

# Mending “the injurie of oblivion”: “Englishing” Chaucer and Barbour in early printed editions

Antony Henk

*Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany*

## ABSTRACT

This article examines the editorial choices made in Edinburgh printer Andro Hart’s 1616 edition of John Barbour’s *Brus*. Comparison of the 1616 Hart edition with Thomas Speght’s 1602 Chaucer edition displays similar concerns with preserving accessibility to historical texts despite significant language changes in both Older Scots and English, noting shared employment of assistive paratextual apparatus. Linguistic assessment comparing Hart and Speght’s editions to their parent texts demonstrates how both editors modernize language to improve reader accessibility while preserving archaic qualities and metricality. Contextualization of the declining prestige of Older Scots during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries further clarifies this assessment. Hart’s edition portrays both a genesis of mutual intelligibility between Scots and English, and a coda for Older Scots as a literary prestige tongue.

KEYWORDS: Older Scots; Thomas Speght; Scottish printing; Early Modern printing; Anglicization.

**Emmendando “la injuria del olvido”:  
La “anglificación” de Chaucer y  
Barbour en las ediciones impresas  
tempranas \***

RESUMEN: Este artículo examina las decisiones editoriales tomadas en la edición del *Brus* de John Barbour realizada por el impresor de Edimburgo Andro Hart en 1616. La comparación entre la edición de Hart de 1616 y la de la obra de Chaucer realizada por Thomas Speght en 1602 demuestra que hay una preocupación similar a la hora de preservar la accesibilidad a textos históricos a pesar de los significativos cambios en tanto en el escocés an-

**Remendando “o dano do  
esquecimento”: A “Anglicização” de  
Chaucer e Barbour em edições  
impressas protomodernas\*\***

RESUMO: Este artigo examina as escolhas editoriais feitas na edição de 1616, do impressor Andro Hart de Edimburgo, do livro *Brus* de John Barbour. A comparação da edição de 1616 de Hart com a edição de 1602 de Chaucer por Thomas Speght mostra preocupações semelhantes com a preservação da acessibilidade de textos históricos, apesar de mudanças linguísticas significativas no (ânglico) escocês e no inglês mais antigos, observando-se o

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\* Translation into Spanish by Tamara Pérez-Fernández.

\*\* Translation into Portuguese by Miguel Ramalhete.

tigo como en el inglés, y llama la atención acerca de un uso compartido de aparatos paratextuales de apoyo. La evaluación lingüística comparando las ediciones de Hart y Speght con sus textos originales demuestra cómo ambos editores modernizan el lenguaje para mejorar el acceso del lector al mismo, preservando a la vez cualidades y métricas arcaicas. Una contextualización del prestigio en declive del escocés antiguo durante los siglos XVI y XVII ayuda a clarificar esta evaluación. La edición de Hart representa tanto un origen de inteligibilidad mutua entre el escocés y el inglés como un punto final para el escocés antiguo como lengua de prestigio literario.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Escocés antiguo; Thomas Speght; imprenta escocesa; imprenta protomoderna; anglicización.

emprego comum de aparatos paratextuais auxiliares. A avaliação linguística comparativa das edições de Hart e Speght com os textos originais demonstra como ambos os editores modernizam a língua para melhorar a acessibilidade aos leitores, preservando qualidades arcaicas e a métrica. A contextualização do declínio em prestígio do escocês mais antigo durante os séculos XVI e XVII ajuda a clarificar esta avaliação. A edição de Hart representa tanto uma gênese de inteligibilidade mútua entre o escocês e o inglês, como também um momento conclusivo para o escocês mais antigo como uma língua de prestígio literário.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Escocês antigo; Thomas Speght; imprensa escocesa; imprensa protomoderna; anglicização.

In 1616, a new edition of John Barbour's *The Brus* left the busy press of the wildly successful Edinburgh printer Andro Hart (d. 1621). Hart's prefatory letter to his readership opens thus:

There is nothing vnto which the minde of man doth more aspire than to renown & immortality: therefore it is, that no time hath bene so barbarous, no countries so vnciuile, but they haue had a care to preserue worthie actions from the iniurie of obliuion, & laboured that the names of those that were vertuous, while they liued, should not perish with their breath. And amongst all the strange and diuerse fashions of remembering the dead, no record hath bene found to be compared to that of bookes, & amongst all bookes none so lasting as these in verse, which how so euer rudely done, yet seeme to haue striuen with dayes, and euen to compasse time, beeing the first remembrances that either Greece or Rome haue, and apparrantly shall be the last. (Hart 1616, sig. ¶2r)<sup>1</sup>

This compelling statement on the memorializing power of great literature would not be out of place in a modern editor's foreword.

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<sup>1</sup> Hart's edition of Barbour's *Brus* (Barbour 1616), including his preface and the table, will be cited as "Hart 1616" throughout the article. The spelling of the quotations of printed texts has been maintained, though expanding abbreviations (except for the ampersand).

The predecessor of a slightly different 1620 print, Hart's 1616 *The Actes and Life of The Most Victorious Conqueror, Robert Bruce, King of Scotland* (hereafter *Actes*) has attracted only modest scholarly interest in recent years, most centered on its relationship to its source text. Jeremy Smith's chronology of historical *Brus* editions (2013, 37–54) briefly notes Hart's interest in showcasing the authority of the text and discusses the edition's lessened inclusion of Scots forms. Concerning Hart himself, Alastair J. Mann's contributions to the history of the Early Modern Scottish press sketch a detailed image of Hart's life and career (2000; 2001; 2004).

