LATE MODERN ENGLISH GLOSSARIES AS TOOLS OF DEFINITION AND CODIFICATION

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Abstract

This contribution aims to discuss instances of glossaries appended to literary and non-literary works in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in order to investigate their function as more or less neutral sources of information on the meaning of lemmas. While on the surface such glossaries appear to be relatively innocent lists illustrating, or indeed translating, lexical items occurring in a different variety, such as we see in Scottish literary texts by Allan Ramsay or Robert Burns, in fact they reinforce the idea of the same variety being obscure, old-fashioned, and therefore inappropriate for daily usage. In other contexts, instead, glossaries laid the basis for the development of dictionaries of specialized discourse. In both cases glossaries appear to have been valuable tools for language codification, providing (often indirect) guidance to language users, while offering clarification on the semantic value of individual items.

Key words: Late Modern English; lexicography; specialized vocabulary; literary discourse.

Resumen

Esta contribución tiene como objetivo discutir los casos de glosarios adjuntos a las obras literarias y no literarias de los siglos xviii y xix, con el fin de investigar su función como fuentes más o menos neutras de información sobre el significado de los lemas. Mientras que en apariencia tales glosarios parecen ser listas relativamente inocentes, que pretenden traducir las palabras que ocurren en una variedad diferente, tal como lo vemos en los textos literarios escoceses de Allan Ramsay o Robert Burns, de hecho refuerzan la idea de que dicha variedad sea oscura, pasada de moda, y por lo tanto inadecuada para el uso diario. En otros textos, en cambio, los glosarios sentaron las bases para el desarrollo de los diccionarios de discurso especializado. En ambos casos los glosarios parecen haber sido útiles para la codificación del lenguaje, ofreciendo orientación (en ocasiones de forma indirecta) a los usuarios de la lengua, al tiempo que ofrecen una aclaración sobre el valor semántico de cada palabra en particular.

Palabras clave: Late Modern English; lexicografía; vocabulario especializado; discurso literario.

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1. INTRODUCTION: GLOSSARIES VS. PROSCRIPTION LISTS

For the *Oxford English Dictionary* (henceforth OED), a *glossary* (n.[1]) is "**a.** A collection of glosses; a list with explanations of abstruse, antiquated, dialectal, or technical terms; a partial dictionary". The quotations provided to illustrate usage range from the late fourteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, and it is in the late seventeenth century (i.e., 1696) that the contemporary meaning begins to be recorded:

> *a*1380 *S. Paula* 36 in Horstm. *Altengl. Leg.* (1878) 8 As seiþ þe bok, iclept Glosarie.
> 1483 Caxton tr. J. de Voragine *Golden Legende* f. 379^{v}/1, It is sayd in the glosarye that clemente is sayd rightwys, swete rype, and meke.
> 1610 P. Holland tr. W. Camden *Brit.* i. 364 Whence it is that an Old Glossary interpreteth *Alpes Italie*, The Woulds of Italie.
> 1696 *Philos. Trans. 1695–7* (Royal Soc.) 19 264 The Glossary, at the end, is not only an Account of Words and Phrases, but also an explication of ancient Customs, Laws, and Manners.
> 1785 W. Cowper *Needless Alarm* 70 He...needs no glossary to set him right.
> 1797 W. Turton (*title*) A Medical Glossary.
> 1894 J. T. Fowler in St. Adamnan *Vita S. Columbae* Pref. 8 A glossary is appended. *fig.*
> 1839 Dickens *Nicholas Nickleby* iii. 15 The expression of a man's face is commonly a help to his thoughts, or glossary on his speech.
> 1859 I. Taylor *Logic in Theol.* 49 Having no participation of the elements of the animal and moral nature, it would want the glossary of mundane life.

Leaving aside the philological meaning of "collection of glosses", the definition of a glossary as "a list with explanations of abstruse, antiquated, dialectal, or technical terms" may bear some qualification. The vocabulary employed in such a definition immediately characterizes the variety to which the glossary refers, be it geographically-, historically-, or diatypically-marked, as distant from ordinary usage. If an item is glossed, i.e. –in most cases– translated, rather than illustrated, it is immediately labelled as an element beyond the competence of readers, even at the receptive level; it is distanced in place, time, and/or social context, and attributed traits of quaintness, when not distinct inappropriateness for everyday usage.

