## The Nonlexical and the Encyclopedic\*

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HE EDITORS OF THE G. AND C. MERRIAM Co. have been asked over and over again to explain why thousands of words became obsolete between 1934, the date of the first printing of Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, and 1961, the publication date of Webster's Third New International Dictionary. Specifically, we have been asked to explain how the Third Edition can have 50,000 new words and yet have 100,000 less words than the Second Edition. The questioners sometimes even cite a 1959 or 1960 printing of the Second Edition, and want to know why these words became "suddenly" out of date. The questions, so phrased, are unanswerable, for no suddenness is involved. For over 100 years the vocabulary of Merriam-Webster unabridged dictionaries had increased without any considerable pressure for a thorough review of the evidence for currency. When it became practically indisputable that the physical bulk of the Second Edition with its 3393 pages and its thickness of five inches could not expand enough to take in 50,000 new words and 50,000 new senses of old words, a number of relevant editorial decisions had to be made.

These inevitable decisions emerged gradually as soon as the Second Edition began in 1939 adding supplementary matter especially in the addenda section of new words – that is, words new to the dictionary whether neologisms or not – and in the gazetteer. When Webster's Biographical Dictionary was published in 1943 and Webster's Geographical Dictionary in 1949, anyone might have foreseen that the biographical and geographical sections were going to be omitted from the next unabridged dictionary. It seems in order now to let interested dictionary users know the full nature of the change. The following numbered paragraphs, mutatis mutandis, are from a directive issued in October, 1954:

<sup>\*</sup> Read at the Fourth Names Institute, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Florham-Madison campus, Madison, N.J., May 1, 1965.

- 1 The word nonlexical has been compounded, adopted, and manipulated arbitrarily as expedient editorial jargon to cover in its broadest sense all matter not accepted for inclusion in [the] 3rd ed. Timetables of the nation's transportation systems, dividend records of stocks listed on the exchange, analysis of Leonardo da Vinci's anatomism, and the letter-sequence dlub should be readily acceptable as nonlexical, although dlub, even if phonetically impossible in English, needs perhaps an assertion that it is not known to have any meaning or to have ever been uttered in communication. Anyone, however, who makes an unconsidered attempt to add to these four examples is likely to come up with something that has already been included in one of our own (or similar) dictionaries or proposed for inclusion.
- 2 The history of lexicography that will account for this situation has not yet been published. Noah Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language provides little (compared with Webster's New International Dictionary of 1934) that could relevantly be called nonlexical, nor do the two earlier folio volumes of Dr. Johnson. The matter became important to us about 1860 when Noah Porter appointed to the Merriam editorial staff one William A. Wheeler, probably first met by students of literature as the author of An Explanatory and Pronouncing Dictionary of the Noted Names of Fiction; Including Also Familiar Pseudonyms, Surnames Bestowed on Eminent Men, and Analogous Popular Appellations Often Referred to in Literature and Conversation. This handy little vade mecum of several thousand names and 400 pages got its start as a small pronouncing appendix headed "Names of Men of Modern Times" in Joseph Worcester's 1860 Dictionary. When Wheeler went over to the Merriams, he enlarged this matter to fill 52 pages of Webster's 1864 Unabridged under the heading "Names of Noted Fictitious Persons and Places, etc." This supplement was introduced to the public as "a novel and appropriate accompaniment of an English Dictionary ... the first attempt of its kind, at least in our language, and is valuable for its interesting gleanings from history and biography ..." (p. viii). Elsewhere the editor defended his course: "An objection may be made by some, that, however useful and important such a glossary may be, it does not form an appropriate accompaniment to a general dictionary of the English language. But ... experience has shown, that [such] information ...

is more naturally looked for in a general dictionary than in any other kind of dictionary" (p. 1591).

