New Approaches in Textual Editing. A Selection of Electronic Editions under Analysis

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ABSTRACT

In the present article, we make an approach to the world of digital editions available in electronic format. Using as a starting point Professor González Fernández-Corugedo's classification of some of the best web pages related to the topic (available at http://www.uniovi.es/HELL/Hyptxed.htm), we have examined the design and contents of some sites that deal with texts mainly in Old and Middle English. The readers are offered an outline of what they are expected to find in every page, highlighting their main virtues and shortcomings. As a result of the analysis of all these pages we are ready to propose certain steps necessary in the elaboration of a 'good' electronic edition.

KEYWORDS:
electronic editing, Internet, OE, ME and eMod E literary texts

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last twelve years, when the first digital editions began to be devised,' a great number of scholars has remained sceptical of the possible benefits that this type of editions could beget. In addition, it must be said that researchers who work on the field of digital editing have had to overcome challenging setbacks such as the shortage of funding for this type of projects and the lack of support from the most important publishing houses.' Perhaps the latter is the main reason

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for choosing the web as the rnain vehicle to exhibit the work-in-progress of sorne research tearns. In sorne cases, when the process is cornpleted, the webpage stops working and we are 'kindly asked' to contact a certain person to buy a CD with all the materials,[3] though in rnany others the final output can be exarnined."

Only the second type of URLs are dealt with in the present article, focusing on free sites on the net, not on other kind of electronic devices such as CD-ROMs or DVDs.[5] Many of the cornrnercialised CD-ROMs contain texts that have been included with the purpose of getting students acquainted with the docurnents of the period. However, several of thern have been simplified in the sense that original punctuation has been rnodernised or graphic conventions have sornetirnes been rnodified to rnake thern uniforrn and the extracts are short indeed. The only airn of such texts is for students to translate thern or to practise specific grarnrnar aspects.

Since the time the web pages were created and Internet became popular, the arnount of data related to electronic editing available on the net has grown considerably. For this reason, only those sites[6] that can be regarded as useful tools will be analysed here. This is not an exhaustive list of all possible sites. Contrariwise, it tries to provide hints and inforrnation on sorne reliable sites from which a more specific search can be initiated.

Professor González Fernández-Corugedo's cornpilation of digital editions was taken as a starting point for this study. The process of listing the URLs took place several years ago, so some of thern were obsolete at the time we tried to access thern. However, most of thern can be easily traced down.[7] Thus, as we were rnaking progress in our search for valuable electronic editions, we gathered inforrnation on these sites and on new ones we carne across. Due to the great arnount of material found, we realised that it was irnpossible to cover thern all in a work like this. Though a good number was considered in detail.[8]

In our analysis of this type of editions, sorne of thern have proved to be useful tools to study different aspects of early periods of the English Language whereas others have not succeeded in their atternpt to overcome previous 'printed' versions of the sarne text. Anyway, our opinion is that having a look at most pages included below, as well as at others that the reader rnay find on the net, is worthy and highly recornrnended.

II. AUTHORS AND WORKS REVISED BY ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Aberdeen *Bestiary*
http://v\vw.cl ues.abdn.ac.uk:8080/besttest/firstpag.html

There are two different editions of the bestiary: the first one was developed in 1996 and the second one was published in 2002. As can be read on the web page, the first edition was conceived as "a pilot scherne for producing digitised irnages of rnanuscripts on the Web". A great nurnber of institutions contributed to the developrnent of the project either funding it, as

the Joint Funding Council Library, or collaborating actively, like the University Library, the Department of History of Art and the Centre for Computer Based Learning in Land Use and Environmental Sciences (CLUES) at the University of Aberdeen. The team who worked on the first edition provided editorial comments on several issues, such as: punctuation and capitalisation, any suggested reading, and variants from other texts. There is a table of contents in which information on the genre, the provenance and transmission of this particular text and the illustrations can be found.