Where geographical varieties are concerned, glossaries may be seen to complement lists of proscribed items, such as those that circulated in Britain throughout Late Modern times, when awareness of differences between varieties concerned both accent and vocabulary. Smollett, for instance, thus commented on Home's *Experiments on Bleaching*:

> The language in some places is a little uncouth. – We meet with some *Scottish* words and measures, which an *English* reader will be at a loss to understand. Such as *tramp* for treading under foot, *lint* for flax, *dreeper* for a dripping-stand, *bittling* for a beetling, *mutchkin* for a pint, *chopin* for a quart, *Scots pint* for two quarts, *Scots Gallon* for sixteen quarts, etc. (*The Critical Review* 1: 114, in Basker 87)

James Beattie's *Scoticisms, arranged in Alphabetical Order, designed to correct Improprieties of Speech and Writing* (1779, republished 1787), though prescriptive in its aim, was also descriptive in offering one of the earliest distinctions between overt and covert Scotticisms (Dossena, *Scotticisms* 61), but lists of proscribed Scotticisms, provincialisms, and vulgarisms continued to be drawn up well into the twentieth century. Among such lists, the one compiled by David Hume is both well-known and perhaps surprising, given its author's importance as a philosopher; Hume's list of Scotticisms to be avoided, apparently meant for private use only (Rogers 58), appeared in some copies of the 1752 edition of his *Political Discourses*, then was reprinted in the *Scots Magazine* in 1760. It comprised about 100 items, apparently listed in random order: 33 verbs, 18 nouns and noun phrases, 14 prepositions and prepositional phrases, 12 adverbs and adverbial phrases, 12 adjectives and adjectival phrases, 4 pronouns, 1 conjunction and 1 idiom, together with notes on word order and modality, particularly on the notorious usage of *shall* and *will* with first-person subjects – see Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Arnovick.

On the other hand, James Adams (154) listed Scots lexical items, such as "*blate*, bashful; *bonny*, more than simply good; *brae*, declivity; [...] *ingle*, fire-place;" and many more, whose adoption into English he recommended on account of their semantic efficacy (Dossena *Scotticisms* 88-89). A more ambivalent attitude was displayed by James Boswell, who began to draw up a dictionary of Scots nearly half a century before John Jamieson's lexicographic landmark, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, of 1818 (see Rennie *Jamieson's Dictionary*). Despite his attempts to "improve" his diction, Boswell had also written "Proposals for a periodical paper in the Scots dialect", *The Sutiman* (see Pottle, Abbott & Pottle 106). As for the envisaged dictionary of Scots forms, the idea of which had been under consideration since 1764,[1] it had actually been encouraged by Samuel Johnson, but the project was never completed, and indeed the manuscript was untraced for nearly two centuries (see Dossena *Scotticisms* 73 fn. 37 and Rennie *Jamieson's Dictionary* and "Boswell's Scottish Dictionary").

The attitudes with which these lists were compiled are important in many respects, not least because such lists bear witness to stages of language change, when attitudes and perceptions had an impact on the viability of varieties, and could commend or discourage usage, depending on the prestige or stigma attached to phonological features, lexis and/or morpho-syntactic aspects. In Late Modern times Scots –and indeed all 'provincial' varieties– could be perceived as obsolete, and therefore inappropriate for current usage, but at the same time these varieties appeared to be worthy of preservation on account of their antiquity. In the next sections I will attempt to outline some of the ways in which glossaries functioned as tools for the preservation of lexical items (especially when appended to literary texts), the promotion of new vocabulary (in the case of specialized discourse), and the codification of usage in both cases.

[1] The project is outlined in Boswell's Journal entry for 24th February 1764: "I am writing a dictionary myself! [...]. It is a Scots dictionary. [...]. We have not a single Scots dictionary. Really, that is amazing" (Pottle 103-104).

2. GLOSSARIES OF GEO-HISTORICAL VARIETIES

The strain between the search for propriety and the wish to preserve antiquity was pervasive in many Late Modern works. Among the authors, printers, and publishers who paid specific attention to these issues, Allan Ramsay (1685-1758) is perhaps emblematic, as his works enhanced the dignity of Scots as a contemporary literary language, but may also have crystallized its image as a language for bucolic expression. In the preface to his *Poems* (first published in 1721), Ramsay wrote:

> The *Scotticisms*, which perhaps may offend some over-nice Ear, give new Life and Grace to the Poetry, and become their Place as well as the *Doric* dialect of *Theocritus*, so much admired by the best Judges.

