

## **Authorial or Scribal?**

**Spelling Variation in the Hengwrt and Ellesmere  
Manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales***

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**PROEFSCHRIFT**

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*To Mariola,  
my example of somebody who never gives up*



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Luisella Caon  
Leiden, November 2008

## Abbreviations

ACE	Fisher, John H., Malcolm Richardson, Jane L. Fisher (1984), <i>An Anthology of Chancery English</i> , Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
CTP	The Canterbury Tales Project
El	The <i>Ellesmere</i> manuscript of <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> , San Marino, California, Henry E. Huntington Library, MS EL 26.C.9
Fol.	Folio
Hatfield	The fragment of <i>Troilus and Criseyde</i> (Hatfield House fragment, Cecil Papers, Box S/1)
Hg	The <i>Hengwrt</i> manuscript of <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> , Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 392D
Kk	The Kk fragment of <i>The Prioress's Prologue and Prioress's Tale</i> , Cambridge, University Library, Kk.1.3, Part 20
l(l).	line(s)
L	link
LALME	McIntosh, Angus, M.L. Samuels, M. Benskin (eds) (1986), <i>A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English</i> , Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP.
LP	Linguistic Profile
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
ME	Middle English
MED	McSparran, Frances et al. (last update 18 December 2001), <i>The Electronic Middle English Dictionary</i> , Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press
n.	note
OE	Old English
OED	Simpson, John (ed.), <i>Online Oxford English Dictionary</i> (last update 2008), Oxford: OUP.
Par.(s)	paragraph(s)
s.v.	sub voce
Tr	Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.2 (James 581), Gower's <i>Confessio Amantis</i>
v.	verb



# 1

## Introduction

### 1. Chaucer and his language

In *The Regiment of Princes* (1411) Thomas Hoccleve praises Chaucer for being ‘the firste fyndere of our fair langage’ (l. 4978). This was a decade after Chaucer’s death (1400) and now, more than six hundred years later, we still praise Chaucer’s innovative use of the vernacular in his literary works, though we know little about his language, and in particular about his spelling habits. A great deal of research has been devoted to the subject, yet scholars tend to disagree on various features of the poet’s spelling (cf. Samuels 1988a, Benson 1992, Horobin 1998). This is due to the fact that none of Chaucer’s original manuscripts has come down to us, with the possible but very much contested exception of the *Equatorie of the Planetis*, MS. Peterhouse, Cambridge 75.I, a manuscript which Samuels (1983) believes to be a holograph, while Benson (1982) and Rand Schmidt (1993) think it is a scribal copy. All conclusions drawn about Chaucer’s language so far have thus been based upon the language found in a number of Chaucerian manuscripts copied by different scribes, as well as upon the comparison of such manuscripts with a number of non-Chaucerian texts of the same period (see Samuels 1972, 1988a). The extant manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* represent an invaluable source of information for linguistic research. There are more than eighty of them, including both complete manuscripts and fragments of the text, which date from the fifteenth century. In addition, there are four incunabula from the end of the fifteenth century, which can likewise be used for linguistic analysis, since at that time printed versions of texts were mere imitations of manuscripts (see the list of all fifteenth-century witnesses of *The Canterbury Tales* in Appendix 1).

Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales* between ca. 1387 and 1400, and many scribes produced numerous copies of it throughout the fifteenth century. This is a period in which English was a patchwork of dialects rather than a single variety of the language, and consequently dialectal variation is found in the language of the extant copies of this work. In spite of the large amount of data that is available, it is very difficult to draw conclusions about the language that was attested in the original version, that is, Chaucer’s own language. Blake (1985:167–178) suggests that the author’s original draft was the exemplar used for the early manuscripts of

*The Canterbury Tales*, that is, those copied shortly after Chaucer's death, thus implying that these manuscripts are authoritative versions of the text because they preserve authorial spelling features. Yet the studies conducted on some of these early manuscripts so far have not led scholars to draw the same conclusions about Chaucer's spelling. Horobin (1998), for instance, contradicts Samuels' (1988b) conclusion that Chaucer spelled the word AGAIN(ST) as *ayein(s)/ayeyn(s)*, showing instead that the forms *again(s)/ageyn(s)* ought to be considered archetypal, i.e. preserved directly from the author's original copy. In addition, recent studies (e.g. Robinson 1997) have revealed that authorial readings are also found in manuscripts dating from the end of the fifteenth century, as they are either very closely related to the original version or at just one remove from it (cf. the description of the 'O manuscripts' in the next section).

One of the early copies of *The Canterbury Tales*, Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 392D, the Hengwrt manuscript (henceforth referred to as 'Hg'), has received a great deal of attention since 1940, when Manly and Rickert (1940, vol. 1:276) suggested in their edition of *The Canterbury Tales* that it was 'a MS of the highest importance'. More recent studies have confirmed the superiority of Hengwrt over the other manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* by proposing that this 'is the earliest extant manuscript' (Blake 1985:80), and that its exemplar might have been Chaucer's holograph itself (Robinson 1999). Samuels (1988b:25) also argues that the scribe who copied Hengwrt seems to have adopted a spelling system similar to the system used by Chaucer himself. This scribe has long been referred to as 'Scribe B', because, according to Doyle and Parkes (1978), he was the second of the five copyists who collaborated in the production of one manuscript of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.2 (James 581) (henceforth referred to as 'Tr'), of which he copied only three quires (folios 9r–32v). Scribe B was also known as the 'Hengwrt/Ellesmere scribe', because, according to Doyle and Parkes (1978, 1979), he was the main copyist of Hengwrt as well as of another copy of *The Canterbury Tales*: San Marino California, Huntington Library, MS EL 26.C.9, the Ellesmere manuscript (henceforth referred to as 'El'). The hand of Scribe B has also been recognised in the Hatfield House fragment (Cecil Papers, Box S/1) from *Troilus and Criseyde* (Doyle and Parkes 1979:xxxv), and possibly in another fragment, Cambridge University Library, MS Kk 1.3/20, which contains some lines from the *Prioress's Prologue and Prioress's Tale* (Doyle and Parkes 1979:xxxv, Doyle 1995:60). Only very recently, as will be discussed in the next chapter, was this copyist identified as Adam Pinkhurst, and five other manuscripts have so far been attributed to him (see Chapter 2, §1 for the list of the manuscripts presumed to have been copied by this scribe).

Most studies carried out on the spelling system of Scribe B before the latest discoveries focus on some or all of the texts traditionally ascribed to him: the Hengwrt and Ellesmere manuscripts, the three Gowerian quires and the two Chaucerian fragments. Results obtained from the analysis of these texts, and the differences found between Hg and El in particular, have led scholars to make assumptions about this copyist's scribal habits (cf. Burnley 1983, Samuels 1988a,



Doyle 1995), even to the extent of suggesting that Hg and El were copied by different scribes (cf. Ramsey 1982, 1986). Such contrasting opinions are partly due to the fact that different methods of investigation were adopted: some studies were carried out upon selected parts of the texts (cf. Samuels 1988a), while others entailed the analysis of a number of features throughout each manuscript (cf. Ramsey 1982, 1986, Burnley 1983). What has been lacking so far is a comprehensive analysis of Scribe B's language in the manuscripts copied by him, in order to draw even more precise conclusions about his spelling practice and possibly to gain indirect information about Chaucer's language. Such an analysis is now greatly facilitated by the availability of an increasing number of texts copied by Scribe B in computer-readable format, which allows searches that would otherwise have been too time-consuming.

## 2. The Canterbury Tales Project

The recent application of computer technology to the Humanities in general and to Middle English texts in particular has offered scholars new perspectives on the study of these texts. In the past few decades, this approach has resulted in the emergence of a number of projects that aim to produce digitised versions of Middle English texts, making it possible for scholars to carry out research on the original versions of the texts instead of being forced to use later editions. The Canterbury Tales Project is the leading project as far as the study of Chaucer's *Tales* is concerned and, as its director Peter Robinson (2003:127) explains, its aim is 'to explore the textual history of the *Tales* by transcribing, collating, and analyzing the manuscripts of the *Tales* using computer methods'. The Canterbury Tales Project issues CD-ROMs that contain images and transcriptions of all fifteenth-century witnesses, i.e. manuscripts and printed editions, to *The Canterbury Tales*, word-by-word and line-by-line collations of the text of a tale in all its witnesses, spelling databases in the early productions only and stemmatic commentaries in the more recent ones, thus offering countless possibilities of searching for variants as well as a wealth of information about each and every witness. As of 2008, four CD-ROMs had been issued: *The General Prologue* (GP), *The Miller's Tale* (MI), *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* (WBP) and *The Nun's Priest's Tale* (NP), and several publications have already been based on the data gathered with these new tools.

A precursor of this project was the work started by Manly and Rickert in 1920, culminating in 1940 in the publication of their eight-volume edition of the *Text of The Canterbury Tales; Studied on the Basis of All Known Manuscripts*. Manly and Rickert likewise studied the textual tradition of *The Canterbury Tales*, and by collating all extant manuscripts they tried to determine the line of descent of each of them from the archetype, i.e. the manuscript representing the head of the manuscript tradition. They classified most of the manuscripts into four genetic groups, referred to as A, B, C and D, and they observed that the remaining texts formed independent pairs. By discerning authorial from non-authorial variants, Manly and Rickert aimed to reconstruct the archetype of the extant manuscripts, although in their view this

was not Chaucer's original copy, which they believed could not be recovered, but instead the text from which subsequent copies of *The Canterbury Tales* were made. This is at least what can be deduced from the following statement:

comparison of the MS readings affords no means of passing beyond the archetype to the author's original except where there is reason to believe that certain variants transmitted by extant MSS have been preserved by direct derivation from the author's original.

(Manly and Rickert 1940, vol. 2:40)

Recent studies conducted by the scholars of the Canterbury Tales Project proceed from the assumption that, as suggested by Robinson (2000a:§3.2.3), 'O is Chaucer's working draft'. These studies have shed new light on the relationship between the extant manuscripts by establishing, for instance, the existence of two more genetic groups, referred to as E and F, in the textual tradition of WBP and, more significantly, by isolating the so-called O group, which consists of a number of texts that are very closely related to O, i.e. Chaucer's original text (see Robinson 1997:80, Barbrook et al. 1998:839 for the stemma of WBP). Even though the O manuscripts are referred to as a group, it should be observed that they do not belong to the same genetic group, since they do not descend from a common ancestor below O, as the manuscripts in all the other groups do. Each O manuscript represents an independent line of descent from O, and is a precious source of information about the language that must have been attested in the archetype.

