

OUTCOMES OF EDITORIAL INTERVENTION IN TEXTS FROM NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES, BROGYNTYN MS II.1: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE*

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ABSTRACT

In editing medieval manuscripts changes in tastes, needs, conventions and resources have resulted in edited texts so disparate that it is difficult to visualise the relative uniformity exhibited by a codex copyist. In this article I compare different editions of texts copied by one of the scribes of National Library of Wales, Brogyntyn MS ii.1, responsible for twenty-one entries in the manuscript. Each edition has been collated with the manuscript to establish the criteria adopted by each editor in their transcriptions. I focus on how editors address aspects such as expansion of abbreviations, normalisation and treatment of certain palaeographical peculiarities. The goal is to show how the work of the same scribe has been variously interpreted and how this variation disguises the essence of this copyist's written language.

KEYWORDS: Brogyntyn MS ii.1, Manuscript Studies, scribes, editorial procedures, abbreviations.

RESULTADOS DE LA INTERVENCIÓN EDITORIAL EN TEXTOS DEL MANUSCRITO DE LA
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RESUMEN

En la edición de manuscritos medievales, los cambios en los gustos, las necesidades, las convenciones y los recursos han dado lugar a textos editados tan dispares que resulta difícil visualizar la relativa uniformidad exhibida por un copista. En este artículo se comparan diferentes ediciones de textos copiados por uno de los escribas responsable de veintiuna entradas en el manuscrito Biblioteca Nacional de Gales, Brogyntyn ii.1. Se coteja cada edición con el manuscrito para establecer los criterios adoptados por cada editor en sus transcripciones. La atención se centra en cómo los editores abordan aspectos como la expansión de las abreviaturas, la normalización y el tratamiento de ciertas peculiaridades paleográficas. El objetivo es mostrar cómo la obra de un mismo escriba ha sido interpretada de forma diversa y cómo esta variación disfraza la esencia de la lengua escrita de este copista.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Brogyntyn MS ii.1, estudios de manuscritos, copistas, procedimientos editoriales, abreviaturas.

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1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Brogyntyn ii.1,¹ formerly known as Porkington 10, is a fifteenth-century miscellanea in a small quarto volume containing fifty-seven entries in prose and verse. In its 211 folios,² thirty-three entries are in verse (thirty-two in English and one in Latin), nineteen are prose texts (seventeen in English and two in Latin), three of them contain exclusively Latin tables, two have English verse and prose, and one contains a Latin table and English prose. The subject matter is manifold ranging from science to history or poetry. Scientific texts deal with prognostication and phlebotomy, astrology, eclipses, divisions of time and space, weather, agriculture and medical recipes; the wide range of literary texts cover Arthurian romances, lives of saints, religious prose, history, parodies, comic tales, love poems, allegorical and moral poems, debate poems as well as material from the *Northern Homily Cycle* and religious and secular carols.³

The volume was originally thought to have been copied by up to nineteen scribes (Kurvinen 1953, 35), although later work on the topic suggested that only sixteen copyists were involved (Huws 1996, 189). More recent research such as Salter (2017, 191) tentatively suggests that there are fewer scribes than sixteen, although I do not find her arguments convincing.⁴ Nevertheless, there seems to be agreement that there are four scribes who were most active in the production of this volume. The so-called scribe O copied twenty-two out of the fifty-seven entries, provided most of the rubrication in the book and wrote the quire signatures. His entries occupy eighty-five folios, meaning he copied roughly 36% of the total. The other three scribes who contributed considerably were scribe Q (forty-nine folios, 22%), scribe J (thirty folios, 17%) and scribe L (twenty-six folios, 13%). Each of the other

* I am grateful to Nancy Pope, who kindly provided me with a list containing the items and some of the editions for the texts in Brogyntyn ii.1 which helped me to initially give shape to this paper. I would like to make a special remembrance to the late Meg Laing who put my name forward to participate in a project led by Nancy Pope on the Brogyntyn ii.1 manuscript. I would also like to thank Keith Williamson and Eburne Garrido-Anes for their always useful comments and suggestions. Likewise, I wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers whose recommendations have helped me improve the clarity of this work.

¹ Digital images of this manuscript are freely available at: <https://www.library.wales/discover-learn/digital-exhibitions/manuscripts/the-middle-ages/a-middle-english-miscellany>. The digital images in this paper have been reproduced by permission of Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / The National Library of Wales.

² According to Kurvinen (1953, 35), the volume originally had 232 leaves. The losses suffered by the manuscript are: thirteen leaves at the beginning, one after f. 26 and seven or more at the end. Huws (1996, 192) proposes instead that after folio 211v “two more leaves should have completed it and not much more is likely to have been lost from the end of Brogyntyn ii.1.”

³ Information about the manuscript as well as a list of contents can be found in the online catalogue at <https://archives.library.wales/index.php/english-miscellany>. Further details can be found in Kurvinen (1953) and Huws (1996).

⁴ See Carrillo-Linares (2023).



thirteen scribes contributed minimally copying among all of them roughly 11% of the whole volume.⁵

In this study I focus on scribe O's production. Seventeen of his pieces are English verse, three are English prose, one English and Latin verse, and another is English prose and a short passage in verse. All his pieces in English have been edited (once or more than once) since the first half of the nineteenth century. Although scribe O exhibits relative consistency in his copying habits and in his language features, the edited texts break this uniformity inasmuch as his work has been interpreted in various ways, and this variation disguises the essence of the copyist's written language. When a reader or researcher faces the edited texts, it is very difficult to discern this relative uniformity. This variation is due to how editors address aspects such as expansion of abbreviations, normalisation of spelling and treatment of certain palaeographical peculiarities.⁶ By collating each edition with the original manuscript, I establish the criteria used by each of the editors—not always stated in their editions—when transcribing, and by comparing different editions I demonstrate how with any editorial intervention we operate with assumptions, and thus, all editorial decisions distort the original text.

The first published edition of a text copied by O dates to 1845, while the most recent one was published in 2005. In the past 178 years, the twenty-two entries copied by this scribe have been edited in fourteen volumes.⁷ Over this period, resources, conventions, tastes and needs have changed. Editorial policies have not always been explicitly stated or, if they have, the information supplied has not always been sufficiently comprehensive or even accurate. Each editor has followed different paths in interpreting the same scribal features and, thus, the colour of the language in each of the edited texts differs from the others, as some idiosyncratic features have vanished from the final edited output.

⁵ Connolly (forthcoming) reduces the total number of scribes to ten or eleven, as she considers that in quire 1 there are only two or three people at work instead of the eight proposed by Kurvinen (1953).

⁶ Regarding word division and capitalisation, there are also certain aspects of interest but for space reasons I have not dealt with them. There is no sign of scribal punctuation in the manuscript and most of the editors have added their own modern punctuation. The only exceptions are the transcription made for the *Index of Middle English Prose* (Marx 1999) and the text edited in Pope (2005), which reproduce more accurately the scribal practice in this respect. Neither have I considered any sort of textual emendation in my analysis.

⁷ Entries by O are: ff. 59^v-61^r, *When I Sleep I May not Wake*; ff. 61^r-63^r, *This World is but a Vanity* (an old man's lament); ff. 63^v-79^r, *The Father of Pity and Most of Misericord* (a translation of the *Visio Fulberti*); f. 79^r, An admonition to prepare for death; ff. 79^v-81^r, *Erthe upon Erthe*; ff. 81^r-83^v, *The Mourning of the Hunted Hare*; ff. 83^v-86^r, *The Knyzt and His Wife*; ff. 86^r-87^r, *The Holly Mane Sente Martayne*; f. 87^r-87^v, *Narracyon of Sente Tantene*; ff. 87^v-89^r, *Ave regina celorum*; ff. 89^v-90^r, Medical recipes; ff. 129^v-130^r, Parody of letter-writing formulae and of medical practice; ff. 150^r-152^r, *Ewyre Say Wyll or Hold þe Still*; ff. 152^r-154^r, *Trvtallys* (nonsense poem in couplets); f. 154^r-154^v, Epistolary love poem; ff. 154^v-155^r, *Have My Hert* (love poem); ff. 155^r-157^r, *Do for Thyself* (a moral poem); ff. 157^r-184^r, *The Sege of Jerusalem*; ff. 184^r-192^r, *The Boke of St Albans*; f. 200^r-200^v, Religious carol; ff. 201^r-202^r, Dialogue between the Virgin Mary and Christ; f. 202^r-202^v, *The Boar's Head Carol*.



2. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data have been collected from manuscript and printed sources: National Library of Wales, Brogyntyn MS ii.1 and the published editions for the texts copied by scribe O in this manuscript. The entire manuscript has been transcribed to disk from the digital images held at the National Library of Wales website. In my transcriptions I have not expanded abbreviations and I have assigned a code to every different non-literal symbol occurring in the manuscript. I have preserved all the manuscript spellings, superscript or inserted letters, lineation, capitalisation and word division.⁸ I created Linguistic Profiles (LPs) using an extended version of the Questionnaire in the electronic version of *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (*eLALME*) (Benskin et al. 2013) to include abbreviation marks, spelling of common words with no dialectal interest and some further items that seemed relevant for the copying practice of the scribe. The forms and features displayed in the LPs have been used to localise all the texts by scribe O, but these also enable comparison of the spelling in his different texts copied from exemplars from various places, since this might have affected the final output in each of his texts.

The editions have been consulted both in paper and in electronic format when available. My transcriptions for each text have been compared manually with the edition(s) available for each text and scribal features subject to interpretation, or which are the result of editorial errors of interpretation, have been listed and arranged alphabetically for each of the editions in order to facilitate the description and counting of the examples.⁹

3. SCRIBAL LANGUAGE

Scribe O shows a high level of consistency in many features. One feature common to all his texts is the use of <ow> (475x), <ov> (372x) or <ou> (172x) for what probably represented /u:/: ‘abowt,’ ‘abovt,’ ‘about.’ The other scribes in this same manuscript do not have this range of variation for this feature and only one of them uses the spelling <ov> sporadically.¹⁰ For medial /v/ his spellings vary from

⁸ An example of the transcription method is the following. The numbers between curly brackets are the code for the abbreviation marks. Characters in-between ‘^ ^’ are marked for insertion in the manuscript:

```
Lor{0} how scha{1} j me co{5}playne  
Vnto myn{5} own{5} lady der{3}  
ffor to te{1} her{3} of my payn{5}  
That j fe{1} þis tyme of þe hei ^re  
My lovfe yf þe 3e wy{1} hit her{3} [...]
```

⁹ For the counting of the relevant examples, I have used Anthony (2014).

¹⁰ Among the other scribes in the manuscript, only scribe J uses <ov> very rarely (8x).




















Code	MS symbol	MS image	Folio number
{0}	d		f. 60 ^r
{1}	h		f. 59 ^r
{2}	‘		f. 63 ^v
{3}	ʝ		f. 59 ^r
{4}	ω		f. 64 ^r
{5}	-		f. 59 ^r
			f. 60 ^r
			f. 65 ^v
			f. 61 ^r
{5b}	ð		f. 61 ^r
{6}	p		f. 78 ^v
{7}	p		f. 71 ^r
{8}	ª		f. 155 ^v
{9}	9		f. 62 ^r
{10}	f		f. 163 ^r
{11}	f		f. 170 ^r
{12}	dñi		f. 200 ^r

Table 1. Abbreviation marks.

<v> (248x) to <u> (238x) and also <w> (99x): ‘heyuyne,’ ‘heyvyn{5},’¹¹ ‘heywyne.’ For initial /v/ he deploys a <w> (26x) and a <v> (27x): ‘wyrgyne,’ ‘vyssyon{5}.’ His spelling for /ʃ/ is always <sch>. He almost exclusively uses <3> (248x) for /x/ as the digraph <gh> occurs only 5x. Likewise, for /j/ he uses <3> (187x) and <y> (98x). Regarding the use of <þ> or <th> for /θ/ and /ð/, the former is used 2,141x against 827x for the latter. Although this distribution seems to favour <þ>, most of its occurrences fall word-initially in articles, demonstratives and pronouns, as well as in abbreviated syllables, while <th> is generally used at the beginning of a line in verse texts, and medially in content words.¹²

He uses uncommon forms for FROM such as ‘frow(e)’ or ‘frov(e),’ together with more common ones such as ‘from(e),’ ‘from’ or ‘fro.’ These uncommon forms

¹¹ As stated in note 8 above, the numbers inside {} represent a code for the abbreviations in the manuscript. I have assigned a number for each mark occurring in the scribal output, and as I do not expand abbreviations, I refer to this number throughout the paper. The symbols and their corresponding images are shown in Table 1.

¹² This is also the case for other scribes such as J in the same manuscript; see Carrillo-Linares (2023).



are shared with scribe J in the same manuscript. In the suffix *-NESS* the vowel is <y> (24x): ‘gladnyse’ or <i> (8x): ‘goonis’ and only occasionally <e> (2x): ‘swetenes,’ and *-ABLE* is mainly spelled with <u> (10x): ‘dyssaywabu{1},’ but spellings with <e> (5x): ‘notable’ also occur. His form for the first-person personal pronoun is ‘j.’

Regarding abbreviations and other palaeographic peculiarities, following Petti’s (1977, 22) classification, three common methods of abbreviation, i.e., suspension, contraction and superscript letters are to be found in the scribe’s output. Some contracted forms representing a whole word occur only occasionally:¹³ [f] = {11} is found twice; a *Nomina Sacra* abbreviated form appears only once, [dñi] = {12}. A hook [ʃ] = {2} has been recorded 393x and is often used in combination with <p>, <u> or <w>, sometimes with <t> or <d> as well. Also widely used (133x) is a backwards loop after a <t>, <g> and occasionally <c> [᠙] = {4}. A very similar mark occurs 975x after an *r* [᠑] = {3}. Two types of ornamented <p> forms are to be found: (a) with a concave curve and forming a loop on the left side, [P] = {7}, which occurs 19x; and (b) with a horizontal mark halfway down the descender of the <p>, [p] = {6}, used 6x only. Likewise, a round curl over the line, a small 9-shaped mark [9] = {9}, is used 194x throughout all O’s entries. A loop going up and turning backwards with a long descender [ʃ] = {10} is used only twice. A crossed double <l> [H] = {1} is also the norm, and it is found 520x.

A bar or horizontal stroke over one or more letters is a common mark of suspension in medieval writing. The symbol assigned to the mark [̄] in the scribe’s output is {5}. It mainly falls over a vowel, an <n> or an <m>. The texts also show occasionally a stroke over letters <ʒ> and <th>. The ink colour and duct of these marks may vary. Sometimes the ink in the stroke is fainter or the colour of the ink is paler. This pale colour is similar to that used in a diagonal stroke over <i>, probably added to distinguish it clearly from other letters with which it could be confused, although the horizontal stroke can also be darker. The difference of colour in the strokes might indicate a later revision (by this same scribe or by another hand). An alternative to a neat horizontal stroke is a back curving loop starting from the foot of the minim of a word-final letter and finishing above the letter. Another mark can be seen when the letter <d> is in final position [d] = {0}. It consists of a vertical stroke extending down from the descender of the <d>. It has been recorded nearly 2,000x.¹⁴

AND is spelled in full as ‘An{0}’ / ‘an{0}’ 818x and portrayed 303x with a Tironian sign = [7]. Superscript letters are common in forms like ‘p^e,’ ‘p^u,’ ‘pⁱ.’ Abbreviation also relies on superior letters in the rendering of WITH and THAT. WITH is usually abbreviated to ‘W^{it}’ / ‘W^{tt}’ / ‘w^{it}’ / ‘w^{tt}’ (95x) or ‘W^p’ / ‘w^t’ / ‘w^p’ (135x) and it is spelled out only four times as: ‘Witt’ (2x) and ‘Wyth’ (2x). In turn, THAT

¹³ See Table 1 for all the symbols and exemplifying manuscript images.

¹⁴ It cannot be determined whether this mark is otiose or has any orthographic signification: it could easily be just a decorative flourish. However, some editors have interpreted it as an abbreviation mark, and thus, I have included it in the discussion.



is spelled ‘That’ / ‘that’ (62x) or ‘þat’ (20x), but in most instances the abbreviated form ‘þʳ’ (288x) is found. A super-linear <a> [ʳ] = {8} occurs 3x.

Regarding the scribe’s dialectal features, I produced various LPs of his usage from the data collected from all his texts. Some of his entries do not provide sufficient relevant dialectal information, as not many diagnostic features occur. Separate analyses have been carried out: (a) his two longer texts¹⁵ have been analysed independently to provide evidence for their possible localisations, and (b) all the relevant information from all the texts has been combined in order to try to localise the scribal language overall. Since the object of this paper is not to give a full account of the dialect of this scribe, I summarise the results obtained from the linguistic analysis and the fittings of the assemblages of his forms and features by comparing them with *eLALME* data.¹⁶

For the text in ff. 63^v-79^r, the fitting of the features in Table 2 in the Appendix indicates an area in the West Midlands that covers most of Warwickshire and north and southeast Worcestershire and north Gloucestershire. The text in ff. 157^v-184^r, on the other hand, can be located in an area that includes south Warwickshire, west Leicestershire and the southern half of Derbyshire. Fitting a combination of features (those in bold in Table 2) of these two texts with some others from the scribe’s shorter texts produces a much smaller area at the boundaries between Worcestershire and Warwickshire, an area that covers from the towns of Redditch in Worcestershire to Warwick and extending to the south as far as Alcester in Warwickshire and Inkberrow in Worcestershire. Whether the scribe was originally from this area or trained there is not possible to know, but the language of the texts that he copied seems to belong to that part of the West Midlands.

