

THE TREATMENT OF SEX PHRASEOLOGY IN THE 2ND EDITION OF THE OED

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ABSTRACT. *In the present article, I analyse an ample selection of the euphemisms and dysphemisms used in English bawdy language taken from a great variety of sources, ranging from Chaucer to contemporary adult literature, with the purpose of ascertaining the treatment they are given in the OED, 2nd edition. I find that although the number of bawdy terms and expressions included in the OED is impressive for a non-specialized dictionary, there are some notable omissions, especially as far as the phrases are concerned. I analyse these omissions, particularly in the light of the commonest conceptual spheres bawdy language can be ascribed to, applying to euphemisms and dysphemisms the model proposed by Lakoff and Johnson for the explanation of metaphorical networks, and come to the conclusion that there seems to be in the OED a lack of unified criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of the terms and expressions in question, both current and past. This impression of a lack of definite criteria is reinforced, in my opinion, by the fact that some of the missing terms have recently appeared in the OED Addition Series, edited as an indication of what will be incorporated into the main body of the Dictionary in a future edition already in preparation. Finally, concerning the quotations given in the OED for some terms and expressions, I was able to trace a number of antedatings and postdatings, which suggests that there still remain in the 2nd edition of the OED some traces of the prejudices against this kind of language in the past that made the compilers of the OED 1st edition disregard any citations containing obscene expressions.*

KEYWORDS. *OED, sex phraseology, lexicology.*

RESUMEN. *En el presente trabajo, analizo una amplia muestra de los eufemismos y disfemismos usados en el lenguaje inglés obsceno, tomada de una gran variedad de fuentes, que van desde Chaucer a la literatura 'adulta' contemporánea, con el fin de determinar el tratamiento dado a los mismos en el OED, 2ª edición. En mi análisis, he podido constatar que aunque el número de términos y expresiones obscenos recogido en el OED es realmente excepcional para un diccionario no especializado, hay notables omisiones, sobre todo en lo que se refiere a las frases. Analizo estas omisiones, a la luz de las principales esferas conceptuales en las que se encuadra este tipo de lenguaje, aplicando a los eufemismos y disfemismos el modelo propuesto por Lakoff y Johnson para la explicación de las redes metafóricas, llegando*

a la conclusión de que se observa en el OED una falta de criterios unificados para su inclusión o exclusión en el Diccionario. Esta impresión de falta de criterios concretos se refuerza, en mi opinión, por la aparición de muchos de estos términos ausentes, en la OED Addition Series, que viene editándose como adelanto de una próxima edición del OED en preparación. Finalmente, he podido encontrar en las fuentes utilizadas algunos ejemplos con fechas anteriores o posteriores a las dadas en el OED, lo que sugiere que hay aún en el OED, 2ª edición vestigios de los prejuicios contra este tipo de lenguaje, que llevaron a los recopiladores de la 1ª edición a descartar cualquier cita que contuviera expresiones obscenas.

PALABRAS CLAVE. OED, eufemismos y disfemismos, inglés obsceno, lexicología.

1. TERMS AND EXPRESSIONS MISSING FROM THE OED

I must make it clear that it is not my intention to make an inventory of the bawdy terms and expressions I found in the sources used¹, and verify which ones are missing from the OED, consequently criticizing the omissions. Omissions are obviously inevitable in a domain where the number of combinations is practically unlimited, and in any case the number of bawdy terms and expressions included in the OED, 2nd edition is really exceptional for a non-specialized dictionary, as I discovered in the course of my analysis. My purpose is just to try to determine the criteria adopted for inclusion or exclusion of this kind of language and, to this end, I will successively analyse the treatment given in the OED to: 1) general terms with a sexual innuendo; 2) coarse slang; and 3) metaphorical euphemisms and dysphemisms.

1.1. Sexual innuendos of general terms

I refer here to those words and expressions of a very general nature, such as *to be* or *to go with*, *to be intimate (with)*, *to have*, *to sleep with*, etc., which can take on a sexual meaning, given an adequate context. I find that some euphemisms of this kind are not explicitly registered in the OED: *affair(s)*, for instance, which is sometimes used as a euphemism for the genitals², is not to be found with this meaning in the OED, though it is registered in the sense of an illicit amorous relationship, a love-affair. Omissions of this type are not infrequent: *to melt* and *to dissolve* (so frequent in English Erotica)³, for 'to ejaculate', 'to have an orgasm'; *to relieve*, *to ease nature*⁴, for 'to copulate' or 'to masturbate'; *to console* or *to solace*, for 'to copulate'; *to arouse*⁵, for 'to excite sexually', etc.

It might be argued that the sexual meaning becomes all too evident, given an appropriate context⁶, but the fact that the OED compilers judged it necessary to include *tool* for 'the male generative organ'⁷ and *gear*, 'for the organs of generation', but not *apparatus* or *equipment* with the same meaning, or *to penetrate*, for 'to insert the penis in the vagina', to the exclusion of *to enter*⁸, for example, raises some doubts about the criteria adopted⁹.

In our day, this type of euphemism keeps cropping up, and it is not always easy for lexicographers to decide where to draw the line. The constant appearance of new euphemisms for 'prostitute' could be a case in point. *Escort*, for example, is now widely

used, as a quick glance at the section of ‘personal’ ads in any contemporary adult magazine will confirm; however, this meaning is not yet registered in the *OED*, though similar euphemisms like *hostess* and *model*, are.

1.2. Coarse slang

As Berg (1993: 179-81) puts it, «the first edition’s policy for the inclusion of words and expressions was, to some extent, governed by contemporary mores», which ruled that «the so-called four-letter words were considered taboo and were not included in any general English dictionary [...] and it was not until 1968 that the Delegates of Oxford University Press decided that taboo words, omitted in the first edition, should be included» in the four-volume *Supplement* then in preparation, and finally published a few years later (1972-1986).

The 2nd. edition of the *OED*, prepared by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, and published in 1989, incorporates all the *Supplement*’s additions, together with some new terms, so that a great number of coarse slang terms, such as *cunt*, *cock*, *fuck*, *shag*, *prick*, and many other words and expressions, missing from the 1st edition are now included¹⁰, but there are still a few remarkable omissions: *brown*¹¹, for ‘anus’ or any related meanings¹²; *to bring off*¹³, for ‘to cause (a person) to ejaculate by masturbation’ (though *to pull off* is included); *bone*, for ‘penis’; *bone-on*, for ‘an erection’¹⁴; *to give head*¹⁵, for ‘to practise fellatio or cunnilingus’, etc.