The second edition is equally clear in the explanation of the objectives of the project and its outcomes. It provides the reader with information on the Aberdeen University Library MS 24 and its relationship with the Oxford Bodleian MS Ashmole 1511; additionally it gives input on the animals that are dealt with in the bestiary, their significance and important codicological issues, such as pricking and ruling, rubrics and initials. As the text is in Latin, it is translated and transcribed. The original folio has been digitised, so that the reader can observe it at the same time and even learn about the figures, the materials and the *marginalia* present in the manuscript. It is worth browsing even if the text cannot be used for research on medieval English, as there are no glosses added to this text.

Aelfric's *Homilies* on Judith, Esther and The Maccabees
http://users.ox.ac.uk/~stuart/kings/

The author. Stuart Lee, warns us about the fact that the electronic edition, dated 1999, replicates a printed scholarly edition, but the reader will find completely new editions of the texts and a word-list to help translating them. It is a proper scholarly edition that can be easily accessed by going through the table of contents that is displayed on the left of the screen. In the foreword the author clearly explains the objectives of the work, his sources and the kind of edition he has undertaken: He has paid attention to different aspects inasmuch as the manuscript variants are supplied in the notes, as well as some palaeographical comments and the editorial procedure. There is also a study of Ælfric's style and details of the writer's manipulation of the source material. The texts are in pdf format. The whole edition is an example of good work, which is highly recommended. Its simplicity and straightforwardness does not make it less attractive, even if there are no illustrations or digitalisation of the original manuscripts. It constitutes a reliable source to work with.

Apollonius of Tyre
http://www.georgetown.edu/cball/apat/apt.html

Catherine Ball, the author, informs the reader that the edition is based on the one published by Thorpe's in 1834. The page was created in 1995. Being one of the first projects on the web, it remains simple and lacks illustrations of any kind. She admits she has adjusted Thorpe's text to conform it to the web, but she explains clearly the changes. When reading Thorpe's translation,

each section is preceded by a number in blue. By clicking on the number the Old English text is accessed. Moreover, while reading the Old English text, the translation can be obtained by clicking on the blue numbers at the beginning of sections. There are some notes about the original elements in manuscripts, such as erasures, stains, or emendations that would be necessary for grammar correctness. There is also a link to an Apollonius included in Gower's *Confessio* Amantis as edited by the University of Virginia and accessible at "She Labyrinth Library Middle English Bookcase" (*Cf.* Miscellaneous section).

Auchinleck Manuscript
http://www.nls.uk/auchinleck/editorial/project.html
This online edition of the Auchinleck Manuscript, funded by the University of Sheffield and the National Library of Scotland, was started by Professor David Burnley in 2000. After his death in 2001, the Project was continued until its final launching, in July 2003, by Dr Alison Wiggins. The contents of the page are arranged into four main sections: The Manuscript, About the Manuscript, Editorial and Bibliography. The first of them includes the transcription of the different parts of the manuscript in alphabetical order and a very helpful searching tool that allows the reader not only to try regular search but also Boolean search. In the second section some details about the history of the manuscript are presented, including information about its previous owners. In the Edition section the editorial policy is discussed and a glossary that explains the different technical terms used to describe the manuscript make-up, its production and historical context can be consulted. ln the final section we can find some bibliographical notes on the Auchinleck manuscript as well as some related links.

Beowulf
Two pages can be mentioned here:
ln the first site (http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~beowulf/), after an introduction that is meant to be a reflection on what can be said about one of the masterpieces of English literature, the reader can learn extensively on the history of the manuscript, its authorship, the characters and other historical and archaeological facts. By following the index section on the left, access is gained to the Old English text and its translation into Modem English, inasmuch as the reader can easily switch between the original and its modem translation. An interesting point is the addition of some links on Old English and more specifically on *Beowulf.*

The following site (http://www.uky.edu/~kiernan/eBeowulf/guide.htm) is also included here as the most important site for the poem. It is entitled Electronic *Beowulf* and was edited by Kevin Kiernan, in collaboration with Professor Paul Szarmach, for the British Library. This is a guide to the two CD-ROMs that are commercialised by the British Library. On this page there is

information on the original project. The British Library wanted to make some of their manuscripts available by using modern processes of digitalisation. The CDs include the 18th century transcriptions as well as the 19th century collations. To the initial project some additions were rnade, such as images of contemporary manuscript illumination, information on culture, and links to the *Toronto* Dictionary *of* Old English project and to the Anglo-Saxon bibliographies of the Old English Newsletter. Unfortunately, the access is not free any longer, as it used to be sorne years ago. Thus, the final output can only be revised after buying the British Library CD-ROM.

