Methodological problems in editing model sermons

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In the Middle Ages, text collections that offered models for various types of literature were very important. Among the genres, one finds handbooks of letter-writing, exercises of rhetorics, formularies for diplomas, manuals for preachers, and – model sermons.

Such sermons were a valuable instrument for aiding preachers. They were transmitted in organized collections, the ‘de tempore’, covering all Sundays and major feasts of the year, and the ‘de sanctis’, covering all the saints’ days on which preaching was expected. Preachers could use them without any changes at all or rework them in various ways to suit their own needs. Of course, they were originally created by individual authors, but since they were used as tools and constantly adapted to different needs, they gradually became transformed into anonymous source-books.

Collections of model sermons – some in Latin, others in vernacular languages – were very popular and widely spread all over Europe, as can be gathered from the fact that there are still hundreds, or even thousands, of such manuscripts preserved as well as a great number of early printed editions from the end of the 15th century up to the Reformation. In fact, this genre has been called the mass medium of the Middle Ages (Le Goff, d’Avray), and it was especially important from the time of the Dominicans and Franciscans on. Among the authors one finds great names like Iacobus de Voragine, Iordanus de Quedlinburg, Peregrinus de Opeln, Conradus de Brundelheim, etc. After the Reformation, however, model sermons lost their influence and were more or less forgotten.

There is now an increasing interest in these collections among scholars from different disciplines. Thus, good editions are needed to make research in this material possible. A few editions or inventories, some of them electronic, have been published, but most of these extensive collections still remain inaccessible to scholars.

The problems of editing sermon collections of this kind lie mainly in the large number of textual witnesses as well as in their size and their unstable character due to constant revision. Therefore, it would be rather impracticable to try to make traditional critical editions of them. Instead, the focus should be on editing a version that has been especially influential.

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My intention is to test a pragmatic editorial method that may be suitable for this text genre, namely the kind of ‘semi-critical’ edition described by David d’Avray in *Medieval Marriage Sermons: Mass Communication in a Culture without Print* (Oxford, 2001). This roughly corresponds to a “critical transcription”, described in an earlier book, *Death and the Prince* (1994).

This type of edition is based on what David d’Avray calls ‘the proportionality principle’, meaning that the investment of scholarly effort should be in proportion to the intellectual gain. This editorial method can also be applied to other types of ‘functional’ texts, for example commentaries and glosses to liturgical poetry.

To simplify, this method contains the following steps: you choose a sermon collection for publication, collate part of the text in a sample of manuscripts and transcribe the text from a good manuscript or from an early printed book which can be regarded as a representative source. Transcribing an incunable instead of a manuscript has some advantages: it is usually easier to read; since it is late, it is likely to contain a more complete text than manuscripts, and, being printed, it probably represents a more widespread tradition. You publish the transcription, after correcting obvious errors, and add a brief apparatus criticus based on a couple of manuscripts which can be used for correcting the transcribed source and giving information on deviating traditions. These manuscripts can be selected by means of ‘West tables’ (so called by d’Avray), i.e. tables listing agreements in error between manuscripts, a procedure which makes it possible to identify groups of manuscripts. In this way, you get the result of stemmatics without a stemma.

The method was first tested within two earlier projects financed by the Swedish National Bank Tercentenary Foundation and hosted by Uppsala University: ‘Model Sermons of the Middle Ages. Commencing the Publication of a Forgotten Mass Medium’ and ‘Medieval Model Sermons – in Latin and Swedish’. These projects aimed at finding a suitable editorial method and then editing one model sermon collection in Latin and one in Old Swedish. The Old Swedish collection was published in 2006 by Roger Andersson.

I am now preparing the Latin edition within the Ars edendi programme. The collection chosen is the ‘Sermones moralissimi de tempore’ by the French Franciscan Nicolaus de Aquaevilla. That collection, which contains 60 sermons, was quite influential, not least in late medieval Sweden, where the Birgittine friars of Vadstena Abbey expanded it by adding quotations from St Birgitta’s Revelations, and it exists in several 15th century printed editions; the two earliest ones (printed around 1480) are kept at Uppsala University Library (UUB 35b:19; 35b:737). My colleague Monica Hedlund has shown in an interesting study how two of these sermons have been reworked and used in practical preaching in Vadstena.