The extremely obscene character of some of the combinations: *cuntlapper*, for ‘a lesbian’, *turd-burglar* or *ass-bandit*, for ‘a male homosexual’, *to finger-fuck*, for ‘to stimulate the vagina or the anus’, *fuck-hole*, for ‘the vulva’, *fuck-pole* or *fuck-stick*, for ‘penis’, etc., (all absent from the *OED*), cannot be regarded as an insurmountable obstacle to their inclusion, since similar obscene terms: *to dry-fuck*, *cock-teaser*, *cunt-sucker*, *cunt-struck*, *shithole*, etc. have been registered.

1.3. Metaphorical euphemisms and dysphemisms

A great variety of metaphors are used to refer to the sexual functions and organs, depending on the point of view from which they are considered. Thus the same sexual act, ‘to copulate’, for example, can be referred to as *to mount*, or *to be aboard*¹⁶, depending on whether sexual intercourse is visualized as ‘riding a horse’ or ‘making a voyage’. The conceptualization can even be contradictory at times: the female genitals have been called *the gate(s) of Paradise*¹⁷, an object of pleasure, or *the gates of Hell*¹⁸, an occasion of sin for men. I will examine briefly some of the commonest conceptual spheres most euphemisms and dysphemisms can be fitted into, applying to bawdy language the model proposed by Lakoff and Johnson for the explanation of metaphorical networks, in order to see the treatment they have deserved in the *OED*.

1.3.1. War and violence

The conceptualization of sexual intercourse as an act of violence, an action of war, is indeed very frequent in English Erotica, but it is here, as in the rest of conceptual

spheres¹⁹, where an absence of definite criteria for inclusion or exclusion of sexual metaphors in the *OED* becomes more evident. Thus, *to bang*, *to bonk* and *to poke*, for instance, all using the ‘hitting’ metaphor, have found their way into the *OED*, 2nd edition, but similar terms such as *to boff*, *to bop*, *to clap*²⁰, or *to plonk*, to cite but a few, have been excluded.

The case of the euphemisms which liken the penis to a weapon is certainly noteworthy: *arrow*, *machine*²¹, *ramrod*, *shaft*, and *weapon* itself, for example, are lexicalized²², whereas *bayonet*, *bilbo*²³, *cannon*, *dagger*, *dart*, *engine*, *lance*, *machinery*, *pike*, *pistol*²⁴, *sword* and many others, are not. It is true that most of these terms have an archaic flavour to them²⁵, but other more recent terms like *arm* (frequent in *short-arm inspection*, ‘penile inspection for venereal disease’)²⁶, *bazooca*, *gun*, *rifle*, *torpedo* (esp. in *pink torpedo*), etc. are missing, too.

1.3.2. Riding

Another very common way of conceptualizing copulation is as ‘riding a horse’, with the copulating male usually *the horseman* or *the rider*, and the woman, *the horse* or *mare* ridden²⁷, although a reversal of roles, as in *to ride Saint George*²⁸, is not infrequent either. The metaphor is indeed so transparent as to have prompted the *OED* lexicographers to label ‘to ride’ as «now only in low and indecent use». It is, however, very often used in English bawdy literature, by itself, and in various combinations (some of them not specifically registered in the *OED*), e.g. *to ride below the crupper*²⁹, *to ride the wild mare*³⁰, ‘to copulate’, *to ride a false journey*, ‘to commit adultery’³¹, *to ride in another man’s boots*, ‘to marry another man’s ex-wife, or to start keeping his former mistress’³² and *to ride bareback*, ‘to have sexual intercourse without a condom’³³.

Different manners of ‘riding’ are also commonly used in English Erotica with a sexual innuendo, e.g. *to colt*, *to mount* or *to vault*, (included in the *OED*), and *to gallop*³⁴, *to amble*³⁵ or *to canter*³⁶ (missing). Related words and expressions are quite frequent, too, e.g. *croup* and *crupper*, for ‘the buttocks’; *easy rider*, for ‘a sexually satisfying lover’; *hobby-horse*, for ‘a prostitute’ (included in the *OED*); and *saddle*, for ‘the female genitals’ (often used in the expressions *to bel/get/ride in the saddle*)³⁷; or *nag/naggie*³⁸, for ‘the genitals’, esp. ‘the male genitals’ (excluded).

1.3.3. Food

Here again, in this completely different conceptual sphere, we observe the same fluctuation of criteria for inclusion or exclusion: referring to the female genitals, we find in the *OED* *meat* (also, ‘the male genitals’, and ‘a prostitute’), *mutton* (also, ‘coition’, and ‘prostitute’), *honey-pot*, *jelly-roll* and *snatch*, among others, but other equally popular terms like *medlar* (used by Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet*)³⁹, *fig*⁴⁰, *clam* (used esp. in *to spear the bearded clam*, ‘to have sexual intercourse with a woman’⁴¹), *fur pie*, *tuna-fish*, *taco* (used esp. in *to tickle one’s taco*⁴², ‘to masturbate’, of a female) and many others, are missing. Sometimes some of the meanings of a term are given, to the

exclusion of others: *battered bun*, for example, is registered as obs. for ‘a harlot, a mistress’, but not with the much more common meaning of ‘a harlot submitting sexually to several, or more, men in quick succession’ (Partridge 1970:115)⁴³.

As for the male genitals, the situation is not very different: *pudd* and *pudding*, for ‘penis’ (also, *to pull one’s pudding*, for ‘to masturbate’), and *nuts*, for ‘testicles’, are duly registered, but *carrot* (used by Shakespeare, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*)⁴⁴, *pear-tree* (already used in some anonymous verses of the 15th c.)⁴⁵, *banana* (so often found in limericks, jokes, etc.)⁴⁶, *sausage*, *salami* (quite common in *to hide the salami*, ‘to copulate’, and *to spank the salami*, ‘of a man, to masturbate’), *wiener*, etc., for ‘penis’, and *damsons* (used by Shakespeare, in *2 Henry VI*)⁴⁷, for ‘testicles’, are excluded. Finally, *melons*, for ‘the female breasts’, is a late addition⁴⁸, but similar metaphorical terms: *apples*, *coconuts*, *lemons*, *peaches*, etc., have not yet been deemed worthy of inclusion.

