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THE FIRST ENGLISH PRINTED PSALTERS —  
GEORGE JOYE'S TRANSLATIONS AND THEIR EDITIONS

The paper discusses four English Psalters which are the work of a prominent, although largely forgotten, English protestant George Joye, whose first English translation of the whole Psalter appeared in Antwerp in 1530. The original publication was followed by two reprints, both of which appeared in London in 1534 and 1544. The fourth publication, which appeared in Antwerp in 1534, was a new translation prepared by Joye on the basis of a different Latin text. The text of Psalm 1 from each of these publications is provided, enabling the comparison of the differences displayed by the texts in question so characteristic of early print.

**Key words:** George Joye; Psalm translations; first English printed Psalter.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to present the first four publications of the Psalter in English which appeared in print within a relatively short period of time between 1530 and 1541 or 1544<sup>1</sup> — a turbulent time full of religious controversies instrumental for the development of the English Reformation. The author of the first printed English translation of the complete Psalter was George Joye, who was convinced that “the afflictions and persecution the Reformers experienced were what Jesus foretold as signs of the perilous end times” (Juhász 2014, 21). Consequently, as reported by Juhász (2014, 21), Joye thought that the psalms were “the prayers most convenient for this

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<sup>1</sup> The dating of the fourth Psalter discussed here, i.e. the one printed by Edward Whitchurch in London, is uncertain. For reasons to be explained below, I will assume 1544 as the most probable date of this publication.

time.” The appearance of the English Psalter in print was also related to the general developments of the period and the growing importance of the printing press. As remarked by Hotchkiss and Robinson (2008, 11), “[r]eligious books were assured a good sale, while translations of the Bible proliferated as the protestant Reformation grew in strength.” It seems that England in this respect followed a similar path to that of Germany, where “the Reformation went hand in hand with book and press. There is in all the centuries preceding the sixteenth century nothing comparable to the print media explosion of the 1520s, an upsurge of activity that coincided exactly with the Reformation in Germany” (Cole 1984, 327).

Putting the socio-historical context aside, the four publications of the Psalter discussed here offer an invaluable source of evidence on some aspects of the development of early Modern English. Specifically, they allow a close study of spelling conventions employed by early printers, who played an important role in the development of the standard language. According to Hotchkiss and Robinson (2008, 11), due to an unprecedentedly wide circulation of printed books, their style and language had a major impact on the way the English language developed. As claimed by Howard-Hill (2006, 7), spellings in fact moved towards modernity from the beginning of printing in England. This process of standardisation was not an immediate one as “what is important is not that printed books continued to evince a considerable amount of spelling diversity but that the variations that tended towards regularity also moved towards modernity [...]. Obviously printers had not yet arrived at a consistent orthography but they had begun to influence the development of spellings towards the modern standard” (Howard-Hill 2006, 7).

The paper is organised as follows: Section 2 provides detailed information on the four publications of the English Psalter by George Joye discussed here. Section 3 presents the text of the first psalm found in all four versions, allowing a direct comparison of the features of each edition. Finally, Section 4 will offer some conclusions.

## 2. GEORGE JOYE’S PSALTERS

The first edition of Joye’s Psalms to be discussed here is a 1530 version, which happens to occupy an important place in the history of English Bible translation as the first complete English Psalter ever printed. Nevertheless, this Psalter is relatively unknown because, as claimed by (Duffield 1971a), it

