REPORTING EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY VOCABULARY IN THE *OED*

CHARLOTTE BREWER

It is universally acknowledged that the *OED* is an unrivalled and invaluable source of information and erudition on words and their meanings, together with their etymology, historical development, currency, spellings, and pronunciation. Not only does this remarkable dictionary provide a systematic and comprehensive account of lexical items from 1150 to around 1928 (the date the first edition was completed), but it also prints, for each entry, a wealth of quotations evidencing usage. These quotations, amassed over many years from enormous numbers of sources, with tenacious and protracted manual industry now almost unimaginable to us, constitute the raw material on which the semantic analyses and definitions of the lexicographers are based.[1] The open display of this evidence on the printed page allows users to scrutinise the quotations for themselves, and thus understand the grounds for the lexicographers' judgements. It also encourages us to draw conclusions from the selection and presentation of the quotations.

But how much do we know about the reasons and circumstances underlying the lexicographers' choice of quotations, and the conclusions it is therefore legitimate to draw from the selection they print? Now that *OED* is electronically searchable, it is possible to begin to answer these two questions and to form views on the dictionary's treatment of different periods and sources in the language. In this paper, I begin by sketching out some of the major issues concerning the role and function of quotations in the *OED*, and then look in more detail at the *OED*'s documentation of the eighteenth century.[2]

The importance of the quotations, and the methods by which they were collected, cannot be over-emphasized. Quotations have been called "the heart of the lexicographical process" (Aitken 1971, 9), and certainly the early lexicographers understood that this was the chief element in their dictionary that allowed them to

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[1] Several histories of the making of the *OED* now exist, the fullest continuing to be that of the editor's granddaughter (Murray 1977). See also Craigie and Onions 1933, and the excellent recent book by Mugglestone (2005).

[2] I am most grateful to John Simpson, Chief Editor of *OED3*, and to John Considine for comments on and corrections to this article and its appendix. All responsibility for the data, views and judgements they contain remains my own.

take such great evolutionary steps forward in lexicography. As two of them, W. A. Craigie and C. T. Onions, wrote in 1933, *OED*'s "basis is a collection of some five million excerpts from English literature of every period," forming "the only possible foundation for the historical treatment of every word and idiom which is the *raison d'être* of the work. It is a fact everywhere recognized that the consistent pursuit of this evidence has worked a revolution in the art of lexicography" (Craigie and Onions 1933).

The main editor of the first edition, J. A. H. Murray, pointed to the fundamental role of quotations in a dictionary when he described their use in Charles Richardson's *A new dictionary of the English language* (1836-7): "Observing how much light was shed on the meaning of words by Johnson's quotations, [Richardson] was impressed with the notion that, in a dictionary, definitions are unnecessary, that quotations alone are sufficient ... *his special notion was quite correct in theory*" (J. Murray 1900, 44 [my italics]; for more on Richardson's dictionary, see Aarsleff 1983, 249-52; Dolezal 2000; Fowler 2004).

A number of accounts exist of the ways in which the early *OED* editors and volunteers gathered the quotations which contributed so crucially to the revolutionary new dictionary. Readers worked through thousands of sources and excerpted quotations from them illustrating how words had been used in varying senses; editors and sub-editors then studied these quotations intensively so as to arrive at an analysis of their historical relationship. The last of these operations was described by Murray to the members of the Philological Society in 1884, in a report which makes clear the importance of the provenance and selection of the quotations concerned:

> Only those who have made the experiment, know the bewilderment with which editor or sub-editor, after he has apportioned the quotations for such a word as *above, against, account, allow, and, as, assize*, or *at* among 20, 30 or 40 groups, and furnished each of these with a provisional definition, spreads them out on a table or on a floor, where he can obtain a general survey of the whole, and spends hour after hour in shifting them about like the pieces on a chess-board, striving to find in the fragmentary evidence of an incomplete historical record, such a sequence of meanings as may form a logical chain of development. (J. Murray 1882-4, 509-10; cf. K. Murray 1977, 298)

Three years later he provided, to quote one of his contemporary successors, the present Director of *OED3*, "a clear picture of the process of discovering meanings in the data" (Silva 2000, 90): "You sort your quotations into bundles on your big table, and think you are getting the word's pedigree right, when a new sense, or three or four new senses, start up, which upset all your scheme, and you are obliged to begin afresh" (J. Murray 1887, x). As Silva writes, "in practice it is almost invariably in the quotations that the historical lexicographer initially seeks and

discerns fine sense-divisions and new senses" (Silva 2000, 89). Murray's younger colleague, Onions, expatiated on this stage of the analysis in an anonymous contribution to the Oxford University Press's in-house magazine of 1928 (part of a longer article written to celebrate the completion of the *OED*):

> Careful and repeated reading of these [sc. the quotations, "the raw material of most of the articles in the Dictionary"] brings to [the editor's] mind definitions of the senses, some well known to him, others unknown or unthought of but for the evidence now furnished him by examples of actual use. At the same time he is continually turning to existing dictionaries—Dr. Johnson, the various editions of Webster, and the most recent supplements—gladly availing himself of any help or hint they offer in the wording of a definition, or in the record of new senses. Full as the recorded material is, he finds that there are uses—especially modern terms and colloquialisms—for which no quotations are forthcoming ... Much of the toil of sifting and collecting fresh material consists in the examination of the Old English and Middle English dictionaries, the glossaries to early texts, and the concordances to the Bible, Shakespeare, and other poets. (Onions 1928, 15)

These remarks make it clear that where "raw material" was perceived to be lacking, editors turned to specific sources to fill in the quotation gaps: Old and Middle English dictionaries (for which resources were then poor), glossaries (such as those provided in Early English Text Society editions, presumably), and concordances to the Bible and to the established canonical poets, these being the only authors for whom concordances, major editions with glossaries, or both were available (e.g. Shakespeare, Milton, Chaucer, and Tennyson). (The question to what extent the editors' expectations and intuition guided, and perhaps determined, their additional and supplementary findings is a fascinating one which deserves full investigation, such as is not possible here).

In two further accounts, the dictionary itself provides information about the quotations and their role; although we may find both descriptions, in their different ways, somewhat cursory given the lexicographers' own views of their pivotal significance in dictionary-making. In his "General Explanations," his brief report on the English language and on *OED*'s editorial practices and printing conventions, published in 1888 as part of the introductory material to the first volume of *OED1* and reprinted in the 1933 and 1989 editions of the dictionary, Murray explained that

> To a great extent the explanations of the meanings, or definitions, have been framed anew upon a study of all the quotations for each word collected for this work, of which those printed form only a small part. ...
> The *quotations* illustrate the forms and uses of the word, showing the age of the word generally, and of its various senses particularly; the earliest and, in obsolete words or senses, the latest, known instances of its occurrence being always quoted. ... They are arranged chronologically so as to give about one for each century, though various

considerations often render a larger number necessary. ... It is to be distinctly borne in mind that the quotations are not merely examples of the fully developed use of the word or special sense under which they are cited: they have also to illustrate its origin, its gradual separation from allied words or senses, or even, by negative evidence, its non-existence at the given date. It would often have been desirable to annotate the quotations, explaining the purpose for which they are adduced; but the exigencies of space render this impossible, and they are therefore left to speak for themselves.