4. EDITIONS OF THE TEXTS BY SCRIBE O IN MS BROGYNTYN II.¹⁷

4.1. MID NINETEENTH CENTURY

The twenty-two entries copied by scribe O have been edited in fourteen volumes. Some pieces have been edited more than once, and some of the edited volumes contain several of the scribe’s contributions. The first edition of one of these texts was published in 1845 by Wright and Halliwell in a collection of various pieces in Middle English. The object of the publication was “to collect together such pieces from ancient inedited manuscripts illustrative of the literature and languages of our forefathers during the Middle Ages” (1845, volume I, iii). With the aim of

¹⁵ These are a translation of the *Visio Fulberti*, ff. 63^v-79^r and *The Sege of Jerusalem*, ff. 157^v-184^r.

¹⁶ A detailed description and analysis of the dialects of the whole codex is carried out in Carrillo-Linares and Garrido-Anes (forthcoming).

¹⁷ A summary of the main features analysed in this section is presented in Table 3 in the Appendix.



presenting the reader with the medieval material they “avoided any lengthened notes or comments on the documents.” In the preface of volume II of this collection of texts, the editors state that these volumes “will be found of use to future philologists, and to all who take an interest in the history of our language and literature” (1845, volume II, iii). Their editorial policy is not stated.

The comparison of the edition with the original manuscript in ff. 152r-154r shows that the manuscript <þ> is systematically changed to <th>, but other characters such as <ʒ> are kept: ‘ʒer{3}’ = ‘ʒere.’ The first-person personal pronoun ‘j’ is represented by ‘I’ and the Tironian sign ‘7’ by ‘and.’ <v> with vocalic value is rendered <u>: ‘covthe’ = ‘couthē.’ Medial <v> with consonantal value is changed to <u>: ‘fove’ = ‘foue.’ Double <ff> is simplified to a single letter and capitalised: ‘ffyfty’ = ‘Fyfty.’ Superscript characters are rendered in the main font size and expanded if abbreviated: ‘þ^e’ = ‘the,’ ‘þⁱ’ = ‘thei, they,’ ‘þ^r’ = ‘that,’ ‘w^{it}’ = ‘with.’ A form for the third-person plural pronoun, which in the manuscript appears as ‘thay,’ has been changed to ‘they.’ Abbreviations are silently expanded and interpreted in this way:

{0} = <de> most of the time (34x), although there are exceptions: ‘An{0}’ = ‘And’ / ‘ba{0}’ = ‘bad’ / ‘go{0}’ = ‘God.’

{1} = <lle> in final position: ‘A{1}’ = ‘Alle,’ but it is considered otiose in medial position: ‘a{1}e’ = ‘alle.’

{2} = <er>: ‘þ{2}’ = ‘ther’ and <ur>: ‘to{2}nyng stonys’ = ‘tournyng-stonys.’

{3} = <e>: ‘aftur{3}’ = ‘afture.’

{4} = <er>: ‘bett{4}’ = ‘better.’

{9} = <us> both for genitive marker: ‘Gnytt{9}’ = ‘Gnyttus,’ and plural marker: ‘mett{9}’ = ‘mettus,’ and also for the suffix <-ous>: ‘mervell{9}’ = ‘mervellus.’

The horizontal stroke is interpreted as: (a) omitted <e>: ‘horn{5}’ = ‘horne’; (b) omitted <n> resulting in words with double <n>: ‘mon{5}y’ = ‘monny’; (c) single omitted <n>: ‘so{5}day’ = ‘sonday’; (d) omitted <m> resulting in words with double <m>: ‘sem{5}eow’ = ‘semmeow’; (e) single omitted <m>: ‘ca{5}’ = ‘cam’; (f) omitted <me>: ‘ca{5}’ = ‘come’; (g) otiose: ‘men{5}ovs’ = ‘menous.’ The back curving loop is understood as <e>: ‘on{5}’ = ‘one.’

The poems found in ff. 59^v-61^r, ff. 61^r-63^r,¹⁸ ff. 63^v-79^r, ff. 79^v-81^v, ff. 81^v-83^v¹⁹ and ff. 150^r-152^r were edited by Halliwell in 1855.²⁰ Again, the short preface to this edition does not mention the editorial policy. The editor states that “the ten articles now printed comprise the chief of the inedited pieces of any real value, and constitute, with those elsewhere published, a complete a copy of the manuscript as will generally be desired” (Halliwell 1855, vii), but the audience for whom the volume is intended is not clear. Comparison of his edited texts with the manuscript shows that <þ> is systematically changed into <th> and <ʒ> is kept throughout, while ‘7’ is rendered ‘and,’ and the first-person personal pronoun ‘j’ is ‘I,’ as in the

¹⁸ The poem in these folios was edited again in Brown (1939).

¹⁹ This poem was re-edited in Robbins (1952).

²⁰ Some texts copied by other scribes in Brogyntyn ii.1 are also included in this collection.

edition discussed above. Double <ff> is capitalised: ‘ffrow’ = ‘Frow.’ Initial <v> with /u/ value is turned into <u>, although it is sometimes kept in medial position:²¹ ‘yovr{3}’ = ‘youre.’ Medial <u> with consonantal value is turned into <v>: ‘Whoso eu{2}’ = ‘Whosoever.’ The pronoun ‘þow’ is changed into ‘thou’ and ‘wtt’ is ‘with.’ Superscript characters are levelled out and expanded if abbreviated as: ‘þ^e’ = ‘the,’ ‘þ^t’ = ‘that,’ ‘þⁱ’ = ‘they,’ ‘þ^u’ = ‘thou,’ ‘w^{tt}’ = ‘with.’ The editor expands abbreviations without notice, and his interpretation of some of the marks does not coincide entirely with the interpretation in his and Wright’s 1845 edition:

{0} = meaningless.

{1} = <lle> in final position: ‘Gabre{1}’ = ‘Gabrelle,’ although not always.

Not expanded in medial position: ‘sty{1}e’ = ‘style.’

{2} = <er>: ‘ou{2}’ = ‘ouer.’

{3} = <e> when it occurs finally in a word:²² ‘eyr{3}’ = ‘evyre,’ but sometimes meaningless in medial position: ‘dyuer{3}is’ = ‘dyveris.’

{4} = <er>: ‘eu{4}y’ = ‘every.’

{6} = <per>: ‘{6}secusione’ = ‘persecusione.’

{7} = <pro>: ‘{7}cesse’ = ‘procese.’

{8} = <ra>: ‘g{8}ce’ = ‘grace.’

{9} = <us>: ‘helpp{9}’ = ‘helppus.’

{10} = <es>: ‘ergamente{10}’ = ‘ergamenttes.’

The horizontal stroke is understood as: (a) omitted <e>: ‘man{5}’ = ‘mane’; (b) omitted <n> resulting in words with double <n>: ‘began{5}e’ = ‘beganne’; (c) single omitted <n>: ‘wha{5}’ = ‘whan’; (d) omitted <ne>: ‘when{5}’ = ‘whenne’; (e) omitted <m> resulting in words with double <m>: ‘com{5}ynly’ = ‘commynly’; (f) single omitted <m>: ‘co{5}playne’ = ‘complayne’; (g) otiose: ‘am{5}en{0}’ = ‘amend,’ ‘mon{5}y’ = ‘mony.’

In a volume devoted to early popular poetry, Hazlitt (1864-1866) edited the poem found in ff. 83v-86v, a Marian miracle from the *Northern Homily Cycle*. The principal object of the editor was “to render accessible sound texts of as many pieces of old popular poetry as could be brought within the compass of a few volumes” (1864-1866, xv) and he declares that he “paid much greater attention to accuracy than preceding editors of similar collections” (1864-1866, xvi). His editing criteria are not explicitly stated, though. My collation of this edition with the manuscript shows that once more <þ> is replaced by <th> but <ʒ> is retained. ‘7’ is rendered ‘and,’ and medial and initial <v> with vocalic value are changed into <u>: ‘adovne’ = ‘adoune.’ Consonantal <u> is changed to <v>: ‘eu{1}’ = ‘ever’ and the first-person personal pronoun ‘j’ occurs as ‘I.’ Double <ff> is simplified to a single letter and capitalised: ‘ffor’ = ‘For.’ Superscript characters are levelled out and expanded as: ‘w^p’ = ‘with,’ ‘þ^e’ = ‘the,’ ‘þⁱ’ = ‘thi,’ ‘þ^t’ = ‘that,’ ‘þ^u’ = ‘thou.’ The abbreviations are silently expanded and the palaeographical marks have been interpreted as follows:

²¹ In one of the texts medial <v> with vocalic vowel is changed to <o>: ‘yovthe’ = ‘yooth.’

