

White Kennett. 2018.
Etymological Collections of English Words and
Provincial Expressions,
edited by Javier Ruano-García.
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With this comprehensive and meticulous edition of White Kennett's monumental and hitherto unpublished *Etymological Collections of English Words and Provincial Expressions*, also known as MS Lansdowne 1033, Javier Ruano-García has produced a major work of scholarship which has rescued from relative obscurity a substantial landmark of antiquarian lexicography of the seventeenth century. As the editor observes, "Few early dictionaries and glossaries give credit to Kennett's glossary in the history of English dialectology" (80). Kennett is also absent from more recent discussions of the genre, such as Penhallurick (2009), despite his having been, along with the better-known John Ray, a major source of early dialect data for Joseph Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* (1896–1905) (henceforward *EDD*) and James O. Halliwell-Philips' *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words* (1847). It is now unlikely that this neglect will persist.

The volume is a very welcome contribution to lexicography and will be an important point of departure for anyone interested in regional dialect and early etymology. Kennett, a native of Kent, bishop, local historian and polemicist, conceived an ambitious project in the 1690s to compile a "universal English glossary or a *Thesaurus Linguae Anglicanae*" which would include not only "words obsolete and now of local use, but all other English words of most common acceptance" (41).

Writing of Robert Burton, like himself the fellow of an Oxford college but of an earlier generation, Kennett records that

the author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is said to have laboured long in the writing of this book to suppress his own melancholy[...] In an interval of vapours he would be extremely pleasant, and raise laughter in any company. Yet I have heard that nothing at last could

make him laugh but going down to the Bridge-foot in Oxford, and hearing the barge-men scold and storm and swear at one another, at which he would set his hands to his sides, and laugh most profusely. (Kennett 1728, 320-321)

Among the local vocabulary available for that scolding, storming and swearing was “prudgian” for which we have Kennett as our sole authority:

Prugian, Prudgan. Pert, Brisque, Proud.
as You look mighty prudgan. Oxf. Sax.
ppundlic, tumidus, inflatus. (135)

Wright includes the word, along with almost two thousand more of Kennett’s, in *EDD*. Some 43 per cent of the glossary material (ca. 3,100 of the 7,111 entries) is devoted to dialectal forms and uses.

The extensive and informative introduction consists of the following sections: 1) White Kennett in the context of his time; 2) White Kennett in the context of historical antiquarian scholarship (overview; the recovery of the Anglo-Saxon past: glossaries and dictionaries; chorographies, local, and natural histories; and Kennett’s glossary to *Parochial Antiquities*, 1695); 3) British Library, MS Lansdowne 1033 (description; compilation and method: headwords, definitions, senses, etymology, sources and citations, and cross-references); 4) the non-dialect material; 5) the dialect material (sources: printed documents and private correspondents; Kennett’s varieties of English: dictionary treatment, northern words, midland words, southern words; and Scottish, Welsh, and Irish words); 6) the legacy of Kennett’s dialect words (Bodleian MS Eng. Lang. D. 67; from Halliwell’s *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words* to Wright’s *English Dialect Dictionary*; and thereafter) and 7) notes on the editorial policy. The introduction is expertly done and constitutes a monograph in its own right.

The entry for the headword “swingle” will serve to illustrate some of the features of the work:

Swingle. In the Wire-works at Tintern in Mon. is a Mill, where a wheel moves several engines like little barrels, and to each barrle is fastned a spoke of wood w^{ch} they call a Swingle, w^{ch} is drawn back a good way by the calms and cogs in the axis y^e wheel, and draws back the barrle, w^{ch} falls again by its own weight. Swingle in Yks. Is an instrument to beat hemp.⁵⁶² And in Ken. the shorter part of a flail in

in some parts a Swipple is called a Swingle. A Sax. *ƿinȝan*, *ƿinȝelan*,
verberare; *ƿinȝ*, *flagellum*; *ƿinȝla*, *verbera*. Island. *suinǵl*, *vertigo*.
 (390)

Footnote 562 records that this is the earliest evidence for Yorkshire in *EDD*. Kennett's sources are generally signaled in the footnotes, though, surprisingly, not in this instance (Ray 1691, 133–134). In addition to the conjectural etymologies, drawing on a range of Germanic languages, a high proportion of entries are supported by illustrative literary quotations (Gavin Douglas and George Meriton figure extensively), thus anticipating later developments in lexicography.

Ruano-García's editorial policy has sought to preserve scrupulous fidelity to the integrity of the manuscript, and this extends to the retention of Anglo-Saxon script and the Gothic alphabet, which will not be to all readers' taste. Questionable too is the decision to retain an aspect as adventitious as the manuscript word divisions while the potentially more meaningful authorial underlinings are omitted. Without access to the manuscript, it is impossible to assess the accuracy of the transcription, particularly when seeming mis-transcriptions (e.g. "upraid" for "upbraid") may conceivably be spelling variants. In the case of Latin, however, suspicions of error are on firmer ground, although simple misprints cannot be ruled out:

s.v. *eddish*: "quod post messem in campus relinquitur." For "campus" read "campis"? (180)

s.v. *misknawis*: "misknawing our estate, nostra conditionis ignarus." For "nostra" read "nostrae"? (288)

s.v. *Nave or Body of the Church*: "For primitive Churches in respect of their fabric, were supposed to be like Naves inversa, ships whose reel was towards heaven." For "inversa" read "inversae" (and for "reel", "keel")? (296)

s.v. *nepe-tide*: "i.e. recessus maris vel fluvis." For "fluvis" read "fluvii"? (298)

s.v. *snivelard*: "defluxio a capita in nares." For "capita" read "capite"? (365)

None of these shortcomings, however, seriously detract from Ruano-García's achievement. It is difficult to imagine how an edition of this fascinating glossary could have been better conceived and executed.

References

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