The need to keep the Dictionary within practicable limits has also rendered it necessary to give only a minimum of quotations selected from the material available, and to make those given as brief as possible. (Murray 1888)

A number of features can be pulled out here. First, Murray's clear enunciation of the principle we have seen stated elsewhere, namely that the quotations are the bedrock of the lexicographical enterprise. Secondly, his point that the quotations actually printed in the *OED* form only a small proportion of those initially gathered; we may assume that Murray and his editors chose to print the most representative and aptly phrased of the quotations available to them. Related to this point is Murray's reference in the last two sentences to the extreme pressures on the editors to keep the dictionary to a manageable size, so as to ensure the completion of the project on the one hand and control expenditure on staff, administration and printing on the other. Undoubtedly this was always an important constraint on the generosity with which senses could be illustrated (K. Murray 1977 *ad indicem* s.v. *Oxford English Dictionary: size, problem of*; Mugglestone 2005 *ad indicem*, s.v. *Oxford English Dictionary: scale of and attendant problems*). Thirdly, the range of functions that the quotations must perform. They are "not merely examples" of the sense for which they are cited, but they must also present a coherent picture of the way in which, according to the lexicographers' judgement, a word and its senses have proliferated: this requires at least one quotation a century. Fourthly, Murray indicates that he has sought to illustrate with the quotations how a sense has changed or been modified over time, even to the extent of indicating, "by negative evidence, its non-existence at the given date." Finally, a significant implication of Murray's account of the function of quotations is that each discernible sense is to be illustrated by at least one quotation. Given the restrictions on the total number of quotations already referred to, this meant (and means) that the quotations in *OED* cannot be taken to be representative of proportional usage in the period from which they come. If there is one quotation per century, then a rare word will receive the same number of quotations (namely one per century) as a ubiquitous word. Words at the margins receive the same treatment as those at the centre.

No further discussion of the role of quotations was added to the first or second twentieth-century supplements or to the second edition of *OED*. However, a much fuller account has now appeared as part of the online introduction to the current revision of the dictionary, *OED3* (Simpson 2000a). Here, Simpson describes how

many non-literary sources are being read by the revisers in order to correct the literary bias of the first edition (a bias pointed to in Onions' account quoted above, which specified poetic concordances as a first resort for editors seeking to augment inadequate quotation collections, and also evidenced by electronic searches of *OED*). Simpson in addition tells us that the enormous number of new quotations now being added to the *OED* files, together with extensive fresh bibliographic research, are rewriting, in far greater detail than previously possible, the record of language in the dictionary (see further quotation on p. 121 below and Brewer 2004). For the purposes of this paper, his remarks on the lexicographers' judgement as to how many quotations to quote, and with what chronological frequency, are particularly interesting:

> Various factors contribute to the number of quotations that are used to illustrate the history of a particular word or meaning in the Dictionary. In some cases (depending on the length of time a term has been recorded in English) an interval of fifty years between quotations might be appropriate. In others, a longer or shorter time span might be satisfactory. Other significant factors include the relative frequency of the term in a given period, the availability of quotation material, and the need to illustrate numerous spelling variants and grammatical structures. (Simpson 2000a)

Here we may note several important departures from Murray's practice. First, Simpson specifies fifty years, rather than Murray's century, as a possible guideline to quotation frequency; secondly, for the first time it seems that "relative frequency of [a] term in a given period" may now be taken into account in choosing how many quotations to include in the dictionary over a specific number of years; thirdly, it appears that it is not date and meaning alone that may justify printing a quotation, but also variations in spelling and grammatical structure.

All these statements and accounts give us some sort of purchase in making shape of the pictures that emerge from the electronic searches of the *OED* which I began this paper by alluding to, and it is to one particular aspect of *OED* documentation—quotations from the eighteenth century—that I now wish to return.

It has long been recognized that quotations from the eighteenth century in the *Oxford English Dictionary* seem to be fewer than for other periods, despite the major increase in literacy, reading, and publishing over this period.[3] Why should this be? The first major researcher on *OED* methodology, Jürgen Schäfer, thought that readers' slips for this period had somehow got lost, but documents from the late 1850s, i.e. the early days of the dictionary's compilation, indicate that the American

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[3] This increase has been extensively investigated in recent years: see e.g. Rivers (2001), Turner and Suarez (forthcoming). For comparison of *OED* with *ESTC* records, see Brewer 2005-6, "STC 1500-1799."

readers who had undertaken the task of reading books from the eighteenth century did not, for one reason or another, fulfil their promise. (US volunteers subsequently made an enormous contribution to the dictionary, which Murray gratefully acknowledged: J. Murray 1880-1, 123-4.) In 1879, when he became editor of the dictionary, Murray issued an appeal for more readers and reading in which he reported that "nearly the whole of that century's books, with the exception of Burke's works, have still to be gone through," adding in the list of books which concluded it, "the literature of [the eighteenth] century has hardly been touched. Readers are safe with almost any eighteenth-century book they can lay their hands on" (Philological Society 1879, 3, and ibid., appended list 2; Brewer 2000, 45; Brewer 2006, 45). It is clear that Murray toiled heroically to fill the "serious gaps" he found in the quotation material. As he described in 1884,

> for more than five-sixths of the words we have had to search out and find additional quotations in order to complete their history, and illustrate the senses; for *every* word we have had to make a general search to discover whether any earlier or later quotations, or quotations in other senses, exist. (J. Murray 1882-4, 515-16)

But the evidence we can now turn up from electronic searching of the *OED* suggests that he was unsuccessful in this respect where the eighteenth century was concerned.
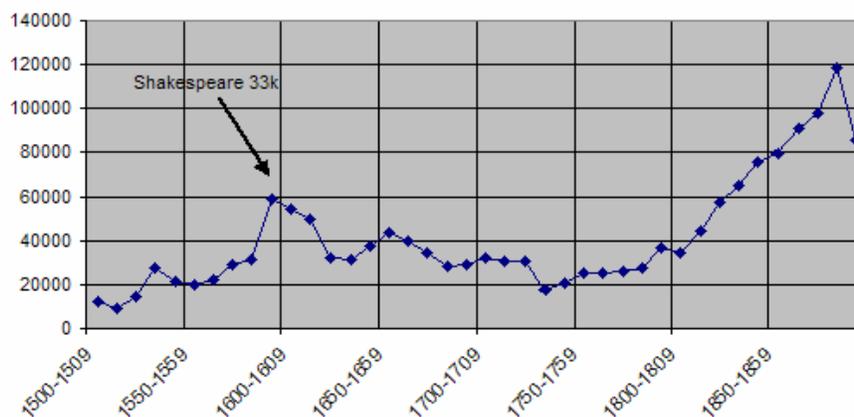

Table 9-1 Quotations per decade in *OED2*

According to the search tools on *OED Online*, there are 246,092 quotations in *OED2* for the period 1500-1599; 380,471 for the period 1600-1699; 270,929 for the

period 1700-1799; and 747,119 for the period 1800-1899. Table 9-1 represents this variation by plotting number of quotations per decade on a graph, reproduced from *Examining the OED*, a research project devoted to study of this dictionary and its sources.[4]

There are a number of ways in which one can review the issue of varying intensity of documentation in *OED* where eighteenth-century documentation is concerned. One is to conduct large electronic searches of the dictionary, taking the century as a (necessarily arbitrary) unit of analysis. For example, it is possible to identify the headwords in both *OED2* and *OED3* where there is a complete break in eighteenth-century documentation (that is, where there is at least one seventeenth-, and at least one nineteenth-, but no eighteenth-century quotations) by using the advanced search tools.[5] Such a search produces 18,027 results in *OED2*, and 18,410 results in *OED3* (searched January 2006). Both these figures seem significantly large, although in fact they do not include the many entries (like that for *report*, discussed below) with *some* eighteenth-century quotations, but far fewer than those from the centuries on either side.

