Law and Early Modern English Lexicons

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1. The First Printed English Legal Lexicons

John Duncan Cowley (1897–1944), nephew to Sir Ernest Cowley, Bodley Librarian from 1919 to 1931, published the first substantial scholarly work on early modern English dictionaries in 1932 for the Selden Society, *A Bibliography of Abridgments, digests, dictionaries and indexes of English law to the year 1800*. Cowley's book came out five years before DeWitt Talmage Starnes produced his first article on bilingual dictionaries for *PMLA* in 1937. Cowley was then County Librarian of Lancashire, a position he obtained in 1925. He had received his education at Merchant Taylors' School and St John's College, Oxford, served in World War I in the machine gun corps, and taken a position as Assistant Librarian, Middle Temple, in London from 1922 to 1924. He became Director of the School of Library Studies at University College London in 1934 and went on to publish two more books, *The Use of Reference Material* (1937) and *Bibliographical Description and Cataloguing* (1939). After the School closed for the war, Cowley joined the Royal Air Force and was killed on August 20, 1944, in active service, holding the rank of squadron-leader, just after having been appointed Goldsmiths' Librarian at London.[1]

Katherine Pantzer cites Cowley's book as an authority on legal literature in the revised *Short-Title Catalogue* (1986: xliv). His *Bibliography* offers well-annotated entries for 330 texts from about 1481, when J. Lettou and W. de Machlina printed a medieval abridgement of statutory topics from 'abjuration' to 'utlagary', to the 18th century, when Charles Viner produced his great abridgment in six volumes. Cowley's introduction is important in the history of the English language because it identifies the first monolingual dictionary to be published as a separate book in England to have been John Rastell's 88-page *Exposiciones terminorum legum anglorum* (*STC* 20701).[2] *STC* and R. C. Alston (2004: XVIII.II.I.1) date it in 1523, and Rastell's bibliographer, the late E. J. Devereux, about 1524. This predates all other English lexical works, including the herbal printed by Richard Banckes (1525; *STC* 13175.1) and Jürgen Schäfer's candidate for the earliest glossary, Gentian Hervet's hard-word table in *De immensa dei misericordia* by Erasmus (1526; *STC* 10474). Thanks to Gabriele Stein, we have for several decades known that English lexicography goes back a century before Robert Cawdrey published his *Table Alphabeticall* in 1604. As recently as 2003, Simon Winchester, in his *Meaning of Everything*, still refers to Cawdrey as author of the 'first monolingual English dictionary ever made' (22), but Rastell is a much more interesting character in English history: lawyer, mathematician, dramatist, printer, adventurer, reformer, and monolingual English lexicographer.[3] He seems to have written his lexicon himself. J. H. Baker, the foremost early English law historian of our times, refers to it as 'an original work not derived from older texts' (Spelman 1978: 185).[4]

English law in the sixteenth century enjoyed two auspices, the Doctors' Commons of the universities and the church, which treated ecclesiastical and admiralty law (Logan 1988; Squibb 1977), and the Inns of Court, the home of common lawyers that, from medieval times, was recognized as the

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[1] J. H. Bowman, the School's present Programme Director obligingly gave me many of these details. The research in this paper was done during a Killam Research Fellowship generously awarded to me by the Canada Council.

[2] Rastell's *Exposiciones* as the first monolingual glossary has also been treated by Graham (1954), Bland (1980), and Lancashire (2004).

[3] For discussions of Rastell's life, see Devereux (1999), Geritz (1983), and Graham (1954).

[4] The English legal vocabulary employed by Rastell descended from the statutes of the realm, and from the Chancery terminology in which they were largely devised (Rissanen 2000).

third university in England after Oxford and Cambridge (Baker 1979). Common lawyers litigated mainly about property, including the Crown's. Thus the gateway to early Tudor money and power was through the common law. The Doctors Commons used academic Latin, but the Inns of Court employed law-French for their records, and (increasingly) English for oral pleadings. Inns of Court law-French was archaic, sprinkled with common English words and phrases denoting things for which French words could not be found. Neither aliens from France nor the native-born English could easily understand what the civilian Abraham Fraunce in 1588 called the 'Hotchpot French, stufft vp with such variety of borowed words, wherein our law is written' (¶3ʳ). Common lawyers gained proficiency in it only by hearing lectures and participating in moots at the Inns of Court because the universities did not teach French. Christopher St. Germain in 1531 complained that 'bycause moche part of the lawe of Englande is wryten in the frenche tonge / Therfore I can not through myne owne studye atteyne to the knowledge therof' (1970: a2ʳ). In Thomas Starkey's dialogue between Lupset and Pole, written ca. 1533–36, the fact that the English common law existed only in French was thought 'ignominious' (1948: 117; Abbott 1973: 88). Sir Thomas Elyot termed law French 'barbarous' (Hogrefe 1967: 149).

For good reason, the Inns, then, had an interest in bilingual lexicography. That interest only increased once the Tudor monarchs ordered the publication of the statutes in English. Common lawyers had to introduce their English-speaking students to both Latin and law-French, but early in the reign of Henry VII, about 1488–89, the Crown decided to print the annual statutes only in English, a job completed by Henry VIII when he had the entire body of statutes translated into English from 1530 to 1533 (Graham 1965–66; Pantzer 1983). Then, although citizens were free to read the statutes, they still could not necessarily understand legal proceedings about them unless they learned Latin and law-French, particularly some terms of art still with us today. For example, Elizabeth Martin's *Dictionary of Law*, which uses 'clear, jargon-free language,' defines the second sense of the noun 'assize' as 'A statute or ordinance, e.g. the Assize of Clarendon, Novel Disseisin.' To discover what 'Novel Disseisin' means one must go elsewhere, such as to David Hey's *Oxford Dictionary of Local and Family History*, which explains it as 'A medieval legal action for claiming recent dispossession.' Law's arcane terminology, uncorrupted by changes in the language, has proved worth preserving because it is precise and unambiguous, but it quickly spawns dictionaries.

