

1. Introduction: The First Monolingual Dictionary in English

Robert Cawdrey's [Table Alphabeticall](#) holds a prominent place in the development of the dictionary in English; recognizing this, the original editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary* comment in their *Historical Introduction* that "To set Cawdrey's slim small volume of 1604 beside the completed *Oxford Dictionary* of 1933 is like placing the original acorn beside the oak that has grown out of it" (vi). To make even so humble a comparison is, perhaps, to exaggerate the lexicographical sophistication of English monolingual dictionaries at the time. Many were small glosses or lists of words, often specialized, which were defined briefly and usually by their synonyms. Cawdrey's *Table*, too, is a small dictionary by today's standards; the first edition contained only 2,543 headwords, and it grew in size with each of its three later editions (1609, 1613, 1617), ultimately to define 3,264 words. Yet Cawdrey's modest work of 1604 is the "first fully developed representative" of the monolingual English dictionary ([Schäfer 1989](#): 7).

As a work which depended upon many diverse sources and which is itself a source of dictionaries up to and including the *New Oxford English Dictionary*, Cawdrey's work is intriguing, but though it borrowed materials and methods from many previous glosses, word lists, and multilingual dictionaries, the *Table* reflects more than an amalgam of previous lexicographical accomplishment. As the largest dictionary of its type at the time, it is an achievement in itself. Within, Cawdrey presents his diversely gathered matter in a relatively standard manner and style, at once drawing from past and anticipating future developmental trends in Early Modern English lexicography. Specifically of interest in this study are the techniques by which he governs the work -- especially the style inherent in his lexicographical method -- for it is an important aspect of the *Table* and has the potential to yield further information about the relationships among the early monolingual dictionaries.

2. Cawdrey's Sources and their Incorporation

Jürgen Schäfer's computer-assisted study of Elizabethan lexicography worked towards revealing, among other things, that the early hard-word dictionary makers were "not fraudulent compilers but true pioneers in the field, worthy ancestors of Samuel Johnson and the *OED* editors" and that the roots of the Jacobean monolingual dictionary lay not solely in the Renaissance Latin-English dictionary, but in a process by which the "humble monolingual glossaries attached to many works of the 16th century [...] are finally emancipated into separate publications" ([Schäfer 1980](#): 37). Cawdrey's work reflects the influence of both the Latin-English dictionaries and the monolingual glosses, and the sources for his 1604 edition alone were both many and diverse. For material he looked to several Latin-English dictionaries,[[1](#)] a number of didactic texts,[[2](#)] and numerous glosses.[[3](#)] As well, he employed Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetoricke* (1533) to the extent that Cawdrey's introductory discussion of what constitutes "the plainest & best kinde of speech" (1604: A3v) is extracted almost directly from it.[[4](#)] Later editions of Cawdrey's *Table*, furthermore, looked to these works and beyond for additional material.

Not surprisingly, then, much of Cawdrey's material and many of his techniques are seen in his sources, as exemplification with familiar entries will make clear.[[5](#)] Cawdrey does rely heavily on the Latin-English dictionaries and Coote's *English Schoole-Maister* (1596) for his material -- [Starnes and Noyes](#) calculate that all but 17%-18% of all Cawdrey's hard words were taken from Coote or Thomas (18) -- and, to some degree, his method. From a brief look at the headword *aggravate* / *aggravo* in Thomas, Coote, and Cawdrey, as shown below, the similarities within each method of definition are evident.

Thomas' *Dictionarium*

Aggravo, [...] To make heavie: also to aggravate, to make more grievous; to loade or lade.

Cawdrey

Aggravate, to make more grievous and more heavie.

Coote's English Schoole-Maister

Aggravate make grievous.

Though Cawdrey's *aggravate* shows a heavier reliance on Thomas than Coote, for the definition captures descriptive elements from Thomas which are not in Coote, Cawdrey did borrow heavily from Coote, at times copying his entries *verbatim*, as in the word *abecedarie*, below, and at times adding to the definition of a word for clarification, as in the word *abbut*.

Coote

Abbut, to lie vnto.

Abecedarie, the order of the letters, or he that vseth them.

Cawdrey

Abbut, to lie vnto, or border vpon, as one lands end meets with another.

Abecedarie, the order of the Letters, or hee that vseth them.

In addition to being a foundation for the discussion of Cawdrey's indebtedness, these entries also demonstrate two trends in Cawdrey's adoption of the material of other works: contraction and expansion. In borrowings from more descriptive works, such as those by Rastell, Fulke, and Golding, Cawdrey must focus the definition. As seen below, he condenses Rastell's *acceptance* and, in defining the word *comet*, he adopts Fulke's synonymic phrase only. From Golding, Cawdrey borrows wholly in the case of *incest*, possibly because of the nature of the word, but he condenses his definition for the word *institute*.