The research carried out so far on the fifteenth-century witnesses of the *General Prologue*, the *Miller's Tale*, the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and the *Nun's Priest's Tale* has led to the identification of a number of O manuscripts for these tales, although not all manuscripts are classified as O in each tale, as shown in Table 1 below.<sup>1</sup> Only four manuscripts, Ch, El, Ha<sup>4</sup> and Hg, belong to the O group in all of the four tales above. The other manuscripts are classified as O only in the tales that seem to derive directly from the archetype, while in the other tales they belong to different genetic groups. This is probably due to the use of different exemplars for some tales, which therefore show a different affiliation in the same manuscripts. These data should, however, be used with caution, because not all of the tales have been analysed yet. It is expected that further research will shed more light on the relationship among all the witnesses of *The Canterbury Tales*, as well as on their different lines of descent from Chaucer's original version. For the purpose of this study, it must be stressed that Hg and El each descend from O independently (see Robinson 2000a:§3.4.1), which rules out the possibility that El was copied from Hg. The relationship between these two manuscripts is crucial for studies about Chaucer's language because, as Robinson suggests:

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<sup>1</sup> In this study the manuscripts are referred to by their sigils (abbreviated names); a list of all extant witnesses of the *Canterbury Tales* and their sigils is provided in Appendix 1.

these two are among the earliest of all the manuscripts of the Tales, possibly written within a decade of Chaucer's death or even within his lifetime. Hg presents a text of uncommon excellence throughout the *Tales* ... but the tale order in El is usually regarded as superior to that in Hg. ... Hg and El are excellent copies, and they preserve many readings present in O and lost in other copies.

(Robinson 2000a:§3.4.1)

GP	MI	WBP	NP
	Ad <sup>1</sup>	Ad <sup>1</sup>	Ad <sup>1</sup>
	Ad <sup>3</sup>	Ad <sup>3</sup>	Ad <sup>3</sup>
Bo <sup>2</sup>	Bo <sup>2</sup>	Bo <sup>2</sup>	
Ch	Ch	Ch	Ch
El	El	El	El
	En <sup>3</sup>	En <sup>3</sup>	En <sup>3</sup>
Gg	Gg		Gg
		Gl	
			Ha <sup>3</sup>
Ha <sup>4</sup>	Ha <sup>4</sup>	Ha <sup>4</sup>	Ha <sup>4</sup>
	Ha <sup>5</sup>	Ha <sup>5</sup>	
Hg	Hg	Hg	Hg
	Hk	Hk	
		Ht	
	li		
			Ld <sup>1</sup>
Ln			
Ps	Ps	Ps	
	Py	Py	Py
		Ra <sup>2</sup>	
Ra <sup>3</sup>		Ra <sup>3</sup>	
		Tc <sup>1</sup>	
To <sup>1</sup>	To <sup>1</sup>		

**Table 1. The O manuscripts in GP, MI, WBP and NP**

For the sake of clarity, in this study I will use the terms 'O' and 'archetype' as synonyms for Chaucer's working draft; I will likewise refer to the 'O manuscripts' when discussing those texts which, according to the findings of the Canterbury Tales Project, originate directly from Chaucer's original manuscript in one or more of the four tales mentioned above.

### 3. Varieties of English and Chaucer's London English

The problem of reconstructing the language of the lost archetype of *The Canterbury Tales* is further complicated by the fact that several manuscripts that have come

down to us are written in different varieties of Middle English. In fifteenth-century England a standard variety of the language had not yet developed and, as I will explain below, scribes often translated their exemplars into their own dialects, thus introducing dialectal variants into their manuscripts. A large number of Middle English dialects have been identified through the survey that resulted in the publication of the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English (LALME)* (McIntosh et al. 1986). An important contribution of this survey is the identification of four types of written incipient standard, which Samuels (1963) calls Types I to IV. Type I is mostly associated with the language of the majority of Wycliffite manuscripts of the second half of the fourteenth century, and is the standard literary language, which was found in texts from the Central Midlands, and survived until 1430. The other three types are more strictly speaking varieties of London English. Type II is the dialect of seven mid-fourteenth-century texts, e.g. the Auchinleck manuscript, which are from the greater London area; Type III is the language recorded in London in a number of documents written between 1385 and 1425 (Chambers and Daunt 1931), as well as in literary texts such as Hoccleve's holographs, the text of *Piers Plowman* in Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17, and the Hengwrt and Ellesmere manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*. Type IV, also known as 'Chancery Standard', is considered to be the precursor of Standard English, and is the language of the numerous government documents that were written after 1430. As this study primarily focuses on the language of Hengwrt and Ellesmere, I will often allude to features of the London dialect Type III. In addition, references to the two other varieties of London dialect, Types II and IV, will be inevitable when discussing old-fashioned and probably authorial variants found in Hengwrt and Ellesmere, or when comparing the literary language of these manuscripts with the bureaucratic language with which Scribe B was very likely to be familiar.

#### 4. Aims and methodology

This study aims to analyse the language of the manuscripts that have traditionally been attributed to Scribe B, namely Hengwrt, Ellesmere, Trinity, the Hatfield fragment (henceforth referred to as 'Hatfield') and the Kk fragment (henceforth referred to as 'Kk'). I have decided to leave out of consideration five further texts that have recently been ascribed to this copyist (see Chapter 2, §1), first and foremost because my research was already well underway when the articles that reported the new discoveries were published (Horobin and Mooney 2004, Mooney 2006). Furthermore and perhaps more importantly, having examined some images of the new manuscripts I was not entirely sure whether all of them were indeed copied by the same scribe. Although it would have been very interesting to look further into this matter, this would have gone far beyond the scope of my research.

Through an analysis of the language of the texts that form my corpus, I intend to shed more light on Scribe B's spelling practice, in order to find out why he often used different variants in Hg and El, and to what extent the language of either of these two manuscripts can be evidence of the language that was in the exemplar.

Since it is possible that Hg in particular was either copied directly from Chaucer's original drafts or from the first exemplar of *The Canterbury Tales* produced from them (Robinson 1999:203), and since El is closely related to Hg, any new findings about the language of these two manuscripts are relevant to current research on Chaucer's language. By investigating Scribe B's orthographic practice, I also aim to determine what kind of copyist he was. To do so, I will make use of McIntosh's classification of Middle English scribes into different types depending on how faithful they were to their exemplar, a classification which is further discussed in Chapter 2. I therefore hope to be able to explain the differences between the spelling of Hg and El, which in the past have been justified either by arguing that El is an edited text (cf. Manly and Rickert 1940, vol. 1:150, Pearsall 1985:10, Mann 2001:73 n.11), or by considering the spelling in El as the adaptation of the scribe's practice to the ongoing spelling changes in London English (Samuels 1988a:40), or even by claiming that Hg and El were the work of two different scribes (Ramsey 1982, 1986). This study entails an extensive survey of the copyist's written production in order to isolate significant spelling variants and then to define which of these variants are scribal and which are or might be authorial. I chose to approach the vast amount of data at my disposal selectively, and consequently I have carried out my research according to the following methodology.

I first collected facsimiles of the manuscripts known to have been copied by Scribe B when I started my research, that is, Hg, El, Tr, Hatfield and Kk. For reasons already explained, the other five manuscripts attributed to this scribe were left out of consideration here. For the purpose of this study, I needed to be able to consult the manuscript itself as well as a computer-readable and searchable version of all five texts in my corpus. Although I did not have direct access to any of the manuscripts, I was able to make use of the *Hengwrt Chaucer Digital Facsimile* (Stubbs 2000), and the electronic transcriptions of *The Canterbury Tales* in Hg and El, which were made available to me by the Canterbury Tales Project researchers. Whenever I needed to check images of Hg and El, I referred to the *Hengwrt Digital Facsimile* as well as to the facsimile edition of Hg (Ruggiers 1979) and to the *Ellesmere Chaucer Monochromatic Facsimile* (Woodward and Stevens 1997). For Tr, I had digital images of the manuscript at my disposal; on the basis of these I transcribed quires 2–4, which represent Scribe B's stint, i.e. the portion of the text copied by him, in this manuscript. I transcribed the Hatfield and Kk fragments as well, although for these texts I had to rely on the images provided in Campbell (1958:307) and Doyle (1995:61), respectively. Following the example of most transcriptions of Hg and El made by the Canterbury Tales Project, I used the program BBEdit® to transcribe Tr, Hatfield and Kk. BBEdit® is a commercial computer program that, among other things, is suitable for making quick searches through large sections of written text. It also allows users to store the results of multiple searches in files that can be saved and consulted at different stages of the research. I did this for all of the lexical items that I deal with in my study. Throughout this study, I will refer to Chaucer's tales by means of the same abbreviations used in the publications issued by the Canterbury Tales Project (see

Appendix 2). Likewise, I adopt in my text the same lineation system used in the CD-ROMs, which starts with line 1 at the beginning of each tale and link (see Blake 1997c, for the correspondences with the traditional lineation system).

The corpus on which this study is based consists of five manuscripts of different length. Hg and El are the longest texts, but while El contains the entire text of *The Canterbury Tales*, Hg lacks the *Merchant's Prologue* (Link 15), the *Canon's Yeoman's Prologue* (Link 33) and the *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*. A whole quire of possibly ten leaves has been lost at the end of the manuscript; it probably contained half of the *Pardoner's Tale*, from paragraph 477 to the end as well as Chaucer's *Retraction*. In addition, other lines are also missing throughout the text, either because they were not copied, e.g. some passages of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, or because they were on leaves that were damaged, as shown by the lower section of folios 210–212, which was probably gnawed by mice or rats (Doyle and Parkes 1979:xxii). For the present study, I compared only the variants occurring in the texts that are present in both Hg and El, even though I did not exclude the variants attested in those sections that are in El but not in Hg. I believe that even if they do not have a counterpart in Hg, variants that are found only in El are qualitatively significant, as they represent part of Scribe B's production, and as such can give information about his writing practice. Variants from El that belong to sections that are missing from Hg are thus acknowledged in this study, but they are distinguished from the others by being presented separately in the tables as numbers that follow a plus sign, as shown in the example below.