Additionally, scholars have remarked on the linguistic changes to the *Brus* text in Hart's two editions: an avoidance of Scots forms or "Anglicization" (Smith 2013, 25–26; Bald 1926, 107–115). This feature has not been fully assessed in the wider context of Renaissance literary vernacular texts, as the Hart edition has not been studied alongside similar editions. Similarly, initial comments have been made about the smaller-scale editing decisions visible in the text of Speght's *The Workes of our Ancient and lerned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly Printed* (hereafter *Workes*). However, not all of Speght's editing choices, particularly his language changes to Chaucer's text, have yet been explicitly squared with the recognition that his editions were designed with his contemporary audience's linguistic needs in mind (Trigg 2008, 107–109). Finally, as Mann (2001, 181) notes, the history of Scottish print has yet to be fully understood in terms of its dependence on, and independence of, the slightly elder English printing industry. A comparative reassessment of Hart's 1616 *Actes* that places it alongside a similar English edition, Thomas Speght's 1602 *Workes*, reveals that Hart's Anglicization is, like the editing strategies of his English contemporaries, geared toward linguistic modernization, creating accessibility for contemporary readers. Specifically, Hart's editing modernizes an archaic Early Older Scots text to a contemporary Late Middle Older Scots, the latter itself undergoing the final stages of dialectalization and subsumption into English.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the editing decisions Speght made to safeguard Chaucer's writings from the linguistic "injurie of time" are

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<sup>2</sup> I draw this distinction between Early Older Scots (to 1450) and Late Middle Older Scots (1550 to 1700) because substantial language change occurred between the writing of *Brus* and the publishing of Hart's edition; I here follow A.J. Aitken's periodization of the language (2015a, 10).

demonstrably similar to those used by Hart in his edition of the *Brus* text, themselves in the name of preserving it from the “iniurie of obliuion” (Trigg 2008, 108; Speght 1598, sig. [aii]v; Hart 1616, sig. ¶12r). This comparison reframes Hart’s edition as one reflecting the changing status and style of Late Middle Older Scots language. Before beginning the comparison, however, some methodological concerns need addressing.

## **1. Comparing a second edition to a first edition: materials and methods**

Hart’s 1616 *Actes* is aptly compared to Thomas Speght’s 1602 *Workes* for several reasons, even on top of the double contemporaneity of both the edition publications and the lives of their respective historical authors, Geoffrey Chaucer (1342–1400) and John Barbour (ca. 1320–1395). Both editions, albeit in differing degrees, are elegant, lavishly decorated interpretations of their source texts, and both make substantial linguistic alterations to their source materials, or, to develop further Smith’s metaphor of editing, their “Platonic texts” (2013, 66). Comparatively extensive academic work has been devoted to Speght’s numerous editions of Chaucer’s oeuvre. Scholars previously have attacked the books for their heavy modernization of their source material, but more recent assessments of the Speght *Workes* recognize that the book’s editing is primarily concerned with publishing a text of majesty, venerability, and authority to assert Chaucer’s and his texts’ places in the English and European literary canon (Bishop 2007, 336–363; Trigg 2008; Bly 1999; Machan 1995, 149). Clare R. Kinney (1998), for example, explores Speght’s careful marking of Chaucer’s “sentences and proverbs,” which utilized Henry Peacham’s definitions of “Gnome” and “Paroemia.” Conversely, Hart’s *Actes* has been problematized for its Anglicization of the source material (Smith 2013, 45–46; Bald 1926) but has not been studied alongside any similar contemporaneous English poetic editions. A comparison of this kind provides a control by which the claim of Anglicization can be better qualified. Further, as will be shown below, the books reflect in their prefatory texts very similar editorial concerns regarding the challenges presented to readership by inevitable language change. Therefore, through close linguistic comparisons of each edition to its respective Platonic text, historical

contextualization, and analysis of each book's design, it is possible to observe the editing strategies of Hart and Speght, and to compare those strategies to one another.

There exist a few procedural concerns to discuss. First, the present essay uses the 1602 *Workes* as its model for comparison with Hart's *Actes*, not the 1598 printing. This choice is to account for the fact that the 1598 print appears to be something of a rush job; it was not until the 1602 edition that Speght was able to resolve several issues with the first edition (Machan 1995, 148). Therefore, selecting the 1602 edition eliminates undesired variables in close comparison. Furthermore, the 1598 *Workes* printing does not make changes to its predecessor text, John Stow's 1561 edition, while the 1602 does display significant textual editing and was completely reset from its predecessor (Machan 1995, 147; Pearsall 1984, 86–87). It is thus the first edition in which Speght's choices in editing his primary texts are truly apparent. Finally, the 1602 *Workes* and the 1616 *Actes* are a few years closer together in age, which helps further isolate their differences to only those being compared.

Additionally, while my comparisons strive to compare manuscripts in transcription directly to their printed counterparts, this was not always feasible as the *Brus* manuscripts have not been digitized for public use. Instead, I have turned to McDiarmid and Stevenson's edition (Barbour 1980), as it contains the most thorough method section and critical apparatus and most avoids modernization.