A finding such as this, indicating that there are substantial numbers of words with what could be described as missing eighteenth-century quotations, points to a feature of both original and revised versions of the *OED* which is certainly worth investigating. Analysing these large quantities of results on *OED Online* in any detail, however, is difficult because of the long periods of time it takes to move between screens, and because the software programme retains records of searches for only 30 minutes or so. So the method I pursue in this paper is to consider

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[4] Brewer 2005-6, "1500-1899." For an explanation of the different editions of *OED* and an account of the search procedures used to arrive at the data on which the graph is based, see Brewer 2005-6, "How to search OED" (the significant point is that electronic searches for quotations before 1850 or so are in effect searches of the original edition of the dictionary, *OED1,* although this material is accessed through searching *OED2*). Before the *OED* was put in electronic form as *OED2*, similar results were achieved by Schäfer (1980), who analysed a sample of the text in *OED*. *Examining the OED* has been supported by grants from the Research Development Fund of Oxford University, the Oxford News International Fund, and by a Laurence Urdang-DSNA Award, all of which are gratefully acknowledged by the present writer, leader of the project. Its searches *of OED Online* have been carried out by Christopher Whalen, who has also managed the database and created the website, and by Dan Calvert and Sarah McLoughlin, all of Hertford College, Oxford.
[5] On the Advanced search page for *OED2* and *OED3* respectively, search for 'Entries' containing ("1800-1899" in quotation date) AND ("1600-1699" in quotation date) AND NOT ("1700-1799" in quotation date).

individual entries in an attempt to see whether they shed light on the cumulative patterns of documentation represented both by these two specific searches and by Table 9-1 above.

Any frequent user of the dictionary will be familiar with the distribution of quotations displayed under the verb *report*, where words or senses are liberally represented by quotations before and after the eighteenth century, but where there are no, or comparatively few, quotations, from the eighteenth century itself. There are 133 quotations altogether in *OED2* for the various senses of this verb, distributed across the centuries as follows:

Century	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	All
Number of quotations	2	15	33	29	6	34	14	133

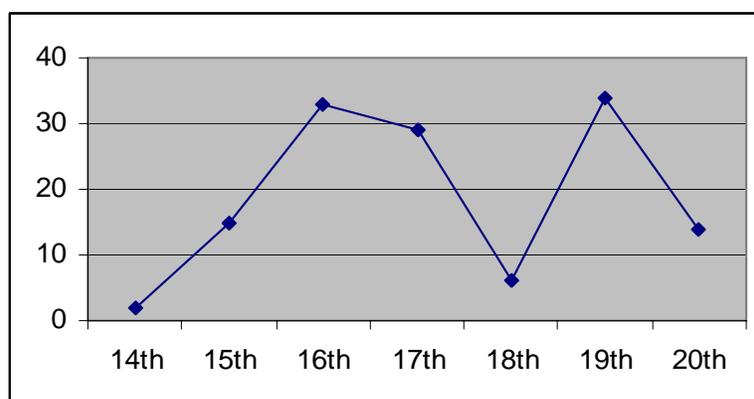Table 9-2 Distribution across centuries of quotations for verb *report* in *OED2*[6]

Table 9-3 Number of quotations per century for verb *report* in *OED2*

Broadly speaking this individual pattern replicates that of the chronological distribution of the quotations in the dictionary overall, as represented in Table 9-1.

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[6] The table includes the thirteen quotations (twelve twentieth-century and one nineteenth-century) added by Burchfield in vol 3 of his Supplement (1982). As Burchfield did not in general set out to provide recent quotations for senses already well illustrated with late-nineteenth-century quotations, the total for the twentieth century is disproportionately low; see further Brewer (2004) 22-4.

Compiling this information on the verb *report* was relatively laborious, since there are (at present) no electronic short-cuts to working through each entry individually, nor, as already mentioned, are there efficient and comprehensive electronic means of identifying individual entries with low eighteenth-century documentation. Nevertheless, as the correspondence between Tables 1 and 3 would predict, such a pattern is typical of many other entries which I examined in a rough sampling of pages across the alphabet,[7] as under the following headwords and countless others:

> *aftermath, afternoon, afterward, aga (agha)*; *blain* (v., sense 1), *blame* (sb., sense 1), *blameless* (sense 2a), *blamelessly, blamer, blameworthy*; *characterless, charactery, charcoal* (sb.), *chard*[2]*, chare*[1] (sense 5); *divest* (sense 3), *divesture*, some senses of *divide* (v.), *divide* (sb., sense 1)*, divided, dividedly, dividedness*; *escheat* (sb., senses 2 and 4), *escheat* (v.), *escheated*; *fire-eyed, fire-flaught, fire-house, fire-pote, fire-proof*; *gabble* (sb., senses 1 and 2), *gabble* (v., sense 1), *gaberdine* (sense 2), *gabion, gabioned, gable* (sb[1], sense 2); *heavenful, heaven-gate, heaven-high, heavenless, heavenlike, heavenly* (senses 2 and 3); *impoverishing, impoverishment* (sense 2), *imprecate* (senses 1b, 2), *impregnable* (fig. sense), *impregnate* (ppl. a.); *jaculate, jaculation, jade* (= horse); *knab, knack* (sb. 1), *knacker*[1] (sense 2), *knag* (sb[1], sense 2); *lubberland, lubberlike, lubberly* (adv.), *lubish, lubric, lubrical, lubricity*; *matchable* (sense 3), *matched* (sense 2), *matcher, matchet, matching* (ppl. a.), *matchless, match-maker*[1] (sense 1) *mate* (sb.[1]b); *nailed, nail-head* (sense 1), *nail-hole, naily, Nair, naïs* (sense 1), *nake* (v.); *outsideness, outsight*[1] (sense 1), *outsit, outsparkle, outspeak, outspend, out-spent, outspin* (sense 2); *palliard, palliate* (sense 4), *palliated, palliatory, pallium* (sense 2a); *quittance* (sb., senses 1-3), *quivering* (vbl. sb.), *Quixote* (sense a [contrast the 3 18th-century quotations for sense b]); *reave* (v.[1] sense 5c), *reave* (v.[2]), *rebaptize* (sense 2), *rebaptizing*; *scroll* (sb., senses 1b, 1c, 2b, 3b), *scroll* (v., sense 1), *scrolled, scrotocele*; *trance* (sb.[1], sense 2) *trance* (sb.[2]), *trance* (v.[1], sense 2,), *trance* (v.[2]), *tranced, tranch*; *umbrous, umpirage, umpireship*; *vane* (sense 1b), *vanish* (v. sense 2a); *waif* (sb.1, sense 2a), *wail* (v., senses 2, 4, 5a), *wailer, wailing* (vbl n.); (no examples of words beginning with *x* from the 2 pages selected, covering '*X-xebec*', on which the majority of quotations were nineteenth-century); *yet* (senses 1a, 1c, 3b, 4b, 5b, 5c, 7, 8, 9); *zelator* (senses 1 & 2), *zendik, zenith* (senses 1, 3).

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[7] I leafed through a first edition of *OED* to find these, arbitrarily selecting one double-page for each letter in an attempt to give a fair representative sample, and swiftly picked out words or senses documented with quotations *both* from the seventeenth century or earlier, *and* from the nineteenth-century, but with either no eighteenth-century quotations at all, or few (e.g. 1), compared with those (2 or more) provided from the centuries either side. The experiment can be easily and fruitfully replicated; cf. also note 5 above.

The key question here is, does the chronological pattern of distribution in these items—that is, no or minimal examples of usage in the eighteenth century, despite (more) examples of usage in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries—tell us about the word concerned, or instead about the texts and periods most read by the lexicographers (or their readers, or both), and therefore most likely to yield quotations?

