, the Dalai Lama, and India, have to be considered, Hong Kong is a deal closed for good with History. So the *Moon Festival* definition seems definitely even more Chinese-unfriendly when compared with those of *Hakka* [n. (and a.)] and *taipan* [[1]]:

> A member of a people now dwelling in parts of southern China, especially in the province of Kwangtung or Canton, and in Taiwan, Hong Kong, etc.
>
> **b.** The (foreign) manager or head of a firm in China, esp. Hong Kong.

In the two definitions quoted above, Hong Kong is treated implicitly as part of China. Since both the *Hakka* and *taipan* entries were composed prior to 1997, and the majority of the quotations in them were gleaned from publications during the one and a half century or so when the British Crown ruled Hong Kong (i.e., 1842-1997), the *Moon Festival* and *dragon* definitions can be taken as a revision of the *OED*'s former standpoint about the status of sovereignty over Hong Kong and therefore as a challenge to China's territorial integrity in the verbal dimension. This challenge surfaces again in the *OED*-online definition of *mainland China* (accessed 10 June 2010) as "[t]he People's Republic of China, as opposed to Taiwan or Hong Kong," whose former version is "the People's Republic of China, as opposed to Taiwan," although by March 2010, "and Hong Kong" had been edited out of the *OED*-online definition of *Moon Festival* (accessed 8 June 2010).

The China that the *OED* has thus outlined is certainly contentious. Whereas the English-speaking world may find this to be of minor consequence, the Chinese resent seeing such disputatious materials in the *OED*, arguably "the world's most trusted" English dictionary, which "continues to shape our ideas about dictionaries and about words" (Bailey 225). What they abhor is that to any user who is no Sinologist, the *OED* will inevitably mislead her or his innocent mind by having its dubious China-related contents justified with the neutrality in and accuracy of historical narratives that its legendary philological authority confers on it. Mugglestone has so perceptively observed that the originality of the *OED* is "both the root of its problems and its salvation" (18). Yet there is a non-technical factor that contributes to the salvation: the general belief in the English-speaking world that the *OED*, as Stanley

Baldwin lauded it in 1928, was “the greatest of its kind in history” (qtd. in Winchester xxvii) and, as in the present-day journalese featuring hyperbolic rhetoric, is “the highest court of British lexicography” (Tonkin).

Having successfully obsoleted Dr. Johnson’s two-volume *Dictionary* and oblivionized Prof. Whitney’s *Century Dictionary*, the *OED* is *sans doute* the principal cause of “the anxiety of influence” to any ambitious “harmless drudge” of our time, whose solitary global *lingua franca* is decidedly English, “the UK’s biggest export success story” (“Learn English with Us”). It is only too natural that “this unique and peerless specimen” of the art and craft of dictionary-making goes further to shape our ideas about the whole world, although its current revisers have made a point of lowering the profile of the *OED*, “not as a representation of the universe, or of reality, but as a social history” (Brewer 42). To be sure, this colossal chronicle of English-speaking culture and society is encoded primarily in the *OED*’s “wonderfully erudite and meticulous documentation of words selected from an enormous range of printed sources from 1150 to the present day” (ibid.). Yet how the world outside the British Isles has been interpreted since the late Victorian period by British English or, to be more specific, Oxford English, which Robert Burchfield held as the genuine form of Standard English (Romaine 24) is meanwhile partly and pertinently reflected in the non-quotation parts of the *OED*.

One has good reason to expect a regular renewal of this interpretation, as “the *OED3* moves forward in one of the most significant scholarly endeavours of the early twenty-first century” (Brewer 49). But when the OUP spokeswoman replied ambiguously about the role played by air pressure, according to the *OED*, or by gravity, according to an academic in the Antipodes, in the mechanism of the siphon, mass-media hype simply has it that a 99-year-old schoolboy mistake, “the most persistent scientific howler in the history of the English language” (Kingsland), has been spotted in this prestigious, ultra-authoritative lexicon, one of the most stupendous human feats in the modern era, reminding the public again of the fallibility of lexicographers, who are not necessarily omniscient, and of the urgency that the *OED* be consigned to a thorough revision in sync with the escalating advance of civilization.

In the case of China-related entries, the dynamic of the *OED* seems particularly stagnant. At times this is made only too manifest. In the entry for *Wade-Giles*, for instance, a news reporter is sarcastically negative about China’s wide adoption of *pinyin*:

> **1979** *Time* 2 Apr. 15/2 The changeover was started by Peking (um, er, Beijing) on Jan. 1, when the government of Zhongguo (otherwise known as China) decreed that in all its foreign-language publications Pinyin would replace the traditional Wade-Giles system of romanization.