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere
REASON	reson	57	13+2
	resoun	24	70+17

**Table 2. Example of variants in El that are missing from Hg**

The texts of Tr, Hatfield and Kk are much shorter than those of Hg and El, because Tr consists of three quires of eight leaves, whereas the Hatfield and Kk fragments are specimens of just one leaf each. Nevertheless, Tr provided enough material for comparison, and variants from Scribe B's quires are therefore frequently put side by side with those from Hg and El. Variants from Hatfield and Kk, by contrast, are taken into consideration less often, as these two manuscripts represent just a small contribution to the corpus, and only a few lexical items in them reveal significant spelling variation. In a previous study by Samuels (1988a) on the development of Scribe B's spelling practice through time, the Kk fragment in particular was not even taken into account, probably because Doyle and Parkes (1979) had attributed this manuscript to Scribe B with some reservations (see Chapter 2). However, Doyle (1995:64–65) suggested in a later study that the feature which made this fragment somewhat different from the other four manuscripts copied by Scribe B, i.e. the broad differences of the appearance of his handwriting in Kk, was due to

modernisation of the scribe's writing style. I thus decided to include this fragment in my study, because I believe that, where possible, the comparison of the language of Kk with the language of the other manuscripts can be a means to assess palaeographical evidence.

I have developed the following method for searching the texts. Since words were going to be the object of my investigation, I started off by conducting a thorough analysis of the spelling variants of adverbial forms. I selected adverbs because they form a large word class, through which I could study other word classes as well, as exemplified by the word *right*, which is an adverb as well as an adjective and a noun. Another reason for starting with the adverbs is that according to Samuels (1988a:39), the linguistic profiles of Hg and El agree on most variables in spelling, while disagreeing on eleven items, five of which can behave like adverbs, i.e. *agayn/ayeyn*, *heighe/hye*, *murye/myrie*, *neigh/ny* and *noght/nought/nat*. I expected that a thorough analysis of the class of adverbs would provide me with relevant data about Scribe B's spelling practice and especially about possible changes in his habits through time. Hence, by using adverbs as a window on other word classes, I collected data which would be useful for an extensive analysis of my corpus.

My first observations about Scribe B's orthographic practice were thus based on the selection and descriptions of those adverbs that exhibited different spelling variants in my corpus, which I performed as follows. First, I selected the adverbs to be studied by consulting both the CD-ROM of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* (Robinson 1996) and *A Chaucer Glossary* (Davis et al. 1981). These resources provided me with spelling databases in which words occurring in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* as well as in the whole *Canterbury Tales* were labelled according to the word class they belonged to. I excluded *a priori* from my analysis those adverbs that occur fewer than six times in *The Canterbury Tales*, such as *forby* meaning 'by, past', as they were too few to provide significant evidence unless they presented relevant spelling variation, as shown, for instance, by the words STEEP (Chapter 3) and APART (Chapter 5). Subsequently, I looked for all occurrences and different spelling variants of the adverbs thus selected in the three longest texts, Hg, El and Tr, and collected all occurrences of the more significant ones; these were stored in a document bearing the name of the relative adverb. Hence, all instances of *again(s)*, *ageyn(s)* and *ayeyn(s)* in Hg, Tr and El were saved in a file called AGAIN. The adverbs that I considered relevant for the present analysis were those that exhibited spelling differences in the three texts, such as Hg *her(e)* vs. El *heer(e)*, or those that were spelled as two words in Hg, e.g. *(n)euere mo(ore)*, but as one word in El and Tr, e.g. *(n)eueremo(ore)*. By contrast, adverbs like *soone*, which were spelled in the same way in all manuscripts, were not relevant and were thus excluded. Finally, I described all data collected in this way. In doing so, I compared the relevant spelling variants found in Hg, El and Tr among themselves and, when necessary, also against the spelling forms in the Hatfield and the Kk fragments. These two manuscripts were not included in the main search for spelling variants, because they are very short texts in which all relevant spelling variants could be easily identified.

The analysis of the adverbial class described here revealed that some spelling variants appeared more frequently in one or more manuscripts, or in one or more sections of the same manuscript. Examples of this are the preference for *-o-* and *-ow-* in Hg and *-ou-* in El in words like *ynogh* and *down* in Hg and *ynough* and *down* in El, as well as the clustering of the variants *muchil* and *mychel* only in the *Tale of Melibee* in Hg, while *muche* and *muchel* are used throughout in Hg, El and Tr. These findings are important for various reasons. The presence in two manuscripts of spelling variants that may with hindsight be considered as either old-fashioned (*ynogh*, *mychel*) or modern (*ynough*, *muche*) could be a sign that some years had passed between the copying of these texts. Likewise, the occurrence of both old and modern variants in the same manuscript could indicate that some tales were older than others. However, the inconsistent use of such variants in the same manuscript raises questions about the scribe's spelling system as well as about his faithfulness to the original text. In order to cast light on the significance of the variation in Scribe B's spelling practice, I first isolated the following five groups of spelling variants, which I noticed recurred constantly in the adverbs that I analysed:

- (1) a. Variants characterised by a variable use of the vowels. To this group belong:
  - i. words in which the vowel may be spelled with a single or a double graph, as in *anon* vs. *anoon*.
  - ii. words displaying a shift from Hg *-o-*, *-u-* and *-ow-* to El *-ou-*.
- b. Variants characterised by a number of different spellings. These are words that primarily occur with a default spelling, e.g. *werke*, but which also exhibit one or more alternative variants, e.g. *wirke*, *werche*, *wirche*.
- c. Variants characterised by a one-word spelling, a two-word spelling or both, as in *moreouer* vs. *more ouer*.
- d. Variants whose spelling is determined by the rhyme constraint because they are placed at the end of the line, as in *alwey* within the line vs. *alway* in rhyming position.
- e. Variants characterised by a different form for a different function, in which the grammatical function of the word therefore seems to influence the spelling of the word, as in the case of *first* (adverb) vs. *firste* (adjective).

I then extended the search for such spelling variations to all words in the corpus at my disposal, so as to determine whether the findings obtained from the analysis of the adverbs were also confirmed by items belonging to the other word classes, and thus whether these variants were the results of an overall change in the scribe's spelling practice or whether there were other reasons for them. The decision to select these features as representative examples of spelling variation was made for practical reasons; it was soon clear that the original plan of dealing with all instances of spelling variation in the manuscripts copied by Scribe B was too ambitious. In addition, such an extensive study would have resulted in a lengthy work



characterised by repetition, as different features, regardless of their number, would ultimately lead to the same conclusion.

The present study therefore consists of an analysis of the above-mentioned spelling features in a considerable number of lexical items in the corpus; the criteria applied are outlined in what follows. First of all, words were selected as representative samples of each feature they exemplify. Thus, for the variants characterised by a variable use of the vowels in (1a.i.) above, for instance, several lexical items were collected, first by looking for words spelled with a double graph in the entire Hg and El manuscripts, and then by selecting only those items that presented variation between Hg and El. Items that were spelled in the same way in Hg and El were disregarded. These words were then compared with the same items in Tr, Hatfield and Kk. The search for more words was halted when the new data clearly did not add any new information, but simply constituted further evidence of what had already been found. In addition, the analysis was limited to words containing *-e-*, *-o-*, as in *gre(e)ne* and *ano(o)n*, and a few examples containing *-a-*, such as *la(a)te*, because the other two vowels, *-i-* and *-u-*, did not show any significant variation between the two largest manuscripts. The data gathered in this way are displayed in tables like Table 3 below, which show only the data obtained from Hg, El and Tr, while the data found in Hatfield and Kk are discussed in the text only when relevant.

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
CLEAN	clene	20	22+3 (L33, CY, PA)	4
	cleene	2 (GP)	–	–
LESSON	lesson	1 (GP)	–	1
	lessoū	1 (L29)	2	–
	lessoun	–	–	1
STEEP	stepe	1 (GP)	2 (GP)	–
	steepe	1 (GP)	–	–

**Table 3. Frequency of variants in Hg, El and Tr**

In the tables, words in Middle English are arranged in alphabetical order, and each of them is preceded by its closest translation into Modern English in small capitals, although the meaning may sometimes be old-fashioned or have grown to differ, as shown below by STEEP for *stepe*, an adjective occurring in *The Canterbury Tales* with the meaning of ‘staring’, as in (2):

- (2) A large man he was with eyen stepe                      Hengwrt GP 1. 753

The number that follows each Middle English variant in the tables indicates the number of occurrences of that form; when significant, the abbreviated name of the tale or tales in which the variant occurs is also given in brackets (see Appendix 2 for

the list of abbreviations for the tales). As already mentioned above, the numbers that follow a plus sign refer to the occurrences in E1 that are attested in those sections which are missing from Hg. Hence, the data provided in Table 3 above show that Middle English *clene*, as a variant of CLEAN, occurs twenty times in Hg, twenty-two times in the text of E1 that is also present in Hg, three times in the sections that are missing from Hg and four times in Tr. *Cleene*, by contrast occurs only twice in Hg, in the *General Prologue*.

A discussion of the lexical items thus presented follows each table; the variants in question are not always considered in the alphabetical order in which they are listed in the tables, however, because items sharing the same characteristics are often dealt with together. Finally, images from manuscript pages of Hg, E1 and Tr are often provided in this study to illustrate relevant points discussed. The source of most images is the *Hengwrt Digital Facsimile*; for illustrating details of the Trinity College R.3.2 manuscript of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, I copied some of the digital images that I used for my transcription of the three quires copied by Scribe B, while images from E1 were copied from the *The Nun's Priest's Tale on CD-ROM*, (Thomas 2006) or they were downloaded from the website of the B. Davis Schwartz Memorial Library, Special Collections and Archives, at Long Island University. Finally, several lines of Hg and E1 were copied from the *Hengwrt Digital Facsimile* and used as examples in this study; punctuation marks have usually been removed, unless they were necessary to the discussion of the examples in question.

The discussion is primarily based on the data collected in the manuscripts that form my corpus, but I will regularly refer to other texts. First of all, the variants of a given item in the table will often be compared with the occurrences of the same word in the other extant fifteenth-century witnesses of the *General Prologue*, the *Miller's Tale*, the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, collected in the respective CD-ROMs. In particular cases I will also collate the witnesses of *The Tale of Melibee* (TM), which I received as separate files from the Canterbury Tales Project. Some early manuscripts and some late but authoritative manuscripts of these tales in particular will be checked for orthographic features that may derive directly from Chaucer's original draft. In addition, comparison will be made with variants recorded in *An Anthology of Chancery English (ACE)* (Fisher et al. 1984), which I also consulted in its online version. The *Anthology* consists of a collection of documents written by the scribes of the Signet, Privy Seal and Chancery offices mostly between 1417 and 1462; only a few letters and indentures are dated between 1384 and 1408, i.e. around the period during which Chaucer wrote his *Tales*. These texts are therefore of particular interest for my analysis, and I consulted them when I needed to know whether a certain form in my corpus was also typical of the bureaucratic language, thus assuming it would be scribal rather than authorial. Although most of these documents postdate the manuscripts copied by Scribe B, I do not exclude the possibility that the language recorded in them was very similar to the language that Scribe B was accustomed to through his work as a professional scrivener at court (see Chapter 2). Finally, I will make use of the *Middle English*

*Dictionary (MED)*, which I mainly consulted for information about the use of words in Middle English in general.