- 3 To make sure that the rival Worcester company could never catch up, Wheeler helped to compile ten additional appendices Scripture Proper Names, Greek and Latin Proper Names, Etymological Vocabulary of Modern Geographical Names, Modern Geographical and Biographical Names, Common English Christian Names, Foreign Quotations, Abbreviations, Arbitrary Signs, Pictorial Illustrations, and World Alphabets altogether taking up 171 pages out of 1768, about one tenth of the volume.
- 4 No sooner was this W1864 off the press than Wheeler either decided that these appendices didn't belong in the dictionary he had helped to edit or saw that he had almost let slip an opportunity for his own gain. He reworked the matter for a third time and brought out in 1865 his own Noted Names, in which he explained "That a dictionary which should furnish succinct information upon such matters [noted names, titles of literary works, names of statues, paintings, palaces, countryseats, churches, ships, streets, clubs] would supply a want which is daily felt by readers of every class is not to be doubted; but it should constitute an independent work" (p. vi). But the damage had been done. Over 95% of this W1864 appended matter was carried over into W1890, the next edition and the first International, with an increase of new names amounting to about 25%. Better than two thirds of the W1864 matter survives in the second New International of 1934 (W1934). Though additions were again made, neither W1934 nor the two intervening editions (W1909 and W1890) could keep up with the main design on which Wheeler had based his 1864 selections, "to explain the allusions which occur in modern standard literature"; e.g., hundreds of lines are given in W1934 to the titles and characters of Dickens but not even one title by Somerset Maugham or Thomas Mann or Oscar Wilde or Eugene O'Neill or Edna Ferber is entered. To make good Wheeler's 90-year old design as of 1954 in literary titles alone without regard to characters or other related allusions would require a minimum addition of several thousand entries. Dictionary users would be expected to object strongly to a balancing deletion of thousands of older titles and characters.
- 5 Another 19th-century sequence of events had considerable influence. Before Noah Webster could get his unabridged into a sec-

ond edition, John Ogilvie began (1838) revising it for Blackie in Glasgow and brought out, first in parts beginning in 1847, the Imperial Dictionary, English, Technological, and Scientific; Adapted to the Present State of Literature, Science, and Art; on the Basis of Webster's English Dictionary; with the Addition of Many Thousand Words and Phrases from the Other Standard Dictionaries and Encyclopedias. ... What effect this dictionary as completed with a supplement in 1855 had on W1864 is secondary now to the fact that it became the basis for the Century Dictionary. A proposal made in 1882, "to adapt The Imperial Dictionary to American needs" resulted seven years later in the first volume of the Century, which acknowledged on the title page verso that material from the Imperial had been "freely used" by permission of the publishers. Not only that. This acknowledgment gave notice that, "certain owners of American copyrights having claimed that undue use of matter so protected has been made in the compilation of The Imperial Dictionary," further arrangements had been made with these protesting owners whereby the Century owners could use matter to which the Imperial owners held dubious claim. How the Century Company squared itself with the Merriam Company is impertinent. The Century had not only taken for its editor in chief an associate editor of W1864 (William Dwight Whitney) but had indirectly acquired a substantial body of Webster definitions, and of course then copyrighted itself with "all rights reserved." Thus, W1890, the first International, found itself in competition with a formidable ten-volume rival of its own paternity (illustrating again the facility with which Webster is ever so often rovally manhandled) entitled The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia: an Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language and a Pronouncing and Etymological Dictionary of Names in Geography, Biography, Mythology, History, Art, Etc., Etc. Another current work was ahead of the Century in similarly using in an English title for the first time the word encyclopedic: Robert Hunter's Encyclopaedic Dictionary begun in 1872 and completed in 1889, in 14 volumes of 5629 three-column pages containing about 180,000 words. Two other influences at work in 1890 should not be forgotten: the Encyclopaedia Britannica was in its 9th edition (25 volumes, 1875-89); and the OED was published two fifths through the letter C. But none of these British publications had as much relevance to the *International* as the *Century*.

