Sir Thomas Elyot as Lexicographer. Gabriele Stein.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. viii + 440 pp. $135.

Gabriele Stein's latest book in a distinguished career devoted to historical lexicography, like her previous study of John Palsgrave (1997), establishes the existence of what I neologistically call lexicature, or lexical literature. In scientific scholarship over the past four decades, Stein has traced a tradition of substantial early modern English dictionaries that relegates Robert Cawdrey's *Table Alphabetical* (1604), often cited as the first English dictionary, to a supporting role in the history of English. Stein describes early modern English lexicographers as authors, specifically the Henrician diplomat and author of *The Governor* (1531), Sir Thomas Elyot. By assimilating a "wealth of cultural and linguistic knowledge," Elyot "strikingly evoke[s] the life and society of the time" (vi). He writes not only a "language dictionary but also an encyclopedia" (9) with 27,000 headings in 1538 and 31,700 in 1542. The title of his second edition — *Bibliotheca Eliotae: Eliots Librarie* (1542) — shows that Elyot, whose entries cite 145 authors, writes as did lexicographer Samuel Johnson two centuries later. Elyot sketches "people, events, countries, and cities, and . . . legendary beings, beliefs, and customs" (347) in ways that are both thoughtful and amusing, like the word entry for "Proletarii": "amonge the Romains were they whiche for pouerties were not able to goo to the warres: and therfore they were lefte at home to gette chyldderne" (99). He educates readers in everyday language from the perspective of a personal eyewitness to history, past and present.

Stein's book has ten chapters. After the introduction, chapter 2, "Compilation, Word Selection, and Presentation," analyzes Elyot's lexicographic principles in choosing, authenticating, and organizing headwords, handling homographs, treating word formation, assigning grammatical roles, and using sources. Chapter 3, "Elyot and His Readers," characterizes the "user-friendly" impact of his personable direct discourse. "Early Records of Regional Variation" (chapter 4) reveals how conscious Elyot was of dialectal forms from the north and midland and western shires. The next chapter, "Linking Lemma and Gloss," employs the late Brian Merrilees's "splendidly developed" theoretical framework for medieval Latin and French dictionaries (125) as a foundation to outline Elyot's advancing use of juxtaposition, punctuation, fonts, *wh* links, verbal metalanguage (in English, not Latin), and usage information. The sixth chapter, "Authorial Reference Points," analyzes Elyot's use of pronouns as a valuable resource for historical grammarians.

Stein next turns to semantics, in "Translating and Explaining Headwords: Elyot's Predecessors." She gives astute, concise descriptions of how late medieval Latin and English dictionaries and John Palsgrave's English-French *Lesclarcissement* (1530) deal with the postlemmatic segment. This prepares for "Elyot's Practice," chapter 8. Elyot avoids the prelemmatic and postlemmatic expansions described by Merrilees and explicates word meaning easily with colloquial linking elements, paraphrases, and formulas such as "genus + *called* + translation equivalent" (292). Chapter 9 summarizes "Elyot's Achievement as a Lexicographer" and his success in neologizing. Stein compares Elyot's vocabulary to that of the *OED* online and discovers no fewer than 579 of his "contributions to the English lexicon," 55 percent more than *OED* now recognizes, having attributed many of Elyot's innovations to later lexicographers like Richard Huloet (382). Her reassessment moves Elyot from seventh to fourth in the *OED* online list of early modern English lexicographers, ranked by contribution to English (308, 344). Stein's final chapter, "Elyot's Dictionary: Impact and Influence," explains how subsequent Latin-English and vernacular lexicographers up to Thomas Thomas, John Florio, and John Minsheu owe headwords and stylistic devices to Elyot.

Elyot innovates in both style and substance. He employs lemmatized headwords that subsume lexical variants and multiple senses (258). Stein speculates that the "classical definition style" influenced him: a logical (not lexical) definition, citing the genus of a thing and its differentiae. Lemmas are abstractions that today stand for concepts, but Elyot's lemmas denote generic entities in the world. His bilingual dictionary can also be viewed as an English lexicon. Though sorted alphabetically by Latin headword, Elyot's word entries consist of English glosses that translate Latin headwords on the left and are themselves explicated by English paraphrases on the right (261). *Sir Thomas Elyot as Lexicographer* is field-defining scholarship from a progenitor of early modern English historical lexicography. With an engaging joy in exploring the lexical mind, Gabriele Stein rewrites the history of English words in Henrician England.

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