

DARE, Dialect, and Techniques of Historical Lexicography

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A quotations dictionary on historical principles, the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (familiarily, DARE) owes much of its overall design and particular technique to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), as DARE's first chief editor, the late Frederic G. Cassidy, freely admitted. DARE is nonetheless an innovative dictionary, a bold synthesis of linguistic geography and historical lexicography. It developed new features of entry structure (maps, questionnaire responses, encyclopedic quotations, and others) in order to satisfy constraints specific to the lexicon (or perhaps to the type of lexicon) it describes, but also to test the limits and capacities of lexicographical technique conventionally understood, to alter somewhat the uses of historical lexicography, and to support new expectations of historical dictionaries from its quite diverse audiences.¹

A dictionary of “dialect” — neither just one dialect, nor a supra-dialectal national variety, nor yet a dictionary devoted to a lexicon comprising a few dialects — encounters challenges of scope, evidence, and representation largely unfamiliar even to the editors of dictionaries like the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, the *Dictionary of American English* (DAE), or the *Dictionary of Jamaican English* (also primarily of Cassidy's design). In the 1940s and 1950s, when DARE was conceived, and the 1960s and 1970s, when its entry structure was refined, Cassidy was almost uniquely positioned to consider the problems dialect poses to a dictionary project, for he had worked on both the *Early Modern English Dictionary* (EMED) project and the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED) while a doctoral student at the University of Michigan and just after, as well as on the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada, as a fieldworker collecting questionnaire data, while an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin.² Thus, he was intimately acquainted with linguistic geography but also knew how dialect had vexed the editors of the EMED and MED, and how Hans Kurath, the linguistic geographer, finally settled the *MED*'s approach to dialect when he became its editor, in 1946. From all of this experience, Cassidy experimented with the lexicographical process as well as its dictionary

¹ Besides the OED, DARE is very likely the most widely consulted of English historical dictionaries, not only by those concerned professionally with English lexis or American history and culture, but also lawyers, physicians, and many others whose interest in regional American lexis is oblique. For an anecdotal account of DARE's audience, see Hall (2010). OCLC's WorldCat currently reports that roughly 2600 libraries hold DARE, whereas the OED (in all formats) is held by roughly 6000, the DAE by no more than 1600, and the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (in all formats) by just over 600. Doubtless, holdings of DARE will increase significantly when it is available online, an impending event in its publication history. According to WorldCat, in Indiana (my current state of residence), DARE is held by 61 libraries, 18 of which are public libraries. In the records for Virginia and the District of Columbia, one finds that, beyond university and public libraries, DARE is held by the law firm Arnold & Porter, the Pentagon, the Smithsonian Institution, the US Central Intelligence Agency, the US Senate Library, the US Supreme Court Library, the National Science Foundation, the Center for Naval Analyses, the US Patent and Trademark Office, the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Joint Forces Staff College, and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. In other words, like the OED, DARE is very much involved, not only in academic scholarship, but in public affairs; also like the OED, it is eminently readable, and private owners with the time and inclination sit and read it as they would any great quotations dictionary.

² See Hall (2001, 4–5) regarding the dictionaries; the DARE archives include several items of Cassidy's correspondence about the Atlas fieldwork, mostly with Miles Hanley, the Associate Director of the Atlas project and Cassidy's colleague at the University of Wisconsin, occasionally with Hans Kurath. I am grateful to Joan Houston Hall, currently Chief Editor of DARE, for permission to plumb the DARE archives and to quote from them here.

product, re-imagining the dictionary as a repository of information about American regional speech, on unexpected terms, with startling success.

The MED is an especially apt contrast to DARE. Limited by the paucity of information about the provenance of speech recorded in manuscripts, as well as by the standards of dialectology at its conception, it had to venture into dialectal description warily and with restraint, a restraint considerably loosened under Robert E. Lewis's editorship (1984–2007),³ with effects also of interest in evaluating DARE. Saying just the right things about the dialectal nature of Middle English took imagination, too, but Kurath's imagination was quite different from Cassidy's: Cassidy was able not only to avoid but to supersede lexicographical impediments to dialectal description, by simultaneously re-conceiving both the very idea of dialect and that of historical lexicography.⁴ His example, as well as that of the MED, reminds us that the variety of lexicographical motives, perspectives, and techniques makes it unlikely that any historical dictionary will be the definitive record of the English language.

As a dialect dictionary, DARE might have followed any of a number of models already mentioned, such as the OED, DAE, and the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* — and to some extent it did. Cassidy acknowledged, "It should be obvious that the model for *DARE* was the *Oxford English Dictionary*, with some innovations, chiefly the use of maps and of oral data" (Cassidy 1993, 104). And those who founded the American Dialect Society, which is behind DARE,⁵ thought of presenting evidence of American dialects in a dictionary, he wrote, "partly because Joseph Wright was just then beginning to edit his *English Dialect Dictionary* (EDD) based on data largely gathered by members of the English Dialect Society. It was felt that a similar society on this side of the Atlantic could do as much for American dialects" (Cassidy 1993, 94). DARE, then, owes considerable debts, in both conception and structure, to the OED and EDD, but it is also quite innovative structurally and in the substance and variety of its data, more so than Cassidy tended to claim. Because those who use DARE frequently may, as an effect of familiarity and habit, no longer notice some aspects of it as innovations, and those who don't may not recognize their significance at all, let alone reflect on what they illustrate about techniques of lexicography, it will be useful to outline both debts and innovations here.

