

# Richard Huloet as a Recorder of the English Lexicon

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Richard Huloet is the author of the *Abececlarium Anglico-Latinum*, a bilingual English-Latin dictionary published in 1552. Within the history of English lexicography, the *Abececlarium* is the third dictionary where English and Latin are matched and where English is the language of the headwords, thus meeting the encoding language needs of its English users. These needs were first met by the *Promptorium Parvulorum*, the first English dictionary to be printed as early as 1499. Its manuscript version is even some fifty years older (1440). The other English-Latin dictionary for productive use was the *Catholicon Anglicum*, which was never printed. The manuscript version that has come down to us dates from 1483.

The publication of the *Abececlarium* came at a time when the *Promptorium Parvulorum* had run its course. Since the work had been compiled during the middle of the fifteenth century and its last edition was printed in 1528, there was doubtless a demand for a new dictionary that would not only provide Latin translation equivalents for English words but that would also reflect English usage of the sixteenth century, for new generations of learners. Huloet set about responding to that demand in the early 1540s, for he tells us in the *Peroration to the Englishe Reader* that it took him ten years to complete his work. Another compiler, however, had also sensed the opportunity. One year after the publication of the *Abececlarium Anglico-Latinum*, in 1553, appeared John Withals' much smaller English-Latin dictionary for schoolboys, *A Shorte Dictionarie for Yonge Begynners*, which was to run through sixteen editions in the next eighty years. Huloet's work, however, was revised once only. The second edition of 1572 was the work of John Higgins who enriched Huloet's original dictionary with a third language, French.

Research on Huloet's *Abececlarium* has so far concentrated on its lexicographical aspects. D. T. Starnes (1951, 1954) focusses on tracing Huloet's sources and Stein (1985: 181–193) looks at his contribution to the development of English dictionary-making in theory and practice. His influence upon two early compilers, Peter Levins and Laurence Nowell, is well known. Levins, the author of the first English rhyming dictionary, the *Manipulus Vocabulorum* of 1570, refers to Huloet in the dedication of the work. Nowell's use of the *Abececlarium Anglico-Latinum* in the preparation of his *Vocabularium Saxonicum* has been discussed by A. H. Marckwardt (1948) and J. L. Rosier (1977).

Although the lexicographical aspects of Huloet's *Abececlarium* need further study, I would like to turn in this paper to lexicological issues of the work. The fact that the *OED* credits Huloet with the first use in English of some 1000 new words or meanings is reason enough for such a change of emphasis. In addition, there is a much wider issue that deserves our attention. Scholarship has so far not even begun to tackle the growth of the English lexicon as it is actually recorded in early English dictionaries. The early compilers present us with thousands of words current at the time; they single out new and old usage, they differentiate between the common vernacular and regional and colloquial variations, they paraphrase the meaning of words and explain idiomatic phrases. We may therefore ask how and when specific vocabulary areas developed. When did special subject field terms become common knowledge items? What lexical items did earlier generations of English speakers use for endearments, what imagery was common to them in metaphorical expressions? We do not have, either singly or in diachronic successions, assessments of synchronic lexical slices of the English vocabulary, though an excellent beginning for such scholarly enterprises is John Ayto's study of *Twentieth Century Words* (1999).

There is, however, a unique research tool for historians of the English language: the *OED*, which provides us with first insights into the lexical layers of English. An extraction of the first quotations for some outstanding 16th-century lexicographers, for instance, gives us the following figures:

Thomas Elyot: <i>The Dictionarie of Syr Thomas Elyot Knyght</i> , 1538, first cited author, first cited date:	117
Richard Huloet: <i>Abecedarium Anglico-Latinum</i> , 1552, first cited author, first cited date:	456
Peter Levins: <i>Manipulus Vocabulorum</i> , 1570, first cited author, first cited date:	238

In view of the well-known shortcomings of the *OED* word captures and recording styles, these data will have to be taken with caution, but they do at least provide us with some approximate figures and proportional relations; they allow us to put Huloet's achievement into a contemporary lexical context.