The results of my investigation of Scribe B's relevant spelling variants described here represent the central part of this book, which is structured in the following way. Chapter 2 provides general information about Scribe B and his manuscripts. Chapter 3 deals with variants characterised by a variable spelling for the long vowels (variants in 1a.i. above). Chapter 4 considers the shift from Hg *-o-*, *(-u-)* and *-ow-* to El *-ou-* (variants in 1a.ii. above). Chapter 5 describes variants that show different degrees of spelling variation, as well as the presence or absence of word division (variants in 1b–1c above). Chapter 6 is devoted to general issues related to spelling variation in Hg and El, including the relations between spelling and rhyme constraint and between the spelling and form and function of words (variants in 1d–1e above). Chapter 7 contains my conclusions and relates my work to previous studies on the same subject.

Through the analysis of the spelling variants in Hg and El, I will proceed to show that the differences between these two manuscripts are not due to changes in the scribe's orthographic practice, but to the scribe's different attitude towards the two texts.



## Scribe B and his manuscripts

### 1. Scribe B

During the past thirty years the scribe of the Hengwrt and Ellesmere manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*, as well as his manuscript production, have received a great deal of interest from scholars, and this has recently culminated in the discovery of his identity and in the identification of other manuscripts which might have been copied by him. According to the latest findings (Mooney 2006), the scribe's name was Adam Pinkhurst; furthermore, he was not only the copyist of Hg and El, but also the Adam mentioned in the following poem by Chaucer:

*Chaucers Wordes unto Adam, his Owne Scriveyn*

Adam scriveyn, if ever it thee bifalle  
 Boece or Troylus for to wryten newe,  
 Under thy long lokkes thou most have the scalle,  
 But after my makyng thow wryte more trewe;  
 So ofte adaye I mot thy werk renewe,  
 It to correcte and eke to rubbe and scrape,  
 And al is thorough thy negligence and rape.

(Benson 1987:650)

This is, however, not the first time that Adam Pinkhurst has been proposed as a possible identity for 'Adam Scrivener' in this poem. In the past the names of Adam Stedeman, Adam Acton and Adam Pinkhurst were put forward by Bressie (1929:383), Manly (1929:403) and Wagner (1929:474), respectively. The name of Adam Pinkhurst was first suggested in a short note that was published in an issue of the *Times Literary Supplement* in June 1929. In this note, Bernard Wagner claimed that he had found Pinkhurst's name in the records of the Scrivener's Company and, in particular, that he had come across it

in a list of some forty men who "appear to have been of ye Brotherhood [of writers of the Court Letter of the City of London] between 1392 and 1404". As this is the earliest list among the records, it is not known if Pinkhurst was a member of the Brotherhood at the time the *Troilus* was being written. However,

if he were a member in 1392 he would have been engaged in the profession as an apprentice since 1385 – as a minimum of seven years was required.

(Wagner 1929:474)

Wagner's suggestion was confirmed by Mooney (2006:98), who shows that Adam Scrivener and Scribe B, or the Hengwrt/Ellesmere scribe, were one and the same person: Adam Pinkhurst. Mooney's evidence for this was Pinkhurst's signature to an oath in the earliest records of the Scriveners' Company, which the scribe joined shortly after 1392, as she noticed that the handwriting in the oath and the signature matched the handwriting in the Hg and El manuscripts. Mooney also believes that the scribe was from Surrey, and that his surname derived from Pinkhurst's Farm, near Abinger Common, between Guildford and Dorking (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Map of Surrey (from [www.A1Tourism.com](http://www.A1Tourism.com))**

This implies that his dialect would not have differed much from the London dialect that was presumably spoken by Chaucer. In addition, Mooney writes that

Adam Pinkhurst also seems to have had regular employment with the Mercers' Company of London, whether on a part-time, full-time, or piece-by-piece basis. His affiliation with the Mercers is attested by three legal documents in which his name is linked with those of several mercers and by his handwriting both in a petition from the Mercers to the Lords of the King's Council and in accounts of The Mercers' Company. Together these documents demonstrate a long-standing affiliation with the Mercers from at least 1385 and lasting until at least 1395 and possibly as late as 1427.

(Mooney 2006:106)

As a result of this discovery, it can be assumed that Pinkhurst was active as a professional scribe at the time when Chaucer was composing his *Canterbury Tales*, that is, between ca. 1387 and his death in 1400 (see below). He was apparently both a literary and a bureaucratic scribe, because seven of the ten manuscripts that Mooney attributes to him are literary works and three more are bureaucratic ones. The ten manuscripts that Mooney ascribes to Adam Pinkhurst are listed on her website of the *Late Medieval English Scribes Project*, and are the following:

Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 392D, Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* (the Hengwrt manuscript)

Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 393D, Geoffrey Chaucer, *Boece*

Cambridge, Trinity College Library, B.15.17 (James 353), William Langland, *Piers Plowman, B-text*

Cambridge, Trinity College Library, R.3.2 (James 581), folios 9–32v, John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*

Cambridge, University Library, Kk.1.3, Part 20 (single leaf), Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, end of *Prioress's Prologue* and beginning of *Prioress's Tale*

Hatfield House (Marquess of Salisbury), Cecil Papers, Box S/1 (fragment of one leaf), Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*

Kew, National Archive, SC 8/20/997, Mercers' Petition to King's Council, late 1387 or early 1388

London, Guildhall Library, MS 5370 (Scriveners' Common Paper), page 56, oath of Adam Pinkhurst

London, Mercers' Hall Archives, Accounts 1391–1464, folios vi–x verso, accounts for 1391–1393

San Marino, California, Henry E. Huntington Library, MS EL 26.C.9, Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* (the Ellesmere manuscript).

(<http://www.medievalescribes.com/scribes.html>)

In the previous chapter, I pointed out that five of these manuscripts, Hg, El, Tr, Hatfield and Kk, had already been attributed to the same copyist, even though Doyle and Parkes (1979) express some doubts about Kk. Despite the fact that they find many similarities between this and the other four manuscripts, they hesitate to state that Kk is in Scribe B's hand as well (Doyle and Parkes 1979:xxxv, Doyle 1995:60). As for the other texts, Stubbs (2002) describes the *Boece* manuscript as a possible work by Scribe B or somebody with very similar handwriting, while Horobin and Mooney (2004) unequivocally ascribe the *Piers Plowman* manuscript to Pinkhurst. The hand of this manuscript had already attracted the attention of other scholars (cf. Kane and Donaldson 1988:13 n.91 and Doyle 1986:39 in particular), who noted a

strong similarity with the hand of the Hengwrt and Ellesmere scribe but did not find this enough evidence to attribute that manuscript of *Piers Plowman* to the same copyist (see Horobin and Mooney 2004:68–69). As for the legal documents, the page containing the oath and the signature of Adam Pinkhurst, the seventh item in the list above, is the document that has reveals the scribe's identity. Together with the other two manuscripts, this document provides evidence that Pinkhurst was also, and probably primarily, active as a bureaucratic scribe between late 1387 and 1393.

In the almost thirty years between Doyle and Parkes' identification of Scribe B's hand in three quires of Tr and Mooney's discovery of his identity, very little new information has come to light about this copyist and his writing practice. By analysing the evidence from his manuscripts, several scholars agreed he was a professional scribe (Doyle and Parkes 1979, Blake 1995). According to Doyle and Parkes (1979:xxi), Scribe B was somebody who knew Latin and was familiar with contemporary English poetry, although he probably was not a full-time literary scribe. Blake (1985:59) speculated that 'he may have been employed, like Hoccleve, in some semi-official capacity as a scrivener'. The possibility that he was a clerk working for the government would explain why he was involved in the production of Tr together with Hoccleve, who is 'Scribe E', the fifth copyist, in that manuscript. It would also account for a link between Scribe B, Chaucer and Gower, who worked as government officers as well, and who might have given him texts to copy because they knew him.

The language of Hg and El places Scribe B in the London or Westminster area (*LALME*, vol. III, Linguistic Profile 6400, Blake 1997a:6), and it has been identified as London English Type III, the dialect that was probably used by Chaucer (Samuels 1963:87, Smith 1995:73). Yet the two manuscripts show a certain degree of spelling variation, which has been explained by Samuels (1988a:40–41) as an adaptation to the milieu in which the scribe lived. At that time, the London dialect was rapidly changing, because of massive immigration from the Central Midlands. London was also the place where Chancery English, the new standard language, was emerging, and becoming the model to be imitated (Samuels 1963). Scribes who were neither speakers of the London dialect nor faithful copyists of their exemplars – the latter being fairly uncommon (see the classification of medieval scribes below) – contributed to this linguistic confusion. In particular, scribes who came from other parts of England often used alternative spelling forms, either by retaining their regional spelling variants and thus translating the language of the exemplars into their own dialects, or by trying to conform to what they thought was the acceptable London dialect.

In the midst of such a linguistically unstable environment, it seems likely that this scribe, who was probably familiar with the London dialect, also changed his practice in the course of time. This is at any rate what Samuels (1988a) concluded from his analysis of Scribe B's spelling in samples of Hg, El, Tr and Hatfield, which he believed had been copied in this sequence within a period of eight to ten years (see the dates of the manuscripts in §2). Samuels argued that the further this copyist proceeded in his career, the more he tended to use his own spelling, as he did in El,



instead of copying faithfully what was in the exemplar, as he did in Hg. Hence, if it is true that Scribe B, like Chaucer, spoke or at least was familiar with the London Type III dialect (see Samuels 1963), it follows that he was faithful to Chaucer's spelling in Hg simply because he found in the exemplar the same variants that he would have used himself. By contrast, he did not preserve the spelling of the exemplar when he copied El, because at that point in time, perhaps some years later, his habits had changed. Burnley (1982) drew an analogous conclusion in his earlier study about the use of final *-e* in the monosyllabic adjectives of Hg and El, arguing that

although the languages of Hengwrt and Ellesmere are essentially similar, they nevertheless exhibit a degree of variation both in spelling and with regard to the representation of inflexional *-e* in adjectives; and this is evident in the fact that Ellesmere both omits, and tends to add, *-e* in positions where it is unjustified by grammar. Hengwrt's deviations from the grammatical norm are almost exclusively by omission of final *-e*. Since the contemporary history of the spoken language is one of the progressive loss of final *-e*, both in pronunciation and as a grammatical sign, the implication of this variation in practice between Hengwrt and Ellesmere is that the former is closer to a form of spoken language than the latter, at least in this respect. The addition of an unjustified inflexional *-e* indicates a desire to conform to a grammatical norm which is no longer fully understood from the experience of speech; the omission of inflexional *-e*, on the other hand, implies only the acknowledgement in the written language of developments currently taking place in the spoken language.