The Inns of Court faced two linguistic challenges under the early Tudors, first to put their law-French and Latin into order, and secondly to translate legal terms into English. Consider the 1517 table to Sir Anthony Fitzherbert's *Graunde Abridgement* that John Rastell had published in 1514–16 (Graham and Heckel 1958). Fitzherbert summarized some 13,845 entries from yearbooks under alphabetically-arranged subject headings that ranged from 'Abbe' to 'Voucher.' The size and language of the *Graunde Abridgement* created problems for readers. To address those issues, Rastell printed his *Tabula*. This indexed Fitzherbert's contents, subject entry by subject entry, in 247 titles and 5,654 subtitles (Boersma 1977: 39; cited by Devereux 1999: 102). However, Rastell's table was in Fitzherbert's law-French and sometimes exceeded in size what it indexed. For example, under the heading 'Addicion,' Rastell needed nine entries to index what were only five entries and a note in Fitzherbert's book. Its entry for 'Addicion' (1514) reads in part:

> Ou seruant nest addicion
> Ou husband est bon*ne* addicion &c
> Ou marchant est bon*ne* addicion &c
> Ou laborer est bon*ne* &c
> Ou chopchurch est bon*ne*addicion &c
> Ou brogger ou enbras*er* ou mainte no-
> on tielz se*rz* q*ui* en co*nter* ley nest. addic*ion*.
> Ou wyddowe est bon*ne* addicion
> Ou single woman en bon*ne* addic*ion*

Understandably, Rastell uses English nouns in citing typical 'additions,' that is, in distinguishing terms annexed to a person's name. The words 'chopchurch,' 'brogger,' and 'wyddowe' thus enter law-French. (His expression 'single woman' is actually a translation of 'feme-sole,' which the *OED* first

dates from 1528.) Such anglicization gradually infiltrated law-French, and it irritated some persons long before it did Fraunce. About 1538–40 Henry VIII took steps to correct the problem by commanding three lawyers, Thomas Denton, Nicholas Bacon, and Robert Carey, to propose a fifth Inn of Court whose moots, plead in Latin by inner barristers, and in French by other barristers, 'shall do what they can to banish the corruption of both tongues' (Waterhous 1663: 540; Tittler 2004). Having patronized John Palsgrave to publish his English-French *Lesclarcissement* in 1530, and Sir Thomas Elyot to finish his Latin-English *Dictionary* in 1538, the king may have wished to put their authoritative lexicons to work in the law.[5] Schoolteacher Palsgrave had a Cambridge B.A. and M.A., but Elyot was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1510 and received a bachelor of civil law degree from Oxford in 1524. This fifth inn, however, never materialized.

Like the universities, the Inns of Court had to bridge their professional languages to English for the benefit of their students. Rastell, an outer barrister at the Middle Temple in 1502 (Reed 1926: 2), first translated an abbreviated abridgement into English. It was published on October 25, 1519. Next Rastell printed his French-English legal lexicon about 1523–24. He was influenced by Fitzherbert's predecessor, Sir Thomas Littleton, whose *Tenures* Rastell had evidently translated about 1525 and issued with the lexicon. Littleton's work was also divided into various articles consisting of simple explanations of what a word or a thing meant. His first entry, on 'Fee simple', begins typically:

> TEnant in fee simple is he whiche hath landes or tenements to holde to hym and to his heyres foreuer. And it is called in laten feodum simplex / for feodum is called inherytaunce / & simplex is asmoche to say as laufull or pure / and so feodum simplex is as moche to say as laufull or pure inherytaunte. For if a man wyll purchase landes or tenementes in fee simple / it behoueth hym to haue these wordes in his purchas / to haue and to holde vnto hym and to his heyres: for these wordes his heyres make the estate of inherytaunce. For if any man purchase landes by these wordes / to haue and to holde to hym for euer / or by suche wordes / to haue and to holde to hym and his assygnes for euer/ In these .ii. cases he hathe none estate but for terme of lyfe / for that that he lacketh these wordes / his heyres: whiche wordes onely make the estate of inherytaunce / in all feffementes and grauntes (a2^r).

Littleton's first two sentences would not be out of place in a modern lexicon. A noun phrase linked by a 'to be' verb to an explanatory clause in easy English precedes an etymology that traces 'fee simple' back to its Latin roots, thus heeding Sir John Fortescue's praise for etymology as a legal skill in his fifteenth-century *De Laudibus Legum Angliae*. However, Littleton's semi-encyclopedic article describes a thing, not just a word, and highlights the powers of just four of its words, 'and to his heyres,' in an action.

2. *Exposicio*nes *te*r*mi*no*rum legu*m *anglo*rum by John Rastell (ca. 1475–1536)

Rastell's *Exposicio*nes *te*r*mi*no*rum *legu*m *anglo*rum or, as he says in English, the *exposicions of ye termys of ye law of england*, has entries in two parallel columns, the first an italicized entry in French, and the second a black-letter English version. The English offers explanations for 168 headwords, alphabetically arranged. It proved both successful and seminal in early modern English lexicography, going through thirty editions up to 1742. From 1563 to 1592, Richard Tottell took over its printing and expanded its entries. During Shakespeare's career, Rastell's dictionary was printed seven times, in 1592, 1595, 1598, 1602, 1605, 1607, and 1609. Shakespeare knew the law and was

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[5] The king possessed several Latin law lexicons by the Spaniard Elio Antonio de Nebrija (Carley 2000, nos. H2.132, H2.496, H2.563–65, and H5.177), as well as the anonymous *Vocabularius Utriusque Iuris* (no. H2.903). Beginning in the late 1520's, when the king needed a divorce to marry Anne Boleyn, he applied himself to learn enough religious and secular law to judge what could serve his needs. Elyot mentions in the preface to his Latin-English dictionary of 1538 that, thanks to being granted access to the king's library, he was able to add many more headwords, including ones in law; and he mentions Nebrija in particular (Hogrefe 1967: 278–79).