has not been reprinted since the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the censorship and persecution which the first printed English Psalter was subject to resulted in only two copies surviving: one in the British Library and the other one in the Huntingdon Library in California (Duffield 1971b).<sup>3</sup> It was printed in a modified black-letter type classified as bastard by Isaac (1936). The reverse of the title page contains the address of the translator to the readers of this Psalter “Johan Aleph greteth the Englishe nacion”. As explained in Hobbs (1994, 166) and Charzyńska-Wójcik (2013, 98), it was common practice in early Reformation times to publish religious works under false names in order to avoid confessional identification and protect the safety of the people involved. Johan Aleph is considered to be a pseudonym identified with George Joye<sup>4</sup> (Butterworth 1941, 64–67; Butterworth 1953, 19; Duffield 1971b, 12–13; Charzyńska-Wójcik 2013, 99; Juhász 2014, 19). Duffield (1971b, 12–13) provides a summary of arguments in favour of Joye’s authorship of the Psalter. First of all, Joye is named as the author of the Psalter by Thomas More, who in 1532 referring to the Psalter said that it was “translated by George Jay, the preste, that is wedded now.” Secondly, Joye himself in his correspondence cites the Argument to Psalm 89 and adds “as I noted in the argument of the 89 Psalm.” Additionally, Butterworth (1941) and Hopf (1946) provide stylistic evidence pointing to Joye’s authorship of the translation. A completely new argument in favour of Joye’s authorship of the translation is provided in Wójcik (2016, 68), where it is argued that Joye himself might have provided an indirect hint as to his authorship of the translation. It appears in Psalm 16 line 9, which reads: “Wherfore my harte shall Ioye & my tonge shall reioyse: ye my bode shall haue suer reste.” The word *Ioye*, which appears in this line, is one of the twelve occurrences of this item in the first 50 Psalms and the only one which is capitalised. What is more, its appearance in 16:9 happens to be the first instance of this word in the text of the Psalms. This is quite striking since capitalisation is reserved in this edition for verse initials and proper nouns, and is not used

<sup>2</sup> Duffield (1971b) provides the first reprint of the original 1530 Psalter since the sixteenth century.

<sup>3</sup> Duffield (1971a) maintains that yet another copy mentioned by Darlow and Moule (1903) as being apparently present in the Bodleian Library in Oxford does not in fact exist.

<sup>4</sup> George Joye (1495?–1553), ordained priest in 1515, encountered the Reformation during his Cambridge years and became part of the circle of students and scholars who met secretly on a regular basis to discuss Luther and his teachings. The religious authorities of the time soon learned about this circle of Luther’s followers and the three leaders of the group were summoned to appear before cardinal Wolsey in November 1527, Joye among them. Fearing persecution Joye decided to escape to the Continent. Most probably he first went to Strasburg but by 1529 he had moved to Antwerp, which at that time was a major centre of book printing and trade (Juhász 2014, 19).

with any consistency even for words like *Lord*, which more often than not are not capitalised. In effect, the capitalisation of *Ioye* in 16:9 can hardly be a coincidence. Hence, Wójcik (2016, 68) argues that the translator in fact disclosed his true identity by capitalising the first occurrence of the word which happened to be homophonous with his name.

In a similar fashion the name of the author of the Latin text which served as the source of the English translation is not disclosed. According to researchers (Hobbs 1994, 166; Charzyńska-Wójcik 2013, 98), the English text of this Psalter is a rendering of Martin Bucer's<sup>5</sup> Latin translation from Hebrew issued in 1529 and published under the pseudonym of Aretius Felinus<sup>6</sup> in order to disassociate the translation from its author, who was deeply engaged in religious controversy.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, the name of the publisher and the place of the publication presented in the colophon to this edition, i.e. "Francis Foxe at Argentine," has been demonstrated, on the basis of typographical evidence, to be the pseudonym of Martin Emperor, one of the several Reformation printers operating from Antwerp (Duffield 1971b, 10; Juhász 2002, 109). Antwerp was a place where Joye settled after fleeing to the Continent from England. As observed by Butterworth and Chester (1962, 50) and Juhász (2014, 14), the city provided the exiles from England with certain advantages. It hosted a large community of English merchants, among whom the reformers could feel relatively safe. Its autonomy and liberal attitude on religious matters is not to be overlooked and, last but not least, Antwerp was the seat of a number of printers and publishers providing employment to the refugees as editors or proofreaders of the books, some of which would readily be smuggled to England by the printers looking for a quick — if at times risky — profit.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Martin Bucer or Butzer (1491–1551) was a Dominican monk and an early convert to Lutheran views. He was a leader of the Strasbourg Reformation. In 1529 he published in Strasbourg a new Latin translation of the Psalter with a large commentary. According to Duffield (1971b), it was a lengthy and scholarly work and to some extent a pioneering commentary on the Psalms. He is largely remembered for his endeavours to bring reconciliation between the factions of the German Reformation (Juhász 2014, 208). Duffield (1971b, 8) maintains that after falling into disagreement with the Swiss Protestants over some doctrinal issues, in 1548 he accepted an invitation by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and left for England to participate in Cranmer's plan to make a Bible translation from the original languages into Latin, which could be used as a basis for further vernacular translations. He died shortly afterwards and was buried in the principal church in Cambridge. A few years later in 1556, during Queen Mary's reign, his body was exhumed and publicly burnt (Juhász 2014, 208).