- 6 In the preface to the Century Whitney calls attention to "the addition to the definitions proper of such related encyclopedic matter ... as shall constitute a convenient book of general reference" (p. v). "The inclusion," he goes on to say (p. xv), "of so extensive and varied a vocabulary, the introduction of special phrases, and the full description of things often found essential to an intelligible definition of their names, would alone have given to this dictionary a distinctly encyclopedic character. It has, however, been deemed desirable to go somewhat further in this direction than these conditions render strictly necessary. Accordingly, not only have many technical matters been treated with unusual fullness, but much practical information of a kind which dictionaries have hitherto excluded has been added. The result is that the Century Dictionary covers to a great extent the field of the ordinary encyclopedia, with this principal difference - that the information given is for the most part distributed under the individual words and phrases with which it is connected, instead of being collected under a few general topics." The statistical result is eight volumes (by 1891) of 7046 three-column pages defining about 200,000 terms and including about 200,000 illustrative quotations, followed (1894-95) by two supplementary volumes, entitled Cyclopedia of Names, of 1085 pages devoted to proper names in geography, biography, mythology, history, ethnology, art, archaeology, fiction, tribes, stars, constellations, buildings, societies, orders, streets, wars, treaties, books, plays, etc.
- 7 W1890 could not do much about these contemporaneous developments in lexicography. It came out substantially in the pattern of W1864, protesting that "even an Unabridged Dictionary has its limits" (page iii) and designating itself openly as "neither a library nor an encyclopedia ... but a dictionary" (publishers' statement). But W1909 had the time, the incentive, and the models for introducing "a greatly increased amount of encyclopedic information" (p. v) and for building in the grand manner a really new *International*, "more evenly balanced, more uniform, and better coordinated," as claimed (p. vii). The most radical and distinctive feature was the divided page, which "made possible the insertion of ... more encyclopedic matter than ... hitherto ... found in a one-volume dictionary" (p. vi). Prefatory attention was called to a number of examples, mostly of what were called systematic defini-

tions, such as the following, here singled out for convenience' sake (since the W1934 parallel coverage is practically the same): Aphrodite 1 (34 lines), Bible 2 (121 lines), bird 2 (39 lines), constellation 2 (71 lines), corporation 2, 3 (74 lines), knot 1 (106 lines), phosphorus 3 (32 lines). "A great deal of matter is given that may best be described as encyclopedic, since it belongs to a province which the encyclopedia has hitherto made its own" (p. vi).

- 8 The resulting 2718 pages (including a 70-page pictorial supplement) determined to a large extent the contents and organization of W1934. Expanded by 675 pages to a total of 3393 to absorb a vocabulary increase of about 25 % and to profit from the completion of the *OED* from the middle of letter R on, W1934 extended the "encyclopedic treatment . . . to hundreds of important terms that lend themselves advantageously to this method" (p. vii), citing as examples animal 1 (111 lines), electricity 2 (77 lines), element 9 (104 lines), elephant 1 (57 lines), Anglo-Saxon 1 (20 lines), and music 1 (66 lines). What W1934 (W34) did with one of the W09 section titles may be interpreted, albeit uncharitably, to symbolize in some respects the revision: W09's "Arbitrary Signs" became in W34 "Arbitrary Signs and Symbols."
- 9 Dictionary of the standard language. It is physically and financially impossible for the 3rd ed. to go on expanding in the same way, to be even more encyclopedic, and at the same time to take in for lexical analysis all that is pressing at the covers. A one-volume dictionary and encyclopedia combined is not feasible and not even sustainable without facilities now unavailable and a type of research not now being carried on. Therefore 3rd ed. is to be primarily a DICTIONARY OF THE STANDARD LANGUAGE as used throughout the English-speaking world.
- 10 Omissions. To bring this change about a number of specific steps have already been taken or planned:
- (a) The Gazetteer section will be omitted
- (b) The Biographical section will be omitted
- (c) The Abbreviation section as such and the Arbitrary Signs and Symbols section will be omitted
- (d) The Brief History of the English Language will be omitted
- (e) The Guide to Pronunciation will be reduced by over half
- (f) Reformed spelling will be omitted