DARE follows the OED most as a quotations dictionary on historical principles, but in order to follow the model, it had to ensure the relevance of its quotations to the purposes of a dialect dictionary. Cassidy noted that "The *OED*, considering everything, suffers less from arbitrary limitations than do most dictionaries. It is not limited synchronically but covers the entire sweep of the language with minor exceptions" (Cassidy 1987a, 23), but broad scope itself can constitute a limitation, for it is difficult to capture regional vocabulary without a finer grain of data and an entry structure of correspondingly finer mesh. DARE follows the OED pattern of collecting quotations from published texts, "though emphasizing such nonliterary sources as diaries, journals, letters, reminiscences, and the like. Local publications of many kinds have been read — newspapers from every state, especially small-town papers that use the local vernacular" (Cassidy 1987a, 27). Recourse to such registers is of course not a criticism of the OED, but rather a matter of scale and what one might call the evidential responsibilities of scale associated with a dictionary of a particular kind.

The EDD had already demonstrated that a dictionary could move beyond the library (in the OED's case, the Scriptorium) into the field of direct speech, in which the green fuse of folk usage so forcefully drives the dialectal flower. Since much of EDD relied on English Dialect Society publications, it might

³ The final alphabetically organized fascicle of the MED was published in 2001 and Lewis thereafter retired, but I use a later date for the close of his tenure here, because the project really wasn't complete until publication of the revised *Plan and Bibliography* in 2007.

⁴ For more on Cassidy's re-conception of what was and still is usually called "dialect" as "regionalism," see Adams (2012), a fully elaborated version of which the author hopes to see in print soon.

⁵ Although DARE functions independently now, at one time it was explicitly a project of the American Dialect Society (ADS). As Louise Pound, one-time President of ADS, wrote: "One chief aim in the Society has always been the preparation and publication of an American Dialect Dictionary" (1952, 12). When the ADS named Cassidy as Editor, he reflected, "Though I find no explicit mention of a Dictionary during the early years [of ADS] we are assured later by Dr. Percy Long (*DN*, VI, 75) that the founders "designed that it [sc. The Society] should ultimately be the means of producing a dictionary which should do in the field of American speech and literature what the *English Dialect Dictionary* has done in representing the popular language of the British Isles" (Cassidy 1963, 1).

be more accurate to say that cuttings from the field had been brought into the library, pressed into those books. The editors of the OED quoted the EDD liberally, consistent with the OED's policy on registering dialectal words (Curzan 2000, 104–105), so by example suggested to Cassidy the value of interleaving evidence of printed origin with that of oral origin. Of course, the EDD was an accidental source for the OED, but the American Dialect Society had collected material in the field expressly for the purposes of its dictionary, for fifty years (1889–1939) in the six volumes of *Dialect Notes*, and subsequently in *Publication of the American Dialect Society* (PADS).⁶ These materials were thus part of Cassidy's conception of and planning for DARE, and it was always assumed that they would inform DARE's wordlist and find a place within its entry structure.

It's fair to say that this traditional foundation of quotations in DARE, those culled from printed texts or from field evidence of folk speech mediated through publications designed for such mediation, is substantial, much more substantial than casual observers, who are likely to focus on less familiar streams of evidence and entry-level techniques of representing it, tend to see. We are, after all, attracted to the shiny objects that magpie lexicographers collect, less so to the paper and string that hold button and rhinestone in the nest of an entry. That conceded, I reiterate that DARE combines historical lexicography and dialect geography, and techniques of collecting and representing data belonging to the latter are indeed innovative features in a work representing the former. These deserve our attention, not only because they test the limits and systems of lexicographical technique, but because elements noticed in the texture of DARE's entries, that is, on the textual surface of the dictionary, allow us insight into DARE's conceptual and biographical origins.

On assuming the editorship of DARE in 1963, Cassidy wanted to correct and amplify the wordlist, ensure the semantic soundness of the DARE database, and represent the distribution of regional words authoritatively. He contrived to do all of this partly by means of an unusual mediation, one hitherto unknown to historical lexicography, use of a questionnaire to elicit lexical information from living informants. Cassidy knew about Edmond Edmont's cycling survey across France, which underlies Gilliéron's *Atlas Linguistique* (1902–10; see Joseph 2002, 50–51), and George Hempl's postal surveys of 1896 and subsequently (see Bailey 1992), of course. But the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada, directed by Hans Kurath, was his most profound and immediate influence: everyone in linguistics knew about it, but Cassidy had actually conducted field interviews for the project in Wisconsin and Ohio during the early 1940s. On the strength of that experience, he devised a questionnaire to collect information on Wisconsin dialect and launched the Wisconsin English Language Study (WELS) in 1947. Results in hand, he and Audrey Duckert revised the questionnaire and published it as *A Method for Collecting Dialect* (1953). Their proposal was to take the questionnaire into communities across the nation as the foundation of the American Dialect Society's dictionary, a dictionary at that stage still without a name, let alone an evidential identity.

Nowadays, with DARE in print for more than a quarter century, questionnaire evidence seems to most of us one of several perfectly reasonable evidential bases for a dictionary of regional American English, a brilliant insight amply justified in the dictionary's execution and use. Many of his contemporaries doubted it, however, and Cassidy struggled to get the *Method* into print. ADS was short of money and the *Method*, were the whole questionnaire printed, would be much longer than most issues of PADS — why should the Society spend the money to print the whole, if the whole were of dubious value? The Society's Executive Secretary at the time, George P. Wilson, had a well known, longstanding hatred of “the Atlas people,” with whom he saw Cassidy siding in a challenge to philological assumptions and methods, and he resisted publishing Cassidy's questionnaire.⁷

⁶ Current readers may recognize this last publication title, but not the publication's original role. *American Speech*, which was founded in 1925, did not become the official journal of the American Dialect Society until 1970. The ADS stopped publishing *Dialect Notes* in 1939 and instead established *Publication of the American Dialect Society* (PADS) as its annual journal in 1944. Since 1970, PADS has been primarily a monograph series, though it has included several edited volumes, as well.