## 2. Hart's editing ethos: Scots against an English backdrop

Other scholars have mined Speght's *Workes* for the techniques it employs in service of canonization. Derek Pearsall assesses the *Workes'* appeals to a classical authority (1984, 75), while Stephanie Trigg highlights an interest in preserving Chaucer's poetry by translating its antiquated language (2008). Further, Tim William Machan highlights Speght's interest in curating a complete collection of Chaucer's writings (1995), and Siobhan Bly and Louise M. Bishop discuss veneration of Chaucer's body and personage (1999; 2007). Hart's *Actes* reflects similar concerns, noting the problem of ensuring intelligibility despite significant language change. This quality is readily apparent in Hart's prefacing letter, and reflects similar

concerns held by Speght. Comparing the concerns expressed shows that both Speght and Hart perceived language change as a barrier for their audiences, and thus suggests reasons that both books make substantial alterations to their source materials.

### *2.1 Anglicizing and modernizing: a changing linguistic landscape*

Andro Hart's prefatory letter is composed in English – admittedly, a large move away from Scots. However, historical evidence suggests that this choice to “English” a part of the book was made with the expectations of a new English-language pre-Commonwealth audience in mind, an audience for whom the linguistic lines between Scots and English were growing less clear-cut. Hart's English preface is not out of place for its time. Marjory A. Bald notes that English, or at least a form of Anglicized Scots, was already for mid-sixteenth-century Scottish printers the “correct diction for academic works,” while Scots was primarily a spoken vernacular language (Bald 1926, 110; Aitken 2015a, 5–6). In the case of Hart's slightly later *Actes*, his critical English preface follows this prescription, following a steady path of language progression. English was already overtaking Scots in the presses by the time Hart printed his 1616 edition: following the years of Robert Waldegrave's press career, which ended in 1603, Scots writings were outnumbered 2:1 by English works (Mann 2001, 191; Mann 2000, 116; Bald 1926, 106–115). James I and VI's own tastes in literature chart the overall literary fashions of the period: his fondness for Scottish poetry waned after the Union of the Crowns, and his tastes shifted towards English-language literature (Wormald 1991, 192–193; Jack 1988, 137–138). Growing preference for English is also reflected by the Scottish Kirk's use of English-language Bibles, both the Geneva Bible and James' Authorized Version. In Bible prescription was an enforced Englishing of the Scots linguistic landscape: in 1611, the Synod of Lothian prescribed that every parish purchase a copy of Hart's 1610 Geneva Bible, while the Synod of Fife enforced that every Kirk did the same, as well as suggesting that ministers also encourage their flocks to buy their own personal Bibles (Mann 2000, 38). Later in 1636, a canon law specifically prescribed the King James Authorized Version, though this ruling was not strongly enforced, and it was not until the 1660s that the shift from the Geneva Bible was complete (Mann 2000, 38–39, 49–50; Mann 2001, 191). Reflecting its declining socio-cultural prestige, Scots was also dropped from the printing of

official documents by the time of Hart's editions. Bald (1926, 114) estimated that a 1606 proclamation printed by Robert Charteris was probably the final official document printed in Scots.

The nature of the Scottish book trade was also seemingly friendly to importation, even of bound books, providing more evidence for changing feelings regarding the English language: it was not until 1681 that the Scottish Privy Council moved to protect the Scottish bookbinding industry, immunizing unbound books from import duties (Mann 2001, 193). This openness of book importation into Scotland is clear from two cases Andro Hart himself brought before the Privy Council, which both upheld the long-standing rights of merchants to import books without paying duties, citing in the second ruling the importance of "virtue, letteris, and learning" for Scotland (Mann 2000, 136–137). Furthermore, changes in Scottish reading tastes show that English-language texts were beginning to supplant Scots-language texts in Scotland. Between the 1630s and 1660, Scottish works of literature and non-fiction were largely superseded in the Scottish book industry by the printing of religious material and importing of Bibles printed in the Low Countries (Mann 2001, 195). On the obverse of this coin, substantial interest in Scottish poetry and Scottish-generated news had grown appreciably in England, though works were typically rewritten in English for southern audiences (Blakeway 2016, 536–537). This fact implies that Englishmen were an additional audience that Hart considered while editing, suggesting another reason for an English preface.

On an epistemic level, feelings seemed to have been rather mixed about this apparent overall "Englishing" of Scottish identity. The general atmosphere of James' early reign was celebratory of the Union, one that James presented as a happy, indissoluble marriage (Lawson-Peebles 2016, 60–63, 66–69). At the same time, a certain uneasy tension between modernity and antiquity remained, an anxiousness to preserve a distinct national identity for Scotland, one reflected in the later reprints and revisions of George Buchanan's *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* (Mason 2013, 38–65). Thus, a Scottish poetic "historie" integrating English and Scots together in one volume, and indeed using modern, fashionable English to introduce more "old-fashioned" Scots poetry within, is perfectly representative of its own time. It also cannot here go unsaid that Scottish printers very

frequently borrowed English printing techniques in general, though preserving their own recognizable style (Mann 2001, 185).

