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1. THE OXFORD CLASSICAL DICTIONARY³: CONSERVATISM

My colleague Tony Spawforth and I have been asked to speak about the third edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (hereafter *OCD*), which we edited jointly in 1990-1994 and which was published in 1996. I begin by describing the dictionary and how the new edition came about. As with so many of the reference works of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries¹ the initiative came from the publisher, Oxford University Press (OUP). The Press were aware of the need for a radical overhaul of the second edition of 1970, which was a relatively light revision of the first, 1949, edition. The book which resulted in 1996 was a single-volume work of approximately 2 million words, 1,640 pages in two columns, containing 6,250 entries by 364 contributors. It has no maps or illustrations, which would have pushed up the price. The entries range in length from a few lines (minor mythological characters) to the monster multi-author entry *Rome, history*; which runs to twelve pages and nearly 24 columns. Although the book is some 30% longer than the 1970 edition, the use of thinner paper to some extent conceals this. It was a tight fit getting everything into one volume again, but this is perhaps *OCD's* greatest advantage over the competition such as *Der Kleine Pauly* or *Der Neue Pauly*.

The flow of publication in our field of classical studies, broadly defined, is so fast and vast that I wonder if it will be possible to produce a one-volume fourth edition, but perhaps new technologies will make this an unreal question. As in 1949 and 1970, all of the entries were either written in English or translated into it. Globalisation, and American cultural dominance of the planet, means that this too has to be recognised as a sales advantage over some academically serious competition, whatever one thinks of this linguistic state of affairs.

The entire operation, from signing the contract in summer 1990 to handing in the typescript in August 1994, took four years. The book was a further two years in production (galley proofs and page proofs) and was published in autumn 1996. The editorial team was a compromise between the methods of 1949 (a panel in which nobody seems to have had overall responsibility) and the *duumvirate* of Hammond and Scullard in 1970. That is, Tony Spawforth and I were general editors, and had area responsibility for the commissioning of entries on history and archaeology (about half the dictionary), but in addition we had a panel of sixteen specialist area advisors who were paid a flat fee in addition to their fees as contributors. The financial arrangements were handled initially by a literary agent, and he secured a good deal whereby every contributor, including those who wrote only one small entry (such as Ian Kidd on *Posidonius*, or Olivier Masson on *Macedonian language*), received not only a fee but a free copy of the eventual dictionary. By no means all publishers of multi-author works of reference give contributors copies of the book: *experto credite*. We had two levels of fee, one for new or heavily revised entries and one (only slightly less) for light revision.

It is my task to speak about conservatism and Tony Spawforth will cover innovation, but that is an arbitrary division of labour because our vision of the

¹ Cf. C.J. Classen's paper "Vita brevis – ars longa: Pauly's beginnings and Wissowa-Kroll-

project coincided exactly. I could just as well have addressed innovation and the conservatism.

The first conservative feature was the name *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. The controversial member of this set of *tria nomina* is the *cognomen*, so to speak, “dictionary”. A dictionary is normally a linguistic tool, a list of words with definitions or translations. The use by our publisher of “dictionary”, for something much more general in scope, is not a usage confined to our book. There is for instance a well-respected *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. From the outset we insisted on the word “dictionary”, for reasons I will explain shortly, and nobody at OUP initially minded about this. A year or so later we did have a struggle because the New York branch of OUP asked that a different word be used, perhaps *Encyclopaedia* or *Companion*. Financially OUP New York is powerful because the US market is enormously larger than the UK Market and OUP NY, which is quite independent, buys (and can decline to buy) copies of OUP UK books in advance and in bulk. This gives it great leverage. Fortunately, and with the support (in this matter as so many others) of our excellent OUP editor Pam Coote, we were able to resist this pressure for name-change because, we argued, it came too late. Commissioning was by then well under way, and we said truthfully that many distinguished scholars had agreed to contribute because of their high regard for the name *OCD*, and because they had affection for their own copies of some earlier edition. It would have been dishonest to change the name *after* commissioning, and in some cases after actually receiving work from those scholars. For experts who were writing one entry only, or a very few, money was hardly an inducement (though the free copy helped). More important was the prestige of the established name *OCD* – and perhaps a related motive,

Ziegler’s monumental achievement”.

namely reluctance to see anyone else's initials below an entry on the subject of one's life's work!

