



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

ISABEL DE LA CRUZ & NILA VÁZQUEZ*
University of Alcalá & University of Murcia

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/Hypertexted.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

* **Address for correspondence:** Isabel de la Cruz Cabanillas, Universidad de Alcalá, Departamento de Filología Moderna, Facultad de Filología, Colegio de San José de Caracciolos, 28801, Alcalá de Henares (Spain) & Nila Vázquez, Universidad de Murcia, Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Facultad de Letras, Campus de la Merced, 30071, Murcia (Spain). E-mails: isabel.cruz@uah.es & nilavaz@um.es

for choosing the web as the main vehicle to exhibit the work-in-progress of some research teams. In some cases, when the process is completed, 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 many others the final output can be examined."

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 commercialised CD-ROMs contain texts that have been included with the purpose of getting students acquainted with the documents of the period. However, several of them have been simplified in the sense that original punctuation has been modernised or graphic conventions have sometimes been modified to make them uniform and the extracts are short indeed. The only aim of such texts is for students to translate them or to practise specific grammar aspects.

Since the time the web pages were created and Internet became popular, the amount of data related to electronic editing available on the net has grown considerably. For this reason, only those sites⁶ 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 information on some reliable sites from which a more specific search can be initiated.

Professor González Fernández-Corugedo's compilation 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 them were obsolete at the time we tried to access them. However, most of them can be easily traced down.⁷ Thus, as we were making progress in our search for valuable electronic editions, we gathered information on these sites and on new ones we came across. Due to the great amount of material found, we realised that it was impossible to cover them all in a work like this. Though a good number was considered in detail.⁸

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

II. AUTHORS AND WORKS REVISED BY ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Aberdeen *Bestiary*

<http://vw.clues.abdn.ac.uk:8080/besttest/firstpag.htm>

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 scheme for producing digitised images of manuscripts on the Web". A great number of institutions contributed to the development 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. In 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:

In 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 Modern English, inasmuch as the reader can easily switch between the original and its modern 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 made, 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 some years ago. Thus, the final output can only be revised after buying the British Library CD-ROM.

Nonetheless, a completely free access to a good electronic text of *Beowulf* is provided at <http://www.heorot.dk/>, where Benjamin Slade seems to have worked splendidly. He provides a diplomatic edition with comments, 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 makes 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 Kingdom. The observer is really impressed by the amount of work that is shown. There are written texts, in addition to illuminated 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 diplomatic 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/eng1401/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 *Canterbury Tales* 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 *Canterbury 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 & 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 and English* that provides the Latin text and images from an edition of 1621 and gives an English translation.

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

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

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 from the British Library can be viewed separately or at the same time. Only the digitised pages are shown; no transcriptions are offered.

Another digital facsimile of the Gutenberg's *Bible* appears at:

<http://www.humi.keio.ac.jp/treasures/incunabula/B42-web/b42/html/index01.html>

Here some information about the provenance and the external appearance of the volume is given. It also includes a section on the illumination, the paper used and the type of writing. Finally, the online digital facsimile is presented. The same 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 William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge". The site supplies the reader with the data related to the different publication and transmission of the original multiple 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 Initiative (TEI).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 images on the side are laid out on a black background, which makes 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 some on-line references. Finally one can consult the conferences and exhibition held in 1998 to commemorate the anniversary of the publication, although the page has not been updated since then. In general, we would have expected to find more information on the poems, the authors, their themes or the stylistic use of language.

Ormulum

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

It is a demo version of the whole project. It contains a diplomatic edition of Orm'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 diplomatic edition the only aspect worth mentioning is the use of different colours to illustrate scribal corrections, deletions and later additions. Special fonts are required and must be installed in your computer. As for the critical edition, it preserves Orm's original punctuation. Links to comments as well as links to a small glossary are provided. When clicking on a key-word in the glossary the concordance items can be checked, either in a 1-verse context or in their full context.

Piers Plowman

<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/scenet/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 frame in which every part of the process is described thoroughly. One of the first tasks was the transcription of the chosen manuscripts to make them fully conformant to the recommendations of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI). After the transcriptions had been made, COLLATE program was used to produce the corpus of variants. The site also informs the reader on the editorial practice. After a discussion on what is the best text according to different authors, the members of the research team describe themselves as eclectic and present their editorial methods. Some 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 development is perfectly explained, so the result must be a coherent well-grounded product that is still in progress. The on-line user is only allowed to browse sample texts to the degree that apart from the variants, little information is provided on other aspects. It is a long-term project that will presumably 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 made available his transcription of the text based on Rawlinson Ms C 83 in 2001. The text has been scanned so that one can shift from the manuscript to the transcription. We would like to learn more about the manuscript, the contents of it and the language included in this specific work, as the links provided are to the home 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 format. which seem 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.msc.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 provisions to continue working with the following works also in the Hunterian Collection of manuscripts: John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* (Hunter 7); Nicholas Love, *The Myrroure 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 Testurment* (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, "It 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 side the manuscript with the transcription. As a separate window we can open Thynne's edition, but no explanation 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.kenvon.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 other modern 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 of them, the author decides not to make a diplomatic edition, which would be "too hard" for them. Nonetheless, 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 future. 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 *Eskatological Homilies*

<http://webpages.ursinus.edu/~lionarons/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 left 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 Camelot 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/uchioko/ctext_oe.html

From this site plenty of texts edited electronically can be 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 a multimedia product. Even if the focus here is on multimedia products, it does also apply to digital ones.

A multimedia product is more than just traditional publishing contents in an electronic format. A quality multimedia product consists of four layers (content

base, software engine, navigation system and user interface) collectively developed and designed to support the 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 lose 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 licensed 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 referred 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 upset 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 when 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 editions of Early English texts, the *Canterbury Tales Project* (started in 1993) and the Electronic *Beowulf* (started in 1994) can be mentioned.
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.uleth.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 the reader can get hold of this material and some new ones will have appeared.
7. We would like to thank Professor González Fernández-Corugedo for his work. We used his list as basic material for our analysis, though it was updated and enlarged as we were working on it.
8. We must warn the 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 in those cases in which we consider that the information found in the webpage might be useful (e.g. the Aberdeen Bestiary at <http://www.clues.abdn.ac.uk:8080/bestfest/firstpag.html>).
9. This has already been 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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