This borrowing of techniques overlapped with the borrowing of English spelling graphemes into Scots and an overall tendency towards subsumption into English that linguistic evidence makes clear. For example, in terms of spelling, Tudor English graphemes such as <sh>, <ch>, <gh>, <oo>, and <-ed> began to mingle with Scots variants (i.e., <sch>, <tch>, <u>, <-it>) in the latter sixteenth century (Aitken 2015d, 8). Furthermore, <yh> and <3h> disappeared, leaving only <y> and <3> (Aitken 2015d, 8). While this change might have been motivated by a loss of aspiration or a change in preceding vowel qualities, it is probable that this change shows some influence from English spelling. This subsumption and overlap are somewhat visible in Hart's prefatory letter itself, which includes a few Scottish elements (Bald 1926, 114). A. J. Aitken (2015c, 36) opines in his re-evaluation of Bald's "The Pioneers of Anglicized Speech in Scotland" (1927) that partly or fully Anglicized language was *en vogue* for Scots speakers; additionally, he assembles several primary sources which indicate that Scots was subsuming into a lower-prestige English dialect (Aitken 2015c, 29). Therefore, by printing his introduction in English, Hart not only courted a possible English-speaking audience for a Scots poem, but also obeyed general subsumptive trends in which written Scots was fossilizing into a language reserved only for special literary uses and spoken Scots was fading into "broadness" and "dialect," leaving English to take over as the written prestige language.

## 2.2 "It speaketh the language of that Time": Language change and intelligibility

Hart also makes a comment in his letter that specifically recognizes the linguistic challenges he faces in creating his edition: "And amongst all the rest, this storie of the valiant Bruce is not the least: it speaketh the language of that time, if it spake ours, it would not bee it selfe: yet as an antique it is venerable" (1616, sig. ¶2v). Hart here defends the Early Older Scots of his text, treating its difficulty (and what Englishmen of the time would have regarded as its "broadness") as a function of its historicity. Furthermore, his comment displays clear awareness of linguistic distance between a current language ("if it spake ours") versus the historical tongue ("the language of that



time"). It is perhaps telling that he does not specify which language is meant by "ours"; his vagueness may be an intentional neutrality, meant to avoid offending either English or Scots readers.

Hart's statement resembles a number of sentiments in Speght's *Workes* that note challenges to reading Chaucer's language, providing guidance on the matter by, for example, noting the presence of double negatives (Speght 1602, sigs. [aii]v- [aiii]r).<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Beaumont's letter in the *Workes* clearly recognizes that language change is a troublesome fact of editing historical texts:

[...] in vsuall languages of common practise, vvchich in choise of words are, and euer vvill be subject vnto change, neuer standing at one stay, but sometimes casting avvay old words, sometimes renewing of them, and alvvaies framing of new, no man can so vvrite, as that all his words may remaine currant many yeeeres. (1602, sig. [aiii]v)

He goes on to praise the practice of "reviving of auncient words," by which he means to use archaic turns of phrase for artistic or poetic use, citing the works of Spenser, and he lauds Speght's editing labors: "[...] by your interpretation of the vnusuall vvords, that auncient hardnesse and difficultie is made most cleare and easie" (1602, sig. [aiv]r). These longer sentiments are, in essence, the same in tone as Hart's brief comment: Hart excuses his text for the fact of its language change, while also stressing its historical component as a measure of its value; Speght and Beaumont do the same. While it is true that Speght intimates that Chaucer's writings are influenced by Latin and Greek sources, historical linguistic change of English was the real issue at stake: Beaumont's comments focus more on linguistic change operating on "wordes in common tongues" and cite Lydgate's praise that Chaucer was "The Loadstarre of the English language" (Pearsall 2004, 120; Speght 1602, sigs. [aiii]v-[aiv]r). Thus Beaumont, at least, appears to have considered English language change more problematic for legibility than influence from Latin or Greek.

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<sup>3</sup> Speght's editions of Chaucer's works (Chaucer 1598; Chaucer 1602), including all the preliminary material and the glossaries, will be referred to as "Speght 1598" and "Speght 1602" respectively throughout the article.

### 2.3 *An editing ethos: Editors as translators*

The most important aspects of these comments by Speght and others are the clear admissions to changing the texts from their original form, and the acknowledgement that this change is desirable and helpful for their readership. That is, it is by Speght's "*interpretation* of the vnusuall words" that the struggle of reading Chaucer is lessened, and his poetry is "restored" (Speght 1602, sig. [aiv]r, emphasis mine). "Interpretation" here is to be understood as "translation": Beaumont's letter asserts that "seeing not onely Greeke and Latine Poets haue had their interpreteurs, and the most of them translated into our tongue" (Speght 1602, sig. [av]r). Additional comments on the same lines appear repeatedly in the book, for example in the laudatory poem on sig. [av]v, praising Speght for making "old words, which were vnknown of many, | So plaine, that now they may be known of any." These lines fully cast Chaucer's English into the territory of the unknown tongue by celebrating Speght's role as his translator. This overall emphasis on language adaptation, and these admissions and comments, allow one to reconstruct Thomas Speght's editing mentality: his interest was in preserving accessibility to the text by altering and translating its language from the original (Trigg 2008, 108). It is important here to briefly consider the real role of Speght in the editing process. As Pearsall (2004) has shown, John Stow put forth substantial labor into the editing of the *Workes*, though he was given only a brief mention of credit, probably because of class prejudices. However, as so much of the 1602 *Workes'* front matter explicitly praises Speght as the translator or interpreter of the language, it seems likely that he was responsible at least for this linguistic portion of the edition of 1602.<sup>4</sup>

Speght's editing ethos was centered on protecting Chaucer's work from the "injurie of time" – by his own admission, Hart's *Actes* is meant to safeguard the poem and its historical content from the "iniurie of oblivion" (Speght 1598, sig. [aii]v; Trigg 2008, 108; Hart 1616, sig. ¶2r). Therefore, considering the similar awareness in the *Actes* of the problem of language change, and the inclusion of similar reading aids and language adjustments, it is probable that, like

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<sup>4</sup> Derek Pearsall (1984, 81) suggests that the glossaries included with the Speght Chaucers, themselves meant as reader aids, were also Thomas Speght's work, which also tilts the scales toward Speght as the textual editor.