- (g) All but anglicized foreign words and phrases will be omitted; this means that the double bars as a distinguishing typographic device will go but not all the W34 terms introduced by them: each term will be considered on its own claims for inclusion in an English dictionary
- (h) Self-explanatory lists will be omitted
- (i) The more recondite terms in W34, particularly in special subjects, will be reduced in number or omitted; these omissions include rare, archaic, obsolete, and nonce terms (see footnote 1 in the Appendix).
- (j) Nonstandard and substandard terms will be reduced in number; these include slang and dialect
- (k) Prenames (given Christian proper names) will be omitted (Jonathan, Louisa)
- (1) Proper epithets and nicknames will be omitted (Athlete of Christendom, Great Commoner, Keystone State)
- (m) Titles and names of written works and of works of art will be omitted (As You Like It, America the Beautiful, Sistine Madonna, Dying Gaul)
- (n) Characters in fiction, drama, legend, and folklore will be omitted (*Micawber*, *Banquo*, *Robin Hood*, *Mother Hubbard*)
- (o) Names of characters in mythology will be omitted (Diana, Odin, Isis, Eumenides)
- (p) Names of persons in the Bible will be omitted (Barabbas, Deborah)
- (q) Names of saints will be omitted (Anthony, George, Cecilia)
- (r) Names of cities, states, counties, etc. will be omitted (Boston, Florida, Yorkshire)<sup>1</sup>
- (s) Names of buildings, streets, urban districts, etc. will be omitted (Whitehall, Fleet Street, Latin Quarter)
- (t) Names of battles, wars, treaties, etc. will be omitted (Blenheim, Boer War, Kellogg Pact)
- (u) Titles of legislative acts will be omitted (Defense of the Realm Act, Mann Act)
- (v) Names of legal cases will be omitted (*Dred Scott Case*, *Dartmouth College Case*)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> As nouns, that is. Over 1300 zero-derivatives of names of places are entered to cover their adjectival function. Compare paragraph 16.

- (w) Names of historical events will be omitted (Louisiana Purchase, Missouri Compromise)
- (x) Names of organizations, social, fraternal, religious, academic, etc., will be omitted (*Phi Beta Kappa*, Boy Scouts of America, Ku Klux Klan, Carnegie Foundation, Federal Farm Loan Board, Royal Academy)
- (y) Names of ships will be omitted (Old Ironsides)
- (z) Names of stars and constellations, etc. will be omitted (Sirius, Ursa Minor, Andromeda)
- (aa) Names of comets will be omitted (Biela's Comet)
- (bb) Names of rivers and currents will be omitted (Nile, Father of Waters, Japan Current, Gulf Stream)
- (cc) Mottoes, proverbs, famous sayings will be omitted (ich dien, ad astra per aspera, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, silence gives consent, all is grist that comes to his mill, when Greek meets Greek)
- (dd) The device of the divided page will be abandoned in favor of a full three-column page, without pronunciation key lines at the bottom
- (ee) The number of black and white illustrations will be reduced by over half
- 11 For practicable purposes all this matter now to be omitted and therefore to be considered *nonlexical* in its broadest sense comes into critical question in two forms: either (1) as a term to go in or out as a definiendum or (2) as information to become part of the definiens. Any term omitted entirely will be called *nonlexical* in a narrow sense; information deleted or withheld from an entered term will be called *encyclopedic*.
- 12 Proper nouns and common nouns. The difference between the nonlexical in this narrow sense and the lexical is chiefly (as far as this directive goes) the difference between the proper noun and the common noun, a difference that must expediently be comprehended despite Jespersen's opinion that "linguistically it is utterly impossible to draw a sharp line of demarcation between proper names and common names" (Philosophy of Grammar, p. 69). The W34 definitions of proper name ("a name distinguishing some individual person, place, or thing") and common noun ("one of a class") distinguish the two groups semantically. Bloomfield's corresponding class meanings of proper noun ("species of object containing only

one specimen") and common noun ("species of object occurring in more than one specimen") are further distinguished formally and syntactically by the presence or absence of a determiner or article, that is, proper nouns are definite and singular and usually take no determiner (there are exceptions); common nouns may be both definite and indefinite: definite common nouns require in the singular and plural a definite determiner for identified specimens (the house, the houses; or with this, that, my, etc.); indefinite common nouns require in the singular an indefinite determiner for unidentified specimens (a house, or with any, each, etc.) except for mass nouns (milk, music) and abstract nouns (life), but require in the plural no determiner (houses, corresponding to the singular a house).