⁷ Wilson's epithet is available in more than one letter by him retained in the DARE archives. Criswell's two-page typed, signed letter to Cassidy is on The University of Tulsa, College of Liberal Arts, Office of the Dean letterhead. Cassidy has marked the passage beginning with “I am trying to soften him up” through the capital conclusion with a vertical line on the left margin. Anonymous referee comments solicited by Wilson comprise ten single-spaced pages of secretarial transcription/consolidation and do not appear in any instance to be redacted; they consider

In fact, a conflict of interest may have clouded Wilson's judgment of Cassidy's work, for Wilson had only recently attempted to set the standard for collecting dialect material on the Society's behalf, in *Instructions to Collectors of Dialect* (1944), the very first issue of PADS. Cassidy's questionnaire method competed directly with Wilson's traditional, unsystematic method. "Anyone," Wilson wrote, "may collect and send in dialect who has definite acquaintance with the subject and who will take the trouble to organize the material and write it down on slips of paper" (1944, 3). And to where should the material be sent, and to what purpose? "All dialect sent in will be filed in the archives of the Society. From time to time pertinent selections will be printed in the Publication of the American Dialect Society ... But the chief reason for collecting dialect is the publication of the great work for which the Society was founded and towards which it has labored for years — the *Dialect Dictionary of the United States and Canada*, a work similar to the great *English Dialect Dictionary*" (1944, 9–10). E. H. Criswell, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Tulsa, interceded on Cassidy's behalf, as he reported on 21 June 1951 in a letter to Cassidy: "Wilson is a very fine southern man, hot-tempered, I believe, but very honest and sincere, and a pretty able fellow ... I am trying to soften him up as to the questionnaire method, which has its merits. In general, I have not favored it entirely, but I probably do not know fully its good points, for I HAVEN'T USED IT."

Neither had Wilson, but that did not stop him from objecting to Cassidy's method, and many others appeared equally willing to trust intuition over experience. Wilson commissioned reviews of the work from no less than eight referees (he asked for even more, but those he asked were too busy to respond); all but one agreed that samples of the questionnaire might be published, but certainly not the whole thing.⁸ As the referee known as "E" put it, "We must admit that it is a very good piece of work in spite of its LENGTH ... let it suffice to state that the fundamental thing against it is its length. For what purpose? To what end? Is it even thinkable that such a work, if published, could materially aid the collector of dialect ... No collector would ever bother to digest and use it in his work." But "D" saw that Cassidy's motives were various and more subtle: "I can see only two reasons for publishing the whole questionnaire with its sample answers: (1) To enable those responsible for policies to decide whether Cassidy's system should be adopted for the Dialect Dictionary; or (2) To allow a good many people to see the questionnaire and to suggest emendations to it." Cassidy was less concerned about what others would do, but was instead laying out the basis of the Society's dictionary; publication of the questionnaire was an announcement, an invitation to criticize his plans, and a rhetorical maneuver intended to gain broad support for an innovative lexicographical method that would greatly enhance but also greatly expand the scope of any dictionary compiled by it.

Against this extraordinary phalanx of criticism, Cassidy made an extraordinary counter-assault: in an undated memorandum sent to Wilson and the unnamed others, he wrote, "As to the questionnaire itself, the feeling seems to be that its length will make it too expensive to print in its entirety. I am aware of this, and have no desire to get the Society into debt. At the same time I see no point whatever in merely printing sample questions. Anyone who wants to see sample questions can look up the various versions of the Atlas questionnaire, which are easy to get. My questionnaire ought to be printed in toto or not at all." And so it was — printed *in toto*, that is.

Cassidy insisted on his method and, for all practical purposes, put himself forward as eventual editor of the eventual dictionary because he grasped better than anyone else the linguistic geographical and lexicographical opportunities (quite clearly unimagined by others, let alone realized, as they were in WELS). "I am in the uncomfortable position," he wrote "of being both the Chairman of our Sub-Committee on Plans and Procedures, and the author of the only plan thus far offered to that Committee. The fact that I am on that Committee at all testifies to my concern in finding a workable plan for the ADS Dictionary, and my attempt to make and test such a plan. But may I say here in all sincerity that I

many issues besides that of length and expense and provide an interesting view of how a "committee" interested in dialect might attempt to decide what a dialect dictionary should be and how it ought to be made. I quote Cassidy in response to those referees from an undated carbon copy of his three-page memorandum, with his typed initials as signature at the end of the third page.

⁸ It is clear that Wilson had chosen like-minded critics and let them know his own views in advance of their reading. "In general," one of them wrote, "my criticism of the MS., and of the project, would follow yours pretty closely."

am more concerned that a good plan be found and adopted than that I should be its author?" One need not venture very far between the lines to read what Cassidy was up to, and we are lucky that he was in fact the author of a good plan, better than good, it seems fair to say.

On the basis of their experience with the WELS survey, and, of course, criticism of it once it had been published in PADS, Cassidy and Duckert completely rewrote the questionnaire for DARE. But, as Cassidy later reflected, "What questions would it contain and on what principle should they be chosen? To answer this methodological question an analysis was made of the approximately 40,000 items already collected and printed in *Dialect Notes (DN)* from 1890 to 1939, and the *Publication of the American Dialect Society (PADS)* from 1944 onward" (Cassidy 1987b, 121). From that examination, Cassidy and Duckert abstracted 41 categories covering words for concrete items and activities of everyday life, as well as words reflecting attitudes, feelings, and opinions, and open-ended questions were devised to elicit words and phrases relevant to the categories: "What are names for a sloping outside cellar door?" "What do you call the kind of owl that makes a shrill, trembling cry?" "What games do children play around here, in which they form a ring, and either sing or recite a rhyme?" "What are some joking or uncomplimentary names for lawyers?" Eventually, they devised a survey of 1847 questions to guide the fieldwork undertaken for *DARE*, more than twice as many as had been used in the questionnaire underlying the *Linguistic Atlas of New England* (1939–1943; henceforth LANE), to which Cassidy had referred those looking for samples of questions and answers, and they administered it to 2777 informants from 1002 communities across the United States, yielding approximately 2.5 million bits of lexical evidence.⁹