My edition is based on a transcription of one of the Uppsala incunables (35b:19), accompanied by a critical apparatus containing variants from two
manuscripts that clearly belong to different groups. The manuscripts selected are Beaune, Bibliothèque municipale 48, called A, written in France towards the end of the thirteenth century, and London, British Library Add. 33416, called F, written in Belgium in 1339. Especially the manuscript F shows a very independent character. It sometimes has very long additions of its own, which I have decided to edit in an appendix.

I also include variants from a third manuscript which must be the primary source from which the incunable was copied. It is a French manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 15957), which is mentioned in a will from 1288 and is thus one of the oldest manuscripts. It is here called α, but I will use a Latin letter for it instead. Its text is very close to that of the incunable. Still, there are numerous minor discrepancies between the incunable and α, where α sometimes agrees with the two other manuscripts or with one of them (more often with A than with F), and sometimes not. Most of these discrepancies are quite trivial, like dixit for dicit, simple transpositions (salus nostra / nostra salus), the omission of est in formulas like notandum est, or different ways of abridging Bible quotations. There are also some clear conjunctive errors that link α and the incunable together. In addition, there are four sermons that occur in no other text witness but α and the incunable. These have a special character, offering exempla and local colour.

The manuscript α offers a good text, but it can rather be described as “work in progress”. It is full of corrections in the text itself and additions in the margin which have been introduced into the text of the incunable.

Of course, one could argue that the best solution would be to base the edition on α rather than the incunable, but I found it practical to use the transcription already made. There is also, in my opinion, a point in editing a widespread, standardized version like the incunable, where, for example, the sermons are numbered in connection with the headings (in α, the numbers of sermons are given in the upper margin; in the incunable, there are also headings for subsections of sermons, which is normally not the case in the mss). After all, a printed book, which exists or has existed in many copies, is always a more influential textual witness and model than any single manuscript. This is a reason for choosing an incunable as main source.

One problem in making a semi-critical edition is how to handle passages where the text of the transcribed incunable is faulty (most often its errors are also present in the ms α). Where there are obvious errors, these are corrected, according to the manuscripts A and F, if they present sound readings (which they normally do). In some dubious cases where the incunable and α agree against A and F and which may be errors but not necessarily so, I have decided to correct according to A and F, if they offer a better text. Where αAF all agree against the incunable and their reading is sound, it is normally accepted in the text even when concerning quite trivial variants.

Other questions to be considered are how big the apparatus criticus should
be, what variants should be disregarded, and how (if at all) italics should be used in quotations from the Bible and other sources.

In order to discuss problems of this kind, I present some passages from my very provisional edition of one sermon (number 26 in the collection). The footnotes concerning these passages are marked in bold (11, 17, 22, 24, 27, 30, 31, 44, 45, 68, 72 + 74, 78, 79, 81, 82, 84).

In this sermon, the manuscript F has a very long passage which does not occur in the other textual witnesses and which I edit in an appendix after the sermon. It is included here to give an idea of the independent character of F. The beginning of the sermon is missing in the manuscript A due to the loss of a quire in the binding of the manuscript.
Examples from sermo 26

In die pasche. Sermo uicesimussextus

1 Maria Magdalene et Maria Iacobi et Salome emerunt aromata, ut ungerent Iesum. Mat. ul(timo).

In uerbis istis duo possimus considerare.

Primum est uidere, quid per istas tres mulieres siue Marias significatur, que uenerunt querere Iesum orto iam sole ad monumentum.

Secundum est uidere, quid significatur per ista aromata, que attulerunt secum, ut ungerent Iesum.