However, the author provided a glossary, possibly also relying on the one that in 1710 Thomas Ruddiman had appended to Gavin Douglas's *Aeneid*. Similarly, a glossary featured in the collection of proverbs that Ramsay published in 1737, in which the last five pages were devoted to the "Explanation of the Words less frequent amongst our Gentry than the Commons": a sociolinguistic observation that shows awareness both of variation in usage and of different expectations on the part of potential readers.

Readers' expectations were perhaps also the reason why glossaries in the sense of lists of "provincial items in need of an explanation" were often published alongside both proverbs and notes on local 'popular' superstitions: language, folklore, and "pithy" forms of expression were presented to audiences presumed to consist of outsiders for whom lists of "quaint" lexical items, idioms, traditions, and supposedly uncanny events could elicit curiosity and provide entertainment. For instance, Francis Grose's *A Provincial Glossary, with a Collection of Local Proverbs and Popular Superstitions* (1787) comprised items like the following, which occur in the glossary and in the section on superstitions respectively:

> *Hag*, or *Haggus*, the belly. N.
> *Hagester*, a magpie. Kent.
> *Haggage*, a slattern. Exm.
> *Haggenhag*, mutton or beef baked or boiled in pie-crust. Corn.
> *Haggis*, or *Haggass*, the entrails of a sheep, minced with oatmeal, and boiled in the stomach or paunch of the animal. Northumb. and Scots.
> [...]
> Children are deemed lucky to a ship; their innocence being, by the sailors, supposed a protection.
> It is lucky to put on a stocking the wrong side outwards: changing it, alters the luck.
> When a person goes out to transact any important business, it is lucky to throw an old shoe after him. [...]
> It is unlucky to walk under a ladder; it may prevent your being married that year.

Other works, such as those currently available in the *Salamanca Corpus*, followed similar patterns, often focusing on specific counties or areas: for instance, in 1887 Walter Rye discussed "superstitions, folklore and dialect" in *A History of Norfolk*, while in 1900 Jabez Good's *A Glossary or Collection of Words, Phrases, Place Names, Superstitions, & c., Current in Lincolnshire* appeared.

As a matter of fact, collections of proverbs were popular throughout the nineteenth century, not least on account of the moral guidance that such dicta often provided, or were made to provide (see Dossena, "Sense, Shortness and Salt"). In such collections editors highlighted, sometimes implicitly, the presumed difficulty of original forms –for instance, the title pages of the collections published by Alexander Hislop (1862) and Andrew Cheviot (1896) stressed the presence of "notes and parallel phrases" (Cheviot) and "explanatory and illustrative notes and a glossary" (Hislop). Indeed, Hislop described his fourteen-page glossary as "simple but comprehensive [...] containing and explaining the meaning of the Scottish words to be found in the book" (xi). The glossary, however, provided translations, explanations, and English equivalents even of lexical items that were only different from the phonological point of view– see for instance the following cases (Hislop 367):

> *Wi'*, with. [...]
> *Window-bole*, "the part of a cottage-window that is filled by a wooden blind, which may occasionally be opened."
> *Windlin*, a bottle of straw or hay.
> *Wink*, an instant, a twinkling.
> *Windlestrae*, a stalk of ryegrass.
> *Winna*, will not. [...]
> *Woo*, wool.
> *Woodie*, diminutive of wood.
> *Worry*, to strangle, to suffocate.
> *Wow*, the cry of a cat.
> *Wrang*, wrong, injury, hurt.

Still in relation to literary texts, the case of Robert Burns's works cannot be ignored on account of their huge popularity. The poet, famously dubbed the 'heaven-taught ploughman' by Henry Mackenzie, was far from the uneducated peasant he was sometimes made out to be, though of course he owed much to his own self-education. His command of English was remarkable, and yet his most successful works were written in a variety that was presented as outlandish and therefore in need of glosses. James Currie, who prepared the first collected edition of Burns' works (published in Liverpool in 1800) as a charity task on behalf of the poet's family, commented: "The greater part of his earlier poems are written in the dialect of his country, which is obscure, if not unintelligible to Englishmen" (Currie lxxix).