What we know about a lexicon is determined by the methods we use to collect, analyze, and represent it. *DARE*, Cassidy realized, could know more and know differently about American regional English than any other dictionary, dialectal or otherwise, and indeed, than any historical dictionary of English, whatever its scope. Cassidy elicited lexical (and related phonetic) evidence of dialect from the mouths of actual speakers. Though that dialect was mediated textually by the questionnaire at the point of elicitation, the data achieved is subsequently unmediated and confirms usage of lexical items, linked to specific semantic fields by virtue of the questionnaire, and to specific speakers (characterized by social factors like race, gender, education, age, etc.) located in specific places, and so, for purposes of dialect lexicography, dialectal attribution can be more precise than is possible (or at least likely) with the sort of textual evidence traditionally quoted in historical dictionaries.

DARE entries are, of course, built partly from such quotations, but those thick textual threads are woven into a pattern just as dependent on the thin filament of questionnaire responses: the unique texture of the *DARE* entry is not achieved only by means of this or that type of evidential thread, but rather from the relationship among types of evidence in its structure. Collecting the evidence may depend on what we call "method" — evidence of any kind collected for *DARE* could be deployed in research quite distinct from lexicography — but gauging the warp and woof of entry structure is a matter of lexicographical technique.

Unusually for a historical dictionary, *DARE* thus includes a snapshot of current usage, or what was once current usage: since "its materials have largely been collected within a five-year period ... *DARE* will come about as close to furnishing a synchronic picture of the American regional lexicon as it is physically possible to come" (Cassidy 1973, 94). It might be argued that a historical dictionary, even when focused on regionalisms, need not or even should not include such a snapshot, but the potential disagreement underscores my point: given any lexicon, one can know about it in different ways that depend on the lexicographical technique one employs. In Cassidy's case, innovative techniques led to knowledge unusual to the genre, as well as innovative means of describing that new lexical knowledge.

Because of the questionnaire responses, *DARE* could speak with more authority about American dialect than other dialect dictionaries could for their respective dialects; for instance, Cassidy noted, "refinements of methodology show us how we can improve upon the kind of study represented in the *English Dialect Dictionary*, which was unsystematic and unequal in many respects" (Cassidy and

⁹ I have culled the questions from "Text of the Questionnaire" in *DARE*, Volume I (1985, lxii–lxxxv); the other figures are reported by Cassidy in his "Introduction" (1985, xii and xiv), except the comparison with LANE, for which see Kurath (1939, 147) on the composition of LANE's "worksheets," the survey instrument parallel to the *DARE* questionnaire.

Duckert 1953, 5). To include controlled fieldwork in the complex web of DARE's evidence allows a level of scientific understanding not easily available in historical dictionaries conceived traditionally on the OED's example: "To ensure the highest possible degree of comparability in the answers," Cassidy wrote, "every DARE question is phrased precisely and the fieldworkers are instructed to ask them exactly in this form ... The computer ... will give flat counts of each individual response as well as percentages of alternant forms — which in turn will make it possible to approximate relative frequencies" (Cassidy 1973, 93–94). Judging relative frequencies among lexical alternants requires a stable questionnaire, consistently applied over a defined number of communities, in order to establish a base (in DARE's case, 1002) from which frequencies can be calculated. As those who currently work on *Linguistic Atlas* materials prove repeatedly (e.g., Kretzschmar 2009 and Burkette 2011), one can analyze those materials for relative frequencies and distributions statistically, but DARE is the only historical dictionary to enable such inquiry.

Cassidy claimed that "As to format or mode of presentation, DARE differs from OED in the most minor ways" (1987a, 27), but clearly he underestimated some differences. Questionnaire responses, a new mode of information within the lexicographical frame, have a surprising effect on the structure of DARE entries, because representing them constitutes a form of labeling, and the quantity of questionnaire response registered in a given entry may lead to unusually abundant labeling. Regional labeling in most dictionaries is sparse and as general as it can be: there is safety in generality.¹⁰ So, the OED labels *corn* in the sense 'small hard particle' as "In Old English and *mod[ern] dial[ect]*" and *corn* 'maize' as "orig[inally] *U.S.*" DARE employs 37 regional labels, including restrictive labels like "chiefly," "especially," and "scattered throughout"; it also divides each state, itself a sub-region, into nine further sub-regions, yielding labels like "cwFL" [= central west Florida] and "seNH" [= southeast New Hampshire]. When a word or sense or form is identically localized by three or more texts, editors interpolate the label into an entry. On this basis alone, DARE's dialectal discriminations are much more precise than those of most other dictionaries, historical or otherwise.

When questionnaire responses appear in an entry, though, labeling is taken to another degree of specificity altogether. Obviously, *corn* 'maize' is used pandialectally in the United States, but that item is very productive in combinations such as *corn dumpling*, an item labeled in DARE as "chiefly S[ou]th[ern]." We learn more discretely, however, that *corn dumpling* was offered as an answer to the questionnaire item H24, "What do you call boiled cornmeal?" by informants in Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Virginia, who are represented by bold postal abbreviations in the entry (**FL**, **GA**, etc.), so that specific locations of use REALLY CANNOT BE OVERLOOKED. And we learn further of the item's fine-grained polysemy, for several informants — from Alabama, Maryland, North Carolina (three of them), and South Carolina — responded with *corn dumpling* to question H14, "What do you call bread made with cornmeal?" which identifies *corn dumpling* as one of over a hundred alternants for that item, the relative distributions of which one can figure on DARE's base of 1002 communities.