more likely to have consulted Rastell than Cawdrey's hard-word *Table Alphabeticall* in 1604 or 1609, although Shakespeare might have known Rastell's book as the work of his son William, a judge in Mary's reign. The Company of Stationers then took over, having Adam Islip print its 200 folios from 1607 to 1629. Islip gave it the name *The Termes de la Ley* in 1624, and it swelled in size. Other major law dictionaries could be found in manuscript, such as those by David Chalmers (1566, dedicated to Mary Queen of Scots), and the anonymous works in Cambridge University Library MS Dd.VI.60 (ca. 1600–25) and MS Dd.VI.68 (ca. 1603–25).[6] John Skene published a large lexicon based on Scottish law, 'De verborum significatione' (1597), but the only practical alternative to Rastell's dictionary was the compact 'Table of certain words in the Interpretation whereof the Common Law of this Realme and the Ciuill Law doe seeme to agree' in William Fulbecke's *A Direction or Preparatiue to the Study of the Lawe* (1600). Much later, in 1656, Thomas Blount included terms from Rastell's work in both his *Glossographia*, an English hard-word dictionary, but it was not until Blount's *Nomo-Lexikon* (1670) that a book challenged Rastell's achievement. Although Blount based his legal dictionary on John Cowell's *The Interpreter* (1607), even Blount bowed to the continuing popularity of Rastell's work by writing a preface for a 1671 edition of *Termes de la Ley* that had 632 pages. Rastell's work, later mined for hard words in dictionaries like Elisha Coles' in 1676, had surprising staying power. No one has estimated how much Rastell's frequently-reissued lexicon influenced English lexis, but the Englishing of the statutes, part of his source matter, has been credited as having an impact on its growth (Graham 1965–66; Rissanen 1999).

Taking Cowley's lead, law historians have since attributed the 'establishment of systematic English lexicography' to John Rastell (Graham 1954: 22), although until Cowley's work Rastell's lexicon was all but invisible.[7] What kind of lexicon did he write? On the title page, Rastell explains that *Exposiciones terminorum legum anglorum* addresses 'the nature of the writtes with diuers rulys & principalles of the law ... for yong men very necessarye' (a1[r]).[8] He appeals in the preface to nature itself as justification for the law and so for his collection of word-entries. Given that 'the vniuersall worlde can neuer haue his continuans but only by ye order & law of nature', he says, and given that 'one law and one gouernour for one realme & for one peple is most necessary', Rastell reasons that 'it is a good thyng for euery man to haue the knolege of ye lawe' of his governor (A2[r]). In order to advance that knowledge, Rastell promises to expound 'certeyn obscur and derke termys.' The first of his two purposes is to help students 'the soner atteyne to the knowlege of the frenche tonge' (a2). If Rastell drew his content from law-French or Latin sources, he must have first composed his entries in French. Each headword (termed by him a 'title') was followed by an explanation (termed by him an 'exposition'), most of which opened with a 'to be' clause. Then he translated these entries into parallel English entries. French entries occupy the left column, and English ones the right column. Unlike bilingual dictionaries such as *Ortus Vocabulorum* (1500), Rastell's quarto translates whole paragraphs, not just equivalent expressions. In this respect it resembles Caxton's *Frenssh and Englissh* (ca. 1480; *STC* 24865), a phrase book in two columns, one French and the other English, that unfolds a continuous poem, line-by-line. Secondly, as a member of the Thomas circle (Rastell had married Sir Thomas More's sister Elizabeth) and as a humanist, Rastell explains the language of writs by reference to the laws of God, Nature, and the King. His quarto broke new ground by linking words with what we regard as abstractions: 'the vniuersall worlde', the 'order & law of nature', and 'one law and one gouernour for one realme & for one peple.' Each expository article is an interpretative commentary on a topic named by the header or 'title.'

Here are three representative English entries. The first does not use font to discriminate between the 'title' term, 'chemyn' (which has no headword in the *OED*), the English exposition that follows, and the Latin phrase 'via regia' included in it. Rastell treats 'chemyn' as if it were English, just as he

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[6] Smaller vocabularies also turn up in manuscripts: Bodleian Library MS Lat. misc. e. 114 has a notebook of Randolph Cholmondeley of Lincoln College, Oxford, ca. 1578–80, with part of a legal glossary (fols. 72[v]–78); and Library of Congress Law MS Folio 2 (owned by a George Austen of the Middle Temple, 1593?) has a vocabulary of Old English words, beginning with 'infangthef' (Baker 1990: II, 56).

[7] A. M. Elliott alluded to Rastell's book but said that 'it amounts to really nothing' (O'Connor and others 1891: xxviii). Jones (1953) did not know of Cowley's bibliography or of Rastell's dictionary.

[8] I use the second printing (London: John Rastell, ca. 1525 (*STC* 20702; Alston 2004: XVIII.II.I.2)).

does the Latin 'titles' of the previous two entries, 'Cessavit' and 'Cerciorare' (both writs), and the English 'title' of the next entry, 'Contynuall clayme.' (It is interesting that the French entry for that term begins 'Contynuall clayme est son home ad driot ...' and so Frenchifies an English phrase.)

> Chemyn is *the* hye way where euery ma*n* goth whych is callyd via regia / but *the* ki*ng* hath no other thyng there but the passage for hym *and* h*es* people/ but *th*e frehold abideth in the lord of the soyle *and* all the profyt growynge there/as trees *and* other thinges. (b2ᵛ–b3ʳ)

After a 'to-be' construction comes a common reference to royal privilege, that the king cannot make money from the land adjacent to the highway even if it takes its name from his royal title. That comment has no bearing on the lexical definition of the 'title' term. In the second example, 'Deodande,' again a non-English term (here derived from Anglo-French and medieval Latin), is anglicized, expounded by a 'to-be' construction, and closed with an apparently digressing note on royal prerogative.[9]

> Deodande / is whan any man by misfortune is slayne by an hors or by a cartt or by any other thyng that mouyth than this thynge that is the cause of hys deth *and* whych at *the* tyme of the misfortune moueth/shalbe forfet to the kyng/*and* that is callyd a deoda*n*d and that p*er*teynith to *the* kyngis almener for to dispose in almys and in dedys of charite (cd3ᵛ–c4ʳ)

Third, here is Rastell's entry for 'Tresour troue,' anglicized from French 'treasur trouvé':

> Tresour troue is when anny money gold or syluer plate or bollyon is founde in anny place and no man knowyth to whom the properte is / than the properte thereof belongyth to the kyng and that ys called tresour troue that is to say tresour found. But if anny myne of metal be found in anny ground that alway perteynyth to the lorde of the soyle except it be a myne of gold or siluer which shal be alwey to the kyng in whose grounde so euer they be found (G1ᵛ–2ʳ)

Note how different is the *OED* definition:

> *lit. treasure found ...* i.e. anything of the nature of treasure which any one finds; *spec.* in *English Law*: Treasure (gold or silver, money, plate, or bullion) found hidden in the ground or other place, the owner of which is unknown.