Also an unsigned notice in a 1787 issue of the *Critical Review* said: "It is to be regretted, that the Scottish dialect, in which these poems are written, must obscure the native beauties with which they appear to abound, and renders the sense often unintelligible to an English reader" (Low 80). The comment was to

be echoed by other critics, for whom his "uncouth dialect" was a serious obstacle to the appreciation of the poems – see Low (1974/1995). Indeed, Mackenzie (278) had stressed the need for a glossary, disruptive though its use might be for the reading experience: "Even in Scotland, the provincial dialect which Ramsay and he [Burns] have used is now read with a difficulty which greatly damps the pleasure of the reader: in England it cannot be read at all, without such a constant reference to a glossary, as nearly to destroy that pleasure."

The relationship between geographically-marked usage and older stages of the language was also emphasized in John Cuthbertson's *Complete Glossary to the Poetry and Prose of Robert Burns. With Upwards of Three Thousand Illustrations from English Authors*. This was an attempt to show that many lexical items believed to be difficult were in fact used by English authors at other points in the history of literature, and the book provided explanations meant to associate individual items with the lore of other parts of the country – see for instance the entry for *bannock*:

> *Bannock*. Flat, round, soft cake. As Jamieson has pointed out, a *bannock* differs from a cake principally in not being toasted before the fire as well as on it–
>
> A *bannock* is also much thicker than a cake or scone.
>
> *Bannock*, an oat-cake tempered in water and baked under the embers. *Bailey, Ray, and Grose*.
>
> These definitions, Scotch and English, speak only of bannocks made of oatmeal, whereas, in Scotland at least, they were often made of cheaper material, as witness the song,
>
> Bannocks o' bear meal,
> Bannocks o' barley !
>
> Indeed, when bannocks were in common use, oat-meal was considered too valuable to form more than a small part – parritch always excepted – of the food of a cottar's or even of a farmer's house This is well brought out in an incident in the life of Burns's mother, related by Chambers. When a child, "Agnes Brown was sent to live with her mother's mother. When this old person was more than ordinarily pleased with her grand-daughter's doings at her wheel, she gave her, as her *ten-hours*, or lunch, a piece of brown bread, with a piece of white as *kitchen* to it, both being only varieties of oat-meal cake."
>
> Now, I believe the brown bread was *mashlum*, a cheaper kind of bread, oat-meal being always, till recently, called *white* meal, and long after Agnes Brown's useful days it was customary to reward deserving youngsters with a piece of oat-cake along with the *mashlum scone*, not as kitchen, but as a *bonne bouche*.
>
> In Ireland they (fairies) frequently lay *bannocks* in the way of travellers. *Grose*.
>
> The butter, the cheese, and the *bannocks*,
> Dissolved like snaw in a fresh. – *The Northumberland Garland, Ritson*.

As we saw above, glossaries had long been in existence for English dialects too –the *Salamanca Corpus* lists glossaries concerning Northern, Southern, West and East Midlands varieties of English dating from the seventeenth century to

1950. One of the earliest specimens is the anonymous "clavis" (i.e., key) to *A Yorkshire Dialogue between Will a Wally, and his Wife Pegg, & her Brother Roger, their Son Hobb, their Daughter Tib, their Neece Nan, & their Landlord* (Ruano-García 138-139). These lists, however, are not meant to be actual lexicographic tools, such as John Ray's *Collection of English Words Not Generally Used* (1674). Rather, they are typically meant to illustrate "peculiar" or "provincial words" and "vulgarisms" pertaining to different areas– for instance, William Humphrey Marshall published *Provincialisms of East Norfolk* (1787), *of East Yorkshire* (1788), *of the Midland Station* (1790), *of West Devonshire* (1796) and *of the Vale of Glocester* (1797). In addition, works like the "clavis" supplemented humorous dialogues in which dialect was a comic tool, such in the case of *Tim Bobbin's Tummus and Meary* (1850), written in the dialect of South Lancashire and one of the best-known examples of dialect literature meant for entertainment.[2]

At the turn of the twentieth century stress was still placed on the 'rustic' quality of speech found in provincial areas, and particularly as witnessed in the language of older speakers. Among these, the collections presented by James Wilson (4) meant to illustrate "the homely pithy speech of the village folk" with vocabulary lists, notes on grammar and phonology, riddles, rhymes and songs. Also, in *Lowland Scotch as Spoken in the Lower Strathearn District of Perthshire* (1915), *The Dialect of Robert Burns as Spoken in Central Ayrshire* (1923) and in *The Dialects of Central Scotland* (1926), Wilson adopted a phonetic spelling to represent the realisation of different items, as in "Dhe neerur dhe kirk, dhe fawrur fay grais. The nearer the church, the farther from grace" (*The Dialect of Robert Burns,* 92), so as to facilitate his readers' reconstruction of the pronunciation, which might differ from theirs.