Besides introducing an unexpected level of labeling into entries, the questionnaire responses are also, in structural terms, a new type of cross reference. Each informant can be identified by number, so the 'boiled cornmeal' speakers of *corn dumpling* are actually **FL26**, **GA8**, **MD14**, **MS72**, **NC79**, and **VA45**. The first volume of DARE includes a table of all the informants and an array of social facts about them. As Cassidy explained, "As a secondary matter, DARE seeks to discover the social factors correlated with usage of regional words and phrases. As is well known, a speaker chooses, consciously

¹⁰ Many general-purpose dictionaries label words as "dialect" without indicating which dialect is at issue (see McDavid 1997). According to Ward Gilman, in *Webster's Second New International Dictionary of the English Language* (1934), "'Dial.' had been used ... as a label of convenience when an editor was stuck" (Gilman 1997, 163); in *Webster's Third*, however, "[t]he label by itself was intended to be used when an entry word had too complex a distribution of American dialect regions to be compendiously described or when it had well-attested British dialectal use and scantier American use" (Gilman 1997, 163). DARE supplies more precise labels to account for those complex regional distributions, though *Webster's Third* does indicate national dialects (e.g., *Irish*) and broad regional areas of use, such as "Northeast" and "chiefly South and Midland," etc. (Gilman 1997, 163–164). Editors exercise caution because regional labels should summarize matters of fact, and the facts are not usually assessed as thoroughly for general-purpose dictionaries as they are for DARE. Dictionaries have been less sparing with social labels, which are more a matter of judgment than fact (see Cassidy 1997).

or unconsciously, which words to use, varying them according to time, place, and the physical context, the kind of people he is speaking to, and his relationship to them. A word is not fully understood until one knows who spoke it and on what occasion. DARE notes five ‘social’ factors about each informant (type of community he or she lives in, age, education, sex, and race) as contextually relevant to the choice of words and to the relative frequency of their use” (Cassidy 1987b, 119). Thus, “[t]he individual’s code ... represents not only his or her community’s place on the map, but a series of biographical facts,” principally the indexical ones just mentioned, though “[f]urther biographical facts — family background, occupation, travel, hobbies, etc. — can be found in the questionnaires [sic]” (Cassidy 1977, 135). The forthcoming final volume of DARE will include even more information on an informant by informant basis, and so the questionnaire responses catalogued within an entry lead to lexically relevant information outside of the entry.¹¹

Perhaps DARE’s most innovative feature is its peculiar map, which is directly connected to the questionnaire, and a way, in many instances, to summarize the distribution of all responses for a particular lexical item or sense of an item. Cassidy often characterized these as “distorted” (1977, 138; 1987a, 26; 1993, 96), because “they are not areal but populational” (1993, 96). The map was discovered as a by-product of DARE’s very early automation. As Cassidy put it, “As to the use of computers, DARE is something of a pioneer. The project began in 1965 — a date which, in computer terms, is virtually prehistoric,” and “computer processing made possible a unique mapping program” (1987a, 25), in which, “By use of a basic map distorted so that each letter-space on the screen represents one DARE community, no more and no less, one can display in a few seconds the distribution of any response” (1993, 96). The map contains 1002 slots corresponding to the 1002 communities surveyed with the questionnaire. When an informant uses an item or sense of an item, the computer drops a dot into the appropriate community slot.

The DARE map is an arresting and, once one learns to navigate a distorted United States, informative adjunct to the entry. All of the maps (there were 550 of them in Volume 1 alone) and the distributions they outline are comparable, so combinations of maps reveal the vocabulary of regions, and, as distributions overlap or not, which groups of informants share lexis with which other groups. The so-called “populational” maps are configured on population density and settlement history (Cassidy 1977, 138), so while the maps make no claims to represent their words’ historical usage, the series of dated quotations in an entry may very well tell a story that intersects and converges with the mapped data. In DARE’s approach, then, geography does not drive linguistics, as it had in traditional linguistic geography of the kind represented in the *Linguistic Atlas* project — rather, speech drives geography. Regions aren’t ontologically separate from usage of the lexical items they help to describe: they are not areas on a political map onto which lexical data is plotted; rather, they are protean manifestations of use, with each map describing a region for the purposes of understanding its word; the aggregation of maps describes an ultra-empirical “system” of regions, and while the maps may overlap or even be nearly identical, no two of them are ever quite coextensive.

So far, I have discussed interrelated features of DARE’s evidential basis and its entry-level representation: the questionnaire; responses to it; incorporation of those responses into quotation paragraphs within entries; the maps specially conceived to abstract that evidence in visually informative and statistically useful ways, maps that literally reconfigure the United States according to the language its citizens use, or at least have used at a specific period in American history; and cross-reference to some salient social characteristics of each of those citizens. There is yet another innovative feature of the DARE entry, however, that contributes to its unique texture, that is, incorporation of encyclopedic information in dated quotations, information ABOUT regional speech, in addition to quotations that illustrate regional usage.