Speght's, Hart's own editing focus was on creating reader accessibility to the *Brus* text, accomplishing this by modernizing its archaic Early Older Scots to Late Middle Older Scots.

### 3. Book design choices: Accessibility to the historic text

Hart and Speght clearly both recognize that language change is a substantial barrier between their "Platonic texts" and their shared audience: seventeenth-century speakers of English, a portion of whom understand written and spoken Late Middle Older Scots to varying degrees. Considering the general historical context of the Union of the Crowns, as well as the knowledge that Englishmen were taking in a substantial amount of Scots poetry, albeit often heavily edited to fit English tastes, it is fair to assume that Hart's interest in improving language accessibility might have also extended to Englishmen, whose ability to read Scots forms was presumably weak (Blakeway 2016, 536). This fact, alongside the example of Speght's 1602 *Workes*, casts the 1616 *Actes* book design choices as reading aids that promote accessibility to the book's content, and as will be shown at the conclusion of this work, accounts for a portion of the Anglicization of the *Brus*.

#### 3.1 Typeface design and headings

There exist several physical similarities in the books; for the sake of space, I will focus on those which function to improve language accessibility, thereby improving the legibility of the historic texts. The two books mirror one another in typeface design, using typefaces both for critical and assistive means and to assert antiquity. This sharing may be an example of the tendency of Scottish printers to borrow English printing styles; furthermore, the types used are themselves possibly of English origin, as Scotland's first major typefoundry was not in place until the 1740s (Mann 2001, 185). Hart's *Actes* prints most of the critical or supplementary material in roman and the body text in blackletter, using italics to distinguish Latin body content, such as the dedicatory Latin poem or the quotation regarding Scipio (Hart 1616, sigs. ¶¶4v, ¶¶3v; Smith 2013, 45). This choice was a conscious stylistic one on Hart's part; blackletter was well out of fashion in Scotland by this point and Hart did not use it to publish William Drummond's poems or his 1610 Geneva Bible (Smith 2013, 45; Mann

2001, 192). He used blackletter for other historical texts, as well, such as his edition of makar Sir David Lindsay's poetry (Mann 2001, 192). Speght's *Workes* employs the same stylistic technique. It displays Speght's Chaucer biography and most critical commentary in a modern roman. Francis Thynne's corrections and responses to the initial work in the 1598 edition appear in italic, as does Latin. Lastly, text attributed to Chaucer appears in blackletter. In the *Workes*, this printing technique helps to distinguish the sources for various pieces of content; in both books, it lends a sense of venerability to the poetry while also distinguishing critical from historic material.

Additionally, Speght includes short critical comments, or "arguments," between sections of the Middle English texts in roman, while Hart's similarly roman headings break up portions of the *Brus*. The language of these headings typically features some Scots forms, for example here final consonant devoicing: "HOW THE KING PAST TO THE SEA; and how the Erle of LENNOX was chaist" (Hart 1616, 55). This does not match the clearly English commentary of Speght, but the inclusion of these elements still provides a critical and assistive function for a reader as Speght's inclusions do, explaining and summarizing the material and providing breaks in the narrative. The intended assistive use of the headings is clear in Hart's book, as he includes a table of contents referring to them at the back (Hart 1616, sigs. Cc8r–Dd2v).

### 3.2 *Front matter and back matter as reading aid*

Both the *Workes* and *Actes* include various texts that may be lumped in under the heading of front matter. In Speght's book, this front matter is quite extensive: various letters, poems, pictures, an imagined dialogue between Chaucer and his readers, and a table of contents fill the space between the title page and the start of the Prologue on sig. Aiiir. In Hart's book, this front matter takes the form of a long and detailed letter to the reader that runs from sig. ¶2r–¶¶4r, and a short Latin poem, with rhyming English translation, on sig. ¶¶4r. The table of contents, simply titled "A Table," has been bound into the back of the book, beginning sig. Cc8r and continuing to sig. Dd2v. These elements of Hart's edition have assistive, didactic functions that facilitate reader accessibility, even for readers whose ability with Scots is weaker.

The prefacing letter is a firmly instructive, critical inclusion in the *Actes*. Most of the letter, after briefly highlighting the historicity of the poem, serves as a long summary of the historical context for, events of, and characters in *Brus*. It is written in English, as previously noted, and the letter's assistive purpose is clear: Hart writes "somewhat of the occasion of these warres, that the Historie may the better appeare" (1616, sig. ¶2v). Hart's detailed summary describes the events of the poem with care, including dates, names, and locations. Key words such as place and character names are typically italicized. These printing choices provide a detailed English-language key to the poem's events and narrative, either for reference in times of confusion or as a preface. The italicized key words enable a reader to scan for relevant material and thus to check his or her understanding of portions of the *Brus*, and the English language opens the preface to a broader readership. These adaptations are comparable to the assistive motions Speght makes in his Chaucer edition, such as his explanatory notes on Chaucer's language in his prefatory letter and his inclusion of a glossary (Speght 1602, sigs. [aii]v-[aiii]r, Ttir-Uuuiiir).<sup>5</sup>