Rastell's Exposition

Acceptance, is taking in good part, and as it were an agreeing unto some act done before [...]

Cawdrey

acceptance, an agreeing to some former act done before.

Fulke's Gallery

Of Comets or blasing Starres

A comete is an *Exhalation*, whote and drye, of great quantitie, fat and clammye [...]

Cawdrey

comet, A blasing starre

Golding's Exposition

Incest, unlawfull copulation of man and woman within the degrees of kindred or alyance forbidden by Gods law, whither it bee in mariage, or otherwyse.

Institute, too beegin, too go in hande with a thing, too ordeyn, too purpose, too appoynt, too make, too founde, too stablish, too decree, to set up a new, too bryng in a new.

Cawdrey

incest, unlawfull copulation of man and woman within the degrees of kindred, or alliance, forbidden by gods law, whether it be in marriage or otherwise.

institute, appoint, ordaine, begin or go in hand with.

In many cases, as well, Cawdrey added to the material of the definition. From A. M.'s medical gloss, Cawdrey preserved the more specialized meanings of the words, but expanded their definition by adding to

them a more general paraphrase.

A.M.'s Gloss

combine, reade heale
distended, read out of ioynthe
inoculated, read vnholed

Cawdrey

combine, heale, or couple together.
distended, stretched out, or out of ioynt.
inoculated, grafted, or vnholed.

Cawdrey's adherence to a technique which sees his borrowings from diverse sources somewhat regularized in the *Table* is also of importance, in addition to the source alteration in which this pattern of expansion and contraction is largely seen. Most borrowings are placed by Cawdrey within standard definitive structures which vary according to the type of word being defined. From Golding's definition of *institute*, above, Cawdrey gathers the synonymic infinitive verbs which Golding uses, but dispenses with their marker, the word *too*. As well, in Cawdrey's adoption of A. M.'s words, he removes part of A. M.'s lexical metalanguage, the imperative *read*. At times, but not wherever it might be considered necessary, he reduces headwords from his English sources to their lemma form; such is the case in his adoption of Martin's headword *adulterating*, an adjective or present participle of a lexical verb, which Cawdrey represents in its verbal infinitive form as well as the two synonyms which comprise its definition.

Martin's Explication

Adulterating, corrupting.

Cawdrey

adulterate, to counterfeit, or corrupt.

In borrowing from Bright, as below, Cawdrey does not reduce the headword to its lemma form, which would be the nominative singular, but instead normalizes *gestes* by its definition; Bright's definition, *Doe*, suggests that it could be a verb, but Cawdrey's normalization and elaboration make it clear that *gests* is a noun.

Bright's Characterie

Gestes, Doe

Cawdrey

gests, things done, or noble acts of princes.

Cawdrey's technique, thus, was one of compilation involving expansion and contraction in definitions, regularization (to some degree) of headwords and words in the definitions, and standardization of definition form. His sources are clearly reflected in his work but, for the most part, Cawdrey has put his imprint upon them,^[6] and the fact that one can see Cawdrey working towards set structures suggests that, concurrent with the necessity of expanding and contracting borrowed words, he was concerned with some degree of standardization in his entries.

Though "Cawdrey's concept of a dictionary differs from that of his immediate successors" ([Noyes 1943](#): 600-1), his use of external material shows that his work falls in line from his sources and exemplifies Schäfer's comment on the development of the monolingual dictionary in English, that its origin "is best understood as a gradual process and not as a sudden inspiration of Cawdrey's in 1604 resulting in the *Table Alphabetical*"; however, we must concede that the concept of Cawdrey's work "differs fundamentally both

from the spelling list and the bilingual dictionary" ([Schäfer 1989](#): 8-9). There is a significant element of originality in Cawdrey's work as well in both content and method[7] and, because of this, the *Table* represents more than the sum of its parts; but what is at the core of that representation? If there is an element which makes the *Table* strictly Cawdrey's own, aside from the entries he originated, it is found in the structures into which he shaped his source materials as well as his own additions. A stylistic analysis, then, is the starting-point for such an investigation.