This feature of many DARE entries is remarkable because it clearly rejects a canon of historical lexicography, that quotations finally included in quotation paragraphs should illustrate usage at the optimal defining value. Unlike the MED (just as an example), the OED even resists glossarial citations, since glossing and translation don’t illustrate what we might call “use in discourse” — a gloss might be

¹¹ Besides informant profiles, this final volume will include sets of contrastive maps; an index in which one can look up a label and find all words to which the label attaches; and data summaries of some of the original fieldwork.

taken as commentary ON rather than illustration OF a word's use.¹² In the lexicographical tradition, encyclopedism is a vicious tendency, because it is of primary generic significance — cross that line, and perhaps you are no longer engaged in lexicography. DARE challenges this position. For instance, we can find quotations like this from the journal *American Notes & Queries*, in the entry for *amongst*: “I am told that in some parts of Maryland *amongst* is used for *all*, as in this example: ‘Amongst you going to town?’ meaning ‘Are you all going to town?’” And we can find yet another variety in this from Hans Kurath and Raven McDavid's *Pronunciation of English in the Atlantic States* (1961), in the entry for *cooter* ‘freshwater turtle’: “*Goober* ‘peanut’ and *cooter* ‘turtle,’ taken from African languages spoken by the slaves in the South, have either the /ʊ/ of *book* or the /u/ of *two* ...” Sometimes, hearsay was the only or earliest evidence of a particular usage DARE could find, thus the first quotation. In the second case, DARE employs a dated encyclopedic quotation, run into the quotation paragraph like any other, to supply information about regionally significant phonetic issues attending usage of the item in question.

This unusual maneuver on Cassidy's part addresses an interesting problem. Obviously, dialect comprises not only lexical variation, but also variation in phonology and phonetics, morphosyntax, syntax, and pragmatic aspects of language. How far should lexicography address non-semantic matters and what elements of entry structure should represent non-semantic information? (Consider that in a dictionary of more general scope, like the OED, notes on dialect themselves belong to just such a register of information.) In DARE, encyclopedic quotations from scholarship about American speech deal with phonetic, morphosyntactic, and occasionally even pragmatic issues, because these attach to a word without having to do with meaning or location and distribution of meanings and forms, the primary issues addressed word by word in the dictionary. Other dictionaries tend to confine such material to form or etymological sections of entries, a perfectly reasonable approach that nonetheless affects the experience of reading an entry.¹³ In reading a complex DARE entry, the kind that includes such encyclopedic quotations, we construct, not only the history of the word, but also a history of its study (Adams 2002a). This newfangled strand of evidence, in relation to all those strands already described, contributes to the unique texture of DARE's entries, and is but one of several features of Cassidy's innovative lexicographical technique.

If we ask why Cassidy developed his innovative approach to historical lexicography of regional American English, the answer must project an authorial response to the constraints posed by the lexicon. But we may also be able to identify concrete historical antecedents to and influences on his approach. He opened one of his many accounts of DARE with a hint at these influences: “Many readers of this volume are experienced in lexicography. But perhaps it may be useful to underline a few things out of my experience in Ann Arbor on the staff of the *Early Modern English Dictionary*, where I cut my lexicographical teeth. That was from 1931 to 1938, under Charles Fries, and I did one summer (1941) on the *Middle English Dictionary* staff under Thomas Knott. I learned many useful things and of course got hooked on this fascinating, exasperating profession of dictionary making” (Cassidy 1987a, 22). The comment turns out to be a *non sequitur* — none of the following material on DARE refers directly to any of Cassidy's apprenticeship on the two grand, but very troubled, University of Michigan projects.

Yet they very clearly operate in Cassidy's technique, influencing him generally, yes, but also in the most innovative, unlikely features. For instance, Fries had the not entirely coherent idea of including sections in EMED entries on “contemporary comments,” which, he explained in editorial guidelines he

¹² Indeed, Sheidlower (2011, 203) puts it this way: “The best quotes are contextual, unexplained examples. These show that the word is really in use, and they show how it is in use. The worst are glossarial quotations, which can, if the source is trustworthy, be helpful to the lexicographer in writing the definition, but which are not generally very useful to quote.” But he acknowledges that other dictionaries with different agenda value glossarial quotations differently (Sheidlower 2011, 204); for their relative importance in the MED, see Adams (1992, 254).

¹³ For instance, if secondary literature about the pronunciation, etymology, social register, or regional distribution of a word is included in the general material immediately following an entry's head word, then it is taken as “governing” information and invariable, in contrast to meaning and usage illustrated in the subsequent quotation paragraph, which may be highly variable. One can read material thus placed without reading any quotations. But in DARE, one reads encyclopedic comment while reading the quotations, which is, in fact, a subtle way of ensuring that quotations readers grasp what scholars know about aspects of the word (phonology, morphosyntax) with immediate implications for historical semantics and usage.

wrote in 1936, “are to be regarded not solely as *evidence* of meaning or use but as the explicit thought of the people of the time concerning their own language,” not the usual use to which quotations in historical dictionaries are put, so Fries proposed them “experimentally for the present.” The EMED was bogged down by such experiments, which those with the fate of the project in their hands found unpersuasive, but in them we see the glimmer of Cassidy’s later practice of including scholarly commentary on features as quotations among those illustrating meaning and use, just as radical as Fries’ attempt, but so effectively camouflaged in the entry structure that no one notices (see Adams 2010, 292–93 and 298–300).

Though Cassidy worked for a long time on the EMED and only a short while directly on the MED, the MED’s halting development was a more profound influence. In a sense, the MED is a dictionary of regional English, because before the rise of a standard variety, regionality was an unavoidable characteristic of English speech. Of course, many items, as well as forms and meanings of those items, were pandialectal, but many were not, and dealing with the issue of how to sort out and represent dialect was a central constraint in the making of the MED. The dictionary’s first editor, Samuel Moore, sent one of his assistant editors, Sanford B. Meech, to England on an expedition to find as many unknown localizable literary texts and documents in libraries and record offices as possible. He discovered forty-five. Moore, Meech, and another assistant editor, Harold Whitehall, surveyed all the texts in the MED’s bibliography for dialect characteristics. But they resisted using any texts of mixed dialect as the basis for their report, “Middle English Dialect Characteristics and Boundaries,” published in 1935, after Moore’s unexpected death in the previous year (Adams 1995, 161; Adams 2002b, 101–103). As a result, Maldwyn Mills has argued, the Moore Report “depend[ed] upon too small a number of source texts, drawn from too extensive period of time; to consider too limited a range of linguistic features, and group them in a way that obscured their real value” (Mills 1988, 186). Moore had planned a very OED-like MED, and it’s difficult to see, in the Report, how he intended to use whatever knowledge of dialect characteristics and boundaries he managed to achieve in the text of the dictionary.