2 Primum ergo est uidere, quid per istas tres mulieres siue Marias significatur. Per istas tres Marias (quia Maria amarum mare interpretatur) quelibet anima penitens significatur. Que debet habere triplicem amaritudinem, et hoc de tribus peccatis, cordis, oris et operis, quia omne peccatum actuale uel mortale uel ueniale est peccatum oris uel cordis uel operis, quia omne peccatum aut prouenit ex corde ex malo consensu et ex mala cogitatione aut ex ore ex mala locutione aut ex corpore ex mala aliqua operatione. 3 Peccata oris sunt mendacia, falsa testimonia, detractiones et blasphemie, praua eloquia et multiloquia et cetera huiusmodi. Peccata cordis possunt dici et sunt peccata superbie, ire, inuidie, odii et rancoris, cupiditatis et auaricie et cetera huiusmodi. De peccato cordis et totius operis debet quelibet anima penitens habere triplicem amaritudinem et hoc, quia per ista peccata offensit et derelinquit Christum, sponsum suum dulcissimum. 4 Vnde dicitur Iere. II anime peccatrici: Scito et uide, quia malum est et amarum te reliquisse Dominum Deum tuum. De ista triplici amaritudine reple tus fuit Iob, qui dolens...
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interpretatur et significat animam penitentem et dolentem de peccatis suis. *Iob X:* *Loquar in amaritudine anime mee. Dicam Deo etcetera.* […]

6 Secundum est uidere, que sunt illa aromata, que iste sancte mulieres, id est quilibet anima penitens debet afferre ad ungendum Iesum.

Vnguentum triplex.

Et sciemun est, quod triplex unguentum debet afferre ad ungendum Iesum.

Primum debet esse deuotionis siue compunctionis unguentum, et conficietur illud ex reprobatione propiorum peccatorum et debet esse proprie contritio uera cordis. Istud unguentum proprie potest dici Marie Magdalene, que plorans unuit ad monumentum. *Io. ul(timo).* 7 Vnde dixerunt angeli ei: *Mulier. quid ploras?* Et ipsa respondit: *Tulerunt Dominum meum, et nescio, ubi posuerunt eum.* […]

De istis aromatibus dicitur *Canti. IIII:* *Surge, aquilo; ueni, auster; perfla ortum meum, et fluent aromata illius.* 8 O aquilo, surge, id est o dyabole, discede, et ueni, auster, id est Sancte Spiritus. Perfla ortum meum, id est conscientiam meam, et fluent aromata illius, scilicet cordis deuotio et compunctio de peccatis et uera cordis contritio. […]

Secundum unguentum potest dici unguentum uere confessionis et uere pacis cordis. […]

11 Tercium unguentum potest dici mortificationis carnis, et illud unguentum potest dici spiritualiter unguentum Marie Iacobi, quia Iacobus interpretatur supplantator uel luctator et per mortificationem carnis et per elemosinarum largitionem et per alia opera pietatis et per deuotionem orationis debet quelibet anima penitens supplantare uicia et luctari contra illa. Vere
per unguentum, quod est mortificatio carnis, que est in disciplinis, uigiliis et honestis ieiuniis et huiusmodi, debet quelibet anima penitens luctari contra uicia carnis et supplantare illa. 12 Ideo dicit Apostolus Col. III: [...] 13 Ideo dicit Apostolus Col. III quod dicitur […] 50 De isto unguento unxit se sancta Iudith secundum quod dicitur Iudith X, ubi dicitur: Exuit se Iudith indumentis et lauit corpus suum et unxit se mirra optima. Iudith, que confitens uel glorificans interpretatur, animam penitentem significat, que debet Deum confiteri uerbis et factis et ipsum glorificare in quantum potest de bonis ab eo sibi collatis. Ista Iudith debet se exuere indumentis uiduitatis sue, id est de antiquis peccatis per contritionem, et debet lauare totum corpus suum, id est totum hominem interiorem per ueram confessionem, et postea debet se ungere mirra optima, id est bona mortificatione carnis et aspera, que est mirra, que custodit animam et corpus a putredine luxurie. 14 De hoc dicitur Ioelis I: Computruerunt iumenta in stercore suo. Et dicit beatus Gregorius: Iumenta in stercore suo putrescere est carnalem uitam suam in fetore luxuriae vitam finire. [...] Appendix: additio, quam habet F post finire in § 14: De isto unguento Can. 3: mirra et aloé cum uniuersis primis ungentis. Glossa: mirra imputribile corpus reddit et significat illos, qui amaritudine penitentie reddunt corpus suum securum a motibus carnalibus. Can. V: Manus meee distillauerunt mirram et digiti pleni mei sunt mirra probatissima, que imputribile corpus reddit. Interlinearis. Item per elemosinarum largitionem et per alia opera pietatis, quod est secundum unguentum, luctari debet anima penitens contra mundi auaricia et contra cupiditatem. Istud est unguentum oleii, quia sicut oleum ualet ad multa, ad sanandum uulnera et ad illuminandum. Similiter elemosina sanat uulnera peccatorum. Luc. XI: Date elemosinam, et omnia munda sunt uobis. Similiter ualet ad multa alia. Tho. 4: Eleemosinam liberat a morte et a peccato, et non