13 - Capitalization. Nouns which apply in common to all members of a class and so when used alone do not distinguish one member from another member (bugle, dolphin) may become proper when used to particularize, as one named ship (SS. Dolphin), one named building (Pentagon), one named train (Chief), one named newspaper (Bugle), one named animal (Rover), and likewise noun phrases used as particular names are proper names (Old South Church, Cleopatra's Needle, Northern Pacific Railroad). Such change is usually signaled by capitalization. But proper nouns and proper names sometimes become common when by class cleavage they turn the particular specimens into one of a class (two Johns, this John, the Johnsons, my Buick, your Webster, a Brodie). Such common nouns usually continue to carry the capital. Capitalization, therefore, is not by itself a reliable criterion, as found either in W34 or in citations. In its primary sense, Tree of Knowledge, for example, is a proper name because it names a unique tree, but W34 shows only the lowercase form for tree of knowledge, even though defined in its primary sense and not as a symbol. Millenary petition is another good example of a proper name that is l.c. in W34.

14 – Among the nouns common to all members of a class fall not only the majority of lowercase nouns but also innumerable words usually capitalized: a German, an Irishman, the Frenchman, the French, your Vermonter, two Indians, many Iroquois, several Holsteins, few Dutch, a number of Leghorns, a barrel of Baldwins, thousands of Huguenots, all Fridays, a group of Bostonians, one of the Nazarenes, and the majority of Africans. The underlined words are all common nouns.

- 15 Likewise special kinds of nouns often carry initial capitals on words which analyze like common nouns. Among mass nouns occur a piece of *Roquefort*, a little *Chianti*, printed in *Baskerville*, a pipeful of *Burley*, no different (with respect to common vs. proper) from piece of cheese, a little wine, printed in pearl, a pipeful of tobacco. Among similar immaterial mass nouns occur names of languages (he knew no *French*; spoken in excellent *Spanish*) and among abstract nouns occur *Babbittry*, *Bascology*, *Americanism*, all common nouns.
- 16 Substantive nouns only. The proper noun as substantive noun is the only part of speech that is here to be considered nonlexical. Proper adjectives (Canadian bacon, italic type), attributive nouns (Canada goose, macadam road), and verbs (Fletcherize, burbank) will come under no such arbitrary classification and will be treated on the basis of usage like any lowercase term. More specifically, Canadian white pine and white pine fall into the same class. Whether breeds (Holstein cattle, White Rock hen), varieties (Concord grape, Idaho potato, American Beauty rose), or similar terms (Caslon type, Stillson wrench, Murphy bed, Boston rod) are to be entered will have to be decided subject for subject according to importance and available space. Brand names and trademarks that have not become generic or have not lost their brand identity will be arbitrarily omitted as nonlexical (Buick, Camel, Coca Cola, Kotex, Colt, Prestone, Flexible Flyer, and Hotpoint).

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## Appendix<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following columns contain over 500 words that are not in Webster's Third New International but are in its predecessor of 1934, selected from only 50 pages in only one letter. The principal object is to let interested readers actually see some of the words omitted, chiefly because of item "i" in paragraph 10 of the 1954 directive. Also the list will prevent any wrong conclusion that might be drawn from the first paragraph: namely, that the 100,000 entries omitted are all names. The list of omissions here includes only generic words. It contains no taxonomic terms and no measures or coins, for many of these were omitted from the Third Edition only to be replaced by equivalent up-to-date terms; no hyphened or open compounds; no reformed spellings; no terms with cross references to affixes (as -ABLE, DE-, -ISM); and no homographs (as descry, n) of included words. Otherwise it would be several times longer.