<sup>6</sup> Hence the phrase "translated after the text of Feline" in the title of the 1530 Psalter.

<sup>7</sup> See Charzyńska-Wójcik (2014) for a comprehensive discussion of the issues connected with the pseudonymity of the author of the Latin original, the translator and the printer of the 1530 Psalter.

<sup>8</sup> The fate of Christoffel van Ruremund, an Antwerp printer, might serve as a case in point.

The second text presented here is a London reprint of the 1530 version of Joye's Psalter, which makes it the first version of English Psalms to be printed in England. It was published by Thomas Godfray, as can be seen from the colophon which states "Printed at London by Thomas Godfray. Cum priuilegio Regali. Praise ye the lorde. Amen." Johan Aleph is no longer mentioned as the author of the translation and the translator's address comes with the heading "To the reder." The colophon does not mention the date of the publication but, as stated in Duffield (1971b, 14), "probably about 1534 [...] events in England made it safe enough for an English printer to risk such an undertaking." Furthermore, Butterworth and Chester (1962, 137) note that the phrase "Cum priuilegio Regali" in the colophon also suggests 1534 as the most probable date of the publication. They note that "it is almost unthinkable that any printer in London should have dared to print a volume of Scripture in the English tongue, especially if fortified by the royal 'privilege', prior to the break with Rome in the spring of 1534." It is also suggested that Godfray's publication constituted an unauthorised reprint of Joye's Psalter of 1530, which Godfray decided to publish when he learned that Joye was preparing a new translation of the Psalms in English in August 1534 on the basis of a different Latin text<sup>9</sup> (Butterworth and Chester 1962, 137). Duffield (1971b, 14) maintains that the only extant copy of this edition is in Cambridge University Library.

The third edition to be presented here was printed by a London printer Edward Whitchurch. The colophon states "Imprynted by Edwarde Whytchurch cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum", i.e. with the exclusive right to print. The dating of this edition is uncertain. Duffield (1971b) maintains that it was published in 1541 or 1542, while the Early English Books Online catalogue gives 1544 as the year of its publication. Some authors (e.g. Chamberlin 1991) state it was published as late as 1547. Hotchkiss and Robinson (2008, 15) claim that Whitchurch together with another printer Richard Grafton obtained royal license to sell the Bible in England in 1537.<sup>10</sup> Later, in 1543, they received the royal privilege to print all the service books to be

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As reported by John Foxe, a sixteenth-century historian, for selling copies of the New Testament in English Christoffel van Ruremund was imprisoned at Westminster, where he died.

<sup>9</sup> This time Joye translated from the Latin text of the Psalter by a prominent Swiss reformer Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531), also known as Ulrich or Ulrich Zwingli. Like so many prominent reformers, he was originally a Roman Catholic priest. This is the fourth of the Psalters discussed here.

<sup>10</sup> In 1537 they intended to import the copies of the Matthew Bible, for which they secured the royal license to sell the Bible in England. It was arranged to be printed in Paris but the French inquisitor general stopped the project, which forced Grafton and Whitchurch to print the Bible in London (Hotchkiss and Robinson 2008, 15 and 85).

used in England. As remarked by Hotchkiss and Robinson (2008, 85), the system of granting royal privileges to printers for particular genres started to develop under Henry VII. Printers were allowed to use the phrase “cum privilegio” in return for a fee paid to the Crown. The Act of 1538 additionally required those who possessed printing patents to submit their texts to the Privy Council for examination and to add “ad imprimendum solum” in the colophon. In the light of this evidence it seems that Duffield’s (1971b) dating of this edition seems too early, as it predates the royal privilege received by Edward Whitchurch in 1543. As a result 1544, i.e. the date provided by Early English Books Online catalogue seems very likely and hence will be used here. According to Duffield (1971b, 14), there are only two copies of this edition: one in the British Museum and the other one in private possession. Unlike the first two editions, Whitchurch’s edition comes without the translator’s address to the reader but a comparison of the texts of the three editions leaves no doubt that we are dealing with one and the same text, i.e. George Joye’s English translation of Bucer’s Latin Psalter.