As to Richard Huloet himself, very little is known about him. His place of birth is given as Wisbech in Cambridgeshire, but his date of birth is not known. A reference in the *Abecedarium* (Aai<sup>r</sup>) 'preceptor meus Lilius ita docuit' might be taken as an indication that he had been taught by William Lily, the first master of St. Paul's school in London himself. But Lilius is also mentioned in the Latin 'Ad lectorem' (together with the other contemporary Erasmus) as well as in the list of authors consulted for the compilation of the dictionary. McConchie's recent investigations (2000, 2004) on the author's life have not found any evidence that he was taught at St. Paul's school. We do not know whether he had any university education, nor what he did professionally. In the absence of evidence based on external factors, I shall pursue the internal path: are there any clues in his work, the *Abecedarium*? I think that there are several parameters worth exploring which might shed some light on Huloet as a person and lexicographer. I shall investigate these one after the other since they will be relevant to his description of the English lexicon. These parameters are:

- (1) references to places listed in the dictionary
- (2) references to contemporary events and personalities
- (3) his own language use and his attitude towards linguistic variation
- (4) the preferences in the selection of his headwords
- (5) his attitude towards the referents described.

We begin with (1), his mention of **place names**. The *Abecedarium* has an encyclopedic component and includes names of persons and places. This is not unusual for early bilingual dictionaries matching Latin and English where reference is made to biblical events and personalities, and where classical authors, myths and localities are referred to and explicated. Huloet's place names, however, are quite striking and it is highly unlikely that some of the place names will be found in any other dictionary. There is a certain concentration on his native country. He lists major cities such as Bath, Chester, Durham, Exeter, Oxford, York, etc. which reveal the sharing of a common cultural heritage and knowledge on the part of an educated author. But we also find two references to King's Lynn (with the information that the name Lenne had been replaced by Kinges Lenne), and to such small localities as Barwick and Ilchester in Somerset and Crockernwell west of Exeter, perhaps suggesting that Huloet had some connections with these places. For Norwich, he even shows familiarity with its building style. The Latin phrase *silicatus murus* is the equivalent for 'Walle dressed, made, or trimmed with flynte stones, the like is much used in Norwyche buildynges and in those partyes.'

His inclusion of place names for Cornwall, Wales, Scotland and Ireland also make one wonder whether he had some personal local experience. French place names are equally striking and differ to some extent from those found in Sir Thomas Elyot's dictionary, which was one of the major sources of Huloet's work.

We come to (2), references to **contemporary events** and **personalities**. There is a close correlation between such references and (4), **Huloet's word selection**, and (5), **his attitude** displayed towards the referents described. Two striking examples, which also have no parallel in Elyot's dictionary, relate to Christianity and its enemies, the anabaptists and the Great Turk:

**Anabaptistes, a sorte of heretyques of  
late tyme in Germanye about the yere  
of our Lorde God . 1524 . and the . 15 .  
yere of kynge Henry the eyght. *Anabaptistae.*  
*arū* which signifieth rebaptisoures.**

Under the entry for Greece, we read:

**Grece ... [...] It is called diuerslye  
by auctours, for that there be in Grece . xvij .  
Regions, and euery of them had his seuerall  
dominatoure, vntyll they were brought into  
subiection of the infidels wher as they now  
remayne [...] All whiche be as nowe barbarous and  
as vyle haudmaydes [sic] in the seruitude of the  
most cruell enemye to christian religion the  
Great Turke, which before were the mother  
or well of eloquence and of all learnyng, the  
more is to be lamented.**

Religious issues constitute a substantial part of the encyclopedic component of the *Abecedarium*. On a more linguistic level, other entries suggest a special knowledge and familiarity with legal and mathematical matters. Under the noun entry *hotchpot*, for instance, we read:

**[...] hochpot is also a maner of partici-  
on at the common lawe: of landes geuen in  
franck mariage. Se more in Litleton tenu-  
res. Lib. iii. cap. ii.**

Thomas Littleton's book *Tenures*, originally written in French and published in 1481, became the authoritative work on land-holding in England. It was therefore well known by every law student and every lawyer during the sixteenth century and later. Huloet is comparably familiar with a contemporary expert on mathematical issues. Under the entry *ten times* we read:

**Tenne tymes [...] This [sic] a matter of compu-  
tation the whyche I relinqyshe to treate  
of. It shal appeare more euidently in a boke  
compiled by the reuerend father the byshop  
of Durham, entituled *de supputatione*.**

The bishop of Durham in question is of course Cuthbert Tunstall (1530–1559) and the work referred to is *De Arte Supputandi*, first published by Richard Pynson in 1522, and then in 1529 and 1538, by Robertus Stephanus in Paris. Huloet's pronounced interest in mathematics, above all arithmetic, emerges from the dictionary entries relating to the field. It is also manifest in the short account of the history of the science of counting (cf. the entry **Science of nombrings**), his graphical representation of *quincunx* (under the entry **tenne whole partes**) and the tables of algorisms and numbers, added as appendices at the end of his dictionary.

Huloet's up-to-dateness with events relating to the Christian faith as well as his familiarity with topical contemporary work in law and mathematics strongly suggest that he had a university education, possibly a professional position in the law.

We come to (3), Huloet's use of his mother tongue and his **attitude towards contemporary English usage**. If we want to assess Huloet's assessment of the English lexicon, we have to know where he stands linguistically himself, whether or not his own language use is regionally or socially marked. What emerges very clearly from the *Abecedarium* is that there are some marked linguistic features, and that Huloet differentiates between

- an unmarked general use of English and a regionally marked one
- an unmarked use and one marked by subject field
- an unmarked use and one marked as usage by the 'vulgars'
- an unmarked and literal meaning and a transferred one.

A striking feature is Huloet's occasional use of the negative *ne* instead of *not*. Examples are:

**Do a thyng so subtillye that it *ne* can be amended.** *Locum subrilitati, Nullum delinquere.*  
[I.iii.v.]

**Stifnes of sinowes, that the membres *ne* may be bowed.** *Tetanicus morbus, Tetanos*  
[Gg.iiij.v.]

**Vnpalpable, or whyche *ne* can be felte.** *Asonatos.*  
[Mm.ii.ʹ]

As we can see from these examples, *ne* occurs together with a modal auxiliary. *Ne* was of course falling out of use in the sixteenth century, but it is not clear to me whether Huloet's use marks him as a conservative speaker, whether *ne* in co-occurrence with a modal was the most long-lasting usage (cf. *willy-nilly*), or whether Huloet's use of *ne* shows some regional marking.

I have already mentioned Huloet's predilection for things arithmetical. His entries for counting suggest that for him reckoning in scores was quite common. Latin *septuaginta*, for instance, is in English 'seuenty or sixtye and tenne, or thre score and tenne [...]', *octoginta* is 'foure score', an octogenarian is 'ffoure scoure yere olde', and *nonaginta* is 'ffoure score and ten'. *Three score* occurs in quite a number of entries. Whether there might be a correlation between both these linguistic features, the retention of *ne* for negation and counting in scores, would be a subject for further investigation.

There are three nouns only which Huloet marks explicitly as regional, and the regional feature singled out is the northern variety. It is interesting to note that a generation earlier, John Palsgrave in his *Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse* (1530) had also focussed on northernisms as the language use that differed from the common language (cf. Stein 1997: 82–89). The entries for these regionalisms show that Huloet was indebted to Thomas Elyot:

Huloet 1552  
**Hutch or cofer called in the northe contrey an arke.** *Cardopos, Forulus, scrinium*

Elyot 1538  
Cardopos, **an huche or coffar, wherin bread is layde, In the Northe countraye hit is callyd an arke.**

Huloet 1552  
**Mircke, darke, or darkenes.** *Idem, (?) it is a northren speach*

Elyot 1538 –

Huloet 1552  
**Whyte dasye, otherwyse called the margarite, whych the Northen [sic] men call banwort.** *Bellis, Bellium*

Elyot 1538  
Bellis, seu bellium, **the white daysye, callyd of some the Margarite, in the northe it is callyd a Banwort.** [...]