²² There is one exception in one of the texts: ‘yowr{3}’ = ‘yowr.’



{0} = not generally expanded, but in one example: ‘en{0}’ = ‘ende.’
{1} = <lle> in final position: ‘a{1}’ = ‘alle,’ but medially it is considered otiose:
‘ca{1}e’ = ‘calle.’

{2} = <er>: ‘pou{2}te’ = ‘poverté’ but as <ere> in ‘p{2}’ = ‘There.’

{3} = interpreted as <e>: ‘autter{3}’ = ‘auttere.’²³

{4} = <er>: ‘autt{4}’ = ‘autter.’

{9} = <us>: ‘wodd{9}’ = ‘woddus.’

The horizontal stroke is likewise interpreted in different ways in different contexts as: (a) omitted <e>: ‘on{5}’ = ‘one’; (b) omitted <n> resulting in words with double <n>: ‘gon{5}e’ = ‘gonne’; (c) single omitted <n>: ‘ma{5}’ = ‘man’; (d) omitted <ne>: ‘Then{5}’ = ‘Thenne’; (e) omitted <m> resulting in words with double <m>: ‘com{5}e’ = ‘comme’; (f) single omitted <m>: ‘co{5}e’ = ‘come’; (g) otiose: ‘in{5}’ = ‘in.’

4.2. EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Chambers and Sidgwick (1907) edited the poem found in ff. 59^v-61^r in a collection of amorous, divine, moral and trivial poems, some composed in the fourteenth century and others in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. According to the authors, the spellings of “those of the fifteenth century are slightly normalised” (1907, ix) in this way: “*v* is substituted for consonantal *u*, *th* for *p*, *y* or *gh* for *z*, *I* for *y*²⁴ (pronoun), and *is* for *ys*” and also that “an *i*, *e*, or *th*, as the case may be, for *y* or vice versa; *sh* or *sch* for *x*; *-eth* for *-et* or *-it*. Final long vowels have been doubled [...]. Final *l* and *s* have also been doubled [...]. A final *e* has been added to a long vowel followed by a consonant” (1907, 326).

Of particular importance are some alterations which, far from modernising the text, make it seem more archaic, and in turn drive the reader even further away from the original. Examples of this are the changing of some verbal endings such as: ‘morn{5}’ = ‘morneth,’ ‘byn{5}dys’ = ‘bindeth.’ As the editors make substantial changes in spelling conventions and also alter some morphological features, it is difficult to systematise their intended editorial policy in the same way as in the editions discussed above. Double <ff> is portrayed as a single <F> ‘ffor’ = ‘For’ and some of the expanded abbreviations found in this edition include:

{1} = No consistency inasmuch as the words are partly modernised. Sometimes it is expanded to <le> with one <l> omitted: ‘lytty{1}’ = ‘little,’ other times one <l> is omitted without any other expansion: ‘mychey{1}’ = ‘mikel,’ and most of the times it is ignored: ‘scha{1}’ = ‘shall.’

{2} = <er>: ‘eu{2}’ = ‘ever.’

²³ There is one occasion on which this abbreviation is interpreted as <er>: ‘afer{3}{0}’ = ‘aferred.’

²⁴ In the poem in Brogyntyn ii.1 there are no instances of ‘y.’ The first-person personal pronoun is always spelled ‘j.’



{3} = <e> only when it conforms to modern practice spelling, otherwise it is ignored.

The multiple horizontal strokes found in the manuscript are ignored in cases where they do not conform to modern practice, e.g., ‘began{5}e’ = ‘began.’ They are expanded if a more modern version of the word has a vowel as in ‘myn{5}’ = ‘mine.’

The Brogyntyn MS version of the popular poem *Earth upon Earth*, ff. 79^v-81^v, was edited together with twenty other versions of the poem by Murray (1911). Regarding her editorial policy, she affirms that:

Punctuation, inverted commas, and regular use of initial capitals in the text are the editor's. [...] capitals have been added in the case of all proper names [...] and a hyphen has been inserted where the MS. separates a prefix or particle from the rest of the word. The MS. writings ff. þ, ʒ, v for u and vice versa, have been retained in the text, and H, th, expanded to lle, the, but it was not thought advisable to expand m-, n-, to me, ne, nor other letters such as d, r, g, when written with a final flourish. (1911, xli)

In this edition most of the characters in the original manuscript have been preserved, with few alterations: <j> is rendered <l>, both in the first-person personal pronoun or in other contexts: ‘jn’ = ‘In.’ All superscript letters are levelled out to normal size: ‘sayþ^e’ = ‘sayþe’ and expanded if abbreviated as: ‘þ^u’ = ‘þou,’ ‘þ^r’ = ‘þat,’ ‘þ^o’ = ‘þo,’ ‘þⁱ’ = ‘þi,’ ‘þ^e’ = ‘þe,’ ‘Wtt’ = ‘Witth,’ ‘w’ = ‘with.’ Initial <ff> is kept but the first <f> is capitalised: ‘ffor’ = ‘Ffor.’ Abbreviations are expanded and italicised, and interpreted as:

{0} = <de>: ‘amen{0}’ = ‘amende,’ with one exception: ‘go{0}’ = ‘God.’²⁵

{1} = <lle> in final position: ‘a{1}’ = ‘alle.’

{2} = <er>: ‘þ{2}for’ = ‘þerfor.’

{3} = <e>: ‘far{3}’ = ‘fare.’

{9} = <is>: ‘alm{9}’ = ‘almis.’

The horizontal stroke is interpreted in various ways, as in other editions, depending on the context in which it occurs, as: (a) omitted <e>: ‘mou{5}’ = ‘moue’; (b) omitted <u>: ‘won{5}dyrely’ = ‘woundyrelly’; (c) omitted <n> resulting in words with double <n>: ‘a{5}ny’ = ‘anny’; (d) single omitted <n>: ‘caryo{5}’ = ‘caryon’; (e) omitted <m> resulting in words with double <m>: ‘co{5}mys’ = ‘commys’; (f) single omitted <m>: ‘hy{5}e’ = ‘hyme’; (g) otiose: ‘on{5}’ = ‘on.’

In 1913 Sandison published a study on the lyric tradition of the “Chanson d’aventure” and included some editions of lyrics that had not been previously published. One of them is found in ff. 155^v-157^r of the Brogyntyn MS.²⁶ For the editions provided in this volume the author states that:

²⁵ As this interpretation occurs only once and three other instances of the same word are retrieved as ‘Gode,’ this is likely to be unintentional.

²⁶ F. 198^r of the Brogyntyn MS contains another poem copied by a different scribe and also edited in this volume.



Punctuation, uniform capitalisation of line initial, and strophe division in certain texts, are the editor's. Capitalisation of letters within the line has been consistently disregarded. In some texts [...] flourishes and other signs, chiefly over final *n*, have been disregarded when they appear to be without consistent abbreviatory significance. (1913, 100)

Most of the manuscript characters are kept in the edited text, so <þ> and <ʒ> are kept throughout, the renderings of <u>, <v> are faithful to the original and <ff> is also kept. The personal pronoun 'j' is rendered 'I.' Superscript characters are normalised as: 'W^r' = 'W[t]t,' 'þ^e' = 'þe,' 'þⁱ' = 'þi,' 'þ^r' = 'þat,' 'þ^u' = 'þou.' Abbreviations are expanded and italicised. The interpretation of the manuscript marks is as follows:

{0} and {1} = not considered abbreviation marks.

{2} = <er>: 'w{2}' = 'wer' or <ur>: 'whep{2}' = 'wheþur.'

{3} = <e>: 'ʒowr{3}' = 'ʒowre.'

{4} = <ur>: 'aft{4}' = 'aftur' and <er>: 'ʒeust{4}day' = 'ʒeusterday.'

{9} = <ys>: 'clerc{9}' = 'clercys.'

{8} = <ra>: 'p{8}er{3}' = 'praere.'

The horizontal strokes are treated in various ways, as: (a) omitted <e>: 'on{5}' = 'one'; (b) omitted <n> resulting in words with double <n>: 'pe{5}ny' = 'penny'; (c) single omitted <n>: 'by{5}' = 'byn'; (d) single omitted <m>: 'who{5}' = 'whom'; (e) omitted <u>: 'lesson{5}' = 'lessoun'; (f) reproduced with a macron in the edition: 'agayn{5}' = 'agayñ.'