3. Methodology and Tools

To assist in this study of Cawdrey's lexicographic style, electronic texts of Cawdrey's four editions were created and, thus, some words regarding the texts themselves and the methodology of the study are in order.[8] Douglas [Kibbee](#), in a discussion of the difficulties inherent in the study of historical dictionaries, has concluded that "computers are not only a means to avoid some of the mind-numbing aspects of the study of dictionaries; they are more importantly the tool to open new ways of viewing the text" (33). Jürgen [Schäfer](#) also had expressed similar positive sentiments in his discussion of the use of computers in lexicographical research, and he notes the integral part played by the computer in his *Early Modern English Lexicography* (1982, 1989). The computer is a tool that has an extraordinary capability to assist those interested in certain types of textual analysis; specifically, its aid in comparing materials, recognizing patterns, and manipulating data make it indispensable.

The electronic texts of Cawdrey's *Table* which have been made to facilitate computer access are tagged transcriptions with few editorial emendations. Changes, minimal as they are, primarily involve the modernization of some aspects of the Early Modern English writing system -- forms of *s*, *r*, ligatures, and brevigraphs -- to reflect current scholarly editorial procedures. Tags appear in a COCOA format and are, in matter and arrangement, like those adopted by the editors of the electronic texts of the bilingual dictionaries of Palsgrave and Cotgrave ([figure 1](#)).[9] Within all four texts, tags are deployed with the intention of rendering organizational and structural divisions as Cawdrey himself chose to make; a standard entry is represented as seen in [figure 2](#). From the four texts, a separate file was created containing the entries for all distinct headwords. This file has been parsed and lemmatized for the purpose of stylistic analysis; a typical entry appears as in [figure 3](#). [10]

In addition to the use of traditional scholarly methods, analysis of these texts has been carried out with the assistance of *TACT*, a collection of text-retrieval and analysis programs for use on IBM personal computers, as well as common text-editing, word-processing, database, and spreadsheet packages. Text-retrieval abilities afforded by programs such as *TACT* provide an entry into a text that is unavailable to the user of the manuscripts alone. Foremost, *TACT* has allowed me to *ask* questions of the text and analyze patterns therein that would be, otherwise, time-consuming to the point of their being impossible. In examining Cawdrey's lexicographical style, this assistance has been indispensable.

4. Cawdrey's Stylistic Structures

As is stated on the title page of the *Table Alphabeticall*, Cawdrey's interest was in defining "hard vsual English wordes" (1604: A1r). By defining hard words, Cawdrey meant to deal with "any kind of word, old or new -- even proper names, which might present difficulties in understanding" ([Schäfer 1970](#): 34), and not simply neologisms and inkhorn terms. In doing so, he defines almost exclusively *open-class*, or *content*, words[11] for his intended audience of "vnskilful persons", those who may not be able to understand some less commonly used words "which they shall heare or read in Scriptures, Sermons, or else where" (1609: A1r).

In his four editions, he provides in excess of 3,200 distinct definitions, covering more than 3,300 words.[12] Chiefly, Cawdrey's hard words are nouns; he provides 1,579 nominal definitions, including present participles which function as nouns. He also defines 826 adjectives, including past participles which function as adjectives, 795 lexical verbs, and 29 other words, which include 23 adverbs, four interjections, one preposition (*maugre*), and one pronoun (*whilke*) (figure 4).[13] Generally, his headwords are lemmatized; all but two percent (68) of all definitions follow a headword which is reduced to its lemma form, and these exceptions include 66 plural nouns, one ordinal noun, and one lexical verb in the first person singular.[14]

Cawdrey's definitions are also predominantly brief. In the 1604 edition, for example, three-quarters of definitions are made up of less than one short line of text, and some one-third are defined with three words or less. His most frequent method of definition is to provide a synonym or a number of synonyms, at times separated by a conjunction, an infinitive marker (to) and an infinitive verb, or a determiner (or adjective) followed by a noun. Of all his definitions, 1,171 words conform to these basic patterns.[15]

Nouns (645/1579)[16]

[det] n {[conj] [det] n} ...

cheualrie, knight-hood
reliques, the remainder
assay, proof, or a triall

Adjectives (310/826)

adj {[conj] adj} ...

fanaticke, madde
lither, idle, lazie
concise, briefe or short

Lexical Verbs (216/795)

[infm] le xv {[conj] [infm] le xv} ...

reforme, amend
argue, to reason
barter, to bargain or change

However, the remaining set of Cawdrey's definitions, some two-thirds of the total, are of a more complex style. In definitions of nouns, most common is a single synonym, occurring 245 times, and two single synonyms, occurring 145 times. Aside from the basic synonymic pattern of definition, he employs 607 unique repeating phrases which form two other common definition structures.[17] The first, which builds on the nominal-centred definitive method, employs adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions; these number 440.