The fourth text analysed here is another English translation of the Psalter printed by Martin Emperour in Antwerp in 1534. Charzyńska-Wójcik (2013, 100) reviews the relevant literature and dispels some of the confusion and misunderstanding associated with this translation. According to Butterworth and Chester (1962, 129), the 1534 publication was a new translation prepared by George Joye on the basis of the Latin text of the Psalms by Huldrych Zwingli.<sup>11</sup> Butterworth and Chester (1962, 129) state that the exact reasons why Joye was inclined to do another translation only four years after preparing the 1530 version is not known, but they suggest that upon learning about Zwingli’s Latin Psalter from 1532 he may have felt that Zwingli’s version was superior to that of Bucer. This time Joye’s name as the author of the translation is provided in the title “Dauids Psalter diligently and faithfully translated by George Joye [...]” as well as in the information included at the end of the translation. It reads “Thus endeth the text of the Psalmes/ translated oute of Latyne by George Joye. The yere of our lorde M.D.xxxiiii. The moneth of Auguste.” The colophon discloses genuine information concerning the printer — “Martyne Emperowr. 1534.” According to Butterworth and Chester (1962, 129), only one copy survives today in Cambridge University Library. In contrast to the 1530 Antwerp publication and its 1534 London reprint, there is no address to the reader or any other preface here.

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<sup>11</sup> Zwingli’s Psalter was a posthumously published Latin version of the Psalter which appeared in 1532 under the title *Enchiridion Psalmorum*. It contained the text of the Psalm and a commentary.

### 3. COMPARISON OF PSALM 1 FROM THE FOUR EDITIONS OF JOYE'S PSALTER

The table below shows Psalm 1 from the four editions discussed above. The first column in the table identifies the text. 1530<sub>E</sub> stands for the original 1530 text printed by Martin Emperor in Antwerp, 1534<sub>G</sub> marks the same Psalter published by Thomas Godfray in 1534 in London, 1544<sub>WH</sub> is used for the London reprint by Edward Whitchurch from 1544, and, finally, 1534<sub>E</sub> stands for the text of the new translation of the Psalter printed by Martin Emperor in Antwerp in 1534. The table allows one to make an immediate comparison of all the differences between the four texts. A number of editing conventions have been used in preparing the edition. *That* (italicised text) stands for an item which is represented in the original by an abbreviation.<sup>12</sup> “=” sign represents the symbol used by printers to signal word break at end of line, although they showed no consistency in its use. Printers would often omit “=” if requirements of text alignment against the margin called for it. Omitted word breaks at end of lines are represented here as [=]. The indication of a nasal by a macron is signalled by italicising the abbreviated letter, as in ‘sinners’<sup>13</sup> in 1:1 1530<sub>E</sub>.

#### Psalm 1<sup>14</sup>

	1:1
1530 <sub>E</sub>	BLessed is <i>that</i> man which walketh not in the coun=sell of the vn=godly: and stan[=]deth not in the waye of <i>sinners</i> / <sup>15</sup> and sitteth not in the seate of <i>the</i> pe=stelent scorners.
1534 <sub>G</sub>	Blessed is that man / whiche walketh nat in the counsaile of the vngodly / & standeth nat in the waye of <i>sinners</i> / & sytteth nat in the seat of the pestelent scorners.

<sup>12</sup> For example **ʒ** used for ‘that’ in 1:1 in 1530<sub>E</sub>.

<sup>13</sup> This is what it looks like in print: **sinners**.

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 1 edited here is a sample of a much larger project, i.e. the edition of the first 50 psalms from the four versions of Joye’s Psalters by Wójcik (in prep).