Hart's "Table" and its correlating headings also act as a vector for accessibility. His headings are descriptive in nature: "How *lames of Dowglas* slew *Webtoun*, and wan his Castell, and kest it downe"; "How the King scaped fra his faes, and how the sloothhound slaine was" (Hart 1616, 156, 123). Though written in Scots, the headings are new creations on the part of Hart (Mackenzie's introduction to Barbour 1909, viii). The corresponding "Table" in the rear of the book running from sig. Cc8r to the book's end allows a reader to access distinct subsections of the poem by making use of the pagination. Because the Table is organized using slightly longer forms of these very complete, distinctive headings, accessibility to the text is optimized; combining use of the Table with the detailed English summary in Hart's prefatory letter enables even non-Scots speakers to navigate the poem. Therefore, an English reader with no specific Scots knowledge is at least provided thorough context for the language by means of which he can make rough sense of unfamiliar Scots forms and grammar. This reference-based accessibility generated through textual organization and summary appears in Speght's *Workes* as well. The *Workes* employs

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<sup>5</sup> Hart also includes an English translation under his Latin dedicatory poem, which might be considered another nod to textual accessibility.

critical summaries and commentaries to head each section of the text, such as the paragraph included at the start of the Prologue or the short summary of the Knight's tale (Speght 1602, sig. Aair, fol. 1r).

#### 4. Editing methods at hand: editing for accessibility

I have now demonstrated that increased language accessibility to the text was a driving force for Speght, as shown by material in the *Workes* front and back matter, and that Hart's *Actes* follows largely in those footsteps. Furthermore, the editing of the Platonic texts itself also displays evidence of Speght's and Hart's favoring of textual accessibility over historical veracity. Interestingly, though the methods differ in some fine details, Hart and Speght's choices appear to reflect their shared editing ethos.

##### 4.1 Speght's editing methods in practice

Speght's editing has certain prominent features. Pearsall (1984) broadly notes that Speght appears, at least in the case of the *Canterbury Tales*, to have made substantial revisions and improvements from the 1561 Stow version, typically introducing better readings and restoring missing elements (86–88). Pearsall goes on to note that many of these changes were made based on manuscripts or in order to take into account input from Francis Thynne, though the changes do not follow a known single manuscript (1984, 87). My own assessments using transcriptions of the Hengwrt (Hg) and Ellesmere (El) manuscripts correlate with this finding. Furthermore, Pearsall (1984) briefly notes the presence of metrical changes (87). Speght clearly engages in an overall "updating" of the text, largely replacing Middle English words with their Early Modern counterparts while also trying to show an identifiably iambic metrical structure.

On the surface, this work appears to be a mere makeover of the spellings, such as seen in the change "tendre" to "tender" or "halfe" to "half" (GP 7–8: Speght 1602, sig. Aair a/El & Hg).<sup>6</sup> One of the most

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<sup>6</sup> The transcriptions of the Ellesmere (El) and Hengwrt (Hg) Chaucer manuscripts used for my comparison are sourced from *The Multitext Edition*, edited by Estelle Stubbs *et al.* (Chaucer 2013). Quotations from *The Canterbury Tales* are cited with normalized abbreviations: GP = "General Prologue", followed by the references in Speght and the manuscripts.

typical expressions of these changes is the <y> to <-ie> shift, demonstrated in changes like “melodie” from “melodye” (GP 9: Speght 1602, sig. Aair a/El & Hg). However, Speght’s interest in improving accessibility is clear in his attention to vowel changes and expletive structures:

El:	The hooly blisful martir for to seke
Speght:	The holy blisfull martir for to seeke,
El:	That hem hath holpen / whan þ <sup>t</sup> they were seeke
Speght:	That hem hath holpen, when they were seke.

(GP 17–18: Speght 1602, sig. Aair a)

Speght’s new spelling makes clear that the first line is to be understood as “seek” (vowel sound /i/ or /i:/, its length and quality now marked with doubled vowel) and the second as “sick,” (here with vowel sound /ɛ/). This change removes an obvious source of confusion for the untrained reader. He makes a similar change by altering “eye” to “eie,” a seemingly strange choice—however, this choice of grapheme <ie>, expressing vowel sound /i/, allows the line to rhyme with the foregoing “melodie” (GP 9–10: Speght 1602, sig. Aair a/El & Hg). Speght, of course, needs to preserve the all-important end-rhymes to flatter his audience’s poetic partialities. Speght also makes a few careful grammatical changes, such as dropping the now unnecessary, archaic <þ<sup>t</sup>> “that” above in GP 18, or moving verbs to more contemporary positions, as in GP 19, “It befell that season on a day” (sig. Aair a). Here, Speght creates a more modern and easily readable expletive from the more challenging verb-fronted relative construction “Bifil that | in that season on a day” (GP 19: El & Hg).