In an attempt to answer this question, and assuming that documentation for the verb *report* is more or less representative of these many other entries, what can we make of its characteristics? First, we can note that the distribution of quotations varies between one sense and another. Ten main senses, comprising 28 sub-senses, are distinguished altogether of this verb. Of these 28, 13 are illustrated only with quotations *previous* to the eighteenth century, and six are illustrated only with quotations *subsequent* to the eighteenth century. In both these situations, the absence of eighteenth-century documentation in *OED* may reflect insufficient searching by the lexicographers rather than the demise or non-existence of the sense over this period. But it seems more promising to begin by looking closely at the senses where usage is first recorded *before* the eighteenth century, and last recorded *after* the eighteenth century—that is, in the remaining nine senses of the verb *report*—and to look particularly closely at the cases where there is a gap in the list of quotations *during* the eighteenth century. Such a gap occurs under senses 1a ("To relate, narrate, tell, give an account of"), 1b (as 1a, "const[ructed with] *that* or [the] *inf[initive]*"), 2b ("To repeat (something heard); to relate as having been spoken by another"), 5a ("To make report (*on* a person or thing); (obs.) to relate, state," and 5b ("To make or draw up, to give in or submit, a formal report ...").

Here is the entry for 1*a*:

> **1. a.** To relate, narrate, tell, give an account of (a fact, event, etc.). Also const. *to* a person. Now somewhat *rare*.
>
> *c*1386 CHAUCER *Sqr.'s T.* 64 Ther nys no man that may reporten al. *c*1386 ——*Epil. Merch. T.* 17 And I sholde rekenen euery vice Which þat she hath,..it sholde reported be And toold to hire. *c*1420 LYDG. *Assembly of Gods* 1486 When I came in I meruelyd gretly of that I behelde & herde there reporte. *c*1450 LOVELICH *Grail* xlii. 237 Nasciens to hym gan to Reporte In to whiche diuers Contre he gan Resorte. **1500-20** DUNBAR *Poems* xxxii. 69 This report I with my pen, How at Dumfermling fell the cace. **1509** HAWES *Past. Pleas.* XIII. (Percy Soc.) 52, I must procede, and shew of Arismetrik With divers nombres which I must reporte. **1573** G. HARVEY *Letter-bk.* (Camden) 10 If I shuld report and repeat al your wurship miht think me far wurs abusid. **1604** E. G[RIMSTONE] *D'Acosta's Hist. Indies* III. ix. 144 It were a very difficult matter, to report particularly the admirable effectes which some windes cause. **1634** MILTON *Comus* 127 'Tis onely day-light that makes Sin Which these dun shades will

ne're report. **1667** —— *P.L.* VI. 21 He..found Already known what he for news had thought To have reported. **1859** TENNYSON *Elaine* 625 Came the Lord of Astolat out, to whom the Prince Reported who he was. **1883** *Century Mag.* Oct. 927/2 'Outre-Mer', a young poet's sketch-book, reports his first transition from cloister life to travel and experience.

Perhaps the first thing to explain (and then set on one side for present purposes) is the editorial comment that this sense is "Now somewhat *rare*." That word "Now" was written in 1906, the year in which the fascicle for the alphabetic range *reign-reserve* was published. Much of the entry for *report*, in common with the vast majority of entries in *OED1*, was left unchanged both in the 1972-86 supplement (in which Burchfield added three new sub-senses) and in *OED2*. Clearly the usage is *now*, in 2006, a familiar one and has been so for many years.

Where the quotations are concerned, we may observe the predominantly literary canonical character of the sources—two each from the poetry of Chaucer and Milton, and one each from that of Lydgate, Dunbar, Hawes, and Tennyson. The literary bias of the *OED* has already been noted. It was an unexceptionable assumption at this time that, in the words of the American linguist William Dwight Whitney,

> The great body of literary works of acknowledged merit and authority, in the midst of a people proud and fond of it, is an agent in the preservation and transmission of any tongue, the importance of which cannot be easily over-estimated. (Whitney 1867, 23)

So we need not be surprised by this favouring of literary sources as evidence for language usage more generally, which is entirely characteristic of the dictionary (see further Brewer 2005-6, "Literature and the nation"). Three of the authors instanced here—Milton, Chaucer, and Tennyson—are among the ten most frequently cited sources in the *OED*, partly, no doubt, on account of the availability of concordances for Milton and Tennyson (Prendergast 1857; Cleveland 1867; Brightwell 1869; Langley 1870; Bradshaw 1894), and the full glossary to the definitive edition of Chaucer recently published in 1894 by Skeat, a close friend of Murray who had from the beginning been associated with the plans for the dictionary which was to become the *OED* (Skeat 1894; K. Murray 1977, 140f and passim).

The most striking feature of the treatment of this sense, however, is the gap in quotations between Milton and Tennyson. Is it really the case that *report* was not used in this way between the 1670s and 1850s? It seems implausible. But what is the significance of this interruption in the *OED* record, one which as already indicated can be found in many other entries?

To consider this, we can return to Murray's own words on the role and function of quotations in his dictionary. As we have seen, he stressed that "only a minimum

of quotations [could be] selected from the material available" when choosing quotations for an entry. But that is not a helpful explanation here—why two quotations from Chaucer and two from Milton if space was at a premium? Murray also described how the job of quotations was to illustrate the historical development of a word or sense, and "even, by negative evidence, its non-existence at the given date." How much weight does this statement allow us to put on "negative evidence"? Does the gap between 1667 and 1859 qualify as such? Or does it instead indicate that Murray did not inherit suitable quotations for this sense of the verb *report*, and that although, as we have seen him describe, "for more than five-sixths of the words we have had to search out and find additional quotations in order to complete their history, and illustrate the senses," *report* was somehow passed over?

One way of resolving this question is to make independent searches for this sense of the verb *report* over the missing years. Here we have many more resources to hand than did the original lexicographers, thanks to the revolution in electronic media. Major databases for the eighteenth century now include the Chadwyck-Healey collection of English literature (LION) and Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO). How easy is it to find eighteenth-century instances of the verb *report*, in one of the senses under-represented in *OED*, in the various texts stored in these collections?

The answer is, very easy. If you type in *report* as a search term in full text, in ECCO, limiting the search by date to the years 1700-1799, you get nearly 60,000 hits (59,179), which correspond to items in this database containing one or (many) more examples of the word *report*.[8] The database allows swift access to facsimile text of every one of these examples, which I chose to order by ascending date of publication, and a rapid survey of the first few pages of hits revealed over half a dozen examples of the verb *report* (amid many more examples of the noun *report*), all from non-literary sources, religious and legal, apparently unrecorded in the *OED*; these are detailed in section 1 of the appendix to this paper, which is posted online at Brewer 2005-6. Searching LION turned up a good quantity of further

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[8] Searches reported here were made in October-December 2005. Many of these hits (though none discussed or taken into consideration unless specifically indicated) occur in dictionaries, in multiple copies of the same text, or in editions of works originally published before the eighteenth century. It should also be noted that the reliability of the searches in ECCO varies according to the legibility of the facsimiles with respect to the word searched for. While results for *report* seemed consistently accurate, those for *lob* (another word with low eighteenth-century documentation for which I searched ECCO) were not, as the word was consistently misidentified in some of the indistinctly printed sources. I have therefore confined my analysis to words reliably identified in this database.

examples (again amid a much larger store of noun hits), notably six from the work of Pope. Of these, four were from the *Iliad* (1715):

> Go then, to *Greece* report our fixt Design;
> Bid all your Counsels, all your Armies join ... (9: 544-5)

> With Grief I see the great *Machaon* bleeds.
> This to report, my hasty Course I bend;
> Thou know'st the fiery Temper of my Friend. (11: 797-99)

> *Iris!* descend, and what we here ordain
> Report to yon' mad Tyrant of the Main. (15: 180-1)

> Lest any *Argive*, (at this Hour awake,
> To ask our Counsel or our Orders take,)
> Approaching sudden to our open'd Tent,
> Perchance behold thee, and our Grace prevent.
> Should such report thy honour'd Person here,
> The King of Men the Ransom might defer. (24: 818-23)

The other two were from the *Odyssey* (1725-1726):

> Bid him, arriv'd in bright *Calypso*'s court,
> The Sanction of th'assembled pow'rs report. (1: 106-7)

> Say, royal youth, sincere of soul report
> What cause hath led you to the *Spartan* court? (4: 421-22)

This is striking, since Pope is probably the single most extensively cited eighteenth-century author in *OED* (see Table 4 below), and since these two translations from Homer furnish around 40% of the total number of quotations attributed to this poet in the dictionary. There are c. 5,800 quotations from Pope's work in *OED2*, of which c. 1,500 (25%) are from the *Odyssey* and something under 900 (15%) from the *Iliad*.[9] Nevertheless, these examples of the verb *report*, all arguably good examples of *OED* sense 1a, were missed.