{[det] [adj] [adv] [prep]} n {[adv] [conj] | prep] {det [det]} [adj] n [prep]} ...

maiestie, the stately port and honourable renoun of any
nadir, the point directly vnder us opposite to the Zenith

In the second, a pattern which is repeated 28 times, Cawdrey employs verbal phrases to define nouns.[18]

[LVP] NP { {[PVP] [LVP]} | MVP} [NP] ...

aduouision, patronage, or power to present, or giue a liuing
ingine, an instrument to doe anything with

In defining verbs, Cawdrey employs 355 distinct repeating phrases, and the most frequent entries include a single synonymic lexical verb (83) or two of them (34). In addition to these simple definitions, Cawdrey employs two other patterns. The first, occurring 148 times, is strictly verbal and resembles synonymical definition except that it includes adverbs and prepositions.

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[infm] le xv {[adv] [prep]} {[conj] [infm] le xv [adv] [prep]} ...
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congeale, to harden, or ware hard, or freeze together

abandon, cast away, or yeelde vp, to leaue or forsake

The second, repeated 136 times, includes adjectives and simple nominal phrases.

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[infm] le xv {[adv][prep]} {[adj] {[conj] adj} [NP]} {[conj] [infm] le xv  
[adv][prep]} ...
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conclude, make an end

epitomise, to make an epitome, or to bring a book into a lesser volume

Cawdrey defines his adjectives with a total of 378 distinctly different repeating lexical sequences, and his most common definition consists of a single synonym (95) or two synonyms (91). His method of definition is best described as composing two distinct groups. The first has its basis in the synonymic method but introduces adverbs (34), noun phrases (114), and verb phrases (17) to add further information.

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[adv] adj {[conj] [adv] adj} ...
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instable, inconstant, not steddie

energeticall, very forcible and strong

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[det] adj {[conj] [adv] adj} [NP] ...
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obseruant, dutifull, full of diligent seruice

distraught, out of his wits

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[det] adj {PVP | LVP} {[conj] [adv] adj} [NP] ...
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conspicuous, easie to be seene, excellent

vnweldie, not able to move, lumpish

The second group, which is much less frequent (33), are not so obviously synonymical; rather, they are centred upon phrases beginning with relational pronouns, such as *that* or *that which*; see below:

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prnrel [prnrel] [MVP | LVP] {NP | {[PVP | LVP] [adj] [conj] [adj] [prep]}} ...
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iudicious, that hath a good iudgement or vnderstanding

preparatiue, that which maketh fit or prepareth

5. Conclusion: Assessing the Structures

The majority of Cawdrey's definitions, then, simple and complex alike, adhere to relatively set structures following the syntactic category of their headword. Much as might be expected, nouns are generally defined by one or more noun phrases, and at times with a verb phrase. Definitions of verbs most commonly contain a

series of verb phrases, sometimes joined with a preposition and noun phrase. Adjectives are defined either by synonym(s) or with noun and verb phrases.

These structures are the measurable result of Cawdrey's compilation process in the *Table* -- of his expansion, contraction, regularization, and standardization -- and represent the basic elements of Cawdrey's style of definition. His use of these patterns, I believe, will distinguish him stylistically from other early modern English lexicographers; stylistic similarities in patterns of definition among early lexicographers such as Cawdrey, moreover, will illuminate links among them.

Because Cawdrey's *Table Alphabeticall* is situated in such a transitional location in the development of early modern English lexicography, the establishment of his style of definition promises to lead to further knowledge of the relationships among the early monolingual dictionaries. However, in an area of research which, by necessity, relies primarily upon comparative study, my study currently lacks the context which it ultimately requires. As well, a method of notation which fully reflects the stylistic structure of Cawdrey's entries, and which will allow comparatively unrestrictive stylistic comparison among differing texts, is needed. But, with the availability of additional electronic texts of other early Modern English monolingual dictionaries, and with further work towards the representation of stylistic information in such works, this context shall be found and, at that time, explored.

Notes

[1] These include Thomas Cooper's *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae* (first edition, 1565) and Thomas Thomas's *Dictionarium Linguae Latinae et Anglicanae* (first edition, 1587). See [Starnes](#) (1937: 22-3); [Schäfer](#) acknowledges the influence of these sources but refutes previously held assumptions about their importance (1989: 2).

[2] These include Richard Mulcaster's *Elementarie* (1582), Edmund Coote's *English Schoole-Maister* (1596), Peter Bale's *The Writing Schoolmaster* (1590), Timothy Bright's *Characterie* (1588), and William Fulke's *Goodly Gallery ... of Meteors* (1571).