If regionalism is marked but rarely, the same is not true for synonymy. In a good number of cases, many of them referring to animals and plants, Huloet provides several terms. Beside the common expression attested by the *OED* as current before Huloet's time, we often find another, either first recorded by Huloet or not yet listed in the *OED* at all. Examples are:

**Caddowe, or choughe, byrde some call them  
Iacke dawe.** *cornix. Monedula. ae.*

**Canker worme which creapeth most comonly  
on colewortes, some do call them the deuyls  
goldrynge, 7 some the colewort worme**  
*Eruca. ae.*

**Cheeselypp worme, otherwyse called Robyn-  
good felowe his lowse.** *Tylus.*

*Chough* goes back to Old English times, *caddow* is listed in the *Promptorium Parvulorum* (1440) and *jackdaw* is recorded for the time when Huloet began his work (1542). The first quotation for *cankermorm* dates from 1530, Palsgrave's *Lesclarcissement*. *Colewort worm* and the *devil's goldring*, which the *OED* describes as the 'popular name of a destructive caterpillar', are both attributed to Huloet. *Cheeselip* is another first quotation by Palsgrave (1530), and *Robin Goodfellow's louse* is another Huloet first.

Plant names may be illustrated by the following examples:

**Ashe called a wylde ashe with greate leaues.**  
*Ornus. ni.*

**Beanes called ffrenche beanes.** *Eruilia.*

**Puffe growynge vpon the ground, called of  
some a dead mans hatte or toad stole.** *Fun-  
gus. gi, Tuber*

*Wild ash* is first attested by Huloet. For *French beans* Huloet is not yet credited, the *OED* adduces a much later quotation from Sherwood (1632). *Toadstool* is already recorded by John Trevisa (*a.* 1398). The suggestive term *dead man's hat* for a toadstool has not yet found its way into the *OED*.

Names like the *devil's goldring*, *Robin Goodfellow's louse* and a *dead man's hat* have a popular ring to them. Further research might reveal whether the variety of expression illustrated from the *Abecedarium* has a regional basis or whether the items represent contemporary popular colloquialisms.

An awareness of social differences in the use of English emerges from Huloet's occasional descriptive comments that a particular expression is used by 'the vulgars' or represents 'vulgar speech' which in 16th-century English meant the common people or ordinary, common and familiar language use. Here are some examples. The first two show a similar pattern: there is a rather general headword phrase, *bring something to nothing*, *decay between this and that* which might be regarded as the linguistically unmarked renderings of *abolesco* and *intercido* in a Latin-English dictionary respectively. The neutral, quite abstract phrases are then, as it were, put into common idiomatic English:

**Brynge somethynge to nothyng, as the vul-  
gare speache is, to brynge pynnock to pan-  
nock . ꝛc.** *Abolesco. scis. Adnichillo. as, Pefun-  
do. as. are, Tenuo. as*

**Decay betwene this 7 that, after the vulgare  
speech, betwene two stoles the arse goeth to  
the grounde.** *Intercido. is.*

The *OED* lists neither the expression *to bring pinnock to pannock* nor the saying *between two stools the arse goes to the ground*.

In the following examples, Huloet describes politeness terms in common use:

**Gramercy to thee, whych is a maner of than kes geuyng among the vulgares.** *Ago gratias, uel grates, Do gratia, uel grates, Gratias, Gratias tibi propino, Habes gratiam, Refero Gratias.*

**Honor saued, or sauynge your honour.** *Dignitate tuta.* (?) **a terme spoken absolute in a poynt of reuerence, as the vulgar saying is, sauynge youre reuerence.** *πc. Reuerentia salua honestate salua. etc.*

These extracts from the *Abecedarium* have shown us a compiler who was aware of linguistic variety in 16th-century English and who commented on it although his main concern was Latin, having set himself the task of providing his countrymen with a dictionary that took as its basis their mother tongue and translated English words and phrases into Latin.