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[9] Pope shared his translation of the *Odyssey* with two collaborators, Elijah Fenton and William Broome, who between them were responsible for half the books, Fenton taking I, IV, XIX and XX, and Broome II, VI, VIII, XI, XII, XVI, XVIII and XXIII. Pope translated the rest and revised the whole: Johnson commented, "How the two associates performed their parts is well known to the readers of poetry, who have never been able to distinguish their books from those of Pope" (Johnson 1779-81/2006, 3: 90). *OED3* distinguishes between the translators of the *Odyssey*, with

On the basis of this preliminary study it seems reasonable to assume that one could easily turn up many more such instances. It also seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that the absence or low representation of eighteenth-century usage of the verb *report* in the *OED* does not accurately reflect the language of the time. We have already established that the intention of the *OED* was not to be representative of the *relative* usage of words or senses, but to record instances, one a century, of their usage if such was available. So the comparative rarity (as suggested by ECCO and LION) of the verb *report*, as against the noun, in eighteenth-century texts is not a sufficient reason not to record the usage of the verb over this period.

Swift searches of a comparable kind readily furnish eighteenth-century instances of many other words where documentation from this period in *OED* is also missing or sparse. I give full accounts of three, *afternoon*, *aftermath*, *afterward,* in the Appendix (section 2). There seems no reason to think that these examples are not representative of perhaps hundreds more, given the comparatively low total number of eighteenth-century quotations in the dictionary.

At this stage we may pause and ask ourselves why such examples should have been missed. Where the verb *report* is concerned, we may speculate that, because the word is not morphologically distinct from the far more common noun (for which *OED* supplies relatively more, if not abundant, eighteenth-century quotations), it was therefore less likely to catch the eye of vigilant volunteer readers.[10] That explanation will not do for *aftermath*, however: and indeed it is very difficult to produce, and convincingly defend, plausible explanations that would apply across the board to the numerous further examples, of varying types, one can turn up in similar investigations of meagre eighteenth-century documentation.

If we extrapolate from these examples it would seem likely that scanty representation of this period is due to the lexicographers (and in some cases, perhaps, the limitations on the material available to them) and not to the language

the result that quotations for this work attributed to Pope are dropping in number as *OED3* revision progresses.

[10] There is good reason to think that relative familiarity or conspicuousness of word-form played a significant part in evidence-gathering for the *OED*. The first set of instructions to readers had asked them to pick out quotations only for words not included in concordances to the Bible and Shakespeare, thus encouraging selection of unusual rather than usual words; Murray famously complained that as a consequence he was over-supplied with quotations for eccentric vocabulary, ending up with 50 instances of *abusion*, and only five of *abuse* (J. Murray 1879, 572). A good illustration of the consequence of such practice is the *OED1* quotation record for the verb *mirror*, which begins with 1820 (Keats); the *OED3* revisers have found earlier examples in Hoccleve (1410) and Nashe (1593), both of which authors were also read and quoted by *OED1*.

itself. We may also have to accept the proposition that, consciously or unconsciously, the first-edition editors of *OED* felt, when shaping the entry for a word, that eighteenth-century quotations were less interesting or important than those from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth centuries, despite the declared aim to provide at least one quotation a century. This disregard may be helpfully elucidated by exploring nineteenth-century accounts of eighteenth-century literature and language (for recent discussion, see the essays in O'Gorman and Turner 2004). Swinburne, for example, writing in 1868, reminds his readers that Blake lived at

> a time when the very notion of poetry, as we now understand it, had totally died and decayed out of the minds of men; when we not only had no poetry, a thing which was bearable, but had verse in plenty; a thing which was not in the least bearable (Swinburne 1868, 8)

He likewise comments on some of Blake's early lines ("My lord was like a flower upon the brows | of lusty May") that they are "Verses not to be despised, when one remembers that the boy who wrote them ... was living in full eighteenth century" (Swinburne 1868, 11).

The conclusion that the use of eighteenth-century texts by OED1 lexicographers was shaped by their attitudes to the period is incidentally supported by the list of eighteenth-century authors particularly well treated by the lexicographers, readily understandable as reflecting late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century tastes:
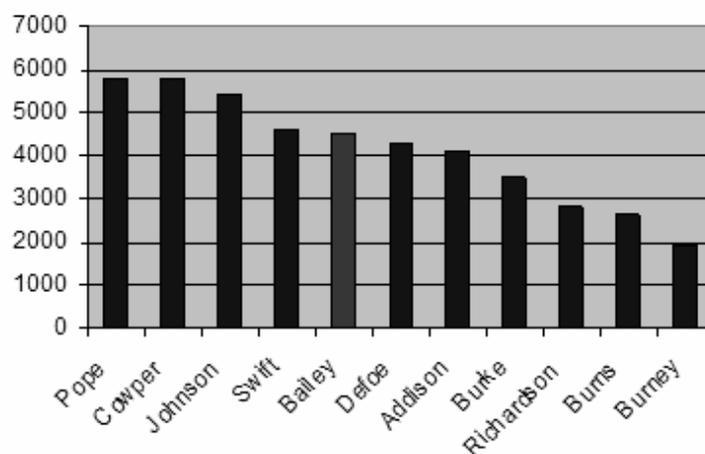

Table 9-4 *OED* favourite 18th-century sources (Brewer 2005-6, "18c sources")

As I have described elsewhere, these mainly comprise the major male canonical authors, with only one highly quoted female author, Frances Burney, among their number. The exception in this list of literary authors is Nathan Bailey, who is quoted, for material in one or other of his dictionaries, nearly 4,600 times. This is another matter that needs further investigation: citation from early eighteenth-century dictionaries in the *OED* seems to be unusually intense, perhaps because quotations from this period were in relatively scarce supply (see further Brewer 2006, 47).

Additional searches suggest a reasonably strong correlation between the number of *OED* quotations and late-nineteenth-century literary values. Two examples, selected from many possible candidates, may serve as illustration. First, William Blake, who was minimally but not negligibly treated by the dictionary. His total of 108 quotations in the first edition of *OED* (mostly from texts published before 1800) was possibly influenced by two signficant studies of his work, by A. Gilchrist and by the poet Swinburne, both of which sought to establish him as a great and hitherto unjustly neglected poet, and both of which were published and swiftly reprinted in the 1860s, when reading for the *OED* was getting under way (Gilchrist, Linton, et al. 1863; Swinburne 1868; see also Bentley 1975).[11] A contrasting case is that of A. L. Barbauld (1743–1825), a distinguished, productive, and contemporarily acclaimed poet and essayist (see Newlyn 2000, 134-69, and McCarthy 2004). Her *Poems* went through five editions between 1773 and 1777 and were described by the *Monthly Review* as having "a justness of thought, and vigour of imagination, inferior only to the works of Milton and Shakespeare" (Woodfall 1773, 54), and her other works were similarly often reprinted. She is quoted just 18 times in all in *OED1*. Ridicule by S. T. Coleridge and others, together with her gender, probably played a part in this near-exclusion (Coleridge 1808-19/1987, 1: 406-8; Vargo 1998; on *OED*'s treatment of female authors see Baigent, Brewer, and Larminie 2005). Yet it is easy to find examples in her works of usages that would valuably supplement the *OED* record for the eighteenth century. For instance, in line 3 of "To a little invisible being who is expected soon to become visible" (written 1795), she provides an additional eighteenth-century quotation for *pledge* 2d ("Applied to a child, as a token or evidence of mutual love and duty between parents, or as a hostage given to fortune"); in line 4, an adverbial instance of *auspicious*, unrecorded in *OED2*; in line 11, a second eighteenth-century example of s*warm* (n 2), not a contemptuous usage, by contrast with the existing quotations, to match the two sixteenth-century and nineteenth-century ones ; at line 4 of "Washing Day" (1797), an instance of *slipshod* (a, 2a) antedating the four