1.3.4. Travelling

Sexual intercourse is often likened to a journey in English Erotica⁴⁹, and lots of related terms such as *baggage*, for ‘a prostitute’, *to cruise*, for ‘to walk or drive about (the streets) in search of a casual (esp. homosexual) partner’, *house of accommodation*, for ‘a brothel’, *poop* or *stern*, for ‘the posterior’, *poophole*, for ‘the anus’, *to pull a train*, for ‘(of a woman) to copulate successively with more than one partner’, etc. can be found in the OED, but omissions in this area are by no means exceptional either. I give only some of the more striking: *to be aboard*⁵⁰, *to board a land carack* (used by Shakespeare in *Othello*)⁵¹, or *to arrive at the end of the sentimental journey*⁵², for ‘to copulate’; *(a trip) around the world*, for ‘oral caresses all over the partner’s body’⁵³; *to get off/out at Gateshead*⁵⁴, or *at Redfern*, in the Australian version, for ‘to perform coitus interruptus’⁵⁵; *hatch*⁵⁶, for ‘the female genitals’; *the little man in the boat*⁵⁷, for ‘clitoris’, etc.

Car imagery, very frequent in contemporary slang, is also practically absent from the OED’s pages where none of the following is to be found: *to get one’s oil changed*, for ‘to copulate (of a male)’; *to get one’s wheel greased*, for ‘to copulate (of a female)’; *the exhaust pipe*⁵⁸, for ‘anus’; *dipstick*, *gear stick*, *hot-rod* or *hot-stick*, *piston rod*, for ‘penis’; *cylinder*, for ‘vagina’; and *headlights* or *hooters*, for ‘the breasts’.

1.3.5. Animals

Comparisons with animals are commonplace in bawdy language⁵⁹. Many terms used to refer to animal copulation have acquired the secondary figurative meaning of ‘to copulate between humans’: *to couple*, *to colt*, *to cover*, *to leap*, *to mate*, *to nick*, *to ram*, *to season*, *to serve*, *to service*, *to tread* and *to tup*, for instance, have all been lexicalized with this secondary meaning, though retaining their primary literal meaning of animal copulation. Other terms like *to bull*⁶⁰, *to dog*⁶¹ and *to horse*⁶², for example, although not lexicalized for ‘copulating between humans’, are used with varying degrees of frequency, within the same conceptual network.

The genital organs have also been called with names of various animals. Thus 'vagina' is lexicalized as *beaver*⁶³, *coney*⁶⁴, *cunny*, *puss*, or *pussy*; but other equally popular names like *bunny*, *monkey*, *mouse-trap*, *mouse-hole* and *poodle*⁶⁵, never were. As for 'penis', I will cite two noticeable omissions: the 17th-18th c. Br. E. sl. *ferret*⁶⁶, and the common current sl. *one-eyed trouser snake*⁶⁷, 'of Australian origin'⁶⁸. Prostitutes have also been given many names of animals, especially in the past⁶⁹: *cat*⁷⁰, *badger*, *goose*⁷¹, *guinea-hen*, *hackney*, *night-hawk*, *plover*, and *quail*, for example, all found their way into the *OED*, although others of the same kind like *barnacle*⁷², *gull*⁷³, *lioness*⁷⁴, *partridge*⁷⁵, *pheasant*⁷⁶ and *sardine*⁷⁷, did not.

1.3.6. Religion

The conceptualization of 'sexual intercourse' in terms of performing a religious act is quite common too in English erotica: *to pray with the knees upwards*,⁷⁸ *to do miracles*⁷⁹, for 'to copulate'; *what Eve did with Adam* for 'copulation'⁸⁰; *in Abraham's bosom* for 'engaged in coition'⁸¹; *riding St. George* or *the dragon upon St. George* for 'the position of the woman being on top in the sexual act'⁸²; *to give up the ghost* for 'to have an orgasm'⁸³, etc.

There is, as can be seen by the examples cited above, a certain dysphemistic slant in the vast majority of expressions of this type. This jocular aspect is further confirmed in the names given to both the male and female genitals; for 'penis' I found: *hermit* or *bald-headed hermit*⁸⁴, *devil*⁸⁵, *father-confessor*⁸⁶, *rector of the females*⁸⁷ and *Saint Peter*⁸⁸, among others, and for 'vagina': *altar of love*⁸⁹, *garden of Eden*⁹⁰, *mother of all saints/souls/of St. Patrick*⁹¹, and many more⁹². This disrespectful aspect, insulting even on occasions, is most marked in certain expressions referring to 'male masturbation', in which the penis is likened to a 'bishop' (*to flog the bishop*)⁹³, a 'Jesuit', (*to box the Jesuit and get cockroaches*)⁹⁴, or even the Pope himself (*to pull the Pope*)⁹⁵.

The fact that none of the above is registered in the *OED* is thus not surprising in excess, given their blatantly irreverent character, which must have conditioned the lexicographers. But the same irreverent quality did not deter them from including the following similar dysphemisms: *nun*, for 'prostitute', *nunnery*, for 'brothel', *abbess*, for 'madam of a brothel', *to lead apes in hell*, for 'the fancied consequence of being an old maid', and the highly offensive *Vatican roulette*, for 'the rhythm method of birth control, as permitted by the Roman Catholic Church'.

1.3.7. Personification

Men and women like to give persons' names to their genitals; the custom is quite widespread in the Saxon world, to the point that practically any name can be used, often the names of the genitals' owners themselves⁹⁶. Logically, most of them keep a private restricted usage, but sometimes one of them becomes so popular as to deserve its inclusion in general use dictionaries. That is what happened to *John*, *John Thomas*⁹⁷,

Johnson, Roger, Peter and Willie, for example, all of them registered in the *OED*, as euphemisms for ‘penis’, although (*old*) *Pedro*, so popular in the USA., is not.

1.3.8. *Ethnic Slurs*

I employ the term⁹⁸ in the sense of dysphemisms used as jokes at the expense of certain nationalities, e.g. *Irish toothache*⁹⁹, for ‘priapism’ and ‘pregnancy’, *Scotch/Scottish warming pan*, for ‘a complaisant young woman’¹⁰⁰, *English muffins*¹⁰¹, homosexual sl. for ‘a boy’s buttocks’, *German helmet*¹⁰², for ‘the glans penis’, *Portuguese pump*¹⁰³, for ‘male masturbation’, *Copenhagen capon*¹⁰⁴, homosexual sl. for ‘a transsexual’, *show an Abyssinian medal*¹⁰⁵ ‘to have a fly-button undone’, etc. Ethnic slurs can be highly offensive, and indeed none of the above has yet gained admission to the *OED*’s pages. But offensive as they may be felt to be at times, ethnic slurs are widely used, and some of them enjoy a long tradition in English literature; there is an interesting precedent in Shakespeare himself, in the famous passage of *The Comedy of Errors*, where Dromius of Syracuse, speaking to his master Antipholus about a fat kitchen maid who is pursuing him with matrimonial intent, baptizes the various parts of her voluminous frame with the names of different countries: *Ireland*¹⁰⁶, *Spain*¹⁰⁷, *Belgia*¹⁰⁸, *the Netherlands*¹⁰⁹, etc.