(Burnley 1982:174–175)

The desire to conform to a grammatical norm that he no longer fully understood was very likely due to the fact that the scribe wanted to preserve final *-e*, a distinctive feature of Chaucer's language, even though it was disappearing from the language of his time, in order to lend authority to his copy of *The Canterbury Tales*. In my study of all fifteenth-century versions of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* (Caon 2002), I show that throughout the century a few scribes likewise preserved adjectival final *-e* in their copies of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, in spite of the fact that final *-e* was already a rather old-fashioned feature in Chaucer's time (see Samuels 1988c), and was definitely obsolete at the time when these copies were made. In the case of Scribe B, who was a contemporary of Chaucer's, the use of final *-e* in the text of El in environments where it was not needed may therefore be a sign of hypercorrection, a sociolinguistic phenomenon which, as Horobin explains,

describes the process of overcompensation by which speakers who are weakly tied to their own linguistic network attempt to imitate the speech patterns of a different social group. It seems that in copying El the scribe or editor was attempting to emend the spelling of his copytext according to a system that he did not fully understand.

(Horobin 2003:58)

I will provide further examples of hypercorrection in Chapter 4.

Spelling variation between Hg and El has been the object of several studies which have tried to determine what Chaucer's language was like, and to what extent Scribe B changed Chaucer's original text. As mentioned above, these studies have led to different conclusions, which is not unusual, as one of the most common problems encountered when doing research on Middle English texts is that it is often difficult to establish *a priori* whose language it is that is found in a manuscript. It could be the language of the exemplar, the language of the copyist or a mixture of both, as very often both the exemplar, including the authorial one, and the copyist of a manuscript are unknown. McIntosh (1963:8–9) suggested in his influential article on Middle English dialectology that Middle English texts were very often more or less systematically translated from the dialect of the exemplar into the dialect of the scribe. Subsequently, in the first volume of the *LALME*, McIntosh argued that

it is necessary at the outset to state the various treatments that are open to a copyist whose exemplar is in a dialect different from his own. Such a scribe may do one of three things:

- A. He may leave the language more or less unchanged, like a modern scholar transcribing such a manuscript. This appears to happen only somewhat rarely.
- B. He may convert it into his own kind of language, making innumerable modifications to the orthography, the morphology, and the vocabulary. This happens commonly.
- C. He may do something somewhere between A and B. This also happens commonly.

(McIntosh 1986, vol. I:13)

In their further description of these three scribal types, Benskin and Laing added the following:

the categories represent *types* rather than absolute distinctions, and the characterization is in detail clinal. Nevertheless, the practices of most M.E. scribes may usefully be described in these terms. The degree of inconsistency admitted by categories A and B is clearly much smaller than what may be contained in C: by definition, C is anything that is not sensibly described as either A or B.

(Benskin and Laing 1981:56)

In the light of this classification, several scholars consider Scribe B to be a more or less consistent translator, a Type B scribe, although the proposals of the faithful scribe, Type A, and the mixed scribe, Type C, have not been rejected altogether.

As one of the supporters of the scribe as a translator, Smith (1995:78–79) studied the various orthographic differences between Hg and El, and argued that Scribe B 'more closely followed Chaucer's own practice' in Hg than in El, where he consistently used his own orthography. It is possible that when Scribe B copied El he intended to preserve Chaucer's spelling, while at the same time unconsciously introducing forms that were not in the exemplar, simply because he considered them

to be correct. In an earlier study on the language of the fifteenth-century copies of the *Confessio Amantis*, Smith (1988b:108 num. 5) attributed the language of Scribe B's stint in the Trinity manuscript to the scribe himself. In fact, according to Samuels and Smith (1988:19), 'Gower's dialect is essentially based on the two regional dialects of Kent and Suffolk, not on that of London', and Scribe B seems to preserve little of it in his manuscript. Samuels (1988b:25) had already noticed that 'as a copyist of Gower, this scribe is very unusual in that he translates his Gower exemplar thoroughly (with a few notable exceptions) into the normal Hengwrt-Ellesmere spelling'. This means, for instance, that Gower's *oghne* regularly becomes *owene*, which is the form that is used consistently in the Chaucerian manuscripts. Samuels (1988b:25) also wrote that Scribe B 'transforms Gower's spelling with such obviously practised ease and consistency that it is difficult to believe that he was acting any differently when he copied Chaucer'.

Benson (1992:3) considers the scribe of Hg and El a Type C copyist, i.e. a mixer, for he argues that: 'Scribe B, probably like most scribes, is not regular in his habits. Sometimes he translated all the forms with practised ease ... sometimes he translated inconsistently ... sometimes he translated partially and sometimes he did not translate at all'. Likewise, in a more recent study, Horobin contests the idea that Scribe B was a translator of Gower's language by referring to the Fairfax and Stafford manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis* (see §2.3 below), which are reliable samples of Gower's language, and by pointing out that

while the claim that the Fairfax and the Stafford are linguistic autographs may be authoritative, we can be less sure that they represent the immediate exemplar of the Trinity Gower. To assume therefore that Scribe B consistently translated the Trinity exemplar is similarly open to debate, and simplifies the problem further. The subsequent assumption that Scribe B would behave identically when presented with the Chaucer's exemplars requires a similar leap of faith. Any intermediary copy between the Gowerian archetype and the Trinity manuscript could transform the authorial language, and alterations in the frequency and distributions of authorial forms would be inevitable. Identification of a consistent translator must be firmly based on factual evidence from an immediate exemplar, and as this does not apply to Scribe B it is safest to assume that he was more likely to operate as a Type C copyist, mixing transcription with translation.

(Horobin 2003:40)

Later on, however, Horobin (2003) refines his theory, to the extent of arguing in favour of Scribe B as a faithful scribe (Type A). By comparing the spelling of all fifteenth-century manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*, he was able to isolate some spelling variants, such as *ayeyn/ayein* and *tofor-*, which are clustered in the same sections of several manuscripts. He believes that these forms were also in Chaucer's autograph copy, because it cannot be a coincidence that different scribes chose one and the same spelling variant in the same sections of their manuscripts. Horobin (2003:138) therefore concludes that: 'the presence of a number of such forms which appear to derive from Chaucer's language suggests that Scribe B did not translate

his copytext into his own language, but rather that he carefully preserved certain minor details of his copytext in both Hg and El'. He would therefore behave like a faithful scribe either because he spoke Chaucer's dialect, or because he learned his spelling habits from Chaucer while working under his supervision, as indeed the poem *Chaucers Wordes unto Adam, his Owne Scriveyn* suggests.

Clearly there is no agreement as to which kind of copyist Scribe B was, and now that it is known that this copyist was 'Adam Scriveyn', Chaucer's own opinion on the matter should be added to those mentioned above. In the poem that he wrote for his scribe (see above), Chaucer reproached Adam for regularly changing the spelling of his words due to negligence and haste. According to Chaucer's criticism, Scribe B was therefore neither a faithful copyist, nor a translator, but a Type C scribe, who in this case mixed authorial and scribal variants because of carelessness. In this study I will likewise argue that this copyist was a Type C scribe according to the classification proposed by McIntosh, although he dealt with the texts of Hg and El differently. When Scribe B copied Hg, he probably mixed authorial and scribal forms because he was working quickly. By contrast, when he produced the more carefully planned El; he tried to reduce spelling variation in this manuscript by selecting from the language of his exemplar those variants that were more characteristic of Chaucer's spelling, some of which coincided with variants from his own practice.

Despite the fact that Chaucer's scribe produced two early versions of *The Canterbury Tales* that are not alike, his regular though not mechanical handwriting (see Doyle and Parkes 1979:xxxv) suggests that he was a very proficient and accurate copyist. El is generally considered to be the best manuscript of this text, but Blake stresses how skilful the scribe's work had been in the less spectacular Hg as well, when he argues that

the scribe of Hg was conscientious and experienced. ... He imposed an order on the fragments and provided the parts of the poem with rubrics and running heads. He provided KfT and PsT with subdivisions to make the material more manageable; and he evidently found no difficulty in this type of work. He corrected many of his mistakes as he went along, though he made few to start with. He copied only what was in front of him and took no liberties with the text and did not seek to edit the contents. There are few omissions in his text. Passages which are not in Hg and which appear in later manuscripts are consequently likely to have been introduced into the text after Hg was written. The scribe of Hg did not know the poem well before he started copying. How far he was responsible for the order in which the tales appear is difficult to say, but it is not likely that he composed the extra links which were copied late into his manuscript. The evidence suggests that the copytext he had to work from was not in a good condition for it contained gaps and it had not been put into a final form. Nevertheless he made an excellent job of presenting its material in a coherent and accurate text.

(Blake 1985:95)

According to Blake, the few mistakes that the scribe made in Hg seem to have been caused by the fact that he was pressed for time or did not receive clear instructions. The layout of Hg, as well as the tale order (see Appendix 4), suggest that Scribe B was very likely given a pile of papers to copy, which were left unarranged by Chaucer and had gaps in the text. It is therefore possible that during the process of copying he encountered various difficulties. Evidence of this is provided by the first line of the *Parson's Prologue* (L37 l. 1), in section five, where he changed the name of the pilgrim who told the previous tale and wrote *Maūciple* instead, as shown in Figure 2.