4.3. SECOND QUARTER OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The poems in f. 200^r-200^{v27} and f. 202^r-202^{v28} were first edited in Greene (1935), in a collection of carols composed before 1550.²⁹ The editor contends that:

Emendation of the texts of the carols is as sparing as possible. The original spelling has been retained throughout, except that *þ* and *ʒ* have been transliterated into their modern equivalents and *i* and *j* are printed according to modern practice. Punctuation, capitalisation, and division of words follow modern usage and have been supplied by the present editor. Manuscript abbreviations are expanded in italics, and words and letters supplied by the editor are enclosed in square brackets. Erasures, scribal corrections, and minor palaeographical peculiarities are not recorded. (1935, 1)

²⁷ Edited again in Brown (1939).

²⁸ The poem in this folio was later edited in Robbins (1952).

²⁹ Two more poems in the manuscript, held in f. 198^r-198^v and ff. 198^v-199^v and copied by another scribe, were also printed in this same volume.



As stated in the editor's policy <3> and <þ> are turned into <gh> and <th>, respectively: 'no3t' = 'nought', 'þow3t' = 'thought' and 'j' is rendered 'I,' while <ff> is simplified to a single letter and capitalised: 'ffor' = 'For.' The practice regarding the superscript letters is to render them 'þ^e' = 'the,' 'þ^r' = 'that' and 'þ^u' = 'thou' and the Tironian sign '7' is transcribed as 'and.' Additionally, there is alteration in the spelling of some words such as: 'grettust' = 'grettist.' The manuscript abbreviations are interpreted as:

- {0} and {1} = meaningless.
- {2} = <er>: 'eu{2}' = 'euer.'
- {3} = <e>: 'fadyr{3}' = 'Fadyre.'
- {9} = <us>: 'wertt{9}' = 'werttus.'

The horizontal strokes are interpreted as: (a) omitted <e>: 'son{5}' = 'Sone'; (b) omitted single <n>: 'co{5}sayfe' = 'consayfe'; (c) omitted single <m>: 'hy{5} selfe' = 'hymselfe'; (d) otiose: 'reson{5}' = 'reson.'

The poem in f. 200^r-200^v was edited again in Brown (1939) together with three other poems in the manuscript copied by scribe O, in ff. 61^r-63^r, ff. 87^v-89^v and ff. 201^r-202^r. Regarding editorial policy Brown remarks that:

The manuscripts have been followed in orthography and capitalisation; and the Middle English characters *þ* and *ȝ* have been retained. On the other hand, the punctuation of the texts is editorial, and hyphens have been introduced, chiefly in compounds and after prefixes, which in the manuscripts are often separated. Also, the ordinary manuscript contractions have been expanded without the use of italics. (1939, xxxii)

He also retains the spelling <ff> throughout and the Tironian sign '7' is portrayed as '&.' Apart from that, this editor normalises the form for the first-person personal pronoun 'j' as 'I.' Likewise, superscript letters are normalised: 'hyþ^e' = 'hyþe,' 'þ^e' = 'þe,'³⁰ 'þ^r' = 'þat,' 'þ^o' = 'þoo,' 'þ^u' = 'þu,'³¹ 'w^{tt}' / 'wt^t' = 'witt' and 'w^u' = 'with.' Scribal usages of <v> and <u> are kept. Abbreviations are expanded in this way:

- {0} = meaningless.
- {1} = meaningless in most cases.³²
- {2} = <er>: 'mast{2}' = 'master.'
- {3} = <e>: 'nodyr{3}' = 'nodyre.'
- {4} = <er>: 'matt{4}' = 'matter.'
- {9} = <us>: 'wytt{9}' = 'wyttus.'

The scribal horizontal strokes are interpreted as: (a) omitted <e>: 'born{5}' = 'borne'; (b) omitted <n> resulting in words with double <n>: 'mon{5}y' = 'monny'; (c) single omitted <n>: 'croppy{5}' = 'croppyn'; (d) omitted <ne>: 'vppo{5}' = 'vppone'; (e) single omitted <m>: 'hy{5}selfe' = 'hym-selfe'; (f) omitted <m> resulting in

³⁰ On two occasions in the poem in ff. 61^r-63^r, 'þ^e' = 'the' (f. 61^r).

³¹ In the poem in ff. 201^r-202^r, there is one case of 'þ^u' = 'þou' by this same editor.

³² Only in one instance it is expanded as <e>: 'a{1}' = 'alle' (f. 62^v).



words with double <m>: ‘com{5}yth’ = ‘commyth’; (g) omitted <u>: ‘mo{5}rnyng’ = ‘mournyng’; (h) otiose: ‘Thyn{5}’ = ‘Thyn.’

4.4. MID TWENTIETH CENTURY

Robbins (1952) published an anthology of popular lyrics dealing with the realities of the daily life of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In his collection he edited five poems from the Brogyntyn MS, four of them copied by scribe O (ff. 81^v-83^v, f. 154^r-154^v, ff. 154^v-155^v³³ and f. 202^r-202^v).³⁴ Regarding his editorial policy he stated that:

The manuscripts have been followed in orthography and capitalisation; and the Middle English characters þ, ð, and ȝ have been retained. The common manuscript contractions have been expanded without the use of italics. The punctuation of the text is editorial, and hyphens have been introduced where components of words are separated in the manuscripts, and where modern usage demands. (1952, unnumbered page immediately facing p. 1)

Vocalic <v> is portrayed as <v>: ‘sovl[?]³⁵’ = ‘sovle’ and consonantal <u> is also faithful to the original: ‘eu{1}y’ = ‘euery.’ The spelling <ff> is also retained and the Tironian sign ‘7’ is ‘&c,’ but the editor does not mention that he normalises the use of <j> to <i> in all contexts as well as superscript characters such as: ‘þ^e’ = ‘þe,’ ‘þ^r’ = ‘þat,’ ‘þ^u’ = ‘þou,’ ‘þⁱ’ = ‘þi,’ ‘þ^s’ = ‘þis,’ ‘w^r’ = ‘with,’ ‘w^{tt}’ = ‘with.’ In the poems in ff. 81^v-83^v and f. 202^r-202^v, ‘wtt’ = ‘wit,’ but in f. 154^r-154^v, ‘wtt’ = ‘witt.’³⁶ Regarding abbreviations, his interpretation is as follows:

{0} and {1} = meaningless.

{2} = <er>: ‘eu{2}y’ = ‘euery.’

{3} = generally <e>:³⁷ ‘haar{3}’ = ‘haare.’

{4} = <er>: ‘hont{4}is’ = ‘honeris.’

{9} = <es>: ‘cokk{9}’ = ‘cokkes’ in ff. 81^v-83^v, but in f. 202^r-202^v = <is>: ‘wodcok{9}’ = ‘wodcokis.’

Horizontal strokes are interpreted as: (a) omitted <n> resulting in words with double <n>: ‘we{5}nissun’ = ‘wennissun’; (b) single omitted <n>: ‘furma{5}te’ = ‘furmante’; (c) single omitted <m>: ‘ho{5}buls’ = ‘hombuls’; (d) omitted <m> resulting in words with double <m>: ‘com{5}yth’ = ‘commyth’; (e) omitted <u>: ‘mo{5}rnyng’ = ‘mournyng’; (f) otiose: ‘gan{5}’ = ‘gan.’

³³ The poems in f. 154^r-154^v and ff. 154^v-155^v were edited again in Kurvinen (1953).

³⁴ A poem copied by another scribe and found in ff. 130^v-132^r was also printed in this edition.

³⁵ The modern binding of the manuscript hinders the correct reading of the end of this word in the online version.

³⁶ There is also a single case of modernising a spelling by altering the original vowel and thus changing <o> to <e> in: ‘Thor{5}for’ = ‘Therefore.’

³⁷ In f. 202^v, {3} is not expanded as in other texts in this same edition: ‘odyr{3}’ = ‘odyr.’