Oddly enough, none of these terms used by Shakespeare is to be found in the *OED*, but many others are, e.g. *French*, for ‘fellatio’; *to French*, for ‘to practice fellatio or cunnilingus (with)’; *French letter*, for ‘a contraceptive sheath’; *French pox*, *French disease*, *French measles*, *French cannibal*, *French aches* and *French goods*, among others, for ‘syphilis’ (also *Spanish pox* and *Spanish gout*); *Spanish fly*, for ‘cantharides’, the alleged aphrodisiac; *Spanish padlock*, for ‘a chastity belt’; *Dutch cap*, for ‘a contraceptive diaphragm’; *Dutch wife*, for ‘a masturbation machine’, etc.; even the exotic *Ugandan affairs*, for ‘copulation’, has been included.

The question here, as before, is what criteria have been followed for admission or rejection, and although I am sure there must be good reasons for each choice, I believe that the acceptance of *French*, for ‘oral sex’, against the proscription of *Greek*, for ‘anal sex’¹¹⁰, or of *English discipline*¹¹¹, for ‘sado-masochistic practices’, may cast some doubts as to the general validity of the criteria adopted.

2. LATE ADDITIONS

In the *OED Addition Series* (3 volumes) published from 1993 to 1997, I find some euphemisms and dysphemisms which had not been included in the *OED*, 2nd edition of 1989. Some of them are relatively recent, to judge from the date of the first quotation given: *French tickler* (1967), for ‘a condom of which the tip incorporates several small protrusions, designed to stimulate the vagina during sexual intercourse’¹¹²; *guppie* (1984), ‘a homosexual yuppie’¹¹³, a blend of ‘gay’ and ‘yuppie’; *to lay pipe* (1967), for ‘to coit a woman’¹¹⁴; *the life* (1960), for ‘prostitution’¹¹⁵; *mammaries* (1976)¹¹⁶ or *melons*

(1972)¹¹⁷, for ‘the female breasts’; *pink* (1950), for ‘gay, homosexual’¹¹⁸; *hanky-panky* (1939), for ‘sexual activity or dalliance, esp. of a surreptitious nature’¹¹⁹; *pocket-book* (1942), for ‘vagina’¹²⁰; *prong* (1969), for ‘penis’¹²¹; *shim* (1975), a blend of *she* and *he*, for ‘a transvestite or transsexual’¹²²; *skin* (1960), for ‘condom’¹²³; *stiff* (1980), for ‘an erection’¹²⁴; *twinkie* (1980), for ‘a male homosexual, an effeminate man (also, a child or youth regarded as an object of homosexual desire)’¹²⁵, etc.

Others, however, go back to the 19th c. or beginning of the 20th: *erect* (1893), for ‘of the penis, nipples, or clitoris: enlarged or rigid through the engorgement of erectile tissue, as during sexual arousal’¹²⁶; *flagellation* (1870), for ‘beating with whips, etc. to derive perverse sexual gratification’¹²⁷; *fly-girl* (1893), for ‘a lewd or sexually promiscuous young woman, esp. a prostitute’¹²⁸; *frotteur* (1892), for ‘one who engages in *frottage*’¹²⁹; *gash* (1893), for ‘the vulva, hence, a woman considered as a source of sexual satisfaction, sexual intercourse, or women (esp. prostitutes) viewed sexually’¹³⁰; *Mary-Ann* (1880)¹³¹, for ‘an effeminate man, a male homosexual’¹³²; *to molest* (1895), for ‘to harass, attack, or abuse sexually’¹³³; *ramrod* (1902)¹³⁴, for ‘penis’¹³⁵; etc.

A few, finally, date back to former centuries: *to lift a leg over sb* (1719), for ‘(of a man) to copulate or achieve sexual intercourse (with)’¹³⁶; *manhood* (1640)¹³⁷ and *needle* (1638)¹³⁸, for ‘penis’; *paedicator* (1661), for ‘one who commits paedication, a sodomite’¹³⁹; etc.

All these late additions, which the present editors of the *OED* intend to incorporate into the Third Edition of the Dictionary¹⁴⁰ already in preparation, induce me to believe that the terms were overlooked in the *OED*, 2nd edition.

3. QUOTATIONS: ANTEDATINGS AND POSTDATINGS

When in 1968 the Delegates of Oxford University Press opened the doors of the Dictionary to taboo words, which so obstinately had been left out of general English dictionaries since Samuel Johnson’s times, many of these terms, as we have seen, peacefully invaded the pages of the *Supplement* first and of the *OED* 2nd edition later. This historic change of policy automatically meant that hundreds of citations that Murray and his assistants must have had in their hands and grudgingly set aside could now have a place in the Dictionary, and indeed many did, but some seem to have been overlooked.

A detailed analysis of the sources used has allowed me to trace some *antedatings*, citations from an earlier source than the first one given in the *OED*¹⁴¹, and *postdatings*, citations from a later source than the last one given in the *OED*, esp. those in which the euphemism in question, often marked as obs. in the Dictionary, is shown to be still current, or to have been used at least a century after the last date registered¹⁴².