dabba dant decatoic defamy defatigable dabbeh danton deceasure defatigate dabuh daoine decene defaultive dacca dapicho decener dacker dapico decennal defaulture daraf defease dacoitage decenvl decerniture dacre darat defectology dardanium decess defectuosity dacryops dactylioglyph darger deciatine defectuously darkmans decidement defeise dactylitic defensative dactylopatagium darnex decidence dactylorhiza darr deciduoma defenser decime defension dadder dartars daduchus dartoic decine defervescency daekon dartre decipiency defet daer darwan decipium definish decise defixion daesman darwaysh declarement deflourish daez daswen daffle declinal defluous dasypaedal declinator datiscetin defoil dagassa datiscin decoll defoul dagh daturism deconcoct defrication dagon dagswain dauk decoped degen daukin decora degender dague daurk decourt degenerously daguilla dahll daverdy decrete degest dainteous davyne decretion degger dawm decretorily degradand daintrel daira daval decrew degraduate decuria degraduation daïra dayment daynous deddv degravate dairi dakoo dearworth dedecorous degravation debacchation dedentition deha dalf dalk debage dedignation dehonestate dallack debash dedo dehonestation dedolation dehortative dalle deben debilissima deductile dalt dehorter debilitude deduit dehydrodalteen deblaterate deduplication corydaline damassin dehydromucic dambonitol debout deenie dambose debulliate deere deificate damier decacerate deess deignous deinos dammaret decacerous deevev decadionome deewan deintrelle damonico deiplenus decaedron defail danceress danda decamalee defailment deipotent deisidaimonia danner decapitable defamous

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dejectment deierate dejeration dejerator dekalin dekamali demigrate delacerate demihag delapsion demijambe demilegato delatory delavy demimark delayment deleble demiparcel deletive deletory deliber delicioso delie delineature demisable delinquishment deliquate demissive deliracy demissorv delirancy demisuit delirant delire democraw delirement dempne demster delirous delisk demulce delit demulceate denat delitable delitous deliverness dendral dendraxon delk delubrum dendric deludher demeanance demen deneer demency denegate denizate demene demeore demere denshire demerge dentagra demester demicaponier dentata demicastor denticate demichamfron dentiferous demidentilated contrafagotto

demicuirass dentile demiditone dentiloguy demidolmen dentimeter demigalonier dentinalgia demigauntlet dentinification dentinitis dentinocemental dentiparous dentiphone dentiroster demimentonniere dentiscalp demiparallel dentistic dentolabial demipauldron dentural demirelievo denumber denumberment demirevetment demisability denumeral denumerant demissionary denumeration denumerative denunciable denunciant demivambrace deobstruent deoculate deodate deoppilant deoppilate deoppilation deoppilative dendrachate deosculate deosculation deota deoxidative dendritiform deozonization dendrodont depair depardieu departable depas denizenation depascent depass depasturable dentaphone depasturation depatriate depe depeach depeculate dentilation depeint

depeller depencil deperdite deperditely depersonize depertible depetalize depetticoat dephase dephilosophize dephlegm dephlegmatize dephlegmatory dephlegmedness dephlogistication dephysicalization dephysicalize depiedmontize depilator deplaceable deplant deplantation deplethoric deploitation deplorate deplorement deponer depopulacy depopulative depositate depositee depositive depositure deposure depotentiate depotentiation depravate depravingly deprecable deprecatoriness depreciant depredable depredationist depredicate deprehensible deprehensibleness

depel

deprehensibly depressomotor depriment deprint depriorize deprome deprostrate depthen depucelate depullulation depulse depulsion depurative depuratory depure deputable dequantitate derbukka derdoing dere deregulationize dereligion derere deresinify deresinize dergie deric derival derivant derivedly derivedness derivement dermad dermalith dermatagra

dermatalgia

dermatic dermatine dermatocoptic dermatolysis dermatophagic dermatoplasm dermatoplast dermatoplastic dermatoplasty dermatoskeleton dermatozoon dermatozoonosis dermitis dermogastric dermography dermohemal dermol dermoneural dermoosseous dermoossification dermophobe dermorhynchous dermostosis dermutation derner dernful dernly deroga derride derries dertrotheca dertrum desaurin descense descensory

desciple desclaundre descure desdain desecate desecation desertful desertfully desertress desertrice desertrix desespeir desesperance deshmukh deshonour deshpandi desiderability desiderably desidiose desidious desightment designment desilicification desiliconization desiliconize desmic desmohemoblast desmoid desmology desmon desmopelmous desmosite desmotomy desobligeant

desolative

despairable despeche despection despeir despence desperance despert despight despitous despitously desponsation desport despose despouse despume desray desse dessicative dessicator destin destinable destinably destinal destour destructory desucration desuete desume detainal detainder detant detax detectible deteigne

desolatory