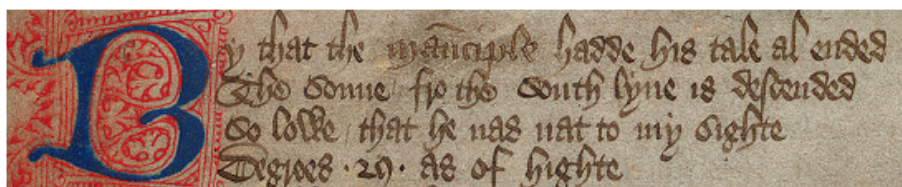


Figure 2. *Maūciple* written on an erasure in Hengwrt, fol. 235r

The word *Maūciple* is now written on an erasure; different suggestions have been made for the name that was there before, namely *Frankelēyn* (Manly and Rickert 1940, vol. 1:276–277) and *Somnour* (Doyle and Parkes 1979:xxviii). Whatever it was, what matters is that in this folio the scribe had to make some changes, presumably in order to insert the *Parson's Tale* at that point of the manuscript.

The scribe also left gaps in the text when links between tales were missing which he expected to receive (e.g. folio 128v between the *Man of Law's Tale* and *The Squire's Tale* was left blank for the *Man of Law's Endlink*), or when entire lines or just parts of them were lacking or were hard to read. This can be seen, for instance, in folio 150r of Hg, represented in Figure 3.

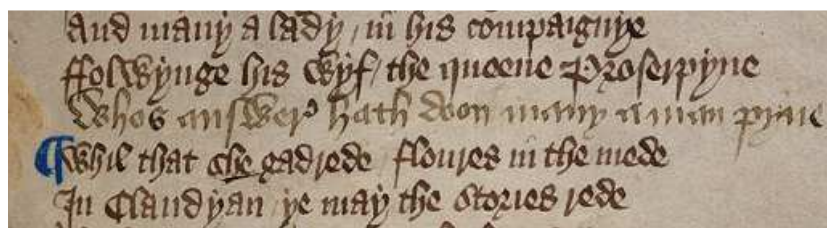


Figure 3. A line supplied by a different scribe in Hengwrt, fol. 150r

In this folio Scribe B left a space for line 986 of ME, probably because the line was missing or was illegible in his exemplar, and the blank line was filled by a different scribe, namely Doyle and Parkes' 'Hand F', who was probably Thomas Hoccleve (see Doyle and Parkes 1979:xlvi and the description of Hg below). The line that was added in Hg reads:

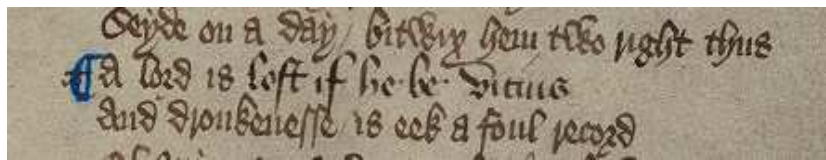
- (1) Whos answer<sup>p</sup> hath doon many a man pyne      Hengwrt ME l. 986

and, according to Manly and Rickert (1940, vol. 6:482–483), Hg is the only manuscript that displays this reading, while El and a fairly small number of manuscripts, Ad<sup>1</sup>, Bo<sup>2</sup>, Ch, Dd, En<sup>1</sup>, En<sup>3</sup>, Gg, Ha<sup>4</sup> and Hk, share the following reading:

- (2) Ech after oother right as a lyne      Ellesmere ME l. 986

Manly and Rickert (1940, vol. 3:477–478) also note that in El this line is written in a different ink, a detail that however cannot be seen in the monochromatic facsimile. Line 986 of *The Merchant's Tale* (ME) was apparently still missing from the exemplar of El, or the text was not clear enough to be transcribed, but unlike what happened in Hg, this line was added in El later by Scribe B himself. The presence of line 986 of ME in manuscripts that either belong to the O group in other tales, i.e. Ad<sup>1</sup>, Bo<sup>2</sup>, Ch, En<sup>3</sup>, Gg, Ha<sup>4</sup> and Hk, or that date from the first quarter of the fifteenth century, i.e. Dd, suggest that the reading is authorial.

Another example, illustrating this time the omission of part of a line, is on folio 83v of Hg in which, as the detail in Figure 4 shows, line 340 of *The Summoner's Tale* (SU) was begun by Scribe B and ended once again by Doyle and Parkes's 'Hand F'.



**Figure 4. A line completed by a different scribe in Hengwrt, fol. 83v**

In this case the text of the line is the same in both Hg and El, which read:

- (3) A lord is lost if he be vicious      Hengwrt/Ellesmere SU l. 340

The text in the exemplar of Hg must have been unclear or damaged at this point, so that the scribe could not copy any further than the first two words of this line. For El, the scribe may have used a different exemplar, or more likely he had the same one, which had in the meantime been edited and thus contained the missing words.

The differences between Hg and El should be seen as being due to the purpose for which these manuscripts were produced. According to Manly and Rickert (1940, vol. 2:477), 'Hg represents the earliest attempt after Chaucer's death to arrange in a single MS the tales and links left unarranged by him'. El, by contrast, is a later manuscript, which 'must have been carefully supervised though almost no traces of

supervision are now visible' (Manly and Rickert 1940, vol. 1:148), and which was commissioned as a high-quality edition of the text. The idea that, unlike Hg, El is an edited text has been accepted by many scholars (see Mann 2001:73), although it is unclear whether the editor was the scribe himself or somebody else who supervised his work. Horobin (2003:141–142) analyses the linguistic differences between Hg and El, and he explains them as a sign of different scribal attitudes towards the text. He believes that the scribe was more faithful to the exemplar when he copied Hg, while he was less tolerant of spelling variation and tended to normalise the language of the text when he copied El. In addition, Horobin suggests that such linguistic differences might point towards different functions of these manuscripts as books, when he argues that

the Hg manuscript demonstrates greater consistency and regularity with regard to features which affect the pronunciation of the text, while the El manuscript appears to be more concerned with regularising the appearance of the text. Such a distinction may be suggestive of the function of the books themselves. Perhaps Hg was designed for reading the text aloud while El was produced for silent reading?

(Horobin 2003:144)

Mann (2001), however, contests the idea that El is an edited text, and proposes that the differences between Hg and El are due to the use of a different exemplar for the two manuscripts. Furthermore, she believes that if any text was subjected to an editorial process, it was the Hg manuscript. She provides several examples to support her claim; an interesting one is that Link 20, between the *Squire's Tale* and the *Merchant's Tale*, and Link 17, between the *Merchant's Tale* and the *Franklin's Tale*, were adapted in Hg in order to fit into the incorrect tale order of this manuscript. In fact, in Hg the *Merchant's Tale* is placed between the *Squire's Tale* and the *Franklin's Tale*, while the correct order is that of El, in which the *Merchant's Tale* is followed by the *Squire's Tale* and then by the *Franklin's Tale* (see Appendix 4). The adaptation of the links in Hg required changing the name of the pilgrims mentioned in them, with subsequent damage to the metre. By contrast, the *Merchant–Squire Link* and the following *Squire–Franklin Link* in El reflect the authoritative order, as they retain the original names of the pilgrims and they are thus characterized by a regular metre.

The recent discovery of Scribe B's identity confirms the results of several studies that have been carried out so far about him and his manuscript production, and it also helps to cast light on the circumstances in which the first copies of *The Canterbury Tales* were produced. Scattergood (1990:501) argued that the mention of 'Boece or Troilus' in *Chaucer's Wordes unto Adam, His Own Sciveyn* suggested a date of around 1385 for this poem. At that time, the scribe had already copied two major works by Chaucer, and was probably going to do some more work for him. It is unlikely that Chaucer would have written a poem for Adam if he had thought that he would no longer employ him as a scribe. Furthermore, some scholars think that the scribe copied Hg under Chaucer's supervision. Samuels' (1988a) and Manly and

Rickert's (1940) traditional view that both manuscripts should be dated after 1400, with Hg being the first post-mortem effort to produce a manuscript of *The Canterbury Tales* and El the later de luxe production of the same text, has thus been recently challenged. Blake (1997b:105) and Stubbs (2000: Observations) believe that Hg may actually have been copied during Chaucer's lifetime and under his supervision. This opinion is supported by Scott (1995), whose dating of the Hg and El borders, i.e. the decorative motifs drawn around the text on a manuscript page, points to an earlier date for both manuscripts: between 1395 and 1400 for Hg and between 1400 and 1405 for El (see §2.1 in this chapter). This implies that Hg, the earlier manuscript, must have been copied before Chaucer's death and not after. In the light of her recent findings, Mooney likewise suggests that

the scribe of Hengwrt and Ellesmere had been Chaucer's 'owne scriveyn' from as early as the mid-1380s, and this identification means that he would probably have known the poet's idea about the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole through close contact with him in the late 1380s and 1390s, when Chaucer was writing the *Tales*. ... The identification also supports arguments that Chaucer may have supervised the preparation of a portion of the Hengwrt manuscript before his death in October 1400. Since Pinkhurst would have been in a position to know how much of the *Tales* Chaucer had written, he would hardly have left space for the completion of the Cook's Tale (fol. 57v) if he were writing after Chaucer's death. And since he later came back to add the marginal note, 'Of this Cokes tale maked Chaucer na moore,' in the ink that he used at the last stages of production of the manuscript, as noted by Stubbs, it seems likely that Chaucer died while Pinkhurst was working on it.

(Mooney 2006:105)

In addition, the identification of Scribe B as an employee of the Mercer's Company of London places him in the bureaucratic milieu of Chaucer's time. However, Scribe B was not only a government clerk: he must have been very active as a literary copyist as well, perhaps as a freelancer, since he was engaged in the production of texts by Chaucer, Gower and also by Langland, if he indeed was the copyist of the Cambridge, Trinity College Library, B.15.17 manuscript of *Piers Plowman*. Accordingly, he must have been familiar with both Type III and Type IV of the London dialect. Finally, if Chaucer supervised the preparation of Hg, or part of it, this should be evident from the language of this manuscript, which may therefore be expected to contain authorial forms. The difference between Hg and El might thus not be due to a change in the linguistic practice of the copyist, but to the preservation of authorial forms, possibly mixed with scribal variants, in Hg and to the attempt to normalise the spelling in El according to criteria that need to be determined.