I have already hinted at the reason for retaining the name "dictionary": the wish to represent the book as a new version of a trusted work of reference. This consideration naturally affected potential purchasers as well as potential contributors, and we as editors were keen that the book should tempt the purchasing public as well as the busy and distinguished scholars invited to write for it. But the second consideration would guarantee the first. If we could tempt the very best scholars internationally, they would give their best because they would know that their contributions would be used by colleagues whose good opinion they valued. *OCD* is so well known that it amounts to the full glare of publicity. No hiding behind obscurity of place of publication.

We think that this policy worked. Almost no contributor whom we approached refused us: only six out of 370. This is a very small rejection rate. There is a Cambridge rival in the pipeline (illustrated, maps) but we have seen its letter of invitation and to some extent it has to define itself as "not the *OCD*". We take this as a compliment. Naturally we hope that our contributors were also tempted by the innovations we were proposing, but it is not my brief to talk about that. We believed that all classical scholars and students, contributors included, routinely consult *OCD* for facts outside their own competence, so we were unapologetically determined to retain that detailed factual specificity, at the highest possible level of accuracy.

The result of obtaining world experts was that in many cases fastidious scholars were persuaded to offer general accounts of and judgments on their subjects, in a way they had not ventured to do elsewhere in print because they had previously published in the specialist and technical shelter of learned journals. Examples which happen to come to mind because I was heavily involved with the commissioning of them are Albert Henrichs on *Dionysus*,

Robert Parker on *sacrifice, Greek*, Peter Parsons on *Simonides*, Peter Fraser on *Lycophron*, Elaine Matthews on *names, personal, Greek*, and Olivier Masson on *Macedonian language*. This, given the status of the authorities concerned, gives some of the *OCD3* entries the status of research tools in their own right. An analogy from the earlier editions might be H.T. Wade-Gery's classic and much-cited entry on *Thucydides*, retained even in 1996 but with an extra section on work since 1970.

My main point, then, is that the conservatism which impelled us to keep the name and approximate format of the old editions of *OCD* was precisely what made the innovations possible. Without the top names in the world, our plans for improvement would have been so much ambitious hot air.

2. THE *OXFORD CLASSICAL DICTIONARY*³: INNOVATION

In the second half of this double-act I am taking over from my colleague Simon Hornblower to speak about the innovations in *OCD3*.

It was clear when we began our planning in 1990 that we would need to define our intended readership. We knew, firstly, that the market would remain overwhelmingly Anglophone, even if we anticipated limited sales beyond the Anglosphere. We felt, secondly, that there remained an individual readership for a classics reference work in the United Kingdom – that a new *OCD* was not doomed to live out its working life mainly on the shelves of libraries.

Our enquiries led us to believe that this same readership still existed in the USA – the key market, for reasons Simon Hornblower touched on earlier. Our judgment as to the potential size of this individual readership to some extent has been borne out since by the pattern of sales. Our OUP editor Pam Coote tells us that *OCD3* “is bought by individuals through bookshops rather than

just by libraries. This is most marked in the USA where for example in 2002 nearly 70% of their sales of *OCD* were sold through stores, wholesalers and Amazon rather than through library suppliers.”

As to how this individual readership broke down, we suspected that an element at least comprised the educated “general reader”, for whom classical antiquity still formed an integral part of a wider cultural outlook. We came to believe that in the USA the classics were more entrenched in this respect than in Britain. At any rate, it seemed inconceivable that classical Greek precedent could ever be cited in a British court of law, as has happened recently in the USA.

On the other hand, we accepted that many of these individual readers, perhaps a majority, would be students, teachers and academics turning to the new *OCD* as an up-to-date work of reference. Much anecdotal evidence since publication supports this view. It was clear from the outset therefore that the scope of the third edition would need widening to take account of developments in our subject since the 1960s. Broadly speaking, we felt, these developments were of three kinds.