These changes also infer alterations to the meter, as by the Early Modern period, final <-e> schwa was no longer pronounced, and the Great Vowel Shift was well underway (Menzer 2000; Baugh and Cable 2002, 222–3). Speght resolves these metrical problems by slightly emending the wording in certain lines to attempt to form iambs, foreshadowed in his defensive note to the reader that

[Chaucer’s] verses, although in diuers places they may seeme to vs to stand of vnequall measures: yet a skilfull Reader, that can scan them in their nature, shall find it otherwise. And if a verse here and there fal out a sillable shorter or longer than another, I rather aret it to the negligence and rape of *Adam Scriuener*, that I may speake as

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Chaucer doth, than to any vnconning or ouersight in the Author.  
(Speght 1602, sig. [aiiii]r)

This slight adaptative measure allows the Early Modern reader to recognize Chaucer's merit as a poet and improves accessibility: Speght's audience clearly expects quality verse to conform to the rigid rules of good poetry as laid out in their own time, and they must be able to recognize that conformity to the rules with ease. This technique is visible in l. 22:

El:	To Caunterbury / with ful deuout corage
Speght:	To Canterburie with deuout courage,

(GP 22: Speght 1602, sig. Aair a/ El)

Speght's edition omits "ful." The only reason to drop this largely unchanged modifier is to enforce an iambic form despite changes in the stress of 'courage' and the number of syllables in the typical pronunciation of "Canterbury." This placename would have had a definite four syllables in its Middle English form. As Speght's audience would presumably not have struggled to understand this use of "ful," this deletion must serve a metrical motivation. Other changes for presumably similar motivations are those in GP 28, in which a second "the" is dropped from a parallel construction, leaving "The chambers and stables weren wide," and in GP 27, in which "wolden" has been modernized to "would" (GP 27: Speght 1602, sig. Aair b / El). In the former case, dropping "the" has no reader effect but to alter the meter. In the latter case, Speght has adopted single-syllable "would" here, but elsewhere leaves <-en> verb forms in place, such as GP 28-29, "weren," or GP 13, "seeken" (Speght 1602, sig. Aair a-b).

#### 4.2 *Hart's editing methods in practice*

It is clear from the above that Speght's editing methodology focuses on presenting an acceptably iambic metrical structure, removing certain challenging aspects of Middle English grammar, and modernizing word forms. Hart's editing choices are not far removed from these and represent not simple, overt Anglicization as such but rather an intended modernization of Scots language, one which brings it into a more modern, Anglicized form. This reassessment thus puts



a fresh angle on Smith's (2013) argument that Hart's edition largely de-Scotticizes in its changes to the source materials (46).

Hart's editing changes many word forms from the source material. Just as Speght has done, Hart swaps <-y> spellings for <-ie> spellings, for example changing "storys" to "stories" and "heryng" to "hearing" (ll. 1, 3, 5, 10: 1616, 1/Barbour 1980, vol.2). These changes are, like Speght's own respellings, probably more motivated by printing concerns than anything else as removing these descenders tidies up the interlinear space. Thus, they cannot really be considered an "Englishing" of the text. Additionally, <-ie> spellings were appearing interchangeably with <i> and <y>-type spellings in Scots by the sixteenth century (Aitken 2015d, 7). Furthermore, while Hart does make vowel changes that could be interpreted as simple Anglicizations, such as the change from "suthfastness" to "soothfastness" (l. 7: 1616, 1/Barbour 1980, vol. 2), he more typically leaves a Scots form in place, merely adjusting its orthography. For example, in l. 8, Hart modifies "schawys" to "schawes," or in l. 33, "buk" becomes "buke," and in l. 15, "swa" becomes "sa" (1616, 1-2); Barbour 1980, vol. 2). These changes do not strive to remove Scots from the text in any way; they merely adjust the Scots to follow new rules. "Soothfastness" from "suthfastness" reflects, for example, the use of a new grapheme recently adopted from Tudor English into Scots as a possible spelling (Aitken 2015d, 8). Hart's interest is therefore in improving the readability of the text to the Early Modern reader, not in de-Scotticizing it *per se*, and his method is much like Speght's.

Hart also shows a similar concern in adapting the more challenging grammatical structures of Barbour's historic Early Older Scots language to reflect the grammar of contemporaneous Middle Older Scots writing:

<i>Brus</i>	Yan suld storys yat suthfast wer
Hart	Then sould Stories y <sup>t</sup> [that] soothfast wer;
<i>Brus</i>	And yai war said on gud maner
Hart	If they be spoken in good maner,

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<i>Brus</i>	Howe dubbill plesance in heryng. <sup>7</sup>
Hart	Haue double pleasure in hearing:

(ll. 3-5: Barbour 1980/Hart 1616, 1)

George Eyre-Todd's translation provides for these lines, "Therefore should stories that are true, if well told, have double pleasure for the hearer" (Barbour 1907, Book 1). The subjunctive modality of l. 4 is not overtly expressed in the basis text. It must be inferred by the modal "suld" in l. 3, which subjunctivizes not only "suthfast wer" in its own line but also "war said" in l. 4. Hart resolves this hindrance to his readership by adding overtly subjunctive "if" and "be" to l. 4 to clarify the sense of the line. This change is reminiscent of Speght's small grammatical alterations, such as his change from a verb-initial form with a relative pronoun, "Bifill that," to a more modern expletive, "It befell."

Hart also modifies archaic negation methods for clarity:

<i>Brus</i>	For yar mycht succed na female
Hart	For there nicht not succeid a Female, <sup>8</sup>

(l. 59: Barbour 1980/Hart 1616, 3)

Rather than negating the noun in the archaic style, "na female," Hart negates the verb in contemporary fashion, "nicht not succeid." This eliminates a certain "broadness," but more importantly clarifies the sense of the line; note that the spellings are altered but the Scots "nicht" form remains intact. Thus, the intent is not to de-Scotticize, but to clarify. Another alteration of negation is in l. 52, in which "nyt" is exchanged for "contraryit." This example also makes a change which does not actually de-Scotticize; the use of devoiced <-t> in the spelling is in no way a move toward English. If anything, Hart has asserted Scottishness more then backed away from it. Furthermore, this change is one typical of Late Middle Older Scots literary structure, in which Latinate and French loanwords appear in addition to, or replacing, vernacular terms (Aitken 2015d 2, 34). At the same time, the very Germanic and dated "nyt," (lit. "nay-ed," cf. modern German

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<sup>7</sup> All lines marked *Brus* in this manner are sourced from vol. 2 of McDiarmid and Stevenson's edition (Barbour 1980).