## 2. The manuscripts

Scribe B's handwriting has been recognised in a number of manuscripts on the basis of palaeographical evidence. Doyle and Parkes describe it as follows:<sup>1</sup>

The most distinctive qualities of this hand lie in its size, and its agile duct with a vertical impetus which leads to irregularities in the height and slope of the letters. Its individuality is most apparent in those features of the duct exemplified in such letter forms as **g** and final '8'-shaped **s** in which the ends of component strokes frequently fail to join up, leaving small gaps or 'loose ends' at the points of contact ...; the 'tilted' **y** in which the left limb is vertical and the fork drops below the general level of the body of the other letters ...; the letter **w**...; **I** with its slope, prolonged head-stroke and incipient cross bar ... . Descenders of **f** and long-**s** are frequently short, minims are often asymmetrical, and the hand contains frequent accidental bitings [i.e. convergence of parts of two letters] (e.g. between **w** and a following letter).

(Doyle and Parkes 1978:170–174)

Examples of these letterforms are provided in Figure 5 below, in the words *droghthe* (l. 2), *his* (l. 1), *every*, *veyne* (l. 3), *swich* (l. 3), *Inspired* (l. 6) and *blisful* (l. 17). In what follows, I will describe the five manuscripts that have been traditionally attributed to Scribe B: Hg, El, Tr, and the Hatfield and Kk fragments. I will supply general information about the manuscripts themselves, while at the same time drawing on studies that have been carried out on the nature of these texts in the past. In addition, I intend to discuss what has been suggested so far about Scribe B as a copyist of literary manuscripts, in the light of earlier studies by scholars who have analysed his work on the above-mentioned copies of Chaucer and Gower's texts.

### 2.1. Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 392D, the Hengwrt MS

Hengwrt is believed to be the first extant manuscript of *The Canterbury Tales* and probably represents the first attempt to put together what Chaucer had left behind after his death, most likely a pile of papers without any discernible order. It is incomplete, because it lacks the *Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale*, as well as some links and passages, and is defective at the end, having lost the second half of the *Parson's Tale* and possibly the *Retracciouns* (Doyle and Parkes 1979:xix). On the basis of the spelling of the manuscript, Samuels (1988a:46) proposed 1402–1404 as the possible period of time within which Hg was copied, but an earlier date has since been suggested by Blake (1997b) and Stubbs (2000). In addition, Scott

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed descriptions of Scribe B's handwriting in different manuscripts are also provided in Doyle and Parkes (1979:xxxiv–xxxvii), Doyle (1995:53–55), Horobin and Mooney (2004:102–104) and Mooney (2006:123–138).

(1995:119 n.55) studied the sole border of Hg, which, as shown in Figure 5, decorates folio 2r.

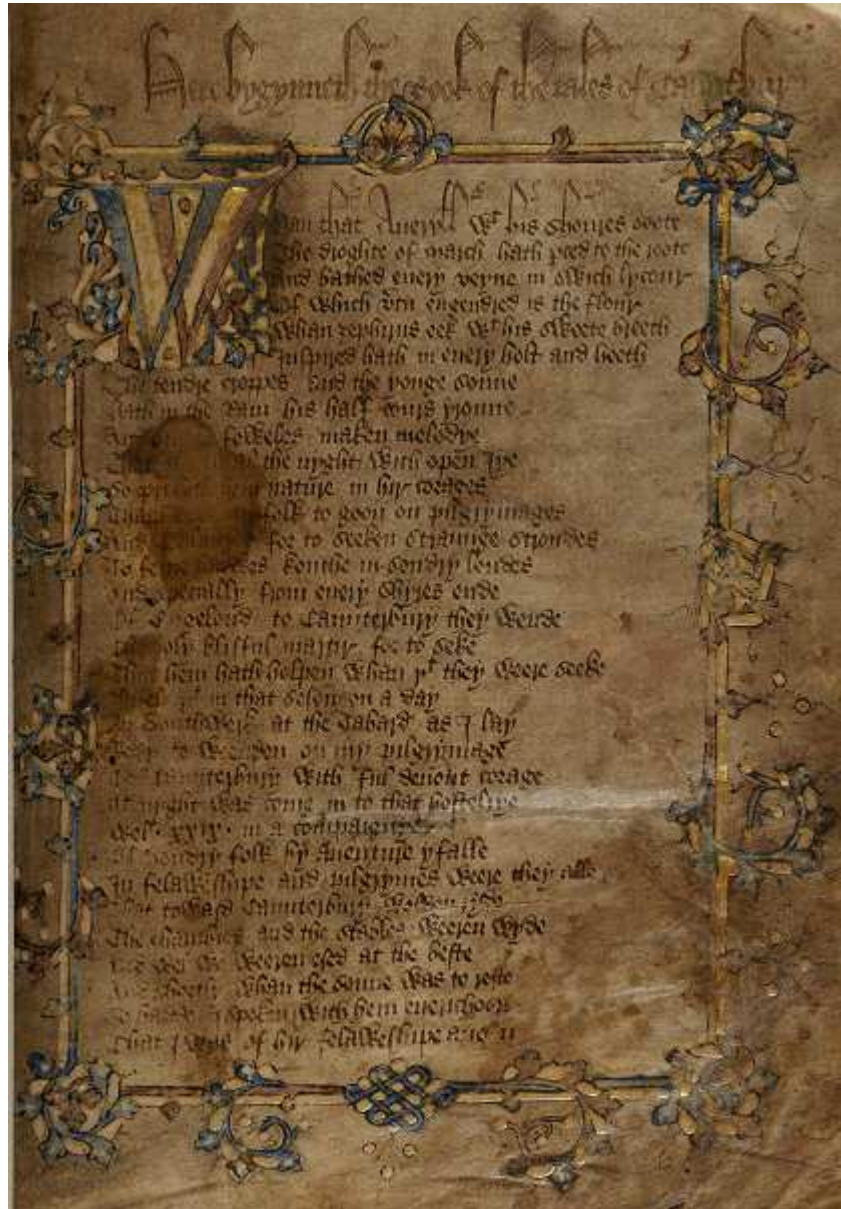
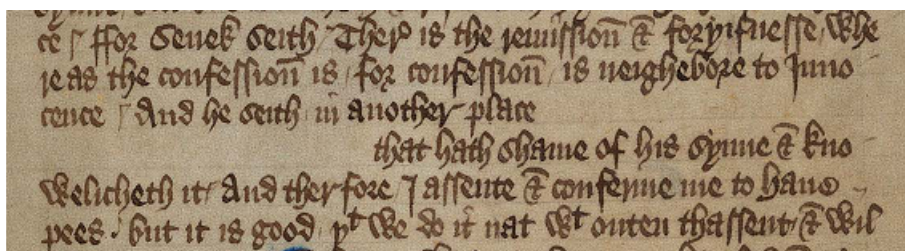


Figure 5. Opening page of *The Canterbury Tales* in Hengwrt, fol. 2r

By comparing the style and structure of this border with that of another manuscript, Oxford, Keble College, MS 47, which is dated 1380–1390, she argues that ‘the Hengwrt border was probably not made after ca. 1395–1400. The implication is of course that Hengwrt was made before the death of Chaucer’.

The suggestion that Hg represents the first attempt to put together Chaucer’s original text is supported by the theory that this manuscript might have been copied without much planning and in a short period of time, and that haste occasionally prevented Scribe B from paying sufficient attention to details. Doyle and Parkes (1979:xliv) note that ‘the copyist was obviously careful in catching and neatly correcting his mistakes, usually (to judge from the ink) soon after they occurred, perhaps because he checked his own work page by page or leaf by leaf’. There are other indications that lack of time and careful planning are the reasons why Scribe B did not provide this manuscript with a uniform layout. For instance, he ruled the pages for a single column, which would host the main text, but this column was of variable length, i.e. thirty-nine, forty or forty-four lines, on different folios. In addition he left a wide outer margin and a narrow inner margin on both sides of the leaf (visible in Figure 7 below), with the result that marginal texts, such as Latin glosses or sidenotes, were often cramped when they were written in the inner margin, as the space left for adding them was insufficient (Doyle and Parkes 1978:186–187).

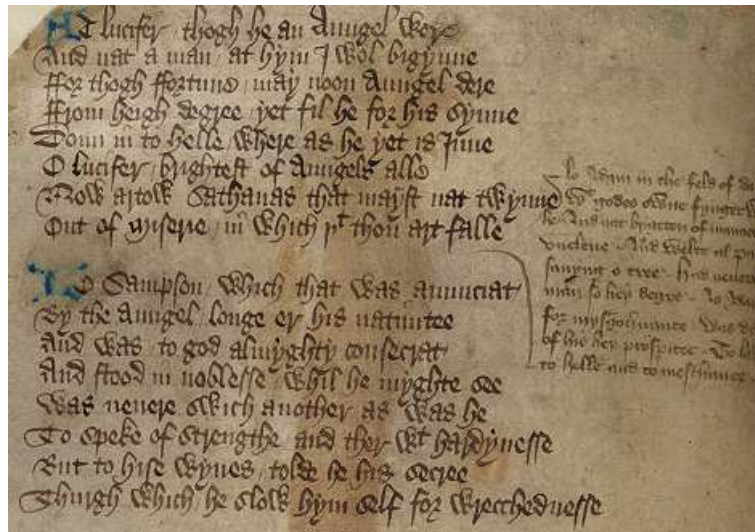
Scribe B is the main copyist of Hg, but the hands of five other fifteenth-century scribes have been identified in this manuscript. Doyle and Parkes (1979:xliv–xlvii) refer to them as ‘Supplementary Hands B–F’, and they are responsible for supplying missing lines or making minor additions to the text copied by Scribe B (who is ‘Hand A’ according to Doyle and Parkes’s nomenclature). Scribe B left gaps in several parts of the text of Hg; some of them were filled by another scribe, as shown in the detail from folio 83v in Figure 4, while others were left blank, as in paragraph (par.) 807 of the *Tale of Melibee*, shown in Figure 6:



**Figure 6. Gaps in the text of the *Tale of Melibee* in Hengwrt, fol. 233r**

Occasionally Scribe B even failed to copy larger sections of text, as shown by the omission of the entire ‘Adam stanza’ from the *Monk’s Tale*, which was added in the outer margin of folio 89v by Doyle and Parkes’s ‘Hand C’ (see Figure 7). Scribe B also added the running titles for three tales only: the *Nun’s Priest’s Tale*, the *Manciple’s Tale* and the *Parson’s Tale*, while another copyist, referred to by Doyle

and Parkes as 'Hand B', supplied running titles for all the other tales, with the exception of the *General Prologue*, where there are none.