As for the idea of antiquity, or in any case an association of the items in the glossary with a lost age, this was sometimes made explicit in the titles of the collections: for instance, William Henry Long's *Dictionary of the Isle of Wight Dialect* (1886) also included "provincialisms used in the island, [...] the Christmas Boy's play, an Isle of Wight "Hooam Harvest", and songs sung by the peasantry; forming a treasury of insular manners and customs of fifty years ago". The language of 'provincial' expression, popular culture, and the past were thus blended into a unique image of quaintness and preciousness – it may not be accidental that Long's collection was indeed called "a treasury". Nor was it just 'provincial' idioms that attracted this kind of attention: the link between antiquity and literature was highlighted also in glossaries concerning Elizabethan works – among these, Robert Nares's *Glossary* (1822) was presented as a *Collection of words, phrases, names, and allusions to customs, proverbs, etc., which have been thought to require illustration, in the words of English authors, particularly Shakespeare, and his contemporaries*.

[2] On the use of Scots for humorous purposes in Late Modern local papers, see Donaldson.

3. GLOSSARIES OF SPECIALIZED VOCABULARY

Late Modern times also took an interest in older registers concerning specific professional areas: in 1837, for instance, James Raine published a glossary of the 14th century *Charters of Endowment, Inventories and Account Rolls of the Priory of Finchale*. This attention, however, had very deep roots: already in 1597 (1641), in Edinburgh, Sir John Skene had compiled his *De verborum significatione, the exposition of the termes and difficill words conteined in the foure buikes of Regiam majestatem and vthers in the actes of parliament*, a glossary of legal terms pertaining to the Scottish legal system, to which the OED owes as many as 153 quotations. Similarly, the Enlightenment promoted the circulation of numerous specialized dictionaries, such as those listed by Rousseau (315-316, fn. 77) in relation to maths, geography, military terms, and mining. At the time of the Industrial Revolution, such works appealed both to specialists and to non-specialists who appreciated innovation, and this attention to novelty is witnessed in the OED's interest in specialized vocabulary; the striking number of new lexical items or meanings recorded throughout the nineteenth century and, more specifically, in its second half is a clear indication that the world was changing, and –predictably– so was language (Dossena, "Late Modern English"). In addition, also in these cases the connection between specialized lexicon and both social and geographical variation featured quite prominently: for example, a flyer published by the National Coal Mining Museum for England in Wakefield states:

> Not only does mining have, like any other industry, numbers of technical words or jargon, but also different dialects in different regions. A person who hauled the wagons or tubs might be known as a *waggoner* in one part of the country, a *hurrier* in Yorkshire, a *drawer* in Lancashire, a *putter* in Northumberland or a *haulage-man* in Scotland!
> The language that a miner would use in the pit was usually confined to the pit, and he would use words there that he would not use at home. The use of a different language in the mines emphasized and strengthened the brotherhood which existed amongst miners.
> (https://www.ncm.org.uk/)

Increasing awareness of variation resulted in increasing attention to language. In addition, the discoveries, explorations, and innovations that occurred throughout Late Modern times in life sciences, physical sciences, maths, medicine, and also in the arts could not but have a great impact on vocabulary. As shown elsewhere (Dossena, "Dispenseis"), many new items or meanings first occurred in dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and lexicons – among these, the *New Sydenham Society's Lexicon of Medicine and the Allied Sciences* (1879-1899) would contribute material to the OED for a total of 2,375 quotations, 482 of which provided first evidence of a word, such as *cholecyst*, *hypothermia* and *hyperthermia*, and 1002 provided first evidence of a particular meaning, such as in the case of *avalanche theory*, in the sense that "nervous influence gathers force as it descends", or *knee reflex* meaning *knee-jerk*.

In addition, many OED quotations were derived from manuals and introductory texts, i.e. genres meant to disseminate knowledge among both learners and interested readers, according to the ideology of (self-)improvement that was so pervasive in Victorian times (see Secord). Among these, we find Lindley and Moore's *The Treasury of Botany. A Popular Dictionary of the Vegetable Kingdom* (1866), but also Alexander Macaulay's *Dictionary of Medicine Designed for Popular Use* (1845, 8th edn), William Audsley's *Popular Dictionary of Architecture and the Allied Arts* (1879, 2nd edn), and Edwin Lankester's *Haydn's Dictionary of Popular Medicine and Hygiene; Comprising All Possible Self-aids in Accidents and Disease* (1880).