His English headword list will undoubtedly have been prompted by what he found in Latin-English dictionaries, retaining as headwords what were translation equivalents for Latin words. D. T. Starnes has shown that Sir Thomas Elyot's Latin-English dictionary was one of Huloet's major sources, which Huloet mentions himself in the list of authors and works consulted. That Elyot's English equivalents often served as a first basis only which Huloet then developed further can be demonstrated with the following examples:

**Elyot 1538**

**Versura, a tournynge. It is also whan a man boroweth of oone to pay his dettes to an other. and to borow in suche wyse is Versuram facere.**

**Huloet 1552**

**Borowe of Peter to paye Paule, whyche is a vulgare speach, properly wher as a mañ doth Borow of one to paye an other.** *Nomen trans-ferre, Versuram facere, Soluere, uel uertere.*

**Elyot 1538**

**Loquax, cis, a babler or greatte speaker.**

**Huloet 1552**

**Clatterer or clatterfart, which wyl disclose a-nye light secreate,** *Loquax cis*

**Elyot 1538**

**Scrupus a lyttell stone or piece of a stone.**

**Huloet 1552**

**Grauell stone, which happeneth into the shoe and hurteth the fote or heale.** *Scrupus [...]*

**Elyot 1538**

**Recocta, seconde or course cheese.**

**Huloet 1552**

**Chease not worth eatynge for badnes.** *Recocta.*

In the first two examples, Huloet has introduced two idiomatic expressions: *to borrow of Peter to pay Paul* and *clatterfart* for what we nowadays call a *chatterbox*. The common saying *to borrow from Peter to pay Paul* has escaped the *OED* which gives as its first occurrence a date as late as 1693. The first record for the colloquialism *clatterfart* is the *Abecedarium*. The examples for *recocta* and *scrupus*, in their deviation from Elyot, show us a more personal perspective.

Huloet seems to have had an ear for the spoken language. In a number of entries, he describes the actual words uttered in a specific situation. Such a situation may be taken from everyday life, as in the following examples:

**Darlynge, a wanton terme vsed in veneriall speech, as be these: honycombe, pyggisnye, swetehert, trueloue.** *Adonis. is, uel dis delitiae. arum, sauuium, sauuium.*

**Drinke or quaffe one to an other, as when the one sayth, I drinke to you, the other aunsweareth, I pledge you.** *Praepoto. as, poscere maioribus uel prioribus poculis, propino. as.*

Yet Huloet's interest also embraces more specialized subject fields, as is evidenced by the following examples relating to working life, litigation and the public domain:

**Crye a larges when a rewarde is geuen to workemen.** *stipem uociferare.*

**Demure in lawe, or dwell in lawe, called amonge our lawyars.** *Moratur in Lege, Consistere iudicium, uel opinionem, (?) ⁊ then when the Iudge hath determined the state of the matter, then must be sayde.* *Constituere statum caussae.*

**Oyes is a ffrenche frase, and is as muche to saye, harke you, or heare you, whiche is vsed in cōmen proclamation to cause the people to harkē diligently what shalbe done or sayde.**

**Sipulation [sic], bonde, bargayne, obligation, or promise to do, perfourme, ⁊ satisfye y<sup>t</sup> thinge for the whyche suche stipulation or bond is made, whether it be for paiment of any sūme of mony, or other act to be performed. Albeit some take it for money onelye, other affirme stipulation to be made of any demaūd whiche is thus diffined. A stipulation is a fourme of wordes spoken affirmatiueleye, by the whiche a man doth affirme, oblige, and bynde him selfe to do, perfourme, and satisfye that thinge whiche he is demaunded or required.** *stipulatio. onis, stipulatus. us.*

The English headwords are not all as complex as the examples quoted so far. There is a gradient of complexity which is a characteristic of early bilingual dictionaries (cf. Stein 1997: 194–254). The basic structure is a one-word item matched by a one-word equivalent, as in **Butter**. *Butyrum. ri*. More complex structures are those where the headword is followed by a postmodification functioning as a homograph discriminator, as in

**Stew or hothouse.** *Hypocaustum. ti*  
**Stew or ponde for fyshe.** *Ichthyotrophia*

In other cases the lemma proper is described in such a way that the whole headword entry reads like a description of the Latin equivalent, strongly suggesting that the entry was taken from a Latin-English source and had then been inverted, e.g.