Rastell's comment on the king's right to processed metals is information that the *OED* relegates to a note. To a modern lexicographer's eye, his second sentence must appear to go off-topic by urging the king's right to own gold or silver mines. Such ores, having never been owned and then hidden, are not treasure trove ... or are they?

These three entries, and many more, are not the kind of lexical definitions with which we are familiar today. Rastell had different assumptions than James Murray, who insisted that the dictionary explained words and so was different from a cyclopedia, which described things (Burchfield and Murray 1993: 93). Rastell frequently uses 'is when' and 'is where' in expositions to contextualize a named thing in the temporal world. He says nothing about etymology, spelling, and part of speech. When Rastell has two interpretations of a 'title' like 'Garantye,' he says that the word is 'in ii. maners': the *OED* explains these 'maners' as types or species of things, not of words. Rastell often links a 'derke' term to royal laws and the king's privileges in property or goods. For example, the king has the right to use the highway, but not to sell anything associated with it. He can claim any moveable thing that causes the death of a subject, and all treasure trove. In the world, neither words nor things

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[9] This term was still in use until the late nineteenth century, when the thing it denoted ceased to exist. The final *OED* citation, taken from The Times in 1882, is 'Deodands are also things of the past.'

can be understood independently of the laws that govern them. Rastell states in the prologue to his exposition that natural law 'co*m*pellyth euery thyng to do his kind' (Devereux 1999: 112). Words were important, in his mind, for the power of the things they denote. When Rastell explains outlawry, for example, he does not content himself with something like the *OED* definition (sense 1a): 'One put outside the law and deprived of its benefits and protection.' He pointedly notes that an outlaw forgoes the king's protection, forfeits all his goods and chattels *to the king*, and yet may purchase 'hys charter of pardon from the kyng' (G3; my italics). Repeatedly, throughout the eighty pages of his little book, Rastell glosses 'derke termys' in ways that serve royal power. The 'one governour' Rastell describes in his preface as exercising the law is Henry VIII. The king stands parallel to Nature herself in the best humanist tradition.

Rastell's abridgements of the statutes (1519 and 1527), his moral interlude *The Nature of the Four Elements*, and the use of the word 'exposition' by other lexicographers back up this interpretation.

On October 25, 1519, Rastell published his English translation of the abridgement of the statutes. His preface describes this work as a 'kalender' (a list or a register) rather than an exposition of obscure terms, although it superficially looks like a dictionary. Again we find an alphabetical list of (145) topics, each identified by a 'title' and followed by information about it, but by comparing entries for 'Alyens' in the 1519 abridgement and 'Alyon' in the 1523 dictionary we can see why John Cowley distinguished between the two works. The 1519 abridgement lists four brief summaries of the relevant parts of statutes that he cites from the reigns of Richard II and Henry V. Nowhere is there an explanation that an alien is a foreigner.

> Alyens.
> Priours alyens co*n*uentuall institute *and* induct may haue theyr benefycis in englond so *that* they fynde suerte *that* they shall not discouer *the* secret*es* of the realme / The furst yere of henry the .v.c.vii.
>
> Non of the kyng*es* lege people nor non other be fermour nor procuratour to any alyen whiche hath any benefyce within this realme / The .iij. yere of Ryc*hard*. ii.capitulo.iij.
>
> Alyens shall take no possessyon in no benefice in englond without the kyng*es* lycence / The.vii. yere of Richard.ii.capitulo.xi.
>
> The kyng shall haue the possessio*n*s of priours aliens in fee if they be not co*n*uentuellis institute *and* induct/The.iiij.yere of henry *the* v.*the* last chapt*er*. (a2ᵛ)

The 1523 glossary, in contrast, explains the alien's foreign extraction:

> Alyon is he of whome the fader is born and he hym selfe also borne out of the elegiaunce of our lord the kyng/but yf an alyon come *and* dwell in englond whyche is not of the kynges enemyes *and* here ad issu this issu is not alion but e*n*glysh / also if an englysh ma*n* go ouer the see with *the* kyng*es* lyce*n*ce *and* ther ad issu this issu is not alyon (b1ʳ)

Rastell's calendar-entry in the abridgement focuses exclusively on priors and benefices, but his word-entry explains who is and is not a foreigner with respect to that person's birth and allegiance to the king. The first indexes a collection of papers; the second expounds an entity in the world. Rastell knew that he was doing something unusual in devising the first stand-alone dictionary in which both headwords and expositions were in English.

Rastell chooses the word 'exposition' to name his dictionary. This is a conventional medieval term for a text with an explanatory function. Its history goes back at least to William Brito's *Expositiones vocabulorum biblie*, a dictionary of the Bible composed ca. 1248–67 (Weijers 1989: 147). The term came to be used particularly in law. The so-called 'Expositio Vocabulorum,' existing in three versions

and found in over 75 manuscripts (Baker and Ringrose 1996; Lancashire 2005), is a centuries-old *vade-mecum* intended to assist the reading of old legal documents with archaic Anglo-French and Old English terminology (Skemer 1998, 1999). The first printed edition of 'Expositio Vocabulorum' with English explanations appears in Rastell's own enlarged abridgement of the statutes, published December 22, 1527. Titled the 'Exposicion of old wordis,' Rastell's article transcribes thirty-one entries from this ancient glossary, which runs from 'Sok' to 'Auerpeny.' Jürgen Schäfer identifies the Rastell article as one of the earliest English printed glossaries and includes it in his *Early Modern English Lexicography* (1989). Schäfer also excludes all other articles in this 1527 abridgement, correctly, because they are index entries, not word-entries, but he may have thought that Rastell's dictionary ca. 1523–24, although termed '*Exposiciones*', was also an abridgement, because he bypassed it too. Rastell's use of the word 'exposition,' however, shows that he knew the traditional word for a glossary that discussed its 'title' word rather than just giving bilingual equivalents in other languages. Rastell might have had the ancient 'Expositio Vocabulorum' in mind when he gave the 1523–24 lexicon its title. He appears not to have been thinking of the mainstream tradition of Latin-English, English-Latin dictionaries analyzed by Gabriele Stein (1985), *Medulla Grammatice*,[10] *Catholicon*, *Promptorium Parvulorum*, and *Ortus Vocabulorum*.