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[11] *OED3* is steadily adding to the numbers of quotations from Blake and has increased them by 40 so far (56 over the revised alphabet range *M-philandering*, compared with *OED2*'s 16).

nineteenth-century examples (starting with Leigh Hunt in 1815)—and no doubt there are many others.[12]

Whether the comparative paucity of quotations in *OED* from this period is due to under-reading of this period and hence a comparatively low stock of quotations to draw on, or instead to the lexicographers' preferences for certain sorts of quotation sources over others—or, perhaps most likely, to a combination of these two factors—the consequences of so reduced and selective an array of quotations are, I suggest, highly significant. As we have seen, quotations in *OED* are not so much illustrative as constitutive of meaning—for that is the implication of the definition methods described so vividly by Murray and Onions, quoted at the start of this article. This is fully recognized by the present-day *OED* lexicographers as well as by their predecessors. Thus Penny Silva writes,

> The discovery of meaning in the quotations was acknowledged by Murray when he noted that [as quoted above] "the explanations for the meanings have been framed anew upon a study of all the quotations for each word collected for this work," and explained that it was from the quotations "and the researches for which they provide a starting point," that "the history of each word is deduced and exhibited." (Silva 2000, 90, quoting Murray 1887, 19)

Fewer quotations from the eighteenth century meant less evidence of usage for this period, and less opportunity for eighteenth-century lexical productivity and innovation of one sort or another to impress itself on the lexicographers in the manner that we have already seen graphically reported by Murray: "You sort your quotations into bundles on your big table, and think you are getting the word's pedigree right, when a new sense, or three or four new senses, start up, which upset all your scheme, and you are obliged to start afresh." Churlish as it seems to criticize this great dictionary, we may wonder what aspects of eighteenth-century language might have started up in front of the eyes of the lexicographers had their eighteenth-century evidence been fuller? What examples of characteristic or uncharacteristic language usage over this period may they consequently have failed to document in the *OED*?

Now, however, *OED* is being revised, and decisions taken 75-120 years ago, based on imperfect collections of data, are being revisited and re-considered in the light of extensive accumulations of additional primary material (see further Brewer 2004). The team of lexicographers assembled for the purpose, under John Simpson, have been working on the revision since the 1990s, and since 2000 they have been

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[12] *OED3* has added 13 new quotations from Barbauld's work, less than half the number added for Blake (see preceding note), bringing her total to 31 quotations in all—still tiny in comparison with many male authors.

gradually publishing the results online. At the time of the Gargnano conference, June 2004, they had revised the alphabet range *M-orature*, and at the present time of writing, December 2005, they have completed the letter *o* and penetrated into the letter *p* as far as *philandering*. So how will *OED3* seek to correct its predecessors' unevenness of documentation of various sources and periods?

In his Introduction to *OED3*, Simpson remarks on the perceived literary bias of his predecessors, and comments, "A closer examination of earlier editions shows that this view has been overstated, though it is not entirely without foundation" (Simpson 2000a). By contrast,

> The revised text makes use of many non-literary texts which were not available to the original Victorian readers and their immediate successors, particularly social documents such as wills, inventories, account books, diaries, journals, and letters such as the *York Civic Records*, Gilbert White's *Journals*, and the *Diaries* of Robert Hooke. The inclusion of material from sources such as these allows the editors to provide a fuller picture of the vocabulary of (especially) the Early Modern period. Further reading of similar sources will doubtless result in additional significant discoveries, as will the re-examination of texts already "read" for the Dictionary. (ibid.)

Elsewhere, describing the reading programme, he writes

> The original Dictionary relied heavily on a small number of authors (notably, of course, Shakespeare) for its coverage of Early Modern English (1500-1700). Today, readers systematically survey a much broader spectrum of texts from this and other periods. A separate Historical Reading Programme has been created to serve this function. ...
>
> In addition to the "traditional" canon of literary works, today's Reading Programme covers women's writing and non-literary texts which have been published in recent times, such as wills, probate inventories, account books, diaries, and letters. The programme also covers the eighteenth century, since studies have shown that the original *Oxford English Dictionary* reading in this period was less extensive than it was for the previous two centuries. Also carefully perused are the books and articles by other scholars who have studied the language of individual authors of the Early Modern English period. ...
>
> Taken as a whole, these Reading Programmes represent one of the most extensive surveys of the English language ever undertaken. Since the first publication of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the breadth of materials available and the means of retrieving and analyzing those materials have expanded incalculably. Despite the changes, the original aim of the programme remains unaltered since the days of James A. H. Murray: to collect examples of the changing vocabulary of English from a highly diverse range of published sources spanning the entire English-speaking world, and to provide the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s editors with a constantly updated and ever more detailed record of English past and present. (Simpson 2000b)

What changes have therefore taken place in the representation of eighteenth-century language? Simpson states that this has been a particular focus of the new reading programmes, and it is clear that the vast quantity of scholarship and publishing on eighteenth-century language, literature, and culture that has appeared since 1928—including the substantial reconfiguration of earlier views of the canon, as instanced in the work of Lonsdale (1984, 1989)—will have greatly changed the ways in which we might regard and evaluate eighteenth-century vocabulary.

To get a broad picture of *OED3*'s activities in this respect, we need to isolate the alphabet range so far revised by *OED3*, i.e., from *M* to *philandering* (December 2005), and compare the number of quotations per century for this alphabet range only, as in Table 9-5 below:
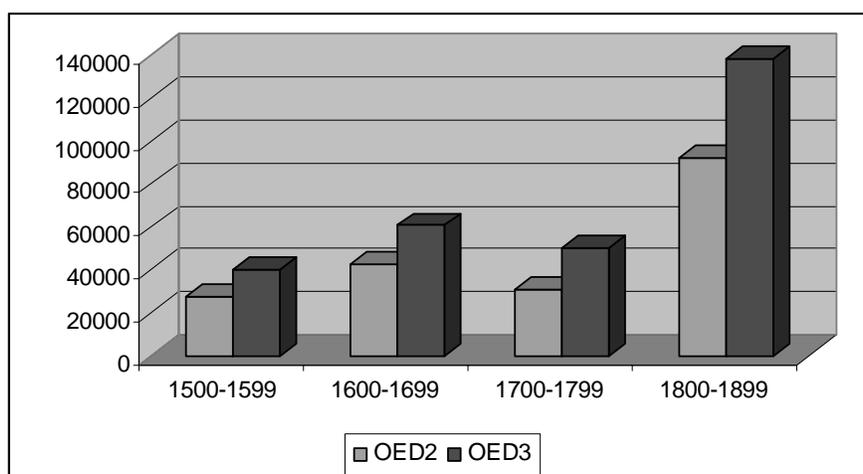

Table 9-5: *OED2* and *OED3* quotations per century 1500-1899 over *M-philandering* (data collected January 2006)

It is clear that the revisers are doing something to redress the apparent imbalance in documentation of the eighteenth century as compared with its neighbouring centuries; not enough, however, to make a consequential change to the proportions already established in the parent dictionary. The revisers' policy seems rarely to exclude quotations already present in *OED2*, at least for pre-twentieth-century sources, but instead to seek out additional quotations, as well as check and if necessary re-date—usually by just a few years—the thousands of existing quotations in *OED2*. This means that the original distribution of quotations in *OED* still significantly influences that in *OED3*, as visible in the relative proportions

between centuries above.[13]