**Cake made with flowre, and mylke.** *Ma3a.*  
**Cake made of meale and salt.** *Mola. ae.*  
**Cake made of sundry spices, and graines.** *Fertum. ti.*

For our present purpose, the study of the English lexicon as described by Richard Huloet, entries where a Latin lexeme is not lexicalized in English and merely paraphrased are of no relevance. As soon, however, as the descriptive paraphrase is matched by an English lexeme or phraseological unit, it becomes a point of interest. The lexicalizations encountered in the *Abecedarium* may turn out to be ad-hoc formations by Huloet himself or current English lexemes recorded for the first time by Huloet. Very interesting cases are those in which Huloet suggests an English phrase or term and then explains it himself. The typical wording is ‘by circumlocution’, ‘by translation’. Examples using the phrase ‘by circumlocution’ are:

**Barley bunne gentleman, whyche is by circumlocution meened by suche ryche nigardes as lyue wyth barley breade, or otherwise hardlye.** *Hordiarius. ij.*

**Cuckowes note by circumlocution, wher one can synge but one tune, or tel one tale.** *Monologium. ij, (?) et Monologus is he that dothe so.*

**Go out of the waye, and properlye to go oute of the furrowe, makinge a balke as ploughmen do, which by circūlocution is as much to saye, as to make a lye.** *Deliro. as.*

**Lyme fingred, whyche wyll touche and take or carye awaye anye thyng they handle.** *limax. cis.(?) by circumlocution it is appliēd to suche as wyll fynde a thyng or it be loste.*

*Lime-fingered* as an expression for the characteristic “given to pilfering” is first recorded for 1546 (John Heywood: *A dialogue conteinyng the nomber in effect of all the prouerbes in the Englishe tongue*), the time when Huloet was compiling his dictionary. For *cuckoo’s note* the *OED* gives the date 1749, that is, two hundred years after Huloet’s use. *Barley bun gentleman* is obviously an ad-hoc formation, but the *OED* credits Huloet with the first mention of *barley bun*. Coinages such as *barley bun gentleman*, *cuckoo’s note* and *lime-fingered* show a certain liking for linguistic playfulness,

figurative language use on the part of its user. A similar vein of humour emerges from examples like the following:

**Blacke or blewe spotte in the face or bodye,  
made with a stroke, as when a wife hath a  
blew eye, she sayth she hath stombled on hir  
good man his fyste.** *Suggillatio. onis, Liuor.  
uoris.*

**ffeastes or banqueten wherat ther is no kinde  
of drinke, properly called sobermens feastes**  
*Nephalia, prandium caninum.*

From such examples in the *Abecedarium* it emerges that the description of the English lexicon given by Huloet recognizes linguistic variety as well as literal and figurative usage. A substantial number of English words and phrases used in the *Abecedarium* has either escaped the *OED* or is recorded for a much later date. What should have become manifest is that Huloet's use of English is close to the common language of the time, occasionally changing into the colloquial idiom. This is further confirmed if we look at all those lexical items whose use, according to the *OED*, is first attested by Huloet. The *OED* includes some 2000 quotations from Huloet. More than a thousand of these are first records for the items in question. Some of them, as for instance *stipulation* quoted earlier, are rather specialized terms or barely assimilated Latinisms, short-lived "inkhorn terms". The majority, however, are common words with a down-to-earth flavour. This is a marked difference in language use between Richard Huloet and the classical scholar Sir Thomas Elyot and his work. Examples are: *applemonger* "a dealer in apples", *bread-basket*, *a chopper* "someone who chops or cuts into pieces", *fig-gatherer*, *garlic bed*, *sandblindness*, *bow-legged*, *double-edged*, *dull-headed*. One may think that Huloet's role as a contributor to and recorder of the English vocabulary has been duly recognized by the compilers of the *OED*. Yet the present study has demonstrated that this role is still underrated, that more research is needed. A random check of the *Abecedarium*, for instance, yields the following lexical items which have to be predated because they are already listed by Huloet: *a dragon's herb*, *a hand towel*, *an heir in remander*, *to hit the mark*, *honey-gathering*, *summer fallow*. Items such as *double harp*, *draught-cattle*, *falt table*, *to have a do*, *hive maker*, *limmer dog* "a mungrel, being half cur, half hound, or spaniel" and others will have to be added to the *OED*'s record of the English lexicon.

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

edited by

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Heli Tissari, and Tanja Säily

Cascadilla Proceedings Project    Somerville, MA    2006

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