3. Rastell's *The Four Elements*

A third source of information about the meaning of 'expositions' can be gleaned from Rastell's career as a playwright and as the maker of the first known outdoor public theatre in England at Finsbury Fields. In Rastell's fragmentary play, *A New Interlude and a Mery, of the Nature of the Four Elements*, a character named Nature—who seems to be a prince—translates 'Into englyshe' his knowledge of the four elements (fire, air, water, and earth), the ingredients of all visible things. Rastell's play explains difficult words by using an on-stage 'fygure' or painting (a thing to which Nature's words plainly refer) to illustrate how the four elements combine to make everything that man experiences, and how these visible things 'take theyr effectys and operacyons / Of the bodyes in the region ethereall' (ll. 170–71). Nature's words denote things, visible on stage, that are governed by heavenly laws. When he leaves Humanity in the company of Studious Desire, he brings in a character named Experience to prove the points that Nature enunciates. Experience exemplifies Nature's doctrine visually by using his hand to point to things in the figure (l. 706). In this way, Rastell again links words and things. He has the habit of mind of someone who expounds words.

After the first and easiest step in expounding words, using objects that they denote, Experience associates the objects on stage with those laws that, not coincidentally, arise from royal power. Experience explains how 'Westwarde be founde new landes' that Englishmen, with the authority of the king, tried to reach, failing only because of treasonous mariners. (These adventurers included Rastell, whose foiled voyage to the new world took place in 1517.) Experience then exclaims

> O, what a *thynge* had be than,
> Yf that they that be englyshe men
> Myght have ben the furst of all
> That there shulde have take *possessyon* (ll. 762–65; my italics)

Had Rastell succeeded, the king could have extended his 'domynyon' (l. 770) into lands rich in natural resources like fish, since harvested by Frenchmen (l. 808). By learning about words, Rastell habitually suggests (cf. Herman 2000), an audience comprehends things in the world, things informed by natural laws by virtue of which the king can increase his sway.

Rastell's *Four Elements* is not the only play that serves royal interests in the Henrician period. Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucres* and John Skelton's *Magnificence* (which Rastell printed) expound royal policy on the moral character of courtiers. In *The Interlude of Youth* (Lancashire 1980), the character Youth embodies the flaws perceived by the earl of Northumberland in young Henry VIII.

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[10] See Vincent McCarron's editions for an account of this widely disseminated and highly variable manuscript lexicon.

Hick Scorner (a play largely based on *Youth*), performed at first by players associated with Charles Brandon, Henry's friend, reworks Northumberland's slighting piece into an attack on Richard de la Pole, the self-styled duke of Suffolk and the Yorkist pretender to the throne of Henry VIII. The allegorical characters in these plays denote, in visible stage figures, characters alive in the early Tudor world. Unsurprisingly, playwrights did not spend much time making the words in which these plays were written either eloquent or novel. The expositions of the things to which their words pointed—especially the proper names of the characters—highlighted the regal prerogatives that governed Henrician society.

4. A Tudor Theory of Representation

A general theory of representation informs Rastell's method of describing the signification of words (cf. Lancashire 2002). *Terms* signify insofar as they denote *things*, and *things* may express invisible *laws* established by Nature or a governor. Terms signify (that is, point to or label) things in which divine or royal law inheres. To explicate the signifying relations among these three parts, term, thing, and God, is to expound. Because a divinely-appointed king stands at the center of God's world, legal terminology finally refers to God, Henry VIII, and their prerogatives. In his famous sermon on ploughs, delivered at St. Paul's in London on January 18, 1548, for example, Hugh Latimer uses the verb 'expounds' in explaining word-meaning:

> He ment by hys owne sacryfice on the crosse, where he offered him selfe for the redemption of mankynde, and not the sacrifice of the Masse to be offered by an other. For who can offer hym, but hym selfe? He was both the Offerer and the offeryng. And thys is the pricke, thys is the marcke at the whych the Deuyll shooteth, to euacuate the crosse of Christ, and to myngle the institucion of the Lordes Supper, the whych althoughe he can not bryng to passe: yet he goeth about by his sleightes and subtyle meanes, to frustrate the same, and these fyftene hundreth yeares he hath beene a dooer, onelye purposyng to euacuate Christes death, and to make it of small efficacie and vertue. For where as Christe, accordyng as the Serpent was lyfte vp in wyldernes: so woulde he hym selfe to bee exalted, that thereby as manye as trusted in hym should haue saluacion. But the Deuyl would none of that. They would haue vs saued by a dayly oblacion propiciatory, by a sacrifice expiatory, or remissory. Now yf I should preach in the country among the vnlearned, I would tel what propiciatory, expiatory and remissory is: but *here is a learned auditory, yet for them that be vnlearned I wil expound it. Propiciatory, expiatory, remissory, or satisfactory, for they signify al one thing in effect, and is nothing els but a thing wherby to obteyne remission of synnes, and to haue saluacion.* And this way the Deuyl vsed to euacuate the death of Christ, that we myght haue affiaunce in other thynges, as in the dayly sacrifice of the prieste, where as Christe would haue vs to trust in his onely sacrifice. (c3^v; my italics)

Latimer explains that the words 'propiciatory', 'expiatory', 'remissory', and 'satisfactory' signify but 'a thing' associated with God's power to forgive sins. These words denote numinous, other-worldly entities that call for a thoughtful explanation that cannot be reduced to etymology, derivation, lexical equivalent, logical definition, or lexical definition. An *etymology* gives a historical source for a word, a source that may not be in living use in any language. *Derivations* offer a related source: adjectives, nouns, adverbs, and other parts of speech are traced to verbs, thought to be the root of all other words.[11] Bilingual dictionaries usually give one-word *lexical equivalents* from a foreign language for a headword: these signs come from a living language and so they are different in kind from etymons. Latimer ignores both these relations. A *logical definition*, in an Aristotelian sense, is the *genus* or kind

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[11] Weijers (1989: especially 147–49) gives the main outline of early medieval metalanguage, focussing on the Latin terms 'etymologia', 'derivatio', 'interpretatio', and 'compositio.'

and the *differentiae* or distinguishing characteristics of a thing. This rhetorical tool reduces all the features of a thing in the world (not of a word for that thing) to the minimum number necessary for its unambiguous identification. We go to etymological dictionaries for etymons, bilingual or synonym dictionaries for lexical equivalents, and encyclopedias for logical definitions. The lexical definition, that is, the explanation of what the word means (rather than what the thing signified by the word means) informs word-entries in the common monolingual dictionary today, but in the Renaissance lexical definitions rarely make an appearance.[12] When Latimer expounds words, he crafts expositions made popular in print by men like Rastell.