Nonetheless, a cornpletely free access to a good electronic text of *Beowulf* is provided at http://www.heorot.dk/, where Benjarnin Slade seems to have worked splendidly. He provides a diplornatic edition with cornrnents, images, bibliography and a good bunch of links to other editions of *Beowulf.* He also includes some audio files, where excerpts can be heard. The electronic resources seem to have a link to everything Anglo-Saxon, which rnakes it impossible to review them all. He acknowledges the classic sources on the topic and gives details about plenty of other interesting ones. This is an example of good independent work.

Blake

This archive (http://www.blakearchive.org) is hosted in two different servers: one in the USA and the other one in the United Kingdorn. The observer is really impressed by the amount of work that is shown. There are written texts, in addition to illurninated books, drawings, paintings and engravings by William Blake. The site comprehends sections on related links and instruments for further research, such as bibliographies, collection lists and Blake's Complete Poetry and Prose edited by D.V. Erdman.

Caedmon's *Hymn*

There are different pages for this work by Caedmon:

At http://people.uleth.ca/~daniel.odonnell/research/caedmon-job.html D. P. O'Donnell promises the readers they will be able to "have access to colour facsimiles and diplornatic transcriptions", as well as "be able to generate mediated ('critical') texts on-the-fly by choosing the editorial approach which best suits their individual research or study needs". In fact, there used to be free access to the material at http://people.uleth.ca/~caedmon/. However, we are now asked to contact the editor to purchase the CD-ROM in case we want to be able to read this, which does not enable us to decide whether the original promises were fulfilled.

http://www.heorot.dk/bede-caedmon.html

In this site we find a parallel version of *Caedmon S Hymn* in Old and Modern English. The Latin version is also available. There are some notes to explain grammar difficulties and three appendices. The first one shows the tables containing information on the manuscripts and the language the text is written in; the second one offers notes on the manuscripts and the final appendix presents some audio aids, where Caedmon's song can be heard in the voice of two different scholars.

http://www.heorot.dk/bede-caedmon-i-txt.html
This page was designed by the same author as the previous one, Benjamin Slade. From here, we can go to other sites containing different translations or glosses to some specific extracts of Bede's account, like the one from the University of Toronto
http://eir.library.utoronto.ca/rpo/display/poem369.html
or some others clearly aimed at students, such as Thomas Palakeel's
http://www.shelterbelt.com/BRITISH/caedmon.html
or http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/engl401/texts/caedfram.htm that includes a glossary.

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*
There are many pages containing different electronic editions of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. After having analysed a great amount of them, the reader is suggested to visit the following ones:
http://hosting.uaa.alaska.edu/afdtk/ect_main.htm
Daniel T. Kline's electronic *Canterbury Tales,* including links to a Middle English version at the UVA Electronic Text Centre and to a Modern English Translation at the Electronic Library Foundation. The edition is complemented with information about the historical and cultural background and on the sources, analogues and related texts for each tale. In addition, in some tales we are also offered multimedia and audio files and additional online bibliography.

http://www.towson.edu/~duncan/chaucer/ This is another interesting electronic version of the *Canterbury Tales* where mouss-overs supply definitions of difficult terms. Readings of different parts are available, as well as a section devoted to 'understanding and pronouncing' Middle English. A translation into Modern English can be consulted and information on Chaucer's literary and historical background is added.