In an article devoted entirely to the description of the Brogyntyn MS, Kurvinen (1953) provided transcriptions of several entries in the manuscript that had not been published before. Among them are six copied by scribe O.³⁸ Kurvinen declares that:

Since most contractions present no problem of interpretation, they have been expanded without notice. Italic print has, however, been used when expanding the contractions for the syllables *-es*, *-us*, *-er*, *-ur*, etc., in unstressed positions. Italic print has also been used in expanding a horizontal stroke as a final *-e*. Strokes through *b* and *ll* as well as final curls to *m*, *n* and *r* have been disregarded as they appear to be mere ornaments. [...] The letters *i*, *j*, *u* and *v* are used as in Modern English. Capitals and punctuation are editorial. (1953, 38)

Vocalic <v> is rendered <u>: 'lovfe' = 'loufe' and consonantal <u> as <v>: 'p{2}-ou{2}' = 'pereover.' For superscript characters her usual practice is: 'w^r' = 'with,' 'p^e' = 'pe,' 'pⁱ' = 'pi,' 'p^s' = 'pis,' 'p^r' = 'pat' and for <ff> she capitalises: 'ffor' = 'For.' She also renders 'wt^t' = 'witt.' The Tironian sign '7' is rendered 'and.' Regarding abbreviations and other marks, her interpretation is:

{0} and {1} = not considered abbreviation marks.

{2} = <er>: 'allysaund{2}' = 'allysaunder' or <re>: 'eg{2}mony' = 'egremony.'

{3} = meaningless in all the cases.

{4} = <er>: 'butt{4}' = 'butter.'

{6} = <par>: '{6}cel' = 'parcele.'

{9} = <us>: 'flowr{9}' = 'flowrus.'

The horizontal strokes are interpreted as: (a) omitted <n> resulting in words with double <n>: 'llyn{5}yn' = 'llynyn'; (b) omitted single <n>: 'euy{5}' = 'euyn'; (c) omitted single <m>: 'ty{5}' = 'tym'; (d) omitted <m> resulting in words with double <m>: 'wom{5}an' = 'womman'; (e) otiose: 'an{5}' = 'an.'

The two editions of the poems in f. 154^r-154^v and ff. 154^v-155^v differ only slightly in the transcription conventions. Apart from noticing or not the expansions of the abbreviations, they differ in the treatment of {3}: in the 1953 edition it is considered otiose, but Robbins (1952) expands it as <e>. For the vocalic <v> both editors make different choices. In the 1953 edition it is changed to <u> while in the 1952 edition manuscript <v> is retained. Likewise, for consonantal <u> the 1953 editor changes it to <v> while the 1952 edition retains the original manuscript form. Beyond these alterations, both outputs are very similar.

³⁸ These are the fragments (prose and verse) found in ff. 86^v-87^r, f. 87^r-87^v, f. 89^v, f. 90^v, f. 154^r-154^v, ff. 154^v-155^v, ff. 187^v-188^r. The last of these fragments and those found in ff. 89^v-90^v were also transcribed in Marx (1999).



The version of *The Siege of Jerusalem* found in ff. 157^v-184^r was edited by Kurvinen in 1969. In the introduction to her edition, she offers a very detailed description of her editorial principles and her criteria for adopting those principles. As a whole, she aims to stick closely to the original manuscript, keeping the manuscript usage of *þ*, *ʒ*, *v*, *u*, *j*, although she states that a “distinction is made between the letters *z* and *ʒ* even if they are indistinguishable in the MS. The scribe’s initial *ff*, which occurs half a dozen times, is printed as *f*. Paragraph division, capitals, and punctuation are editorial.” She adds that “with the exception of the stroke for a nasal and the signs for *er*, *es* and *us*, they offer no difficulty of interpretation” (1969, 66). Manuscript abbreviations are silently expanded and superscript characters are normalised, so that ‘þ^e’ = ‘þe,’ ‘þⁱ’ = ‘þi / þei,’ ‘þ^o’ = ‘þo,’ ‘þ^u’ = ‘þou,’ ‘þ^r’ = ‘þat,’ w^{tr} = ‘wytt’ and an ending of the third-person singular present indicative, such as ‘follow^r’ = ‘followyth.’

In her editorial policy she mentions the treatment of “the abbreviation for *er*” (1969, 68) as a single feature, although this covers two different marks, the ones that I have named {2} and {4}. She affirms that she has expanded following the scribe’s usual spelling as far as possible, and sometimes she expands it as <-er> and others as <-ur> or <-yr>. Examples for the two different marks are: ‘eu{2}’ = ‘euyr,’ ‘ou{2}turn{5}’ = ‘ouerturn,’ ‘to-geyd{2}’ = ‘toge ydur,’ ‘aft{4}’ = ‘aftur,’ ‘gou{4}nowrs’ = ‘gouernowrs,’ ‘nob{4}’ = ‘noþyr.’ Also, although she does not mention it, she also expands {2} as <-re>: ‘p{2}che’ = ‘preche,’ ‘p{2}sense’ = ‘presense.’

One of the two scribal instances of {10} = <is> occurs in f. 163^r: ‘langag{10}’ = ‘langagis.’ In turn, the eighty-four occurrences of {9} have been interpreted “in four different ways, in each case in conformity with the scribe’s usual spelling of the same or similar words” (1969, 68). The cases in which {9} has been used in the manuscript include plural endings, genitive case and endings in Latin proper nouns, and they have been expanded as <-ys>, <-is> or <-us>: ‘angell{9}’ = ‘angellys,’ ‘Jam{9}’ = ‘Jamys,’ ‘kyng{9}’ = ‘kyngis,’ ‘bok{9}’ = ‘bokus,’ ‘Tyt{9}’ = ‘Tytus.’ The marks {0}, {1} and {3} are always ornamental. Other abbreviated forms are: ‘wt’ = ‘wyth,’ ‘wtt’ = ‘wytt’ and ‘7’ = ‘and.’

She interprets the horizontal strokes as an omitted nasal, never as a vowel. In cases like ‘co{5}fon{5}dyt’ (where there is a second stroke over the minims), she interprets the first one as an omitted nasal and the previous character as <u> and transcribes it: ‘confoundyt.’ In cases where the scribe wrote the nasal and a stroke, she interprets it in two ways:

- a) It has been interpreted as indicating an omitted medial nasal when it is placed above the vowel preceding the written nasal, if this is followed by a vowel and if the scribe’s usual spelling is not definitely against a double nasal [...]
- b) the stroke or curl has been disregarded when the written nasal is final; it has also been disregarded medially in the following cases in which the scribe’s usual spelling is against a double nasal [...]. (1969, 66-67)



Following my own systematisation she interprets the stroke in this way, as: (a) omitted <n> resulting in words with double <n>: ‘lyn{5}yn’ = ‘lynnyn’; (b) single omitted <n>: ‘slay{5}’ = ‘slayn’; (c) omitted <m> resulting in words with double <m>: ‘com{5}e’ = ‘comme’; (d) as a single omitted <m>: ‘hy{5}selfe’ = ‘hymselfe’; (e) otiose: ‘down{5}’ = ‘down,’ ‘hom{5}e’ = ‘home.’

Handlist XIV of *The Index of Middle English Prose* for the National Library of Wales collections was compiled by Marx (1999). In the entry devoted to Brogyntyn MS ii.1, apart from transcribing the *incipit* and *explicit* of entries contained in the manuscript, Marx transcribed some of the short texts in full, or almost in full. Among these extracts are the entries found in f. 89^v, f. 90^v and ff. 187^v-188^v. The *Index* is mainly designed as a tool for finding copies of a text across several manuscript witnesses, so the texts transcribed there are not editions. However, the transcriptions found in the volume, which follow the general guidelines for the series, are close to the manuscript spellings and there is no editorial punctuation added. The spelling <ff> is retained as in the manuscript: ‘ffor’ = ‘ffor,’ and vocalic and medial consonantal <v> are kept as <v> and <u>, respectively: ‘vndur{3}’ = ‘vndur,’ ‘povder{3}’ = ‘povder,’ ‘euy{5}’ = ‘euy.’ Initial consonantal <v> is also retained: ‘ven{5}ery’ = ‘vennery.’ The spellings with <þ> and <3> are kept throughout, while <j> is portrayed as <i>. The Tironian sign ‘7’ is ‘&.’ Superscript letters are normalised and expanded: ‘blow^t’ = ‘blowith,’ ‘draw^{tt}’ = ‘drawitt,’ ‘w^{tt}’ = ‘witt,’ ‘p^e’ = ‘pe,’ ‘p^v’ = ‘pat.’ The abbreviated form ‘wt’ is portrayed as ‘witt.’ Abbreviations have been silently expanded in this way:

{0}, {1} and {3} = ornamental.

{2} = <er>: ‘gou{2}nny{0}’ = ‘gouernyd’ and <re>: ‘eg{2}mony’ = ‘egremony.’

{4} = <er>: ‘A nauan{4}’ = ‘an auaner.’

{9} = <us>: ‘basterd{9}’ = ‘basterdus.’