<sup>15</sup> Virgula suspensiva (/) was in common use from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. Often used for short pauses (such as the *caesura* in the middle of a line of poetry), but sometimes used as an equivalent to the *punctus*. It could be made increasingly emphatic by doubling or even tripling (Parkes 1992/2012, 307). The comma as we know it today is a sixteenth-century development (its first known use in England was in a book printed in 1521). Of the texts presented here, only Whitchurch in 1544 uses the coma instead of “/”.

1544 <sub>WH</sub>	BLessed is that man, whiche walketh not in the counsayle of the vngodly, and standeth not in the way of synners, and sytteth not in the seat of the pestylent scornors.
1534 <sub>E</sub>	OH / how blessed is the man / that go=ith not to counsa=il with the vngod[=]lye: nor abydeth not in the waye of the wiked / nether sitteth not dow[=]ne in the chaier with the peruerse pestelent skornors.
	<b>1:2</b>
1530 <sub>E</sub>	But hath all his plesure in <i>the</i> la=we of the lorde: and vpon it his min=de is occupyed / bothe daye & nyghte.
1534 <sub>G</sub>	But hath all his plea[=]sure in <i>the</i> lawe of <i>the</i> lord / & vpon it his minde is ocupied both day & night[.]
1544 <sub>WH</sub>	But hath all his pleasure in the lawe of <i>the</i> Lord and vpon it hys mynde is occupyed bothe daye and nyghte.
1534 <sub>E</sub>	But delyteth in the lawe of the Lorde: and in it / hathe his medita[=]cion daye and night.
	<b>1:3</b>
1530 <sub>E</sub>	Syche a man shalbe like a tre plan[=]ted by the ryuerside: which will gy=ue forth hyr frutis in due time / and hyr leues shall not wither: for what so ever he shall do / shall prospere.
1534 <sub>G</sub>	Sich a man shall be lyke a tree planted by the ryuer[=]syde. <sup>16</sup> which wyl gyue forth her frutes in due tyme / and her leues shall nat wither / for what so euer he shall do: shal <i>prosper</i> . <sup>17</sup>
1544 <sub>WH</sub>	Such a man shalbe lyke a tree planted by the ry[=]uer syde: which wyl geue forth her frutes in due tyme, and her leues shall not wyther, for what so euer he shall do shal prosper.
1534 <sub>E</sub>	This man is lyke the tree planted by the ryuer syde: whiche yildeth forth her frute in her tyme. Whose leaues sal not downe: all hir frute plentuously prospereth.
	<b>1:4</b>
1530 <sub>E</sub>	But so shall not the vngodly: for they shalbe lyke duste which is dis=persed with the winde.

<sup>16</sup> The spelling of compounds is characterised by lack of consistency: both joined-up and separate spellings of the same item can be found. This makes the interpretation of a text in which '=' symbols are not consistently used even in instances where we are clearly dealing with one word rather complex.

<sup>17</sup> The abbreviation for *pro-* **p**.



1534 <sub>G</sub>	But so shal nat <i>the</i> vngodly: for they shal be lyke dust which is dyspersed with the wynde.
1544 <sub>WH</sub>	But so shal not the vngodly, for they shalbe like dust which is despersed with the wynde.
1534 <sub>E</sub>	But contrarye wyse it cometh vn[=]to the vngodly: for thei be lyke the duste dispersed of the winde.
	<b>1:5</b>
1530 <sub>E</sub>	Wherefore theis vngodly shall not stande in the iugement: nether theis sinners maye abyde in the compa=ney of the rightwise.
1534 <sub>G</sub>	Wherefore these vngodly shal nat stande in the iugement / neither these syn=ners maye abyde in the companye of the rightwyse.
1544 <sub>WH</sub>	Wherefore these vngodly shall not stande in the iudgement, nether these synners maye abyde in the company of the ryghteouse.
1534 <sub>E</sub>	Wherefore / the synfull vngodlye: maye not lyue in the felowshippe and congregacion of the iuste.
	<b>1:6</b>
1530 <sub>E</sub>	For the lorde aproueth the waye of the rightwise: but <i>the</i> waye of sin=ners shall perishe.
1534 <sub>G</sub>	For the lorde aproueth the waye of the ryghtwyse: but the waye of synners shall perisshe.
1544 <sub>WH</sub>	For the Lorde aproueth the waye of the ryghte=ouse: but the waye of synners shall peryshe.
1534 <sub>E</sub>	For as the waye of the iuste plea[=]seth the Lorde: euen so dothe the waye of the vngodly perishe.