Moore’s successor, Thomas A. Knott, vacillated over the dialect question for a decade: “Should we try to do anything about dialects? In our judgment, this would demand too much time and space and the solution of very difficult, if not insuperable problems of presentation,” he wrote in a questionnaire distributed with a specimen of entries from L-LAIK in 1937.¹⁴ But to ignore the regional character of Middle English would be irresponsible, a sort of scholarly falsification for the sake of editorial convenience. Hans Kurath, director of the Linguistic Atlas Project and recently lead editor of *Handbook of the Linguistic Geography of New England* (1939) and the *Linguistic Atlas of New England* (6 volumes, 1939–1943), arrived in Ann Arbor to succeed Knott in 1946, and more or less immediately swept aside Knott’s editorial plan.

Kurath went into the question of Middle English dialects thoroughly, from the point of view of an experienced, expert linguistic geographer. He assessed the relationship of text and manuscript in a proxy correspondence between one of his assistant editors, Margaret S. Ogden and the medievalist Hope Emily Allen, formerly an associate editor of the by then mothballed EMED. He pored over the scholarship: Brandl, Jordan, Oakden, Searjeantson, and others. And he mapped their conclusions for particular features in contrast to one another, in order to determine the best possible isoglosses.¹⁵ But he was disappointed in the results of his research. An arch-empiricist who disliked speculation, especially in a major reference work, where it could easily turn out to be error, he preferred laconic definitions, the bare minimum of commentary, and he allowed the evidence to speak for itself insofar as it could. He

¹⁴ Knott’s vexing approaches to dialect in the MED and the questionnaire from which this item is quoted are discussed at length in Adams (1995, 176–179) and (2002, 105–107). Those accounts rely on documents in the MED archives, which the author consulted while they were still at the MED offices in the 1980s and 1990s; the archives have since been moved to the University of Michigan’s Bentley Historical Library, where they have been organized and catalogued by Robert E. Lewis, the MED’s last Editor-in-Chief.

¹⁵ There are, in fact, 54 such maps, some of which account for localization of texts, some of which plot features contrastively on the basis of how they are localized in authoritative scholarship, some of which contrast features as described within an authority’s work, and some of which propose regionally defining isoglosses. Along with the maps, in the same three-ring binder, are various lists and comments written by Kurath while preparing the MED’s original published *Plan and Bibliography* (Kurath, Ogden, Palmer, and McKelvey 1954). Again, these materials are all available in the MED archives (see n13).

was reticent with everything but quotational evidence.¹⁶

In Kurath's plan, quotation paragraphs were carefully balanced, to whatever extent the evidence would allow. Editors were expected to begin a paragraph with the earliest quotation and supply further quotations at roughly twenty-five-year intervals, simultaneously exhibiting all attested spellings.¹⁷ The assemblage of quotations under each sense was expected to provide evidence of subtle semantic development, syntactic patterns of use, regional variation, and also, by means of the array of text types, social variation. A manuscript of a text might not be attributable to a regional dialect, let alone the text available in multiple recensions, but the form of a lexical item in that manuscript or text could be captured in a quotation, and, if early English dialectology ever caught up with the citational record, one day we could identify the form as dialectal. Scholars agree, more or less, on the regional origins of a small number of texts and manuscripts in 1946, and these are listed in the MED's front matter. The user who memorizes those attributions can then read entries with an eye to regional variation.

Cassidy was gone from the scene before Kurath arrived, but he watched the early history of the MED unfold even before he worked on the project officially. The EMED and MED were housed in pendant rooms on the fifth floor of Angell Hall, at the center of the University of Michigan campus. At times, the staffs cooperated, working over words in the same alphabetical range supposedly to mutual benefit, though it never seemed to work out that way (Adams 1995, 155). A young scholar of dialect and lexicography interested in their intersection, Cassidy learned a great deal by observing failure from close up. First among the lessons was this: one cannot rely on printed texts alone for dialectal cues. One can rely on them for dialectal evidence (all texts are written in dialect), but dialects cannot be identified accurately, nor can they be represented in a balanced and representative way, unless a good bit of the evidence is correctly localized. Thus, in writing a dialect dictionary, it would be helpful to have said localized evidence, even if one must generate it oneself, by means of a questionnaire administered to speakers in the field, for example.

Kurath had no such remedy to his dialect dilemma, so he was reticent about naming dialects, generous with the evidence and careful about presenting balanced and representative quotation paragraphs in hope that, if everything were balanced and representative, evidence of regional Middle English would be, too. Yet Cassidy, working with modern records of speech and capable of generating more, felt he could achieve more for American regional English in a dictionary dedicated to it than Kurath had been able to with Middle English dialects in a dictionary of more general scope. Dealing in part with living language, he could fuse linguistic geography and historical lexicography into one enterprise.

Kurath, the leading linguistic geographer of his generation and editor of the MED might well have attempted this fusion himself; indeed, with hindsight, it seems remarkable he did not — he was an ambitious and confident scholar. But Kurath didn't have time to invent the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (LALME) — or, for that matter, the *Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* — as well as the *Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada* and the *Middle English Dictionary*, nor was such a venture in his area of interest or expertise — he was not a textual scholar. He mapped what he could learn about Middle English dialects as a means of importing information from outside the MED into it, but he decided that doing so raised speculation to a dangerous level, that is, to a level that would damage the value of the dictionary, as well as violate the integrity of the MED's data, mixing it with data from studies beyond the MED's control.