An online version of the *Ccinterbury Tales* with interlinear translation appears at
http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/cantales.html

The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions, ed. John M. Bowers (1992) is available at http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/catalog.htm

Finally, it is worth mentioning the page of The *Cunterbury Tules* Project. It used to be hosted by the University of Sheffield (http://www.shef.ac.uk/hri/canterbury.htm), though it has very recently moved to the Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing at the University of Birmingham (the new page will be available at http://www.itsee.bham.ac.uk/projects/ctp). It does not contain any text of the *Canterbury Tales,* but it explains all the details of the on-going process that will end in the multi-text edition of all the individual tales. The *Cunterbury Tales* Project was officially presented in 1993, though its beginnings date back to 1989. Started by Professors Norman Blake, Peter Robinson and Elizabeth Solopova, this project has a great number of members and collaborators in many universities across Europe and the United States. The aim of the Project is twofold. On the one hand, to produce digital editions of single manuscripts. with images of all pages, its transcriptions, complete palaeographical and codicological information and analysis of the arrangement of the tales.' On the other hand, to create multi-text editions of single tales that will offer all the variants in all extant manuscripts (using COLLATE) and a cladistic analysis of the lines (using PAUP and SPLITSTREE), offering a final version as close as possible to Chaucer's original text.

The Dream of the Rood

http://www.flsouthern.edu/eng/abruce/rood/POEM.HTM

Alexander M. Bruce from Florida Southern College gives a thorough description of every detail related to the poem: the manuscript, the poem itself, other related poems, bibliography and translations and other links about related rood and rune sites, as well as the Ruthwell Cross. In fact, a great amount of information about the Cross, images included, is offered. There are, however, no notes on any linguistic aspect.

English Emblem Books

http://emblem.libraries.psu.edu/wordimage.htm

The Pennsylvania State University Libraries hold a special collection of emblem books that have been scanned and displayed in this site since 1999. Their authors consider the material exhibited here really significant for the study of both the daily life of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and for insights into the conceptions and intellectual representations of the period. Emblem books contain images and words to instruct the audience. Some of these books were not only written in English, but also in Latin, French or Spanish, like *Emblemata Amatoria* by Philip Ayres. There are links to bibliographical sources, even electronic ones, such as Alciato's Book *of Emblems: The Memorial Web Edition in Latin und English* that provides the Latin text and images from an edition of 1621 and gives an English translation.

Witliin the tools, the *Website Search* can be highlighted. It allows the on-line user to look for any word or phrase in the cmblem books scanned. However, a proper philological analysis of the texts is niissing. Even if thc reader can learn about this type of books as a genre, its

contents and usual elernents, there is no reference to linguistic aspects of the period. graphic conventions or any indication about the authors' gramrnar.

Gutenberg's *Bible*

There are at least two different pages for the Gutenberg's *Bible:*
http://www.bl.uk/treasures/gutenberg/homepage.html
Here two copies frorn the British Library can be viewed separately or at the sarne time. Only the digitised pages are shown; no transcriptions are offered.

Another digital facsirnile of the Gutenberg's *Bible* appears at:
http://www.humi.keio.ac.jp/treasures/incunabula/B42-web/b42/html/index01.html
Here sorne inforrnation about the provenance and the external appearance of the volume is given. It also includes a section on the illurnination, the paper used and the type of writing. Finally, the online digital facsirnile is presented. The sarne as in the previous page, no transcriptions of the pages are offered.

Lyrical Ballads

http://etc.dal.ca/lballads/index_std.html
As the authors explain in the introduction, the project "was created in 1998 by Ronald Tetreault of Dalhousie University and Bruce Graver of Providence College to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of the first publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by Williarn Wordsworth and Sarnuel Taylor Coleridge". The site supplies the reader with the data related to the different publication and transrnission of the original rnultiple versions, as well as details about how the texts have been keyed using Standard Generalised Markup Language (SGML) following the guidelines provided by the Text Encoding lnitiative (TEl).[10]

The chosen texts came out in 1798, but were published at different places: Bristol and London. The whole London edition can be followed on the right side of the screen, while the transcription is given on the left side. The irnages on the side are laid out on a black background, which rnakes the reading a bit dull and tiring. The London print is also contrasted with the Bristol one and the reader is suggested to continue reading on the topic by selecting sorne on-line references. Finally one can consult the conferences and exhibition held in 1998 to cornrnernorate the anniversary of the publication, although the page has not becn updated sincc then. In general, we would have expected to find more information on the poerns, the authors, their thernes or the stylistic use of language.