But the picture is more complicated if one looks at the different *stages* of *OED3* revision, as in Table 9-6:

Century	*OED2* total quotations (whole dictionary), % per century	*OED3* new quotations *M-philandering*, percentage per century			*OED3* new quotations *M-philandering*, % per century
		M-nipissing (Sept 03)	*nipissing-overzealousness* (Dec 04)	*overzealousness-philandering* (Dec 05)	
16th	15	13	14	10	14
17th	22	18	19	20	21
18th	16	19	19	25	18
19th	47	50	48	45	47

Table 9-6: Comparison of *OED2* and *OED3* PERCENTAGES of quotations for 1500-1899 over revised alphabet range *M- philandering* (i.e. the *OED3* revision up to December 2005)

For our purposes, the significant information in Table 9-6 is what it shows about the proportion of eighteenth-century quotations in *OED*. (The most striking aspect of Tables 9-5 and 9-6 is the dominance of the nineteenth century in both *OED2* and *OED3*. This is presumably because words current in the nineteenth century include many of those already in existence in previous centuries, together with a good number of new coinages, or new senses of existing words; it may also be because sources for this period are and were more readily available).[14] The *OED3* revisers had corrected this proportion slightly by November 2004, raising it from 16% to 19%, and it is now still at that level or thereabouts (18%). But over the last year, from December 2004 to December 2005, they have substantially increased their *relative* collection of eighteenth-century quotations, and brought it up to 25% (at the expense, apparently, of sixteenth-century quotation collection). If this recent trend continues, then the proportions of quotations per century in the *OED* may look very different in the next few years.

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[13] It is impossible to check systematically whether quotations included in the first (or second) edition are now being omitted from the third; my own use of *OED Online* suggests that significant quotation exclusion is only occurring in the twentieth-century section of the dictionary, in cases where the Supplement editor R. W. Burchfield illustrated usages with over-enthusiastic abundance. See further Brewer 2004, 36-7.

[14] See further discussion at Brewer 2005-6, "OED3 1500-1899."

These findings suggest several possible interpretations and several possible directions for future research and investigation. The one I want to take up here, however, is the one we have already pursued in relation to the *OED2* evidence: what light does consideration of individual entries shed on the cumulative patterns of documentation represented in Tables 9-5 and 9-6?

Searching for entries with eighteenth-century gaps in the quotation record in *OED3,* which so far exists only in electronic form, is more difficult than in its print predecessors, as one cannot visually scan large numbers of items at a time by leafing through the work manually. I began with the items in the revised alphabet range (*M-philandering*) identified above as having either (1) one or more seventeenth-century *and* nineteenth-century quotations but *no* eighteenth-century quotations in *OED2*, or (2) two or more seventeenth-century *and* two or more nineteenth-century quotations, but only one eighteenth-century quotation, and compared their documentation in this respect with that in *OED3*, with results presented in Table 9-7 below:

Word (and sense as in *OED2*)	Number of *OED2* quotations			Number of *OED3* quotations			18th-cent. gap continues in *OED3*?
	17c	18c	19c	17c	18c	19c	
1. *matchable* (sense 3)	2	0	1	2	0	1	YES
2 *matched* (sense 2)	1	0	4	0	0	2	NO[15]
3. *matcher*	3	0	1	3	0	1	YES
4. *matchet*[16]	3	0	5	4	0	7	YES
5. *matching* (ppl. a.)	1	0	1	2	0	1	YES
6. *matchless* (a)	2	1	2	2	2	2	NO
7. *match-maker*[1] (sense 1)	2	1	2	2	1	3	YES
8. *mate* (sb.[1]b)	1	0	2	-	-	-	(re-analysed in *OED3*)
9. *nailed* (ppl. a. sense 1, e.g. *nailed shoe*)	2	0	2	2	1	2	YES

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[15] A 16th-century quotation has been excised in *OED3*, presumably because it proved unreliable when checked.
[16] *OED3* treats this word under the headword *machete.*

Word (and sense as in *OED2*)	Number of *OED2* quotations			Number of *OED3* quotations			18th-cent. gap continues in *OED3*?
	17c	18c	19c	17c	18c	19c	
10. *nailed* (ppl. a. sense 1b, form *nailed-on*)	1	0	2	-	-	-	(re-analysed in *OED3*)
11. *nailed* (ppl. a. sense 2, e.g. *long-nailed hand*)	1	0	2	1	0	2	YES
12. *nail-head* (sense 1)	1	0	2	2	0	2	YES
13. *nail-hole*	2	1	3	2	2	3	NO
14. *naily*	1	0	2	1	0	2	YES
15. *Nair*	2	1	2	3	2	3	YES
16. *naïs* (sense 1)	2	0	1	2	2	1	NO
17. *nake* (v.)	3	0	1	3	0	1	YES
18. *outsideness*	1	0	2	2	0	2	YES
19. *outsight*[1] (sense 1)[17]	1	0	2	1	0	3	YES
20. *outsit* (sense 1)	2	0	1	3	0	2	YES[18]
21. *outsparkle*	2	0	2	1	2	1	NO[19]
22. *outspeak* (all senses)	5	0	4	7	4	7	NO[20]
23. *outspend* (v.)	1	0	4	7	0	6	YES[21]

[17] Becomes *outsight* n.[2] (sense 2) in *OED3*.

[18] *OED3* has antedated *outsit* sense 2 (in *OED2* evidenced with 19th-century quotations only), with two 17th-century quotations, resulting in an additional gap in documentation for the 18th century.

[19] An extremely unusual pattern of revision for *OED3*. *OED2*'s first 17th-century example has been re-allocated to a different part of the entry for grammatical reasons (it is a past participle adjective), two new 18th-century quotations have been found (for 1702 and 1708), and the two *OED2* 19th-century quotations—one from Byron and one from Robert Browning—both dropped in favour of a new one (1848, from George Lippard, *Bel of Prairie Eden: a romance of Mexico*).

[20] Re-analysed with new quotations in *OED3*; 18th-century quotation gap in any of four individual senses disappears.

[21] *OED2*'s two senses now re-analysed as three, with many more quotations found (but not for 18th century).

Word (and sense as in *OED2*)	Number of *OED2* quotations			Number of *OED3* quotations			18th-cent. gap continues in *OED3*?
	17c	18c	19c	17c	18c	19c	
24. *out-spent* (ppl. a.)	1	0	1	1	0	3	YES
25. *outspin* (sense 2)	2	0	1	4	0	3	YES
26. *palliard*	2	0	2	2	1	2	YES
27. *palliate* (sense 4)	2	1	2	2	2	2	NO
28. *palliated* (sense 1)	3	0	2	2	0	2	YES[22]
29. *palliatory*	1	0	1	1	0	2	YES
30. *pallium* (sense 2a)	1	0	3	1	1	2	NO
TOTALS (excluding numbers for items 8 and 10 where *OED3* has re-analysed senses)	52	5	58	65	20	70	20 'YES' 8 'NO'

Table 9-7: *OED*'s treatment of 18th-century dip in selection of revised words (minor changes e.g. date changes of a few years, re-writing of definitions, etc., are not noted here unless relevant)

What most struck me in working through *OED3* in this way—over a minute fraction of the revision so far completed—was the huge industry that has gone into both the accumulation of new quotations and the checking and re-dating of existing ones. In three of these thirty examples, the new quotations enabled substantive re-analysis of meaning. In many of the examples, numerous quotations have been added both before and after the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (not recorded in my table), and in all cases the definitions have been rewritten and all the additional features of the entries (etymology, spelling, pronunciation, etc) have been updated. As anyone who has worked with the new edition can attest, it is a *tour de force*.