Cassidy no doubt observed Kurath's solution to the problem dialect posed to the MED with interest. In the end he improved on both Moore and Kurath by making his own synchronic index of American regional items, so that he could localize items, their forms and meanings, definitively by

¹⁶ Thus Philip Durkin's account in his HEL-LEX 3 conference plenary of the MED's altogether sound refusal to adjudicate whether one or another word's etymon is Latin or Anglo-French, when in fact no one can safely tell, and the etymology in question might, in fact, be mixed. Indeed, the "MED's etymologies are very concise, as is to be expected in a period dictionary. They do, however ... show a shift from the practice of OED1 in this particular area in giving dual etymologies much more frequently in cases where a mixed transmission may be possible" (Durkin 2002, 146).

¹⁷ This summarizes, in the sparsest possible manner, material from Kurath's compendious "Editor's Guide," issued in 1947 and annotated continuously as the MED sharpened its technique. The "Guide" is available in the MED archives (see n13).

means of the questionnaire, however murky the provenance and authority of evidence from printed sources. By the same method, he could then code the questionnaire responses so that his distorted maps came from within the data, so to speak, and were thus not a tool of extrinsic analysis but integral both to the dictionary's evidential foundation and entry-level representation of that evidence. In all of this, Cassidy proved Knott wrong, for not only was the research behind DARE manageable, but the modes of representing dialect, while involving a great deal of imagination and deft lexicographical technique, were far from presenting insuperable obstacles.

The MED took at least seventy-one years from start to finish, depending on what one counts as part of the project. Kurath started the dictionary on one set of editorial principles, but by the end, the MED's ultimate chief editor, Robert E. Lewis, had altered those principles significantly, especially as regards matters of dialect: "Kurath recognized that dialectal information was essential to an adequate description of Middle English, but he seldom used dialectal labels among the variant spellings and in the form sections of his part of the MED (A through F). In Kuhn's part (G through P), however, there was an increase in the number ... and in mine (Q through Z) a further larger increase, and, in addition ... we have tried in the later volumes to indicate the combination of the diachronic and the diatopic (e.g. "early SWM") whenever possible" (Lewis, Williams, and Miller 2007, 6). Kurath was reluctant to label, for all intents and purposes permanently, Middle English forms with speculative dialect attributions. Perhaps Lewis had recourse to better dialect research and could label more confidently; indeed, we would hope this would be the case — half a century or more had passed between Kurath's sources and Lewis' arrival at the MED.

The unexpected turn is that Lewis began to annotate entries with dialect judgments from LALME — what would Kurath think? On the one hand, as a linguistic geographer, he would naturally value LALME's conclusions; on the other, he would have resisted including them, so that, should any prove wrong, the MED would not be committed to the errors. LALME'S evidence is not the same as the MED's evidence, so the material is "inorganic." But so are all of the etymologies adopted on the advice of standard etymological dictionaries — MED editors surely looked into them, but they didn't write etymologies from scratch very often. Surely, Lewis looked into the LALME attributions, too, and then labeled forms with them when he was confident of them. This change of editorial direction, along with many others, cannot be taken lightly; but it shouldn't of itself be cause for alarm, either, because editorial principles and practices change during a monumental dictionary project. Lewis's changes were adventurous. Whether they prove valuable or problematic, the future will tell.¹⁸

Significantly, Cassidy had avoided all of the problems the MED had faced in DARE's ambitious yet careful design. He took advantage of the nature of his lexicon; he took the leap into a hybrid form of lexicography one might have expected of Kurath, in order to save himself from Kurath's woes; he exploited new technologies in order to analyze and represent dialect data with greater focus and assurance than ever before; and in the course of all of this he re-envisioned American English with scholarly precision for a wide audience, by developing new techniques of linguistic geography and historical lexicography. It is a legacy to celebrate.

Lately, the banner on its landing page announces the OED as "the definitive record of the English language." One understands the importance of establishing a brand and the value of doing so in a somewhat flamboyant way. Nevertheless, the claim is distorted, to say the least. For one thing, "language" here seems to mean something like that of the original OED definition, "The whole body of words and methods of combination of words used by a nation, people, or race," and while I view myself as a champion of words and lexicography in a post-structuralist age, the age of linguistics rather than philology, the equation of words and language seems rather benighted, even to me. The OED online is better, but not much, when it defines *language* as "the system of spoken or written communication, used by a particular country, people, community, etc., typically consisting of words used within a regular grammatical and syntactic structure." Many a linguist, one imagines, would see the definition as inside out.

But what the OED may mean by *language* in this case is a red herring: the really troublesome word is *definitive*, which, as the OED puts it, means "Having the character of finality as a product; determinate, definite, fixed, and final. Of an edition of a literary work, a textbook, etc.: authoritative;

¹⁸ This paragraph is appropriated from my review of the revised *Plan and Bibliography* (Adams 2008).

the most complete and authoritative to date.” The current OED is the most complete and authoritative OED to date, and it is arguably the most complete and authoritative general dictionary of English to date. The banner claim, however, is remarkably insensitive to scale: the OED is not the most complete and authoritative dictionary of slang, American regional English, nor even Middle English.

And, as I hope my argument entails, we do not want the OED as a lexicographical product to have “the character of finality.” That character is already often assumed by granting agencies and universities, and it disables new lexicography. We want that lexicography because it supplies our knowledge of period and regional English, not to mention slang and niche vocabularies, beyond the OED’s capacity. But we must also avoid hegemony of lexicographical technique, and the best way to spur technique is to let lexicographers take on hard problems and attempt to solve them in dictionaries of their own design.

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