Unexpectedly, some *pinyin* forms, such as those of *renminbi*, *T’ai Chi*, *taotai*, *tou ts’ai*, and

wu-wei and those given in *splittism* and *war-lord*, that the *OED* offers in its etymologies turn out to be as awkward as the *Time* parody is:

> [Chinese *rénmínbi*, f. *rénmín* people + *bi* currency.]
>
> [tr. Chinese *fēnliē zhǔyì*: see split v. and -ism.]
>
> [ad. Chinese *tàiji*, f. *tài* extreme + *jí* limit.]
>
> [Chinese *daòtái*.]
>
> [Chinese (Wade-Giles), *duōcái* (Pinyin), lit. 'multi-coloured', f. *tou* many + *ts'ai* colours.]
>
> **b.** [tr. Chinese *jūnfà*.] In China, a military commander who had a regional power base and ruled independently of the central government, esp. in the period 1916–28.
>
> [Chinese *wúwéi*, f. *wú* no, without + *wei* doing, action.][3]

Although there is no editorial policy as to whether the Wade-Giles system or *pinyin* is preferred, yet the *OED* lexicographers are apparently not so good at applying the latter in recording Chinese characters. The tonal marks are lost (e.g., in "*rénmínbi*,""*tàiji*," and "[*wú*]*wei*"—the correct forms are respectively ""*rénmínbì*,""*tàijí*," and "[*wú*]*wéi*"), wrongly placed (e.g., in "*daòtái*"—the correct form is "*dàotái*"), or misused (e.g., in "*fēnliē zhǔyì*" and "*jūnfà*"—the correct forms are "*fēnliè zhǔyì*" and "*jūnfá*"). It is especially worth noting that although the group of ceramics and antiques is the fourth leading lexico-semantic category of words associated with China in the *OED* (Benson 135-36), the lexicographers have left the erroneous etymology of *tou ts'ai* uncorrected for many years: the Chinese *pinyin* form is *dòucǎi* 斗彩, with *dòu* meaning not "multiple" but "competing" while "multiple colours" in *pinyin* is *duōcǎi* 多彩 rather than *duōcái* 多财("wealthy") or 多才("multi-talented"). The problem with the phonetic transcription uncovers the semantic misunderstanding. By contrast, the *SOED5*, which was published in 2002, has got most of the *pinyin* forms right that are cited above, except those for *tou ts'ai* and *wu-wei*.[4]

More indicative of the *OED*'s failure to pay constant enough attention to China is the absence of a "derogatory" label in its entry for *Chinaman*:

> **2.** A native of China.
> **1854** Emerson *Lett. & Soc. Aims, Resources Wks*. (Bohn) III. 198 The disgust of California has not been able to drive nor kick the Chinaman back to the home.

Indeed, there is crucial evidence that the *OED* does not think of *Chinaman* as

[3] Of these mistakes/inadequacies, only the one in *renminbi* (accessed 8 June 2010) has been corrected in the *OED* online.

[4] Like the *OED*, the *SOED5* misses the tonal marker for *wei* in its etymological analysis of *wu-wei*; unlike the *OED*, though, the *SOED5* is very close to the correct reading of *tou* in its etymological analysis of *tou ts'ai* but has recorded another pronunciation, *dǒu*, of the original Chinese character,斗, which leads to a totally different interpretation: a cup; a ladle.

derogatory. In the definitions of the derogatory *Chink* [n.[5]] and *chow* [n.], "Chinaman" is followed immediately by "(Derogatory.)," whereas when the neutral *China* and *long-tail* are defined as "Chinaman," no stylistic label is attached. On the other side of the Atlantic, besides the notes "often (taken to be) offensive" in the *Merriam-Webster's* entries for the disparaging term, a survey among a panel of 181 Americans shows that the overwhelming majority thinks of *Chinaman* as obnoxious—indeed it has been so for more than a century (Isaacs 115n36). During this long period of time, however, any well-educated Englishman may have used it with a clear conscience, because the *OED* does not say that using *Chinaman* shows little respect for the Chinese, some of whom are said to have exercised saintly patience in the disgusting Golden State. By contrast, a note in the entry for *Jap* [n.] sounds a direct warning against current imprudent usage:

> Colloquial abbreviation of JAPANESE. [. . .]
> As *n*. and *adj*. the word *Jap* has strong derogatory connotations and is now falling into disuse.