Ormulum

http://www.english.su.se/nlj/ormproj/info/projdesc.htm

It is a derno version of the whole project. It contains a diplornatic edition of Orrn's text as written on f. 10 recto through f. 12 recto in Bodleian Library, MS Junius 1 and a critical edition of Hornily viilviii (ll. 3264-3425 in Holt's 1878 edition). In the diplornatic edition the only aspect worth rnentioning is the use of different colours to illustrate scribal corrections, deletions and later additions. Special fonts are required and rnust be installed in your cornputer. As for the critical edition, it preserves Orrn's original punctuation. Links to cornrnents as well as links to a small glossary are provided. When clicking on a key-word in the glossary the concordance iterns can be checked, either in a 1-verse context or in their full context.

Piers Plowman
http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/seenet/piers/index.html
The University of Virginia undertook this project under the direction of Hoy N. Duggan back in 1994. Nonetheless, a large group of scholars took part in the enterprise, as is stated in the credits on the initial web page. The result is a friendly frarne in which every part of the process is described thoroughly. One of the first tasks was the transcription of the chosen rnanuscripts to make thern fully conformant to the recornrnendations of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI). After the transcriptions had been made, COLLATE prograrn was used to produce the corpus of variants. The site also inforrns the reader on the editorial practice. After a discussion on what is the best text according to different authors, the rnernbers of the research tearn describe thernselves as eclectic and present their editorial rnethods. Sorne instructions for using the various software packets for accessing and manipulating the texts and annotations are also added. Their intention is to supply textual, historical, and interpretive notes and describe the manuscripts used. Every aspect of the developrnent is perfectly explained, so the result rnust be a coherent well-grounded product that is still in progress. The on-line user is only allowed to browse sarnple texts to the degree that apart frorn the variants, little information is provided on other aspects. It is a long-term project that will presurnably be ready for publication in 2005, if everything happens as it was planned and reported in 2004.

Regimine Sanitatis
http://web.uniovi.es/HELL/RawC83/RawC83.htm
Professor Gonzalez Fernandez-Corugedo rnade available his transcription of the text based on Rawlinson Ms C 83 in 2001. The text has been scanned so that one can shift frorn the manuscript to the transcription. We would like to learn more about the rnanuscript, the contents of it and the language included in this specific work, as the links provided are to the horne page of the Bodleian Library and to the History of the English Language of the University of Oviedo. Here they hold a good collection of medieval and Early Modern English excerpts in pdf forrnat. which seern to have been especially assembled for teaching purposes.

Roman de la Rose

There are at least two important URLs dealing with this work. The first one (http://rose.mse.jhu.edu/) refers to collaboration among Milton S. Eisenhower Library, John Hopkins University and Pierpont Morgan Library and goes back to 1999. While trying to access this site, the reader will be requested to contact one of the people in the team to ask for a password. Once the conditions for use of the site are accepted, permission for entering is granted. However, the password will be required to see and download any of the images of the six manuscripts that have been scanned. The quality of the digitised folios is extremely good. The rubrics and miniatures of two of them can be browsed and a transcription of the lines of these two manuscripts and of an additional one is also available. Moreover, bibliographic descriptions of all six manuscripts can be consulted from the home page, where precise details are given on the decoration, binding and history of each manuscript. Some of the manuscripts can also be searched by folio or by words and phrase or a combination of both. The manuscripts available for searching and transcription are in French and no English translation is provided.

http://www.memss.arts.gla.ac.uk/

This other project is based at Glasgow University under the direction of Graham Caie, assisted by David Weston from the Special Collection Department of the University Library. This intends to be a diplomatic edition of the Hunter MS 409. This is meant to be only the first step in a long track, as they have previsions to continue working with the following works also in the Hunterian Collection of manuscripts: John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* (Hunter 7); Nicholas Love, The Myrrour *of the* Blessid *Lif of Ihesu-Crist* (Hunter 77); John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (Hunter 5); The *TroyBook* (Hunter 388); The *Chronicles of England* (the Brut): this text is in six copies in the Hunterian - 61, 74, 83, 228,230 and 44; John Wycliffe, *New* Testurnent (Hunter 189 and Hunter 176); A selection of Middle English medical texts; The *Canterbury* Tules MS (Hunter 197); The 1479 Spireleng copy of Chaucer's ABC Hymn (Hunter 239) and *Dives* and *Pauper* (Hunter 270)