Horizontal strokes are interpreted in five ways, as: (a) omitted <n> resulting in words with double <n>: ‘bytto{5}ner{3}’ = ‘byttonner’; (b) omitted single <n>: ‘j’e{5}tylle’ = ‘ientylle’; (c) omitted <m> resulting in words with double <m>: ‘com{5}ente’ = ‘comme’; (d) omitted <u> ‘alon{5}dys’ = ‘aloundys’; (e) otiose: ‘favkon{5}’ = ‘favkon.’

4.6. TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The most recent edition of a text in this manuscript is to be found in an article by Pope (2005, 37) who offers “a diplomatic edition” of the poem found in ff. 129^v-130^r, a parody of letter-writing conventions and of medical practice. In her text no editorial punctuation is added,³⁹ <3> and <þ> are retained throughout the text and <v> with vocalic value is kept both initially and medially: ‘vn{5}nethe’ = ‘vnnethe,’ ‘yovr{3}’ = ‘yovre.’ There is only one case of medial consonantal <v> and

³⁹ Pope (2005) offers a Present-Day English translation of the passage, fully punctuated following modern standards, that guides the readers through her interpretation of the text.



it is also retained as <v>: ‘servau{5}te’ = ‘servau^{te}.’ Superscript letters are normalised and italicised, so that ‘p^e’ = ‘*p^e*’ and ‘p^{at}’ = ‘*p^{at}*.’ The pronoun ‘j’ is portrayed as ‘I’ and the abbreviated form ‘wtt’ is ‘*wit^h*.’ Abbreviations are expanded and italicised and are interpreted in this way:

{0} and {1} = not considered abbreviation marks.

{2} = <er>: ‘neu{2}’ = ‘*neuer*.’

{3} = <e>: ‘allmar{3}’ = ‘*allmare*.’

{4} = <er>: ‘plast{4}’ = ‘*plaster*.’

{11} = ‘*syr*.’

Horizontal strokes are interpreted in five ways, as: (a) omitted <n> resulting in words with double <n>: ‘j-wryttyn{5}’ = ‘*Iwryttynn*’ (b) single omitted <n>: ‘johu{5}’ = ‘*johun*’; (c) omitted <m> resulting in words with double <m>: ‘pem{5}’ = ‘*pemm*’; (d) omitted <u>: ‘wesysyon{5}’ = ‘*wesysyoun*’; (e) otiose: ‘blyn{5}{0}’ = ‘*blynd*’; (f) omitted <er>: ‘on{5}’ = ‘*ouer*.’

5. REMARKS ON THE PAST

Throughout the almost 180 years in which texts from this manuscript have been edited, an evolution can be observed both in the aim of the editions and in the editors’ procedures and choices. As inferred from the contents of the collections and also from the general comments made by the editors, the earliest editions of fragments from this manuscript tend to be collections or anthologies whose main purpose was to make available to contemporary readers medieval material that had remained hidden for centuries. The editor’s role was that of an antiquarian who searched for, selected, arranged and reproduced texts in order to pass on their contents to a readership that ranged from students to those interested in poetry, literature or medieval culture in general. In these years, faithfulness to the text was at odds with possible unintelligibility, and editors sought ways to ensure that the text presented as few obstacles as possible to the reader. The focus of interest was on the content rather than the form, which was secondary for both editor and reader. However, attention was paid to palaeographic details that would eventually be overlooked and that seem to have been much more relevant than in later years. In none of these editions is there any reference to editorial policy, as it was understood that the kind of reader that they had in mind did not need this information.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century editors started to provide the reader with information about their editorial policy, a practice maintained to the present day. Faithfulness to the original text was not always the primary objective, as the normalisation of the language to achieve a better understanding was still common. Yet, there were editions which were close to the original text in which expansions of abbreviations were italicised for the sake of a reader potentially interested in the form of the original as well as in the content. The interpretation of abbreviation marks, at times, also differed from that of their predecessors.

In the second quarter of the twentieth century some of the palaeographical marks, such as {0}, were seen as meaningless. The concept of faithfulness to the



original text was still far from what we understand today, and although editors claimed to have kept to the spelling of the source, editorial changes significantly altered the form of the original. In the editions analysed for this period two editors took different approaches to some horizontal strokes: in the same words, in the same poem, one expanded them as <e> and the other considered them otiose. There were also different approaches in the resolution of {1}.

The editions undertaken in the mid twentieth century kept closer to the original manuscript, although the editors thought it unnecessary to account for the expansion of abbreviations. In their view, symbol and meaning were univocal. Variant interpretations were not possible and so there was no need to italicise the expansions, although these are ultimately their own interpretation of the original. There seems to be an agreement that the marks {0} and {1} should be considered otiose thereafter.

In the editions made in the latter part of the twentieth century editorial principles gained greater weight and very detailed descriptions of both the editorial choices and the reasons behind those choices are given. The editor made it clear to the reader what had been done, how it had been done and why it had been done. It was important not only to provide a readable text faithful to the original but also the tools to enable the reader to make judgements about the text, or to make it possible to use a text for various purposes. For the expansion of the abbreviations the scribe's most usual spelling was followed as a rule. The only edition of a text by scribe O in the twenty-first century is essentially a diplomatic edition and follows the idea of expanding abbreviations according to the scribe's most frequent spelling forms.

All these editions, with their strengths and weaknesses, were made with specific purposes in mind, and for specific potential readerships in each era. From our twenty-first century perspective we cannot judge a work for its usefulness at the time, though we might question its later use for purposes other than those for which it was first intended.

6. REMARKS ON THE PRESENT

None of the Brogyntyn ii. 1 texts has been edited in the last decade. Barton (forthcoming) is editing *The Life of St. Katherine of Alexandria*, which was copied by a scribe other than O, and whose language I have localised broadly somewhere in the borders of west Warwickshire and east Worcestershire area, not far from the place of localisation of the texts by scribe O. Nowadays, paper editions which must conform to the publisher's requirements rather than the editor's priorities are still being produced. In many cases, publishers consider textual aesthetics more important than the detailed representation of the original. This leads to reflections such as that by Parkinson and Emiliano (2002, 348), who questioned the appropriateness of some of the existing editions which "are not suited for the linguistic, philological, and diplomatic study of the documents."

However, the digital era has brought new formats which allow for much more flexibility and variation in any edition. Robinson (2016, 187) states that "we



do not transcribe manuscripts in the digital era as we might have done a century ago, and we do not look at manuscripts the same way.” Digital editions allow for many different possibilities for the editor and the reader. Sahle (2016, 27) declares that “a main characteristic of a digital edition is its representation of a potentially large number of documents in a potentially limitless number of different views, such as facsimile, diplomatic transcription and reading versions.”

The main source of disagreement among the editions analysed in this paper lies mainly in the interpretation and expansion of abbreviations. There is not one single abbreviation mark that has achieved consensus among the editors reviewed for this article since the nineteenth century. There are some for which most editors assign the same value, but in all cases, there is always someone with a different interpretation. In addition, ideas on how to expand abbreviations have changed over time. In recent years concern about how to deal with abbreviations has called the attention of researchers and medieval manuscript editors. De la Cruz-Cabanillas and Diego-Rodríguez (2018, 166) consider that “it is essential to be consistent in the expansion of abbreviations and follow the same criteria on all occasions, allowing the reader to learn about the editorial procedure the editors have adopted.” Although they acknowledge that there is not always a single interpretation for the abbreviations, they still believe that “the most frequent expanded form should be taken into consideration in case there is doubt [...]” (2018, 180). This approach is shared by other scholars such as Esteban-Segura who, when editing Glasgow, University Library, Hunter MS 509, decided that in cases “when two options were possible, the most frequent form was selected” (2011, 100).

Computer technology now allows digital editions to provide different views of a text. Robinson (2016, 193) claims that “a digital transcript might offer alternative ways of seeing the text, toggling abbreviations on or off.” Abbreviations need to have a special status and need to be treated in a very specific way. Honkapohja and Suomela (2022) propose a system for tagging the abbreviations and its expansions by making use of the TEI P5 Guidelines tags for encoding them. Honkapohja (2021, 19-20) argues that “one of the most important uses of abbreviations in palaeography is for dating and localising scribal hands” since “scribes from a certain area may have acquired their abbreviation practices from some local writing centre” and the use of some abbreviations might be geographically conditioned. This means that even if expanding the abbreviations may be desirable for intelligibility of a text, providing the reader with the original abbreviation or a code for it has further advantages. For this purpose, the abbreviations must be treated independently from expanded forms and more studies concerning the actual abbreviation marks should be carried out.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The mark that I have portrayed as {9}, in short, monosyllabic words such as þ{9} = ‘thus,’ h{9} = ‘house,’ sp{9} = ‘spouse,’ was found to have a clear geographical distribution in the West Midlands, at the border of Lancashire and Cheshire and in south Shropshire in the Early Middle English material transcribed for *LAEME = A Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* (Honkapohja 2019, 15). Unlike for the *LAEME* (Laing and Lass 2013) corpus, the use of abbreviations as a way of localising texts for the Late Middle English material is more complicated since there was no



7. REMARKS ON THE FUTURE

It has long been acknowledged that “virtually all editorial interventions in early texts represent potential losses of information, or addition of false information” (Lass 2004, 26). Even the most honourable approaches, such as diplomatic editions expanding abbreviations according to the scribe’s usual spelling pose problems. On many occasions the norm is the abbreviated form, and the fully spelled form is the oddity. From a few cases of a word with a particular spelling (or sometimes only one), it cannot be inferred that all the abbreviated forms of that word stand for the same spelling.⁴¹ The result of this editorial intervention is a written language, partially made up by the editor, which departs from the scribe’s written language and which, as this analysis has shown, causes each edited text to exhibit its own characteristics, making it impossible to see the relative uniformity that the copyist originally produced.