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[22] See note on *matched* above.

It is clear that the lexicographers have applied themselves to supplementing the eighteenth-century record. Nevertheless, as the totals in Table 7 show, eighteenth-century gaps in documentation—though significantly reduced—still remain, according to this very small sample of items, and confirm the larger patterns suggested in Tables 9-5 and 9-6 (in fact this sample seems to have thrown up an unrepresentatively high degree of eighteenth-century quotation supplementation).

What does this tell us? The increase in quotations for the eighteenth century in *OED3* indicates that this period has after all proved perfectly adequate to provide examples of usage. The significant trough in *OED* documentation in the first (and second) edition must therefore be the result of imperfect quotation searching, and should not be interpreted as evidence that the various words and senses simply did not exist over these years. But is this the correct explanation too for what continues (despite the increase) to be the relative paucity of quotation in *OED3*? That is, does the data in Tables 9-5 and 9-6 above indicate that the lexicographers have not yet searched hard enough in sources published between 1700 and 1799?

To illuminate this further question, I searched LION and ECCO for the various items listed in Table 7, to get a sense of how easy it is to turn up further eighteenth-century examples of words still relatively under-quoted in *OED3*. The results are reported in the Appendix (section 3). Of the twenty instances where *OED3* eighteenth-century documentation continues low or altogether absent, I found suitable quotations (usually several) for ten items, found dictionary definitions (like those often cited elsewhere in both *OED1* and *OED3*) for two items, drew a complete blank with four items, and was unable to make efficient electronic searches (owing to the form of the word) for four items. In the course of searching, I came across good quotations for two further words or senses (*nailhead* 2a, a specialised architectural usage, and *over-matching*) which at present have no eighteenth-century evidence in *OED*. I conclude that the continuing deficiency of eighteenth-century quotations in *OED* is certainly remediable, and that the gap in documentation 1700-1799 tells us about the lexicographers and the material available to them, and not about the English language.

What more might analysis of individual words and quotations reveal? I complete this paper with a discussion of *OED*'s treatment of the word *matchmaker*, as a representative example of my argument that more examination of eighteenth-century usage would valuably enhance the lexicographical record.

This word, in *OED*'s first sense, viz. "One who brings about or negotiates a match or marriage; usually, one who is addicted to scheming to bring about marriages," is documented as follows in *OED1* (reproduced unchanged in *OED2*), with two seventeenth-century, one eighteenth-century, and two nineteenth-century quotations:

> *a*1639 W. WHATELY *Prototypes* I. xi. (1640) 102 Pray to God to give a wife or husband to your sonne and daughter, and make piety and vertue the chiefe match-

makers. **1678** BUTLER *Hud.* III. i. 420 Who..would have hir'd him and his imps, To be your match-makers and pimps. **1771** SMOLLETT *Humph. Cl.* Let. i. 14 June, Perhaps the match-maker is to have a valuable consideration in the way of brokerage. **1855** MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* xvi. III. 724 Clarendon assumed the character of a matchmaker. **1881** E. J. WORBOISE *Sissie* xi, Mrs. Williams..was frequently accused of being 'a match~maker', and bent on marrying her daughters brilliantly

OED3 has revised the entry (including the definition) to produce the following:

A person who brings about or negotiates a marriage; a marriage broker. Also freq. in weakened sense: a person, usually a woman, who enjoys scheming to bring about romantic relationships.

1638 T. HEYWOOD *Wise-woman* III. i. sig. D4, I am provided for bringing young Wenches to bed; and for a need, you see I can play the Match-maker. **1678** S. BUTLER *Hudibras* III. i. 25 Who..would have hir'd him and his Imps, To be your Match-makers and Pimps. **1771** T. SMOLLETT *Humphry Clinker* I. 220 Perhaps, the match-maker is to have a valuable consideration in the way of brokerage. **1834** *Pearl & Lit. Gaz.* 4 Jan. 87/3 No wonder all these accomplishments rendered my uncle an object for the match makers of our village to exercise their innocent propensities upon. **1855** MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* III. xvi. 724 Clarendon assumed the character of a matchmaker. **1881** E. J. WORBOISE *Sissie* xi, Mrs. Williams..was frequently accused of being 'a match~maker', and bent on marrying her daughters brilliantly. **1937** R. K. NARAYAN *Bachelor of Arts* ix. 123 Ganapathi Sastrigal..was match-maker in general to a few important families. **1988** *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane) 19 Sept. 22/5 Back as TV's match-maker from tonight is Greg Evans on Channel 10's *Perfect Match* at 5.30.

The record has been antedated, postdated, and expanded. Notably, however, the additions have been nineteenth- and twentieth-century. The eighteenth century remains, as before, illustrated with one quotation only, in comparison with two for the seventeenth century and now three for the nineteenth century. Does this constitute, as an indication of the usage of *matchmaker* in the eighteenth century, something approaching the "negative evidence" (to quote Murray in 1888), from which one may infer "the relative frequency of the term in a given period" or "the availability of quotation material" (to quote Simpson in 2000)?

   Whether it does or not, ECCO—a resource that became available in spring 2004, after this word had been revised in *OED3*—provides ample evidence to supplement *OED*'s eighteenth-century record for this word. Searching for *matchmaker* in "full text," in sources dated 1700-1799, produces 86 hits (searching for the plural form *matchmakers* produces a further 61), including many of an interesting and various nature which would have helpfully informed *OED*'s account, in particular (judging from the hits I sampled) illustrating the strong negative character of the term in this

period: for example "Margaret *Cheatly*, Bawd, Matchmaker, and Midwife of Bloomsbury, by immoderate drinking of Strong-waters, had got a Nose so termagantly Rubicund, that she out-blaz'd the comet" (Brown et al. 1703, 51; this formulation is more or less repeated in several other texts); or "*Say'st thou so, old Satan!* (Spoken to a Woman, who was a Matchmaker)" (Bedford 1730, 264). These, together with many similar examples in ECCO's eighteenth-century sources, tempt one to ask whether the *OED1* and *OED3* definitions sufficiently distinguish the word's potentially derogatory connotations—over this period at any rate (see the account of a matchmaker in *The Spectator* 1712/1755, no. 437), and arguably both before (cf. *OED*'s Heywood quotation) and after. Had eighteenth-century texts been more studied, the treatment of the word might have been different.

   Such disparity in documentation in the new as well as the old *OED* raises the same sorts of questions as before. Are the lexicographers receiving from their readers fewer quotations from this period than from others? Are they less interested in eighteenth-century sources? Do quotations from this period seem to them less deserving of inclusion in the dictionary? Do such quotations illustrate usage less usefully, or illuminatingly? Are there words and usages in this period which have continued to go undocumented because of this comparative disregard? Will this change in future, if *OED3* revisers have better access to eighteenth-century sources (perhaps as a result of the availability of ECCO)?

   All these matters seem worthy of further investigation; but whatever the results of such investigation, they should be seen in their fuller context. The revisers of *OED* are engaged on a task of gigantic proportions. They have amassed countless numbers of new quotations for the dictionary, from a much wider range of texts than those examined by their predecessors. Using this new material they have transformed the record for hosts of words and senses, both major and minor, in the alphabet range so far treated. They are also checking and reviewing all the existing material in the dictionary, and updating or writing afresh all bibliographical, etymological, orthoepical, and many other types of information besides (for example, on usage: see Brewer 2005). The scale of their achievement so far, and their vision, industry and perseverance, is to be celebrated (as is the commitment of their publishers), in a task as daunting and as ambitious as that originally undertaken by Murray and his fellow-pioneers. Their revision of the *OED* is one of the most exciting and innovative events to have taken place for many years in lexicography. Observations and reservations such as are made here will I hope in some small way aid rather than hinder them in their magnificent scholarly undertaking.