Even a cursory look at the four editions presented here allows us to appreciate the wealth of evidence relating to early print spelling conventions. As expected, a considerable amount of spelling variety is displayed by the four texts which span just fourteen years. For example, ‘not’ can be rendered as ⟨not⟩ or ⟨nat⟩; ‘which’ as ⟨which⟩ or ⟨whiche⟩; ‘counsel’ as ⟨counsell⟩, ⟨counsaile⟩, ⟨cousayle⟩ or ⟨counsail⟩; ‘sinners’ as ⟨sinners⟩ or ⟨synners⟩; ‘pestilent’ as ⟨pestelent⟩ or ⟨pestylent⟩; ‘pleasure’ as ⟨plesure⟩, ⟨pleasure⟩, ‘night’ as ⟨nyghte⟩ or ⟨night⟩, to mention just a few cases from the first two lines of Psalm 1. As such the data provides an invaluable source of evidence relating to early Modern English spelling conventions and the role of early printers in establishing the written standard in English.

## 4. CONCLUSION

As signalled earlier, the edition of the first Psalm from the first four printed English Psalters presented here is a sample of an ongoing project whose aim is to provide a critical edition of the first fifty Psalms from the four editions of the Psalter discussed here (Wójcik in prep.). It is to be hoped that a detailed study of the variation displayed by the four editions of the Psalter will shed some new light on the development and standardisation of early Modern English. The Psalters presented above have for a long time been almost completely forgotten for reasons having to do with George Joye — the author of the English translations of the Psalter, who came to be regarded as a controversial representative of English Reformation in spite of his undeniable impact on the history of English Biblical translation.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, even though all four publications have been associated with George Joye in the literature, this has always been done fragmentarily, with individual researchers focusing on a particular aspect relevant for them. In effect, no single piece of scholarly literature known to me has ever associated all the four books with Joye. The present paper overcomes this shortcoming, thus presenting a full picture of both Joye's translatorial activity with respect to the (whole) Psalter and the popularity his psalms enjoyed among the contemporaries despite the theological controversies he was embroiled in. This popularity is evidenced by the decision of the three different printers to publish Joye's Psalters. Thus, the juxtaposition of a sample of each of the four publications offered here brings to light the texts so important for English protestants in the sixteenth century, in an attempt to restore for them the attention they deserve. For the first time since the sixteenth century these texts can be easily accessed and all their features readily appreciated.

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<sup>18</sup> The discussion in Juhász (2014) is by far the most comprehensive and exhaustive presentation of the reasons why George Joye has been almost completely forgotten.

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PIERWSZE ANGIELSKIE DRUKOWANE PSAŁTERZE —  
PRZEKŁADY GEORGE'A JOYE'A I ICH WYDANIA

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia cztery psalterze angielskie, które są dziełem wybitnego, choć w dużej mierze zapomnianego, angielskiego protestanta George'a Joye'a, którego pierwsze angielskie tłumaczenie całego Psalterza ukazało się w Antwerpii w 1530 r. Po pierwszej publikacji nastąpiły dwa przedruki, z których oba ukazały się w Londynie w 1534 i 1544 r. Czwarty Psalterz był nowym przekładem, przygotowanym przez Joye'a na podstawie innego tekstu łacińskiego, i ukazał się w Antwerpii w 1534 r. Artykuł przedstawia tekst Psalmu 1 z każdej z tych publikacji, aby umożliwić porównanie i unaocznienie różnic występujących w omawianych tekstach.

*Streścił Jerzy Wójcik*

**Słowa kluczowe:** George Joye; angielskie tłumaczenia Psalmów; pierwszy angielski psalterz drukowany.