Professor Caie is interested in comparing the manuscript directly with the printed edition by William Thynne (1532), as Thynne assumed that the translation was by Geoffrey Chaucer. According to him, "lt is highly likely that Thynne used the Glasgow manuscript as his copy text, as the manuscript has clear signs of printer's marks and the resemblances between both texts are too great to suggest that another manuscript was used". The work is still in progress. Thus we are allowed to browse the sample pages. The reader can see just the original or side by sidc the manuscript with the transcription. As a separate window we can open Thynne's edition, but no cxplanation on the editorial practice or manuscript description is still available.

Ruin

http://www.ccc.nottingham.ac.uk/~aczsjm/wap/angsp.html

This site, designed by Steve Malone for the University of Nottingham. holds two different translations into Modern English. The layout is in two columns with the text in Old English on the left side and the translation on the right. Apart from a link to the British Library and some Anglo-Saxon resources, there is no analysis of the poem neither from the literary nor from the linguistic point of view.

A more interesting approach to this text and some related Anglo-Saxon riddles is available at: http://www2.kenyon.edu/AngloSaxonRiddles/texts.htm

This page offers the texts and translations of the Exeter Book riddles. Some comments on the texts are provided and it is said that audio and video files will be added in short.

Seafarer

There are at least two sites available about *Seafarer*:
http://212.67.202.29/~cichw/main.htm

This first one was created by Charles Harrison Wallace in 2000. The designer is mostly interested in the translation provided, as his comments are really a discussion about what a translated text should be like. Besides, the original manuscript from Exeter Cathedral has been scanned and links to othermodern versions are supplied. Likewise there is a section on allegedly themed related images, although the connection is not always clear.

http://is2.dal.ca/~caowen/TOC.htm

The second one preceded the one above as it was designed a year before by Corey Owen from the University of Saskatchewan (Canada). Its target readers are late undergraduates or graduate students and, thinking ofthem, the author decides not to make a diplomatic edition, which would be "too hard" for them. Nonethcless, there is a clear section about the methodology employed, its shortcomings and the justification for a new edition. The site is also explanatory when dealing with the manuscript and critical history. The text is provided in Old English and some modern translations, besides notes and sources, as well as bibliography. It looks quite complete and well aware of what must be done in the futurc. For instance, a reading of the text is provided on a separate CD-ROM. although the file is not ready to be inserted on the web yet.

Wanderer

http://www.aimsdata.com/tim/anhaga/edition.htm

Tim Romano from Swarthmore College (Pennsylvania) offers the original facsimile along with a transcription and notes and comments on the poem. Although some of the pages are under construction, one gets a good idea about the work done. Unlike other sites, the author includes data on the script, rhythm, meter and intonation.

Wulfstan's *Esckatological Homilies*

http://webpages.ursinus.edu/jlionarons/wulfstan/wulfstan.html

Out of the five extant manuscripts, just three of them contain the five homilies. Joyce Tally Lionarons, the author, comments on the contents of each one and its relationship to other manuscripts. In the introduction the author admits that even when the work is finished it should remain open, to the degree that "it can undergo virtually infinite expansion and revision as scholarly work on". Thus, the apparatus of edition should benefit from technology in this particular case, because notes, variants, sources. and glosses might be accessed through the hyperlinks. It is true that two texts can be compared on the same screen and there is data about the sources and analogues, but notes or glosses seem to be missing. It is hoped that she decides to continue updating the site, so it can improve what is even yet good work.

Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*

http://english3.fsu.edu/~wulfstan

Once one has accessed the site by Melissa Bernstein from the University of Rochester (New York), the screen is automatically divided into three parts, although it can be reconfigured to allow another layout. The menu is available on the lefi side of it and the upper and the bottom part of the screen can be changed independently, in such a way that two selected texts can be compared. The reader can view the pages of the manuscript that has been scanned, Cotton Nero A.i., and follow the transcription with the variants of the other manuscripts consulted. There are also notes on grammar, sources and analogues, a translation into Modern English and a glossary. It seems to be quite a complete site to look at, although it could possibly be improved by adding some information on palaeographic and codicological aspects of the manuscripts that contain the text.

Miscellaneous

Perhaps the most well-known site where good electronic versions of a great number of texts in OE and ME can be found is that of the Labyrinth Library Bookcase, hosted by the University of Georgetown (Washington DC) (http://labyrinth.georgetown.edu).

There is also a good collection of links to different OE texts at the same university: http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/ballc/oe/oe-texts.html

The reader might find interesting texts in the Carnelot Project URL at
http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/catalog.htm
It includes a list of 46 Middle English texts. Among others, Ancrene Wisse, (ed. Robert Hasenfratz (2000)), John Lydgate's The Siege *of* Thebes, (ed. Robert R. Edwards (2001)) and *Pearl*, (ed. Sarah Stanbury (2001)). The editions are not scholarly produced, but can be used as a learning resource. As said in the page, more texts will be available soon.

A similar project, the Wessex parallel Web Texts, produces accessible electronic editions, especially aimed at teachers of the History of English. The texts can be found at
http:./www.soton.ac.uk/~wpwt

A useful pool of assorted texts belonging to the Old English period is
http://www.taisei.ac.jp/iwjc/staffs/uchioke/etext_oe.html
From this site plenty of texts edited electronically cabe accessed. The main shortcoming of some of these editions is that they were designed back in the 1990s and do not seem to have been updated since then, so the layout is quite plain. They are characterised by showing the text, translation and some basic comments. On other occasions, just the translation appears. They can be used for research as the text can be easily retrieved, but the whole appearance is not as attractive as others that have been mentioned above.

Finally, some of the aforementioned sites, as well as some other useful ones, including not only electronic versions of single texts but also anthologies and corpora are listed at
http://www.hcu.ox.ac.uk/toebi/ele.html

III. CONCLUSIONS

In the course of this study, some of the editions have proved to be really praiseworthy. However, various deficiencies observed in some of the productions need to be discussed: One of the most recurring mistakes is to offer a mere transcription of the text itself, that is, storing the text in an electronic format rather than providing any new valuable information. Even a student could type a text, save it in a computer and make it available to the scientific community, but that is not a 'real' digital edition. What we understand by digital is something else. In 2000 The European Commission published a volume aimed mainly at companies that wanted to undertake electronic projects advising them on the planning, the factors to be taken into account and their implementation. But the target audience is also warned on what must be considered amultimedia product. Even if the focus here is on multimedia products, it does also apply to digital ones.

> A inultimedia product is inore than just traditional publishing conteiits in an electronic forinat. A quality multimedia product consists of four layers (content

base, software engine, navigation systein aiid user interface) coliereiitly developed
aiid designed to support tlie production's message (EC, 2000: 29).

Following this definition, then the term 'edition' should be discarded in those cases in which
a mere electronic 'version' of a certain text is presented. Likewise, we should disregard those
instances of mere digitalisation of a manuscript. It is not our intention to deride the hard work
behind projects of this kind. In fact we agree that this type of material can be useful at certain
stages. However, we think that a more elaborated product is desirable. A different type of error
is to provide either a deficient amount of information or an excessive one. Both situations are
equally unfavourable, the former because it may not offer any interesting data about the text, the
latter because the reader can become overwhelmed and may loose her/his interest on what she/he
is presented with. Finally, a possible fault when approaching the edition of a text. and this
concerns both digital and printed editions, is to focus too much on personal beliefs or attitudes.
The main aim of the editor should be to offer a neutral approach to the text, making the
information available as objectively as possible. The edition, especially the digital one, must be
a tool for the reader to draw her/his own conclusions, not a biased product in which nothing else
can be added.