Interestingly, some dictionaries that claim on their title pages to have been "based on the *Oxford English Dictionary* and its supplements" differ on the stylistic parameter of *Chinaman*. For example, in the *COD8*, which was published in 1990, when the *OED2* was one year old, *Jap* is marked "colloq. often offens.," whereas *Chinaman* "arch. or derog. (now usu. offens.)."

So after the conspicuous flaw in *Chinaman*, which denotes that the *OED* does not follow up all the remarkable historical changes of words and phrases associated with China, it is perhaps less surprising to discover that the knowledge of the monumental historical dictionary about the dynastic chronology of China is not adequate enough. Below is definition one with all the quotations for it in the entry for *Tang* [n.[5]]:

> **a.** The name of a dynasty which ruled in China from A.D. 618 to *c* 906; a ruler belonging to this dynasty.
> **1669** J. Ogilby *Nieuhoff's Embassy from E.-India Co. to Emperor of China* I. xviii. 282 At last having miserably worried and weakened each other, they were all subdued by the seventh Race called *Tanga*, which seized upon the whole Empire, and reigned with his Posterity till the Year of Christ 618. **1738** J. B. Du Halde *Descr. Empire China & Chinese Tartary* I. 194 (heading) The Thirteenth Dynasty, call'd *Tang*, which had Twenty Emperors, in the Space of Two hundred eighty nine Years. **1788** tr. *Grosier's Gen. Descr. China II*. vi. iii. 209 Under the Tang, this superstition still continued. **1837** *Penny Cycl*. VII. 81/1 Ly-yuen..in A.D. 622 founded the dynasty of Tâng. **1925** B. RACKHAM in R. Fry et al. *Chinese Art* 15 When the classic period of T'ang is reached, the potters are working with the easy mastery of artists in their craft. **1940** E. Pound *Cantos* xiv. 41 Tang rising. And the first Tang was Kao Tseu, the starter. **1979** MILLS & MANSFIELD *Genuine Article* iii. 62 Ming, Sung and T'ang have become names synonymous with the finest ceramics. T'ang was the dynastic name of the pottery of China in the eighth century AD.

Instead of a vague "*c* 906," the 2009 editions of *Cihai* (literally "A Sea of Words") and

Encyclopedia Britannica, vastly popular reference books in their own culture, give a clear-cut "907," the year when a shrewd general masterminded a *coup d'état* and dethroned the last emperor of the dynasty. Moreover, what confuses a Chinese user is the *OED*'s definition of *Tang* also as "a ruler belonging to this dynasty," a sense that is absent in the *SOED5* and hardly capable of being attested to by any of the seven quotations. The only possible evidence is the 1788 one. But a perusal of the context from which it is excerpted eliminates the flicker of hope:

> —*Immortals*. These were worshipped as so many distinct deities, independent of the Supreme Being: in like manner several of the ancient kings were metamorphosed into gods, and also invoked. Under the Tang, this superstition still continued. The founder of that dynasty erected and consecrated a magnificent temple of Lao-tse himself; and another emperor of the same family caused the statue of this philosopher to be placed with great pomp and solemnity in his palace. (Winterbotham 335)

Evidently, the *Tang* here is not "a ruler" but "that dynasty" or "the same family."

For all its unusual passion for and systematic inclusion of the translated political vocabulary of modern China (Benson 176), the *OED* has antedated the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution by one year in its entry for *cultural* [a.]:

> ***cultural revolution***, a cultural and social movement in Communist China, begun in 1965, which sought to combat 'revisionism' and restore the original purity of Maoist doctrine; also *transf*.

Hence an internal inconsistency with that for *Red Guard*:

> **2.** A name given to [. . .] (*b*) a youth movement during the Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic of China, 1966–76; also, a member of one of these movements.

Curiously enough, on the one hand, some students of lexicography are thwarted in their aspirations to including neologisms from Chinese English: "It is often frustrating, however, to find that (for example) the *South China Post*, or the *Hindu Times*, is written in impeccable Standard English, and contains little of the local vocabulary that is sought" (Price). On the other, such a local vocabulary is not narrow at all in the Chinese social context. Today, a Chinese user may be intrigued to spot in the *OED* many political words and phrases of Chinese origin that have sunk well into oblivion in their daily life, like the Maoist *capitalist roader*, *Little Red Book*, and *ta tzu-pao*, but may also be puzzled why "Reform and Opening-Up," "Three Represent's," and "Scientific Outlook on Development," which have more relevance in post-Mao times to the Chinese and to their interactions with other nations, are nowhere to be found. Indeed, it is noticeable that "little local vocabulary" of Chinese English is recorded in the *OED* after China opened her doors to the West in 1978, after the Soviet Union collapsed, and the Cold War ended—both so anticlimactically in the early 1990s, and, more importantly, after China, with its no.1 population in the world, became the hugest power of purchasing ELT (English language teaching) products and services.