[3] These include Arthur Golding's *An exposition of certein woords*, which was attached to Neil Hemmingsen's *A Postill, or Exposition of the Gospels* (1569), John Rastell's legal work, *An Exposition of Certaine Difficult and Obscure Wordes ... of the Lawes of this Realme* (1598), A. M.'s glossary to his translation of Gaebelkhover's *Artzneybuch* (1599), Gregory Martin's *Explication of Certaine Wordes* in William Fulke's reprinting of the Rheims' *New Testament* (1600), and Thomas Speght's glossary, entitled *The old and obscure words of Chaucer, explained*, to his edition of *The Works of ... Geffrey Chaucer* (1600). For a listing of all his sources, refer to [Schäfer](#) (1970, 1980, 1982, 1989), [Riddell](#) (1974, 1983), [Starnes](#), and [Starnes and Noyes](#).

[4] Cawdrey retains this passage in his *Introduction* for all four editions; see [Noyes](#) (600).

[5] Examples used here for illustration have been previously cited by [Starnes](#) (22), [Noyes](#) (603), [Starnes and Noyes](#) (17), [Riddell](#) (1974: 119-22, 1983: 224), and [Schäfer](#) (1970: 34), among others, to show Cawdrey's indebtedness to previously existing works. It is not my purpose here to prove these links but rather to show a technique which governs Cawdrey's adoption of materials.

[6] Referring to Cawdrey's use of Speght's glossary in particular -- thoughts which are equally applicable to much of Cawdrey's use of other sources -- [Schäfer](#) has commented that "Cawdrey's practice was by no means mechanical" (1982: 189).

[7] [Schäfer](#) notes that "A careful examination of the early hard word dictionaries reveals, furthermore, that they contain many entries which could never have been gleaned from any spelling list or Latin-English dictionary of the sixteenth century" (1989: 3-4).

[8] See *Robert Cawdrey's A Table Alphabeticall (1604)*, ed. R. Siemens, in the [Renaissance Electronic Texts](#) series (Toronto: Centre for Computing in the Humanities, 1995), reprinted in *TACT, Textual Analysis Computing Tools*, ed. I. Lancashire et al. (New York: Modern Language Association, forthcoming). The resources of the 1604 text can also be accessed via the [Early Modern English Dictionaries Database](#) (ed. Ian Lancashire, 1996). The complete group of texts is available through the Oxford Text Archive (OTA A-1715-A). [Note updated May 1996]

[9] See [Lancashire](#) for a discussion of the Cotgrave and Palsgrave tagging grammar (73-81). Tags in the electronic texts of Cawdrey are of a structure such that they could be converted to TEI-SGML tags by reversing the conversion process described by Lancashire (85-6).

[10] Parsing and lemmatizing were completed with the assistance of *TACT's* preprocessing programs *PreProc*, *MakeDct*, *TagText*, and *SatDct*. *TACT* was developed by the *TACT Group*, the University of Toronto, and is [distributed on-line](#). Please refer to my "Lemmatization and Parsing with *TACT* Preprocessing Programs" ([CH Working Papers, A.1 \[1996\]](#)) for details regarding the lemmatization procedure and the parsing grammar. [Note updated May 1996]

[11] *Open-class* words contrast with *closed-class*, or *grammatical*, words such as pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and other words which denote function more than content in language.

[12] Synonymic headwords, which share common definitions, have only been counted once. Though, as Schäfer notes, the last edition has 3,264 headwords, Cawdrey had removed as well as added words throughout the four editions. All unique headwords and their definitions have been analyzed here.

[13] This breakdown is of a similar scale to that in his 1604 edition: nouns (49.6%), lexical verbs (25.1%), adjectives (24.6%), and other words (0.7%).

[14] Present- and past-participles of lexical verbs are typically defined by Cawdrey as nouns and adjectives, respectively.

[15] In these representations and those following, those parts of speech with no delimiters always appear in that position, those delimited by [] are optional, those delimited by { } are optional and appear as a group, and those separated by a vertical bar | are mutually exclusive. Punctuation, which though predominantly regular is at times inconsistent, has not been accounted for in this study.

[16] In this representation, 645 represents the *minimum* number of conforming patterns; 1579 is the total possible number, in this case the total number of nouns. This representation will be used throughout.

[17] To track repetitions, *TACT's* program *Collgen*, which notes exact repeating phrases, was used. This reduced the data such that structures could be mapped more easily.

[18] The legend to the above representation, and those following, is as below:

Noun Phrase

NP

{[adv] [prep] [conj] [det] [adj] n [prep] [adv]}

Lexical Verb Phrase

LVP

{[conj] [infm] lexv}

Primary Verb Phrase PVP

{[conj] [infm] priv}

Modal Verb Phrase MVP

{[conj] [infm] modv}

For purposes of simplification, any phrase centred on the noun is treated as a Noun Phrase.

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