3.1. *Antedatings*

When the preparation of the 1st edition of the *OED* started in 1858, first under the editorship of Herbert Coleridge and F. J. Furnivall, and later under that of Dr. James

Murray (1878)¹⁴³, a laborious process of citation collecting began. By the time the last fascicle of the Dictionary was published in 1928¹⁴⁴, a file of 5 million quotations had been handled¹⁴⁵. I surmise that a good number of them, perhaps deemed too obscene, were discarded; that would account for many of the omissions noted above, and it would also explain the *antedatings* I have traced:

- to blow* – ‘to fellate’, ‘to practise fellatio’ – the 1st quotation dates from 1933, but I believe there is an allusion in *Pills to Purge Melancholy* (18th c.), where there is a stanza («A Ballad of All the Trades») which tells of a blacksmith who: «...never heats his Iron [...] / But his Maid must blow the Bellows». (Henke 1979: 21).
- box* – ‘the vagina’ - the 1st quotation in the *Addition Series*, vol. 1 dates from 1942, but, according to Partridge (1968: 70), the euphemism was used by Shakespeare in the expression *box unseen* in *All’s Well That Ends Well*, and according to Henke (1979: 25), by Ben Jonson, in the expression *perfum’d box* in *Volpone*.
- cock* – ‘penis’ – 1st quotation, 1618 - the euphemism may be older though, as there seems to be, always according to Partridge (1968: 80), an allusion in Shakespeare’s *Henry V*.
- to come* – ‘to experience sexual orgasm’ - 1st quotation, 1650, but the euphemism seems to have been known before that date, as there is, according to Partridge (1968: 82) some allusions in Shakespeare, in the form of puns, in *Troilus and Cressida*.
- cunny* – ‘prob. dim. of cunt’ - 1st quotation, 1720, but the euphemism is used in «Off Alle the Seaes», in the *Percy Ms.*, 17th c. (Burford 1982: 76).
- to do* – ‘to copulate (with)’ – 1st quotation, 1913, but the euphemism must be much older as, according to Partridge (1968: 95), it was used by Shakespeare in *Titus Andronicus*.
- dose* – ‘an occurrence of venereal disease’ – 1st quotation, 1914, but I came across it in the following 17th c. street ballad:
 «As Roger last night to Jenny lay close
 He pulled out his Budget and gave her a Dose:
 The tickling no sooner kind Jenny did find,
 But with laughing, she purged both before and behind...». (Burford 1982: 275).
- to go off* – ‘to experience a sexual orgasm’ – 1st quotation, 1928, but the euphemism seems to be older since, according to Partridge (1968: 115), it was allusively used by Shakespeare in *2 Henry IV*.
- horn* – ‘an erect penis; an erection’. 1st quotation, 1785, but I found the euphemism used in «A Man’s Yard», in the *Rawlinson Mss.*, c.1600:
 «It is a grafte Horne on a prettye head,
 A staffe to make a Countesse bedd». (Burford 1982: 49).
- jig-a-jig* – ‘sexual intercourse’ and ‘to copulate’ – 1st quotation, 1896, but I found what seems to be a variant of the euphemism in ‘There was a fair Maiden Came out of

Kent' (c.1568), in *The New Academy of Complements* (1671):

«There was a fair Maiden came out of Kent
To be fuck'd by a Joyner was her Intent (...)
'I have a jobbe of Work for you to doe
To make me a Bed to go jig-a-jogoo'». (Burford 1982: 143).

pair – 'elliptical for a pair of breasts' – 1st quotation, 1922, but the euphemism was already used in the 18th c.: «A more enormous pair did my eyes never behold...». (Cleland 1970: 35) (first published in 1749).

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«The Nymphs of the Stage did his ramrod engage;
Made him free of their gay Seminary.
And the Italian Signors opened all their back doors
To the Great Plenipotentiary». (Burford 1982: 280).

root – 'the penis' – 1st quotation, 1846, but the euphemism seems to be older since, according to Partridge (1968: 176), it was allusively used by Shakespeare in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

to serve – 'Of a male animal, to cover (the female); esp. of stallions, bulls, etc. kept and hired out for the purpose' – 1st quotation, 1577, but I believe the euphemism (applied to humans) is used in 'A Talk of Ten Wives on Their Husbands' Ware', a.1460:

«I measured him in the morning tyde
When he was in his most pryde,
The lengthe of three bene.
Howe schulde I be served with that?» (Burford 1982: 41).

willie/willy – 'an infantile name for the penis' – 1st quotation, 1905, but the euphemism must be much older, as I came across it in the following verses from 'A Creature, for Feature, I Never Saw Fairer', c.1600, in the *Percy Ms.*:

«I Stayed him and prayed him and proffered him a favour;
He kist mee and wisht mee to beare with his behaviour;
But Hey tro lolly lolly, the silly willy could not do!» (Burford 1982: 70).

3.2. Postdatings

arrow – 'the penis' - lexicalized as obs., 1382, but I find the euphemism used in the 19th c.:

«Then showed her his arrow, and bid her not fear,
For the pain was no more than a maiden may bear». (*Sylvia the Fair*, J. Dryden, 1808, in Lewis 1981: 96).

Kent' (c.1568), in *The New Academy of Complements* (1671):

«There was a fair Maiden came out of Kent
To be fuck'd by a Joyner was her Intent (...)
'I have a jobbe of Work for you to doe
To make me a Bed to go jig-a-jogoo'». (Burford 1982: 143).

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bung-hole – ‘the anus’ (under *bung*) – lexicalized as obs., 1611, but the euphemism is still current as US. sl.¹⁴⁶

business – ‘euphemism for sexual intercourse’ - lexicalized as obs., 1630, but I find the euphemism used in the 18th c.:

«A Comely Dame of Islington,
Had got a leaky Copper;
The Hole that let the Liquor run
Was wanting of a Stopper:
A Jolly Tinker undertook,
With a thump thump thump, and knick
knack knock,
To do her Business rarely». (‘The Travelling Tinker’, in *Pills To Purge Melancholy*) (Henke 1979: 32).

to deflower – ‘to deprive (a woman) of her virginity; violate, ravish’ – last quotation, 1775, but I found the following current example: «He had relations with a variety of girls, but only once before had he deflowered a virgin» (Mannert 1969: 168). For the action of the verb *to deflower*, *deflowering*¹⁴⁷, for which the last quotation is from 1673, I also found a current example: «To most girls the actual deflowering is one of the most significant events of their young lives» (Hollander 1972: 22).

to embrace – ‘of sexual embraces’ – last quotation, 1660, but I find the euphemism used in the 18th c.: «...he was not ready to embrace me». (Anonymous 1988: 148)¹⁴⁸.

fire ship/fire-ship – ‘one suffering from a venereal disease; a prostitute’ – the last quotation is from 1748, but I found it used in the following fragment of rugby song:

«I played with her for quite some time
And learned to my surprise
She was nothing but a fire-ship
Dressed up in disguise». (Anonymous 1984: 92).

to prostitute – ‘to offer (oneself, or another) to unlawful, esp. indiscriminate, sexual intercourse, usually for hire; to devote or expose to lewdness. (Chiefly *refl.* of a woman.) – the last quotation where the verb is reflexive is from 1653, but I found the euphemism used by a contemporary writer: «In Babylon, every respectable woman was obliged to go at least once in a lifetime to the temple and prostitute herself to the first pilgrim who was willing to pay her». (Vidal 1979: 344).

sport – ‘amorous dalliance or intercourse’ – lexicalized as obs., a.1550-c.1796, but I find the euphemism used in the following limerick (1942):

«When the judge, with his wife having sport,
Proved suddenly two inches short,
The good woman declined,
And the judge had her fined

By proving contempt of court». (Anonymous n/d: 316).

4. CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the lexicographic analysis undertaken, I conclude that: 1) although the number of bawdy terms and expressions, both current and past, included in the *OED* is impressive for a non-specialized dictionary, there are some notable omissions, especially as far as the phrases are concerned, which point to a certain lack of unified criteria for inclusion or exclusion; 2) this impression of lack of unified criteria is reinforced by the fact that some of the missing terms have recently appeared on the pages of the *OED Addition Series*, edited as an indication of what will be incorporated into the main body of the Dictionary in a future edition already in preparation; and 3) the antedatings and postdatings I found to the quotations given in the *OED* for some terms and expressions suggest that there still remain in the 2nd edition of the *OED* some traces of the prejudices against this kind of language in the past which made the compilers of the *OED* 1st edition disregard any citations containing obscene expressions.

NOTES

1. The corpus I gathered contains over 12,000 terms and expressions, taken from a great variety of sources: classic bawdy literature, ranging from Chaucer to Henry Miller, bawdy verse anthologies, specialized dictionaries, contemporary adult novels and magazines (a selection of issues, from 1980 to 1999), rugby songs and jokes, limericks, etc. I take *The Canterbury Tales* as a starting point, though in some of the sources used – Díaz and Lewis, for example- some older sexual metaphors, appearing in the Riddles of *The Exeter Book*, from the 10th c., can be found. The references are to the source consulted in each case, but no reference is given when the term in question appears repeatedly in the adult magazines and/or novels used. I use bold italics for the terms and expressions missing from the *OED*, for easy reference.
2. Shakespeare used *affairs for the female genitals* in *Sonnets*, 151 (for Shakespeare's sexual innuendos, I follow Partridge 1968); I found both *affair* and *affairs for the male genitals* in *Fanny Hill* (Cleland 1970: 37 and 143).
3. *Melt* can be found, for example, in Réage's *Story of O* (Réage 1972: 154), and *dissolve*, in *Fanny Hill* (Cleland 1970: 150). In the *OED*, we find under *dissolve*, in I, 3: «To relax or enervate with pleasure», and in 15: «to become softened in feeling», definitions which do not quite explain the explicit, sexual meaning *dissolve* can have.
4. Used by the Earl of Rochester in his song 'Fair Chloris in a pigsty lay...' (Dietz 1989: 82). In the *OED*, *to ease nature* is registered as 'to relieve the bowels'.
5. Registered only with the general meaning of 'to stimulate into action, an emotion'.
6. However, the vagueness of the definition for a term of this kind can give rise to misunderstandings: *instrument*, for example, is registered as obs. for 'a part of the body having a special function; an organ'; but curiously enough, of the five quotations given the only one with a sexual meaning (from Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*) refers to the female genitals, and not to the penis, the usual meaning I found in the sources used.
7. When the term is included in the *OED*, I always give the definition there provided.
8. Registered only for animal copulation: 'Of male animals: to copulate with'.
9. Obviously many quotations where terms of this sort have a sexual innuendo were simply discarded when the Dictionary began to be compiled in 1858. This would explain disregarding passages like the following, from 'Walking in a Meadow Greene', a.1600, where *to enter* is used for human copulation:

- «And then he thought to venture her,
Thinking the fitt was on him;
But when he came to enter her
The point turned back upon him». (Burford 1982: 48).
10. «The second edition includes approximately seventy-five words with the label *coarse slang*» (Berg 1993: 181).
 11. «...from the color of feces... » (Richter 1993: 30).
 12. I found, among others, *brown eye*, *brown hole*, *brown jug*, *brown bucket* and *brown Windsor*, for 'anus'; *a bit of brown* and *a brown-job*, for 'anal intercourse' (also, 'anilingus'); *to brown* and *to bite the brown*, for 'to practise anilingus'; *brown artist* and *brown-hatter*, for 'a male homosexual'; and *brown family*, for 'pederasts in general'.
 13. «Probably since C. 16» (Partridge 1970: 1030), but it does not appear in any of the sources I handled till 1928 (*Lady Chatterley's Lover*) (Lawrence 1972: 212). I find, however, that it is very frequently used in contemporary adult literature.
 14. Used by Henry Miller in his *Tropic of Cancer* (Miller 1993: 11).
 15. «Originally US» (Green 1998: 494).
 16. See 1.3.4.
 17. Healey (1978: 184).
 18. Legman (1972, 1: 385).
 19. For the analysis of the conceptual spheres, I take as a basis Chamizo Domínguez and Sánchez Benedito (2000: 101-133).
 20. Registered for 'to infect with clap'.
 21. Although *machine* is included in the *OED*, the phrases *brute-machine*, *love-machine* and *man-machine* are missing.
 22. I use the term in the sense of 'included in the *OED*', following the criteria adopted by Chamizo Domínguez and Sánchez Benedito (2000: 85).
 23. Richter (1993: 20) includes the term for 'penis', explaining: «In standard English a bilbo is a sword or blade that was made in Bilbao, Spain».
 24. Used allusively by Shakespeare in 2 *Henry IV* (Partridge 1968: 161).
 25. Shakespeare used *lance*, *pike*, *pistol*, *sword*, and *dart* (*the dribbling dart of love*); *engine*, *machine*, *brute-machine*, *man-machine*, and *machinery*, among others, are very frequently used in *Fanny Hill*; many terms, however, are still frequently used in phrases, especially in adult literature: *beef bayonet*, *dart of love*, *love-dart*, *dart of Venus*, *Cupid's dart*, *lance of love*, *love-machine*, *to sheathe the sword to the hilt*, *to throw the dagger*, etc.
 26. I take the definition from Spears (1981: 352), who adds: «British and U.S. slang, World Wars». Based on this expression, he also registers the fanciful *long-arm inspection*: «An inspection of the erect penis» (Spears 1981: 236).
 27. «Man is always the *Rider*, while woman is always the *Ridden*. Hence the most common designation for the male copulator is *Horseman*, while woman is simply the *Horse*» (Henke 1977: 51).
 28. See 1.3.6., footnote 82.
 29. «Br. E. sl., mid-C 17-18» (Partridge 1970:1085).
 30. «Br.E. sl., 17th c.» (Henke 1979: 223).
 31. «Br. E. sl., 17th c.» (Henke 1979: 222).
 32. «Br. E. sl., 18th-19th c.» (Green 1998: 997).
 33. «Current sl.» (Green 1998: 997).
 34. Used in *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*, 1827 (Burford 1982: 284).
 35. Used in *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*, 1827 (Burford 1982: 284).
 36. Anonymous (1989b: 68).
 37. It is an old metaphor for 'to copulate', and I found it used in some bawdy verses from *Merry Drollery*, 17th c. (Burford 1982: 117).
 38. *Nag* is registered in the *OED* as 'a small riding horse, a pony', and in its transferred sense, as 'a term of abuse', and it is indeed with the meaning of 'a wanton woman' that Shakespeare used it in his *Antony and Cleopatra* (Partridge 1968: 152); but *nag* has also been used as a euphemism for 'penis' (Partridge 1970:

- 548), and that is the meaning it has in some bawdy verses from *Pills to Purge Melancholy*, 18th c. (Burford 1982: 210). *Naggie* is a diminutive of *nag*, used esp. in the phrase *to play at stable-my-naggie*, 'to coit a woman' (Partridge 1970: 821).
39. *Medlar-tree* is used in the same passage; he also used *rotten medlar*, for 'a whore', and *rotten*, for «infected with venereal disease and/or soiled and decayed with constant copulation» (Partridge 1968: 176).
40. «...figs have been identified with the female genitals since ancient times. The Greek word for a fig, for example, was used as a euphemism for the female pudendum [...] In English the word *fig* is also applied to an insulting gesture made with the hand [...] It is intended to represent the female genitals» (McDonald 1988: 53). I found *fig* used in *Men Only* (Dec. 1981: 62).
41. «Australian sl. » (Green 1998: 1118).
42. Often found in *Hustler* and other American adult magazines.
43. «Grose (1785) has: 'One lying with a woman that has just lain with another man, is said to have a buttered bun'» (Partridge, 1970: 115), and similar definitions are to be found in Spears (1981: 58), McDonald (1988: 32), Richter (1993: 35) and Green (1998: 182); the only example I found (Anonymous 1993: 4) had that meaning, too.
44. Partridge (1968: 76). Nowadays, *carrot* is still occasionally used for 'penis', and I found it in a limerick (Douglas 1967: 35).
45. «In the myddis of my gardyn / Is a peryt set [...] / The fayrest mayde of this town / Preyid me, / For to gryffyn her a gryf / Of myn pery tree...». (Díaz 1991: 48).
46. Also quite common in *to peel the banana*, 'to masturbate' (Green 1998: 902); *to get one's banana peeled*, '(orig. US) of a man, to have sexual intercourse' (Green 1998: 481); and *peeling a fine green banana*, 'making love to a very pretty light-skinned girl' (Major 1979: 90).
47. Partridge (1968: 164).
48. In Simpson and Weiner's *Addition Series*, vol. 3.
49. In *Fanny Hill* (Cleland 1970: 103), for instance, I find *journey's end*, for 'an orgasm'; in *Eros at Play* (Anonymous 1993: 174), *voyage*, for 'sexual intercourse'; and in *Little Birds* (Nin 1979: 55), *to travel*, for 'to copulate'.
50. Holder (1989: 1).
51. Partridge (1968: 68).
52. «From the end of L. Sterne's novel, *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*» (Healey 1978: 183). Partridge (1970: 257) registers *end of the sentimental journey* as 'the female pudend'.
53. «Originally prostitute's argot» (Spears 1981: 12).
54. «*Gateshead* is the railway station before Newcastle-upon-Tyne» (Green 1998: 480). I found, in *His Lordship* (Thomas 1970: 160), *Battersea Park*, a curious variant, from the name of the railway station before Victoria Station in London.
55. «*Redfern* is the railway station immediately before Sydney Central» (Green 1998: 480).
56. Found in two limericks (Anonymous n/d: 63 and 262).
57. I also found the following variants: *little man*, *little boy* and *little boy in the boat*.
58. «This euphemism comes from an analogy to the automobile and therefore dates back at least as far as the 1930s, a period when comparisons between the human body and the automobile were common» (Neaman and Silver 1983: 23).
59. «Animality (...) is a common and pervasive metaphor in the expression of sexual concepts» (Richter 1993: xiv), and under 'beast with two backs', he remarks: «Figurative appearance assumed by a copulating couple. This old literary phrase emphasizes the animal nature of sexuality» (Richter 1993: 15).
60. «To have sexual intercourse with a woman» (Partridge 1970: 104).
61. «To have sexual connexion on all fours, i.e. like a dog» (Partridge 1970: 230).
62. «To possess a woman. Ex a stallion covering a mare» (Partridge 1970: 406).
63. Also registered in the *OED* are some *beaver* phrases, e.g. *beaver magfilm* ('pornographic magazine/film') and *beaver shot/split beaver* ('a photo of a woman revealing her genitals'), but *eager beaver*, which I often came across in the adult magazines used, with the meaning of a randy woman or her genitals, is missing.
64. «*Coney* was the word for 'rabbit' until the late 19th c., when it dropped out of use because of the taboo homonym meaning 'cunt'» (Allan and Burridge 1991: 23).
65. Quite common in *to pet the poodle*, 'of a woman, to masturbate' (Green 1998: 908).