52 Cfr Iudith 10,2–3 60 Joel 1,17 61 Cfr Gregorius Magnus, XL Homiliarum in Evangelia libri duo (PL 76: 1133C): Computruerunt jumenta in stercore suo (Joel. I, 17). Jumenta quippe in stercore suo putrescere est carnalem uitam suam in fetore luxuriae vitam finire 1,1 Cfr Cant. 4,14 2 find passage! 3 Cant. 5,5 5 find passage! 10 Luc. 11,41 11 Cfr Tob. 4,11–12

patietur ire anima in tenebras. Magna fidelicia erit elemosina coram summo Deo facientibus eam. I° Thi. 4: Piaetas utilis est ad omnia. De ista unctione Mat. VI: Tu autem, scilicet o penitens, cum ieiunas, unge caput tuum, id est
mentem tuam uel Christum in menbris suis oleo scilicet misericordie et pietatis et Exo. XXX: Facies oleum et unges tabernaculum, id est Christum et uasa eius, id est menbra eius. Similiter de isto unguento potest dici illud Hester II, quod puella, que debebant ingredi ad regem Assuerum se oleo mirrino ungebant et alii sex pigmentis et aromatibus utebantur. Puelle iste dici possess animae fideles et caste, que antequam ingrediantur ad regem Assuerum, id est ad Christum, qui est rex regum et Dominus dominantium Apo. XIX, debent in isto seculo prius se oleo ungere et alii sex pigmentis debent uti. Per oleum cordis piaetas significari potest, per VI alia pigmenta possunt significari sex opera misericordie et exteriora. Que sunt esurientes pascere, hospites colligere, nudos uestire, infirmos uisitare et incarceratos ad horam uel existentes in carcere aliquid tribulationis confortari. De istis uide Mt. XXV. Dictur, quod quando omnes gentes congregabuntur coram eo, scilicet Iesu Christo, in die iudicii, tunc dicet hiis, qui a dextris eius erunt, quia ista sex opera fecerunt: Esuriui, et dedistis michi manducare etcetera. Venite ergo benedicti Patris mei etcetera. Per ista VI pigmenta significatur sex opera misericordie, quibus debent se ungere anime fideles, per oleum pietas cordis et leticia cordis. I Cor. IX: Hylarem datorem diligit Deus.

XV. Sed sciendum est, quod ambigende sunt tribus modis. Primo flagello, id est lectione et sacrorum eloquiorum meditatione. Sap. XVI: In memoria sermonum tuorum exterminabuntur. Item 2° frigore, id est Dei iudicii timore, qui multum timenda est Soph. 3 dies illa, dies ire etcetera. Item 3° calore, id est consideratione ignis eterne, qui est inextinguibilis, et uermis eorum non morietur etcetera.

47 Cfr Sap. 16,11  49 Soph. 1,15  50 Cfr Is. 66,24; Marc. 9,43; 45; 47

46 ambigende] i.e. abigende  49 qui] ut vid.; quod vel quia exspectes  50 eterne] in eterni corr.?