All the above-mentioned flaws should be avoided when preparing a digital edition.
Besides, there are some features that should be taken into account in order to achieve a 'good'
result. We take for granted that digital is synonymous of computerised or electronic, that is,
stored in an electronic format. Though, as said above, from the point of view of the philologist,
we understand that the text cannot be a mere scanning or typing of what has previously been
published. It should be as diplomatic as possible. Special fonts are an essential tool in this
respect, for, the closer to the original the transcription is, the more complete and accurate the
information will be. Software is improving rapidly, so very often institutions can afford buying
licenscd products containing the most suitable applications. Thus, the reproduction of the
marginalia or superscripts, diacritic signs such as macrons or other important features present
in the manuscripts is getting easier and easier. But even if we are thinking of a single scholar,
who has no access to such software, the edition should reflect all the aspects either in the preface
section explaining the procedure or practices that have been followed or simply by inserting
footnotes every time some remarkable philological aspect must be rcferred to.

Besides, a digital edition must also be 'interactive'. It cannot be static; it must provide
diverse links, so that the reading will be different depending on the readers and their choices
when consulting the material. Thus, the reader who wants a simple approach to the text will not
get beset after facing a huge amount of information, whereas the one who is interested in as
many aspects as possible will have the opportunity of learning while navigating throughout the
whole page. We believe that at least two main sections should be borne in mind whcn planning
the elaboration of a good digital edition. One regarding the internal features of the text and a
second one devoted to its external aspects. As for the first one, the editor could include

information on the original layout, rubrication and illumination, *marginalia*, manuscript variants and any type of morphosyntactic, dialectal and even stylistic information on the text. Regarding the second section, subjects such as the author, the socio-cultural context in which the text was written, other pieces of work with a similar topic and many others could be studied. Here the imagination of the editor will be the most useful tool for, depending on her/his interests, she/he will be able to provide as much, and as diverse, information as she/he is willing to offer. In conclusion, a good digital edition should be as enlightening as possible, containing information on materials. as well as linguistic details about the specific features found in the text. Definitely the philological work underneath the text is so important as the text itself. Otherwise, why should some of us, philologists, devote ourselves to such a time-consuming task?

NOTES

1. Among the first projects including digital cditions of Early English texts, the *Canterbury* Tales Project (started in 1993) aiid the Electronic *Beowulf* (started in 1994) can be inentioned.

2. This "lack of support from major publishing houses" is mentioned by Peter Robinson, Director of the *Canterbury* Tales Project, in his article about the future of digital editions in the electronic journal *Digital Medievalist* 1.1 (2005). For more information about this journal visit www.digitalmedievalist.org

3. This is the case of the Electronic *Beowulf* site [http://www.uky.edu/~kiernan/eBeowulf/guide.htm] or *Caedmon*'s [http://people.ulcth.ca/~caedmon/], among others.

4. The *Seafarer* [http://is2.dal.ca/~caowen/TOC.htm] and the *Roman* de *la Rose* [http://rose.mse.jhu.edu] are the best examples.

5. Alcaraz (2002: 205-250) revises both websites and CD-ROMs on the instruction of Old English.

6. As happens in any field, the net is constantly changing so probably some of the URLs might not be available by the time tlie reader can get hold of this material aiid some new ones will have appeared.

7. We would like to thank Professor González Fernández-Corugedo for his work. We used his listas basic material for our analysis, though it was updated and enlarged as we were working on it.

8. We must warn thc reader about the fact that some of the manuscripts that are housed at British institutions and have been digitised are in Latin or French rather than Old English or Middle English. Our main aim in this article is to deal with those pages containing texts in English; however we have decided to include some related to other languages iii those cases in wliich we consider that the information found in tlie webpage might be useful (*e.g.* the Aberdeen Bestiary at http://www.clucs.abdn.ac.uk:8080/besttest/firstpag.html).

9. This has already bccn done by Estelle Stubbs in her 2001 edition of the Hengwrt manuscript.

10. The TEI Project's aim is to "establish standard usage of the Standard Generalised Markup Language (SGML) for electronic text exchange in the humanities" (Shillingsburg 1999: 162). For further information on this project, consult www.tei-c.org.uk

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