Lexicons of Early Modern English (*LEME*), a database of half-a-million word-entries in 150 lexical texts from 1473 to 1702, helps document early lexical metalanguage, including terms like 'exposition' and 'definition.'[13] *LEME* shows that Rastell's expositions employ a rudimentary semantic analysis that owes its form less to Aristotle's rhetoric than to the needs of English lawyers. Sir Thomas Elyot, a lawyer himself, uses the word 'exposition' in word-entries for his Latin-English *Dictionary* of 1538 as a synonym for English words like 'comment,' 'interpretation,' 'reason,' 'declaration', and 'gloss' of 'dark spech', and as an equivalent for the Latin word 'etymologia.' Elyot does not use the words 'definition' and 'exposition' together. His entry for 'definitio, definitionis' reads: 'a definition, whyche expresseth in fewe wordes, what it is that is spoken of, as, Homo est animal, rationale, mortale, A man is a thyng lyuely, resonable, and mortale.' Abraham Fraunce, a Ramist logician writing in 1588, says that 'A Definition is that which declareth what a thing is' (q4ʳ), but he goes on to caution lawyers that using such 'Logicall definitions' in law is 'daungerous' and 'very difficult.' Fraunce prefers explanations that both 'limite and circumscribe' and 'shew and make playne' (r2ᵛ). Although expositions and logical definitions share the same target, a thing in the world, they differ on what they say about it. Exposition and expounding incorporate a thing's purpose, not just the distinct type and *differentiae* required to identify it. An early Tudor exposition is a word-entry article, one might say, where the lexicographer has trimmed a logical definition until it expresses or is consistent with a natural law, God, the king, or their representative.

Desk dictionaries today usually define words lexically in terms of our mental representations of the things they denote. In the early modern period, however, man had not yet become the measure of all things. Adam was not thought to have invented God's creatures; he was believed only to have invented names for them. Man's words remained the servants of God's nature, naming them, not devising their very identity and meaning as if human beings were creating the world in which they lived. Rastell and his contemporaries believed that words denoted things that embodied the laws of God, of God in the king, and of the king in the statutes as legislated by Parliament. This theory of representation, I believe, dominates early modern English. Edmund Coote's *The English Schoole-maister* (1596), a long-lived self-help spelling guide and hard-word lexicon for pre-grammar-school or adult students, teaches that words signify (that is, function as *signs* for) things, and things signify invisible expressions of God's power. For example, Coote cites the word 'water,' which denotes what we drink from the well, but water itself, the thing, denotes the gift of baptism, a holy sacrament that was one of God's laws for mankind. Things themselves are like God's words. For God, the world is filled with his words. Man's language pretends only to signify the things that God often realizes, mysteriously, as words.

Although Rastell had little book learning or subtlety in argument, he had humanist friends and relations. While no scholar of Latin, Greek or Hebrew, Rastell shared the humanist's delight in printing manuscript treatises in order to bring forth new knowledge about the world. He anticipated the serious thinking about language that we associate with seventeenth-century science, the founding of the Royal Society in 1660, and the semantic analysis of English by Bishop Wilkins in 1668. The language philosophy espoused by common lawyers in the Inns of Court, as expressed in Rastell's long-lived lexicon, influenced accepted English opinions about language for nearly two centuries. Legal glossaries, like early medical, herbal, or maritime lexicons, describe things whose essential nature

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[12] In *A Christian Dictionarie* (1612), Thomas Wilson carefully distinguishes among lexical senses; and glossaries of mathematics use such definitions.

[13] For *LEME*, the successor to the *Early Modern English Dictionaries Database* (1996–99), see Lancashire (2003, 2006 forthcoming).

depends on the purpose to which God, Nature, and the king put them. Highways, deodands, and bullion in the ground, like herbs, have 'virtues' or powers that affect man. The laws of God suffuse herbs, and the laws of the king, drawn from God and Nature, suffuse legalia.

In 1607, Dr. John Cowell, a member of the Doctors Commons, and an expert in civil and ecclesiastical law, published *The Interpreter*. It competed with what the Inns of Court and common lawyers had established in Rastell's much expanded lexicon. Cowell's costly error, however, was to let slip in his book that the king ruled by divine right without necessarily being constrained by Magna Carta and Parliament. This brought down on him the wrath of Edward Coke, Parliament, and James I.[14] The common hangman burnt Cowell's book in 1610, Cowell resigned from Oxford University and died a year later, and the Company of Stationers championed and took control of Rastell's *Termes de la Ley*. Not until Thomas Blount, a Catholic in Restoration England, was Cowell's writing incorporated into a conventional law lexicon. Cowell's and other legal lexicons in the seventeenth century are beyond the scope of this essay,[15] but Rastell's legal thinking about words can be taken at least to the time of Shakespeare. The logical positivism of common lawyers, that is, their faith that words could be expounded with certainty in relation to God, Nature, and the King, had emerged forcefully by then.

5. John Manwood (d. 1610) and William Fleetwood (ca. 1525–1594)

John Manwood showed this certainty in his *A Brefe Collection of the Lawes of the Forrest* in 1592 (*STC* 17290). It was the first major work to expound what statutes, abridgements, legal precedents in yearbooks, and treatises by readers of common law in the Inns of Court had to say about the king's vanishing hunting preserves, his forests and chases. How to explain even common words is central to Manwood's task. He scoffs at those who define the forest with 'but an exposition of the worde forest, and not a perfect definition of the nature of the very thing in deede' (138). Manwood mocks those who define the forest by its physical features, both as 'a safe abiding place of the wild beastes to rest in', and as 'a territory of grounde, meeted and bounded with vnremoueable markes, meetes and boundaries.' These traits do not distinguish it from a chase, and the second can apply to Westminster Hall and Saint Paul's Church. Manwood explains that the essential third feature necessary for defining a forest is the 'perticuler Laws *and* officers *that* are only proper to a forest.' For all his bluster, Manwood sees eye-to-eye with Rastell on exposition. The 'three things' relevant to a forest are 'Vert ... Venison, and ... certaine perticuler lawes that are onely proper vnto it' (139). Manwood approves of practical, law-centered explanations.