<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to determine if the punctuation placed here is <,> or <.>

*verneinen*) is made sensible, as the new word choice cannot be so easily misunderstood or read past.

Hart's changes, like Speght's, are also made with an eye for the poetry:

<i>Brus</i>	And led yar lyff in gret trawail,
Hart	And led thair life in great trauell:
<i>Brus</i>	And oft in hard stour off bataill
Hart	And oft intill hard stoure of battell,
<i>Brus</i>	Wan gret price off chewalry
Hart	Wan richt greit praise of Cheualrie,
<i>Brus</i>	And war woydyt off cowardy,
Hart	And was voyde of all Cowartrie:

(ll. 23–26: Barbour/Hart 1616, 2)

Hart inserts new syllables into lines 24–25. This change appears to stem from the change in pronunciation in “trauell”/“trawail” and “battell”/“bataill.” The early forms derive from Old French and were originally stressed on the second syllable, but the latter forms that Hart employs appear to take a stress on the first syllable (Dictionary of the Scots Language 2004, s.v.v. “Travail(l)(e,” “Bataile”).<sup>9</sup> In order to assure that his text maintains good verse form for a contemporary reader, Hart adds “richt” and modifies “in” to “intill.” Notably, the elements he adds are Scots, not English. Though he alters “woydyt,” he does not change the devoiced final stop to a voiced final stop, which could be seen as an Englishing of sorts. Rather, in removing final <-t>, he alters the word from a participial form to an adjectival form, which is a much smaller alteration of the text.

The proof that Hart's editing is more a careful Scots modernization than a simple Englishing is best seen through comparison of the text to a piece of contemporary Scots writing. This 1614 decision of the Privy Council regarding Hart's printing monopoly makes for an especially applicable example:

The fredome, libertie, and previledge of prenting, homebringing, and selling of all suche bookis and volumis quwhilkis are allowit and nowise forbidden [...] aught be free to all His Majesties subjectis [...]

<sup>9</sup> The vowel qualities also shifted in the second syllable from <ai> to <ei>; see A. J. Aitken 2015b.

and not conferrit and gevin to ony one persone without the grite hurte and prejudice of the cuntrey , becaus every suche privat and plane fredome, libertie, and privilege is not onlie a monopolie of ane evill preparative and example, bot will gif occassioun to alter and raise, hicht, and change the pryces of all bookis and volumes at the appetite and discretioun of the persone and personis in whose favouris the said privilege salhappin to be conferrit; and for this effect the saidis Lordis ordanis the gift and privilege purchest be the said Andro Hairt to be stayed, and on nawise to be past or exped. (Quoted in Mann 2000, i)

The composer of this text incorporates, aside from the typical impressive show of free variation in spelling as shown in “privilege” (Aitken 2015d, 5–10), certain Scots forms. Devoiced <-t> tense endings are apparent in “conferrit,” “purchest,” and “past.” Fricative <qu-> forms are present, such as “quwhilkis,” along with sibilant “sal,” apparent here in the compounded “salhappin.” Lastly, fricative <ch> in “hicht” and negating adverb “na” appear. Each of these tendencies is typically upheld by Hart in his edition, and even when changes are made to the source text, they incorporate these forms—note, for example, the insertion of “richt” in l. 25 to resolve a metrical problem discussed above.

## 5. Conclusion

This close study of the editing in Speght’s and Hart’s editions provides a snapshot of how Early Modern readers perceived Middle English and both archaic Early and contemporary Middle forms of Older Scots. Furthermore, it helps to chart a period of subsumption in the Scots language. Andro Hart’s edition of the *Brus* text only Anglicizes its source material in the sense that Speght’s edition Anglicizes the Prologue of *Canterbury Tales*, reworking the language to fit modern language preferences and standards. As Speght does, Hart makes thoughtful changes that appeal to a blended Anglo-Scots readership and lessen their challenges in grasping the content of the text. He is far from a mere wholesale Anglicizer—he is, in fact, a Scotsman working to update Early Older Scots into his conception of good literary Late Middle Older Scots. His Anglicization is thus merely a reflection of an overall ongoing subsumptive and de-Scotticizing process occurring during the Union of the Crowns. Marjory A. Bald’s initial remarks (1926, 114) that Hart’s *Actes* was

published as an antiquarian curiosity is thus not untrue. However, now these observations can be taken with substantially more nuance and context, accounting for the dynamic nature of Scots-English language change and the need to present a linguistically accessible volume to his audience.

Furthermore, the edition is a mark by which one can date one *terminus ante quem* for mutual intelligibility between English and Scots, and a snapshot of what this moment looked like. A fair measure of mutual intelligibility is one reason Hart would have printed his preface in English, as if to present Barbour's poem not only as a monument of Scottish history and literature, but as a work of merit, interest, and worth to Englishmen. Considering the cultural zeitgeist of the Union period and James' rule, Hart was doing well to present his book this way. Certainly, in the frame of the opened book trade, this was the profitable move for a bookseller to make.

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*Author's contact:* antonyvhenk@gmail.com

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