Such glossaries, lexicons, or popular dictionaries often had a distinctly encyclopaedic interest, as they meant to cater for fairly broad audiences; for instance, *The Popular Encyclopedia* (1874) presented itself as a *Conversations Lexicon; Being a General Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature, Biography, and History*. Similarly, *The London Encyclopaedia* (1829) had the following subtitle: *Universal Dictionary of Science, Art, Literature and Practical Mechanics: Comprising a popular view of the present state of knowledge.*

Popularizing sources focused on many different subjects, such as we see in the numerous dictionaries that appeared in the series published by Samuel O. Beeton and his wife Isabella:[3] for these include *Beeton's Dictionary of Useful Information* (1861), *Beeton's Bible Dictionary. A cyclopædia of the truths and narratives of the Holy Scriptures* (1870), *Beeton's Dictionary of Every-day Gardening: Constituting a popular cyclopaedia of the theory and practice of horticulture* (1871), and Isabella Beeton's *Dictionary of Every-Day Cookery* (1865). Entries in such publications are of course different from the ones found in glossaries of geohistorical varieties, in that they provide both translations and explanations – see for instance the following: "American Plants. Under this general name are included Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Kalmias, Ledums, Andromedas, and others, which are supposed to require what is called bog earth. This, however, is not absolutely necessary to their successful cultivation" (Beeton s.v.).

Lists of lexical items are also found in materials meant for learners of English, but in this case what may distinguish them from bilingual glossaries is the fact that they may group items according to the semantic field to which they belong, rather than alphabetically. In Anon. (1905),[4] for instance, meant to cater for the needs of Italian immigrants to the USA, there is a thematic dictionary on 38 topics, ranging from 'Proper names' to 'Jobs' to 'The city', which follows traditional grammar lessons and a conversation manual, and precedes 60 model letters in Italian with their English translations –see Dossena "Prescriptiusme a Century Ago". Within each section of the thematic dictionary, the lexical items

[3] See www.ulib.niu.edu/badndp/beeton_samuel.html (last accessed July 2014).

[4] Unfortunately so far it has not been possible to identify either the publisher or the author(s); as for the place of publication, this can be assumed to have been in the USA (see Dossena, "Terms").

are listed in alphabetical order and arranged in three columns: Italian, English, and pronunciation represented as phonetic spelling– see the examples below:

Mercante di panno	Cloth-merchant	clot-merciant
Merciaio	Mercer	moerser
Merciaio girovago	Peddler	pedler
Metti-foglio	Press-feeder	press-fiider
Minatore	Miner	mainer
Miniatore	Miniature painter	*miniatciur penter*

The items in such lists, however, were not exemplified in meaningful contexts: the presupposition was that users would know when to use specific items in their language, and use the equivalent foreign items in similar situations. On a different note, what remains fascinating is the images of a bygone age that some lexical items evoke when they present jobs that are no longer in existence, as they do allow us glimpses of an increasingly distant past.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

An overview of glossaries appended to Late Modern literary texts, collections of proverbs and idioms, and to materials meant for self-education, has enabled us to highlight the importance of these lists for the development of specialized dictionaries on the one hand, and for the intersection between lexicography and encyclopaedic interests on the other. While glossaries may seem to provide mere lists of equivalent lexical items occurring in different varieties, in actual fact the comments with which they are introduced shed light on the codifying agendas they were expected to meet. Presenting the glossed items as provincial or old-fashioned placed them in a very specific category, where they could be preserved on account of their antiquity, while their usage was discouraged on account of this very distance from current fashion. This prescriptive attitude was not as explicit as in other lists of "vulgarisms", but marked lexis both from a social and a diachronic perspective. In the case of lists of specialized vocabulary, instead, usage was recommended on the basis of the greater accuracy of the glossed items, which were illustrated, and therefore made familiar, while becoming the tools of more professional expression. Though materials like the ones discussed in this brief contribution have seldom featured prominently in the history of lexicography, the contribution they have given to the history of the language may be shown to have been significant, as the audiences they reached were certainly numerous, interested, and eager to 'improve' both their knowledge and their usage.

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