Some degree of editorial intervention is unavoidable in every edition, but old formats have given way to new possibilities. The future is not in paper printed editions since they are very limited and cannot offer the plurality and versatility of digital editions. The future is in digital editions together with digitalised images of the manuscripts that can be linked to an edited text. These editions might include study and research on the contents of the edited material, and textual notes and references to other manuscripts or sources with the same or similar content. Special software can allow inclusion of as many variant readings as we want, thus making it possible to offer editorial interpretations, together with whatever is found in the source. However, the most important requirement for these editions is to provide material that is as close as possible to the original in all respects so that the resulting outputs make clear the difference between what is in the manuscript text and what is interpretation. Digital editions would benefit linguists, philologists, historians, palaeographers and even those lay readers interested in medieval culture with the same interests as the ones for whom some of the first editions were produced. All the editions consulted here, and many others undertaken in the past, despite their limitations, brought their texts out of oblivion, and without all these editions we would not be talking about the future of editing today.

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systematic collection of data for that purpose in *eLALME* (Benskin et al. 2013). Some of the *eLALME* abbreviated forms might have come from editions and, as I have shown in this paper, editors might interpret the same symbols in many ways.

⁴¹ As seen above, in scribe O’s production WITH is usually abbreviated to ‘w^{it}’ (95x) or ‘w^t’ (135x) and it is fully spelled only four times as: ‘witt’ (2x), ‘wyth’ (2x). The majority form does not occur often enough to infer that it would be the scribe’s preferred form. Sometimes there may be no expanded form in the portion of text being edited to establish a comparison, or there might be one that might not be the majority form either if we were to consider the entire output of a scribe in a single manuscript (or in more manuscripts in cases of scribes who copied multiple works in multiple manuscripts).



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APPENDIX

TABLE 2. SOME DIALECTAL DIAGNOSTIC ITEMS.

ITEM	ff. 63 ^v -79 ^r	ff. 157 ^v -184 ^r	FORMS IN ALL THE SCRIBE'S TEXTS
AGAIN	aʒeyne (2x), agayn{5}e (1x), aʒene (1x), aʒeyn{5} (1x), aʒeyn{5}e (1x)	aʒeyne (8x), a-ʒeyne (2x)	aʒeyne (10x), a-ʒeyne (2x) , a-gayne (2x), a-gayne (2x), aʒene (1x), aʒeyn{5} (1x), aʒeyn{5}e (1x) , agayn{5} (1x), agayn{5}e (1x)
AGAINST	Aʒeyns (2x), aʒeynst (2x), aʒens (1x)	aʒenst (2x), a-ʒennyst (1x)	aʒeynst (3x), Aʒeyns (2x), aʒenst (2x), aʒens (1x), a-ʒennyst (1x), Aʒeynst (1x)
ANY	anny (4x), any (2x), an{5}y (2x), an{5}ye (1x), enny (1x), eny (1x)	anny (1x)	anny (7x), an{5}y (5x), any (2x), an{5}ye (1x), enny (1x), eny (1x)
BEFORE	befor (2x), Befor (1x), be-for{3} (1x), byfor (1x), byfore (1x), to-forne (1x)	befor (3x), before (3x), byfor (2x), befor{3} (1x)	befor (5x), byfor (5x), befor{3} (3x), before (3x), be-for{3} (1x), byfore (1x), Befor (1x), Befor{3} (1x), to-forne (1x)
CHURCH		churche (2x), churchus (pl) (1x)	churche (4x), churchus (pl) (1x)
COULD	cov{0} (3x)		cov{0} (3x), cothe (1x), covthe (1x)
DAUGHTER	dowʒtt{4} (1x)	doʒtt{4} (4x)	doʒtt{4} (4x), dowʒtt{4} (1x)
EACH		eche (2x), yche (2x)	yche (6x), eche (3x) , eych (1x), eyche (1x), Eycheon{5} (1x)
FIRST	Fyrst (1x)	furst (6x), ffurst (1x), forst (1x)	furst (15x), ffurst (1x) , forst (1x), Fyrst (1x)
GIVE	ʒeve (2x), ʒeyf (2x), ʒeyfe (1x)	ʒeyfe (4x), geyfe (2x), geyf (1x)	ʒeyfe (8x), ʒeyf (4x), geyf (3x), geyfe (3x) , ʒeve (2x), yeve (1x)
HUNDRED		hundyrtys (1x)	hundyrtys (1x)
IF	yf (1x), ʒeyf (1x), ʒife (1x)	yf (13x), yfe (2x), ʒeyfe (2x), if (1x)	yf (26x), ʒeyfe (4x), yfe (3x), yff (1x), ʒefe (1x), ʒeyf (1x), ʒife (1x), if (1x), Yffe (1x)
IT	hit (15x), Hit (7x), it (3x)	hit (39x), it (1x)	hit (98x), Hit (11x) , it (7x), Hyt (4x) , yt (4x), hite (2x)
LIVE	leue (2x), lyue (1x), leve (1x)	leve (2x), leue (1x), lyve (1x)	leue (3x), leve (3x), lyue (2x), lefe (1x), leyfe (1x), lyve (1x), lyvfe (1x)
MANY	mon{5}y (3x), Many (2x), man{5}y (2x), mony (2x), mon{5}ye (1x)	mon{5}y (3x), many (2x), mony (1x)	mon{5}y (11x), mony (5x) , Many (3x), man{5}y (3x), many (2x), mon{5}ye (1x), mon{5}e (1x)



MUCH		myche (2x)	myche (7x), mecu{1} (1x) , mekull (1x) , meku{1} (1x) , meky{1} (1x) , mychey{1} (1x), mych (1x), mykyl (1x)
SHE		sche (2x), schew (2x), schewe (1x), schw (2x), schoe (1x), schow (1x), schwe (1x)	sche (14x), schw (6x), schow (5x), schew (4x), schoe (4x), schwe (4x), schewe (1x), scho (1x), schowe (1x)
SHOULD	schul{0} (6x), schw{0} (3x), schol{0} (1x), scholdyst (1x), schul (1x), schulddyst (1x), schvl{0} (1x)	schul{0} (11x), schw{0} (5x), schvl{0} (3x)	schul{0} (22x), schw{0} (10x), schvl{0} (4x), schol{0} (2x), schul (1x)
SUCH	syche (2x), Suche (1x), suche (1x)	suche (1x)	syche (8x), Suche (2x), suche (2x)
THEM	hem (1x), þe{5} (1x)	þeme (26x), þe{5} (13x), þem (12x), heme (6x), theme (4x), the{5} (4x), þem{5} (2x), hem (1x), Them (1x), them (1x), Theme (1x)	þeme (26x), þe{5} (17x), heme (16x), þem (12x), theme (6x), the{5} (4x), þem{5} (3x), hem (2x), Them (1x), them (1x), Theme (1x), þe{5}e (1x)
THEIR	her{3} (16x), her (1x), herre (1x)	þ{2} (27x), her{3} (17x), þeyr{3} (1x)	her{3} (41x) , þ{2} (28x), her (1x) , herre (1x) , þeyr{3} (1x)

TABLE 3. SUMMARY OF EDITORIAL CHOICES.

MS feature	1845	1855	1864-1866	1907	1911	1913	1935	1939	1952	1953	1969	1999	2005
{0}	de	d	d de	d	de	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d
{1}	lle	lle	lle ll	ll le	lle	ll	ll	ll	ll	ll	ll	ll	ll
{2}	er	er	er	er	<i>er</i>	<i>er</i>	<i>er</i>	er	er	er re	yr er ur re	er re	<i>er</i>
{3}	e	e –	e	e –	<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>	e	–	–	–	<i>e</i>
{4}	er	er	er			ur er		er	er	er	ur er yr	er	<i>er</i>
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