Manwood's certainties were not shared by other well-informed citizens, notably William Fleetwood, Recorder of London, senior judge, and member of the short-lived Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries. Known membership of this Society, which was founded about 1586, included about forty scholars, many of whom contributed to knowledge about the history of the English language. The most prominent, active members were William Camden (author of *Britannia*), Sir Henry Spelman (compiler of a legal lexicon in Latin only fully published after the Restoration), Richard Carew (whose work on the excellency of English appears in a later edition of Camden's *Britannia*), Robert Cotton (who collected the manuscripts of Old English), John Dodderidge (maker of a proper-names lexicon that survives only in manuscript; see also Terrill 1981), and Joseph Holland (annotator of Chaucer), in addition to Fleetwood.[16] Manuscript records of 38 meetings of the Society from 1590 to 1607 survive. They focus on the law and on language, especially etymology, on which Camden routinely drew, using

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[14] Proceedings against Cowell appear in British Library Add. MSS 513 [6] and 12515; and Add. MSS 24281–83 have the 1637 edition of *The Interpreter*, annotated by Sir Roger Twysden. Cambridge University Library Add. MS 116 has a transcription of Cowell's notes from his copy. For discussions of Cowell's troubles, see Coquillette (1981), Levack (1990), and Simon (1968).

[15] For a survey of seventeenth-century legal lexical works in print, see Alston 2004. For manuscripts, see Lancashire 2005. That *A New Moddell Or The Conversion of the Infidell Terms of the Law* (Anonymous 1652) parodies law lexicons shows how popular they were. See also Beale (1926, 1943) for non-lexical legal books of the period.

[16] Schoeck (1954) and Evans (1956) also discuss the membership of the Elizabethan Society.

French scholars such as Jean Bodin, as a source of information on early Britain (McKisack 1971: 164–66; Sharpe 1979: 21; DeCoursey 2004). On November 3, 1591, the second year for which records survive, its meeting listened to little essays on the nature of forests from two members, Arthur Agard and James Ley (Norden 1946: 500). Fleetwood joined 'The Assembly of the Antiquaries' about 1591 (Evans 1956: 12), the year he resigned as City Recorder. He retired to his London house, where he had been active for twenty years in compiling information about the law. His personal manuscripts on that subject, some in his own hand, survive at the British Library (Add. MSS 25249, 26047, and Stowe MS 850, no. 8), the Guildhall Library (MS 86), Harvard Law Library (MS 15), and the Folger Shakespeare Library (MS V.B.9). That a copy of his manuscript treatise on forests and forest laws (originally composed in 1571), now British Library MS Add. 26047, was 'written in 1592' suggests that Fleetwood attended the November 3 meeting, heard Agard's and Lee's papers, and revisited, in retirement, his old enthusiasm for forest records.

Harvard Law Library MS 15 is an earlier version of Fleetwood's treatise now in the British Library. Its table of contents describes a first book with four parts: a discussion of forests, parks, chases, and free warrens, a section on judicial precedents, instructions to the Justices in Eyre for the forest, and an exposition of 'Auncyent Wordes Expressed in Sundrye auncyent Charters.' This glossary, titled 'De exposicione antiquorum vocabulorum', has 63 entries from 'Alderman' to 'Feoda', headwords in English and explanations in Latin and English. Fleetwood may have intended to expand the ancient 'Expositio Vocabulorum' (which Stephen Batman published in his Bartholomew in 1582) because some words from this old list, though not all, turn up (e.g., 'averpenny', 'burgbreech', 'carvage', 'childwite', and 'Danegeld'). Fleetwood's treatise is very striking for its candid admission that sometimes people did not know what the language of the law meant. He relishes tracing forestry terms back to the original British language, Welsh. This exploration of etymology sometimes results in doubt. The manuscript title-page offers this note:

> Be it knowen to all men That I Willyam Fletwoode Recorder of London did about xiij yeares paste write this booke not to put it in printe for *that* I do knowe there be many Errors in the same The *which* I am in my newe Travell to Correcte Also I did at my Laste readinge Expounde all the said old Termes in thend of this booke not mindinge to put them in printe for bycause of the Errors in the same (88ʳ)

Here are Fleetwood's last five entries:

> **Fledwite** id est quietus esse de a*mer*ciamentis *Cum* quis vt Legatus fugitivus veniat ad pac*em dominus* Regis sponte vel Licencionatus[17]

> **Flemenswite** id est *quod* habeatis Catalla sine a*mer*ciamenta h*omine*s estri fugitivi[18]

> **Franchesia** est L*ibert*as

> **Furches** id est he furcells vel furce *quod* Componit*uer* a fur et Cellio Anglice Towagge Some thinge that furches do Come of this word furta the *which* ys Compounde of ferens et Caput a Stake or a poole whervpon an offenders heade is Sette for an example.[19]

> **Fewda** id est deadly fewde

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[17] The *OED* cites Rastell's lexicon (1579), the only example of this word, 'an alleged term of OE. law', as responsible for disseminating this term through a sequence of later dictionaries.

[18] Perhaps related to *OED* 'flemensfirth.'

[19] Perhaps *OED* 'fouch' 2 ('The hind quarters of a deer'; cf. *OED* 'furch').