66. Found in «Off Alle the Seas», in the *Percy Ms.*, 17th c. (Burford 1982: 77). I also found quite often in contemporary adult magazines *to hide the ferret* for 'to copulate' [«Australian sl.» (Spears 1981:190)].
67. I found several variants: *one-eyed mattress mamba*, *one-eyed monster*, *one-eyed trouser-trout*, *one-eyed worm*, *one-eyed pants mouse*, etc.
68. Green (1998: 870).
69. The trend now seems to point in other directions: *call girl*, *company girl*, *escort*, *good-time girl*, *hostess*, *masseuse*, *model*, etc. (all repeatedly found in *Forum*).
70. *Cat house* for brothel is still occasionally found (the *OED* quotation is from 1931).
71. *Winchester Goose* is also registered, with the meaning of 'prostitute', and that of 'a certain venereal disorder (sometimes simply *a goose*)', but not *green goose*, registered by Partridge (1970: 352) for 'a harlot', and used by Shakespeare in *Love's Labour's Lost*, apparently with the meaning of 'a fresh, young whore' (Partridge 1968: 117).
72. «US underworld» (Spears 1981: 20).
73. «US slang» (Spears 1981: 176).
74. Green (1998: 735).
75. «In Ben Jonson's *Volpone*» (Henke 1979: 185).
76. «In James Shirley's *The Lady of Pleasure*» (Henke 1979: 188).
77. «Possibly a play on *sard*» (Spears 1981: 377).
78. «Said of a woman» (Spears 1981: 311).
79. «17th-century euphemism for copulation, connoting the miracle of reproduction» (Richter 1993: 68).
80. Spears (1981: 420).
81. Spears (1981: 1).
82. «This posture was supposed to be efficacious if the parents wanted their child to be a bishop» (Partridge 1970: 697). Partridge gives also the variant *St George a-horse-back* (1970: 722), and Wilson (1972: 36), *to make a bishop*, as "rural English slang".
83. Anonymous (1989a: 194).
84. Partridge (1970: 388).
85. «From the *Decameron* (Boccaccio); British slang, 1800s or before, Farmer and Henley» (Spears 1981: 319).
86. Spears (1981: 131).
87. Partridge (1970: 691).
88. Spears (1981: 336).
89. Spears (1981: 7).
90. Spears (1981: 155).
91. Partridge (1970: 535).
92. I found all these expressions, and similar ones, like *Aaron's rod*, *hermit in a cave*, *monk*, *gates of Hell*, *heaven*, etc., fairly often, used mainly humorously, in the adult literature I consulted.
93. «Also *bash the bishop* (esp. Army). Ex resemblance of *glans penis* either to episcopal mitre or, more probably, to chess bishop» (Partridge 1970: 1008). There are many variants: Richter (1993: 16) gives *beat the bishop*, and Green (1998: 56), *bang/flog/murder/batter/buff/capture/flip the bishop*.
94. «Grose, 1st ed., 'a sea term'. An unsavoury pun on *cock* and a true criticism of nautical and cloistered life» (Partridge 1970: 87).
95. Green (1994: 239).
96. Cornog (1977: 111-116).
97. Immortalized by D.H. Lawrence in his novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, though according to Partridge (1970: 443) the euphemism was used since c.1840. Curiously enough, *Lady Jane*, the main female character, used by Lawrence in his novel as a euphemism for 'the female genitals' (Lawrence 1972: 238), is not registered in the *OED*.
98. I borrow it from Eisiminger (1979).
99. Partridge (1970: 426).
100. Green (1998: 1038). There are slightly different versions: Partridge (1970: 734) defines it as 'a wench', specifying under *warming-pan* (938): 'a female bed-fellow'; Spears (1981: 341), as 'a female bed companion; a chambermaid'; and Green himself (1994: 200) gives 'an obliging chambermaid'.
101. Green (1998: 393).

102. «Based on appearance or shape» (Richter 1993: 93).
103. «This 19th century nautical expression is an example of the attribution of “unnatural” sexual practices to foreigners» (Richter 1993: 173).
104. «The reference is to the pioneering operation undergone in Denmark by Christine Jorgensen» (Green 1998: 272).
105. Green (1998: 1070).
106. «Posteriors; or perhaps rather the urinary and defecatory organs of woman» (Partridge 1968: 127).
107. «*Spain* must be the pudend, to judge by the evidence of ‘I saw it not’» (Partridge 1968: 186).
108. «The belly; especially in its lower portion, the pelvic basin» (Partridge 1968: 65).
109. «The pudend and adjacent area» (Partridge 1968: 153).
110. **A Greek**, for ‘anal sex’, is as common in prostitutes’ jargon as a *French*, for ‘fellatio’, and I found it often in the sources analysed (especially in personal ads in adult magazines), together with **Greek culture**, **Greek fashion**, **Greek style**, **Greek trade** and **the Greek way**, with that meaning, as well as **Greek love**, for ‘pederasty’, and **the Greek side**, for ‘the posterior’.
111. Often used in personal ads in adult magazines. I also found, in *Forum*, **English culture**, **English arts**, **English guidance** and **English vice**, with the same meaning.
112. Vol. 2.
113. Vol. 2.
114. Vol. 1 (under *pipe*).
115. Vol. 3.
116. Vol. 3 (under *mammary*).
117. Vol. 3 (under *melon*).
118. Vol. 3.
119. Vol. 2.
120. Vol. 1.
121. Vol. 1.
122. Vol. 1.
123. Vol. 1.
124. Vol. 1.
125. Vol. 2.
126. Vol. 2.
127. Vol. 2.
128. Vol. 3.
129. Vol. 2.
130. Vol. 2.
131. Also, *Mary* (1972); other girl names used to designate an effeminate man or a homosexual, such as *Nancy*, *Nancy Dawson*, *Nance*, *Molly*, *Nelly*, etc. were already installed in the *Dictionary*.
132. Vol. 3.
133. Vol. 3.
134. Though, as we shall see in 3.1, the euphemism may have been used before this date.
135. Vol. 1.
136. Vol. 3 (under *leg*).
137. Vol. 3.
138. Vol. 1.
139. Vol. 1.
140. The Series is subtitled *An A-Z presentation of new work-in-progress supplementing the Oxford English Dictionary*.
141. The existence of earlier examples is acknowledged by the editors themselves: «Earlier examples exist (in various places) for thousands of words and senses, and these should be added». (*OED*, vol. 1, lvi).
142. The need to add more recent examples in some cases is acknowledged by the editors themselves: «Many current words are illustrated by a latest quotation from the first half of the nineteenth century, or even earlier, and it is difficult to distinguish them from words and senses that are now, in fact, disused. Recent examples ought to be supplied for every sense that is still current». (*OED*, vol. 1, lvi).

143. Before the Dictionary was finished three further editors were appointed: Henry Bradley, W.A. Craigie, and C. T. Onions.
 144. Thirteen years after Sir James Murray's death, in 1915.
 145. I take the data from Landau (1989: 69).
 146. Wentworth and Flexner (1975: 682).
 147. *Defloration* is also registered, the last quotation being from 1883.
 148. The action of the novel is set in the 18th c.

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