In one of his recent blog entries, Professor Lu Gusun of Fudan University, one of China's leading practitioners of English-Chinese lexicography, has published a briefly annotated selection of Chinese English words that he saw in a popular BBS posting. Some of them are listed in alphabetic order as follows:

Chinsumer 在国外疯狂购物的中国人 [Chin(ese)+(con)sumer: a Chinese consumer who tends to do much shopping overseas]

Democrazy 中国特色民主 [demo(cracy)+crazy: a democracy with Chinese characteristics]

Departyment（政府）有关部门 [de(part)ment+party: a party-controlled government]

Emotionormal 情绪稳定 [emotion+normal: a state in which the masses involved in a public event are reportedly calmed down]

Freedamn 中国特色自由 [free(dom)+damn: freedom with Chinese characteristics]

gunvernment 枪杆子政权 [gun+(go)vernment: a government established on and maintained by its military power]

Innernet 中国互联网 [Inner+(Inter)net: mainland China's heavily-censored Internet]

livelihard 生活 [lively(hood)+hard: a hard living]

propoorty 房地产 [pro(per)ty+poor: real property that has improvised its purchaser]

Sexretary 女秘书 [sex+(sec)retary: a female secretary serves as a fair lady to her boss]

shitizen 屁民 [shit+(cit)izen: a citizen who enjoys few, if any, human rights]

Smilence 笑而不语 [smi(le)+(si)lence]

stuck market 股市 [a stock market that has been slack for long]

Togayther 同志终成眷属 [to(ge)ther+gay: a hard-won gay marriage][5]

[notes and translations added]

In this tiny game of bilingualism, advanced Chinese learners of English not only show off their wit but draw our attention to the potentialities of Chinese English, which has not yet gained full recognition in the club of World Englishes, so to speak. Benson, for one, asserts that there is "no Chinese English in the sense that there is an Australian, Canadian or even Malaysian and Singaporean English" (132).

It is to be ardently hoped that its first thorough revision will enable the *OED* definitions to depict China with closer attention and greater accuracy. Yet this leads to a pivotal question: Who has the final say on what these China-related English words mean exactly? The Chinese? The *OED* lexicographers? Or is it more feasible

[5] A search on Google Books shows that *Democrazy* and *Freedamn* appeared in English publications before they are said to have been of Chinese coinage.

that with the aid of a kaleidoscopic variety of instant communications tools that link every nook and cranny of the globe, these words will be better described rather than prescribed via the concerted efforts of ethnolocalism plus ethnocentrism, that is, of both Chinese lexicographers and English lexicographers, as those former know what the words actually mean as the signifiers of indigenous Chinese things, notions or facts, and those latter know how the words ought to be understood in English? These are open to further discussion. But it is unquestionably a high priority for the upcoming *OED3* to rectify the mistakes that the *NED*'s and the *OED2's* inevitable and formidable encyclopedism, which involves of necessity historical facts and ideological standpoints, has caused and left unnoticed for a long time. In the case of its China-related vocabulary, the *OED* seems to be an alert China-watcher, sometimes even outdoing encyclopedias in the width of coverage. For example, *tou ts'ai* is absent in the 2009 CD-ROM version of *Encyclopedia Britannica*. But this china term happens to underline the accuracy problem, the Achilles' heel of any chaser of the Sun, with the China-related words and phrases. The consequence: a vast Far East country that remains somehow mysterious to the English-speaking world is now misunderstood, and there is the likelihood that this misunderstanding will be institutionalized, for its motivator is none other than the octogenarian ultimate authority on the tongue of Shakespeare and the King James Bible. While correction is one part of the revision task of Herculean magnitude, renewal is another, which may well claim more editorial and critical energies, not to mention those for the parts about China, a looming presence merely on the periphery of Western experience. Besides, for any dictionary project of the *OED* size, renewal itself is by compulsion a most effectual way to accelerate the ageing of lexicographical data. The perpetual paradox, the durable dilemma, for Mr. Richard Snary. Yet one who proposes to define the world and not at length to "lose the name of action" must, like Henry Fowler, derive one's courage and persistence from the Latin adage: *solvitur ambulando* ("solved by walking").

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