Firstly there was, obviously enough, the need to accommodate the steady drip-drip of discoveries sufficiently important, we felt, to justify new entries – e.g. *Vergina*. More fundamentally, we needed to allow for the fact that, whereas the teaching of traditional classics was shrinking, the newer subject of so-called classical studies or classical civilisation, in which ancient texts are studied in translation by people with little or no knowledge of ancient languages, was gaining in popularity – indeed, was increasingly the mainstay of the subject’s survival, at least in British universities. As a subject area, classical studies as opposed to classics shifts the emphasis away from a literary basis, giving equal ranking to ancient history and ancient culture broadly defined. As a result, we accepted that the distinction between “classical” and “archaeological” made in the preface to the second edition of

OCD now seemed much less appropriate, given the increased emphasis on the material aspects of antiquity since the 1960s. Again, in the USA in particular, our enquiries suggested that teaching curricula often included classical antiquity as part of a much more sweeping treatment of, say, world history or world religions. All in all, students using a classics reference work nowadays, we felt, would expect much more thematic material than previously.

Furthermore, we knew that we had to take account of the increasingly inter-disciplinary nature of classical scholarship, and its more explicit interest in methodologies. These developments in the subject of course are well-known now and do not need describing in any detail, although in this respect there was no recently-published classics reference work in any language which, back in 1990, had obviously blazed the trail ahead of us. Some of the newly-commissioned material in this area ran the risk, we realised, of being branded as merely “trendy”. But we were prepared to take the risk that a new entry such as the outstanding *literary theory and classical studies* by Peta and the late Don Fowler might seem to date more quickly than the more traditional, fact-based, entries. Again, anecdotal evidence suggests how useful some readers have found this and similar entries.

Finally, with the first volume of Bernal’s *Black Athena* published only three years before we began to plan the third edition, we were more than aware that the occidental or at least Eurocentric focus of the previous editions might seem to need some correction. Here we also had to make difficult decisions about where to draw the line, not least where *Christianity* (itself a seven-column entry) was concerned. For instance, one could argue the rights and wrongs of giving a new entry to *Paul, St.*, as we did, but not to *Jesus*, or, for that matter, *Mary*. We felt, however, that in a “classical” reference-work retaining the traditional centrality of pagan antiquity was justified.

To take account of all these developments, the end result was the radical revision or rewriting of nearly all the entries retained from the second edition, as well as the inclusion of around 900 new entries (listed after the preface to the third edition). In the detail much of this transformation was the work of our area advisors, who without exception were of one mind as to the kind of changes needed, and who in some cases created their areas more or less *ex novo* (Jewish Studies, Near Eastern Studies).

Finally, we have been asked to comment on the impact of the third edition of the *OCD* on research and education. Since its publication in 1996, it has twice been republished in hard copy (1998, 2003). It has also been marketed in disk format, and is about to be made available to libraries electronically as part of Oxford Reference On-line. The Press has also commissioned a number of derivative titles in hard copy which offer an anthology or themed selection of entries, beginning with the *Companion to Classical Civilisation*, published in 1998, and about to be republished in a paperback edition; followed in 2000 by the *Who's Who in the Classical World*, translated into Spanish in 2002 (with the somewhat misleading title *Diccionario del mundo clásico*); and in 2003 by the separate publication of the myth and religion entries as the *Oxford Dictionary of Greek Religion and Myth*. Finally, the Press has commissioned an abridgment of the third edition.

It is easier to present this evidence of a flourishing market for the dictionary and related products than to say who is using it, and how. The derivative titles are aimed not least at the textbook market: for instance, we understand that the paperback edition of the *Companion* will be adopted as a set book by Britain's distance-learning campus, the Open University.

As for research, it is hard to assess how much scholarly use is made of a reference work which has never, since its conception back in 1933, sought to rival the standard international works of reference in classical scholarship. As with other reference works, its inclusion (or not) of an entry on such-and-such

can be cited to reflect the scholarly state of play (Golden & Toohey 2003, 374). But, as Simon Hornblower emphasised earlier, the third edition contains any number of authoritative summations by international scholars, not to mention the hundreds of entries on *Realien* which one routinely needs to consult for this or that reason (e.g. *Ariarathes*, completely recast by Brian McGing). Our hunch, to close on this point, is that scholarly citations do not reflect the true extent of *OCD3*'s value as a research tool.

References

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