In 1581, when Fleetwood set his glossary aside, he had shrewdly guessed that it had serious mistakes. Rastell's son William seems responsible for placing the nonce-word 'fledwite' in the 1579 edition of his father's lexicon, where Fleetwood must have found it. If 'furches' means the hind quarters of a deer, Fleetwood's etymology, which traces the word to English words like 'towage' and 'stake', is more fanciful than the actual source, the Old French term for 'fork.' Fleetwood gives other signs of doubting the foundations of the language of English law. Of words like 'coides' ('coid,' which he rightly calls an ancient British term for 'forest'), Fleetwood says, 'Of these thinges I Coniecture thus much' (98^v). Later, he prefaces his remarks on the swanimoot or forest court as follows:

> **Omnia sunt** hom*inem* reum pendentia filo et subito easu que Valuere rumit. All humaine Cases do depende as it were vpon a small Threede and thinges that once were of great force by soden Chaunce have Come to Ruen **An** auncyente wryter of our Lawe did vse the Sence of these olde verses for this purpose. That looke whatsoeuer is established by man it is not of Cont*yn*aunce vnlesse yt be Invred *with* dayly supply. His meaninge was that whatsoever is ordered by wise men for a Lawe the Same by due Execuc*ion* ys to be put in vre I meane this a touchinge the Forrest Lawes. (104^v)

What explain the obscurity of some old legal terms, Fleetwood implies, are old laws, 'by soden … Come to Ruen' and unenforced: an association to which John Rastell would have assented.

Fleetwood's next section, on judicial precedents, resembles one of Rastell's abridgements. It has 58 'titles' or headwords, including one on '**Exposic*ion*** of Wordes' (118^v) and another on '**Exposic*ion*** of vsage' (118^v). However, Rastell would not have admitted what the former entry, on words, admits: two failures of the law to comprehend its own language.

> The Pryor of Molton made his Claime to be discharged of Certaine thinges *with*in the Forreste by force of Certaine old Terms or Words. And for bycause the Courte did not vnderstande what the Meaninge of the Words were therfore this Entry Was made. Et quia n*on* liquet cu*ria* manifesto cuiusmoda quietantias Raco*ne* vocabulo*rum* predictto*res* Idem prior *per* se et *hominibus* sine habere intendit dict*um* est eidem Priori quod eadem verba declararet . fo 165 the like Entry ys made in the Claime of the Prior of Ellerton fo: 169 A.

The second title concedes another important aspect of language, one that (again) neither Rastell nor Manwood would have countenanced: usage by people, not just Parliament, the King, and ultimately God, determines word-meaning.

> **William** the Earle of Warren Boheme and Merton graunted by their deed vnto the Abbotte of Furncax That he and his Successors might take *with*in the Forreste of Lan*caster* Materiem que ad vsne suos fuit necessaria et nominatim ad piscariam suam de Lan*caster* fasiend quicquid eis ad hoc opus fuerit And in this Claime the Abbotte Claymed sufficient Timber both for his Mann*our* of B. and also for his piscary and for all oother thinges necessary &c And that by the woord materiam he had vsed and enioyed the same Ever sythence the makinge of the said graunte And Thes vsage beinge thus founde by the Iurye . his Title of Claime was Allowed

> Here yt ys to be noted that Many Times darke and obscure woordes are Expounded by vsage as appeareth by this *pre*sidente.

Fleetwood's scepticism anticipates what went on at the meetings of the Society of Antiquaries, whose members delivered etymological speculations on topics such as 'dukes, marquises and knights, shires, towns, and forests, seals and sterling, castles, heralds, the law terms, funeral ceremonies and epitaphs' (McKisack 1971: 161). All talks were influenced by William Camden's groundbreaking research in his

Britannia (1586), which identified Welsh as the original British language and used etymology in historical studies. Camden cautioned that many 'etymologies ... are obscure, harsh, strained, or controvertible' and so have no 'place among my observations' (I, xxxvi; cf. McKisack 1971: 164). Yet Fleetwood's refusal to publish his glossary is dated five years before the scepticism expressed by Camden's *Britannia*.

Manwood based some of his book on Fleetwood's manuscripts, which he cites once, but Manwood did not share the senior judge's caution. Like many common lawyers, despite the scholarly quagmire of early legal texts, he fixed the meaning of words and related them decisively to God, Nature, and the Crown. The Society of Antiquaries, by posing questions, encouraged intelligent, influential citizens to doubt traditional certainties. When about 1603–05 the members discussed Parliament, for instance, Camden traced its origins to the reign of King John, but Dodderidge argued that it was pre-Roman (Sharpe 1979: 28–29). It was not the ages of member antiquaries that shut their society down for over a hundred years after the Crown did nothing to act on its draft proposal for a royal charter in 1607. The king's objections to its liberating analysis of political terms and concepts led to its dissolution. The Society's petition to the crown, to no avail, promised a self-proposed restraint on all discussion of 'Matters of State' and of religion. Self-censorship ruled out conjectures of the kind that Fleetwood entertained and that Parliament and the Crown ultimately refused to allow in John Cowell's *Interpreter*.

This essay frames sixteenth-century legal lexicography by reference to the writings of three very different men, busy and loyal John Rastell, lexical positivist John Manwood, and the doubting senior judge in London, William Fleetwood. Rastell penned little articles about word-meaning before others did; and he championed a simple theory of representation in which the word signified the thing, and thing served the powers that be. His 'expositions' avoided the rhetorician's logical definitions, the humanist scholar's etymologies, and the translator-lexicographer's bare lexical equivalents. No-nonsense Manwood also made language a servant of received law. In public, Fleetwood was known as a strong judge, but his private papers expose his sense that some legal language would never be understood. He did not believe, as Rastell had, that natural laws fix the meaning of words through time. Notwithstanding their differences, these three men, humanists all, drew on historical manuscripts to publish new learning about words. Together they show that word-meaning belongs, with spelling reform and inkhorn terms, among the sixteenth-century's lexical controversies.

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Selected Proceedings of the 2005 Symposium on New Approaches in English Historical Lexis (HEL-LEX)

edited by
R. W. McConchie, Olga Timofeeva,
Heli Tissari, and Tanja Säily

Cascadilla Proceedings Project   Somerville, MA   2006

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This paper can be cited as:

Lancashire, Ian. 2006. Law and Early Modern English Lexicons. In *Selected Proceedings of the 2005 Symposium on New Approaches in English Historical Lexis (HEL-LEX)*, ed. R. W. McConchie et al., 8-23. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

or:

Lancashire, Ian. 2006. Law and Early Modern English Lexicons. In *Selected Proceedings of the 2005 Symposium on New Approaches in English Historical Lexis (HEL-LEX)*, ed. R. W. McConchie et al., 8-23. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project. www.lingref.com, document #1342.