**Figure 7. Lines added by a different scribe in Hengwrt, fol. 89v**

As said, Hg is scarcely decorated, with the exception of the border on folio 2r (see Figure 5) and the illuminated capital at the beginning of each tale. The script, by contrast, is very regular, and typical of a hand trained in the second half of the fourteenth century (Doyle and Parkes 1979:xx). In Hg Scribe B used two varieties of script, each of them with different functions, that is:

- (1) Anglicana Formata for the main body of the English verse and prose and the longer Latin sidenotes; (2) Bastard Anglicana for headings, colophons, Latin and French quotations within the text, and some shorter sidenotes.

(Doyle and Parkes 1979:xxxiv-xxxv)

Anglicana Formata (see Figure 6 above) is a script that was used in England from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. It developed as a relatively informal handwriting that was initially considered suitable for writing documents and that was later used for copying books, especially vernacular texts. Bastard Anglicana (see the heading in folio 2r in Figure 5 above) developed in the second half of the fourteenth century as a more formal script, which was used for manuscripts of very high quality, as well as for those parts of a manuscript that the scribe wanted to emphasise, such as incipits and explicits (Parkes 1969:xvi-xviii).

Hg has long been underestimated because of its relatively poor condition – the manuscript has suffered from lack of care and was partly gnawed by rats – and also because of its incorrect tale order. The wrong order in Hg was due to the absence of

geographical and temporal consistency among some tales (see Blake 1985:81–84 and the discussions about Links 17 and 20 in the previous section), and to the misplacement of entire sections (see discussion about Structural Sections in Hg below). However, after Manly and Rickert's edition of *The Canterbury Tales*, which was based on all known manuscripts (1940), the publication of the facsimile and transcription of Hg with variants from El as the first volume of the *Variorum Chaucer* (Ruggier 1979), and in particular Blake's edition of *The Canterbury Tales* based on this manuscript (1980), Hg became the object of scholarly interest, as well as scholarly debate. Supporters of the Hg manuscript as the text that is closest to Chaucer's original version are divided into two main groups, according to their more or less strong opinions on the matter, which Hanna (1989) labelled 'soft Hengwrtism' and 'hard Hengwrtism'. According to Hanna, 'soft Hengwrtism'

takes Hengwrt as a guide (sometimes absolute and incapable of error) for all textual readings. However, in consonance with a long-standing tradition in the editing of the *Tales*, 'soft' Hengwrtism in effect evokes split authority for the text: it takes the tale-order from a source other than Hengwrt, but follows the local readings of the Hengwrt manuscript. ... 'Hard' Hengwrtism accepts this one manuscript as an absolutely accurate record of Chaucer's text in all particulars.

(Hanna 1989:65)

Blake (1995:212), who is the strongest supporter of 'hard Hengwrtism', explained that he regards 'the order of tales in Hengwrt as scribal and not Chaucerian; the Hengwrt order simply represents the first attempt to put the tales left by Chaucer into some sort of order'.

The amount of attention paid to Hg has grown in the last decades; in the past, British Library MS Harley 7334 (Ha<sup>4</sup>) and later El were believed to be the best texts of *The Canterbury Tales*, that is to say, the texts that were closest to Chaucer's version. El in particular gained the favour of scholars, not only for its tale order but also for its spelling. Yet, the apparently less regular spelling of Hg may be closer to the original than the polished spelling of El. At present, it is not clear whether Hg contains samples of the language that Chaucer used in his original papers, because there are different opinions on this. As I argued above, Burnley (1982) showed that the scribe of Hg preserved final *-e* in monosyllabic adjectives rather faithfully, despite the fact that this ending was disappearing from his own language. Samuels (1988b:35) claimed that 'Hengwrt preserves a higher proportion of early spellings'. Benson (1992:4), however, categorically rejected Samuels' view, suggesting instead that the exemplar of Hg was not Chaucer's own copy. The crucial question of whether Hg displays a spelling system that is exclusively scribal or to what extent it preserves authorial forms has not yet been answered. Even so, much of the research so far conducted on this subject, including the most recent studies carried out on the basis of computer-readable material made available by the Canterbury Tales Project (Robinson 1996, 2004, Solopova 2000, Stubbs 2000, Thomas 2006), has shown that Hg should not be overlooked in the search for authorial variants.

The manuscript is divided into five structural sections, I to V, each containing a different number of linked and unlinked tales (see Appendix 3). Structural Section I is a rather stable one, because it preserves the same tale order, i.e. *General Prologue*, *Miller's Tale*, *Knight's Tale* and *Cook's Tale*, throughout the textual tradition of *The Canterbury Tales*, whereas the tale order that characterises the rest of Hg is not preserved in any fifteenth-century manuscript. Changes in the tale order had already been made by Scribe B himself when he copied El (see Appendix 4), and it is generally assumed that the order in this manuscript is the intended one. Moreover, the five structural sections in Hg are not in the sequence in which they were copied, probably as a result of the fact that the manuscript was misbound in the past. There is no doubt, for instance, that Section III should follow and not precede Section IV. Evidence for this is provided by the text, because in the *Monk's Prologue* (L29), the first text of Section III, Chaucer the Pilgrim says that his *Tale of Melibee* has just ended, while in the *Parson's Prologue* (L37), which is the first text of Section V, the narrator says that the Manciple has just finished telling his tale. In addition, the scribe did not copy the tales in each structural section consecutively. Section III, for instance, can be divided into two parts: the first one containing the *Monk's Tale* and the second one the *Nun's Priest's Tale* and the *Manciple's Tale*; the colour of the ink differs in the two parts, which indicates an interval in the copying process. According to Stubbs (2000: Inks), the following five different inks were used in Hg:

- (4) Ink 1: a dark brown ink for most of the manuscript;  
 Ink 2: a lighter brown ink for part of the *Miller's Prologue* (L1) and the *Miller's Tale* until l. 620;  
 Ink 3: a grey shade ink for parts of Structural Section IV;  
 Ink 4: a lightest brown ink for the note at the end of the *Cook's Tale* and Section II;  
 Ink 5: a yellowish ink for the opening title, parts of Section III and Links 17 and 20.

The different colours of ink are suggestive of large intervals in the progress of copying, caused, for instance, by changes of exemplar, absence of the text that should have followed, or later additions to the text. What is crucial is that the codicological evidence provided by the division of Hg into five structural sections, by the unique order of the tales and by the different hues of ink can sometimes be supported by the data supplied by the spelling. As I will show in the course of this study, spelling changes may occur where the manuscript shows changes in its make up; for this reason I will often refer to the five structural sections, the tale order and the different inks used in Hg while discussing orthographic features in this manuscript.

Hg has been available since 2000 as a digital facsimile (Stubbs 2000), which contains, among other features, the collation of the entire text of Hg with the corresponding text in El. Even though nothing can replace the actual examination of

a manuscript, the possibility of viewing the images of Hg on a screen and of searching the digitised transcriptions of the *Tales* has enabled many more scholars to study this manuscript, whose text is of great significance for the textual tradition of *The Canterbury Tales*.

## 2.2. San Marino, California, Huntington Library, MS EL 26.C.9, the Ellesmere MS

The current point of view is that Scribe B copied the El manuscript several years after Hg and, according to Samuels (1988a:46), its composition is traditionally dated between 1410 and 1412. Scott (1995) proposes an earlier date on the basis of the illumination, as she identified the style of two limners who decorated several pages of El in the borders of another manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Hatton 4. Scott (1995:105–106) dates the Hatton decoration around 1400 to 1405, and argues that

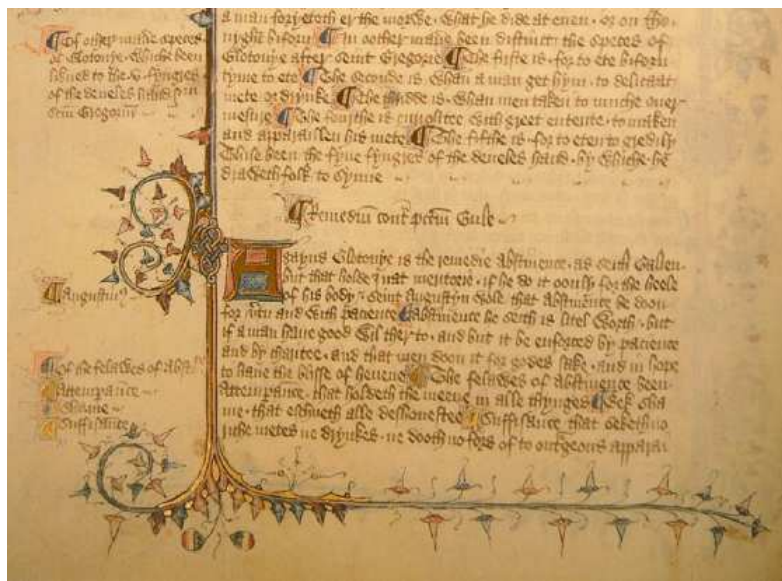
the Ellesmere borders are stylistically even less “modern” and should be placed on the earlier end of the Hatton range ... from the perspective of border decoration, it would be more appropriate to place the Ellesmere limners’ work earlier than in the period 1410–12, better to locate it in a period beginning in or just after 1400 and ending no later than 1405.

(Scott 1995:105–106)

El was commissioned as a de luxe edition of *The Canterbury Tales*; unlike Hg it provides evidence of ‘planning beforehand’ as well as of ‘close collaboration between [the scribe and] the artists’ who decorated it (Parkes 1995:42, 45), all of which is probably due to the fact that somebody carefully supervised the production of this manuscript (Manly and Rickert 1940, vol. 1:148). The layout is uniform: Scribe B ruled all pages for a single column (as shown in Figure 8) of forty-eight lines of text; unlike in Hg (see section 2.1 above), in this manuscript he left enough space in the outer margin, where he ruled a separate frame for the marginal texts, though without providing lines for them (Doyle and Parkes 1979:xxii). He wrote the entire text in what Parkes (1995:43) calls a ‘large “display” version of Anglicana Formata script’, and in this manuscript he provided running titles throughout. Furthermore, the illumination in El is excellent, and each pilgrim is portrayed by means of a miniature placed at the beginning of the tale in question.

Clearly the text was edited, because, compared to Hg, Scribe B modified the tale order, added the *Canon’s Yeoman’s Prologue* and *Tale* as well as four additional passages in the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*, and made several changes in the text of other tales. Blake (1985:67) observes that the text of El runs more smoothly than that of Hg as a result of scribal or editorial decisions, but that such variations were often made at the expenses of the metre. Stubbs (2000) suggests that some of these changes might be revisions made by Chaucer himself, although no convincing evidence for this claim has been provided. Since the end of the nineteenth century, editors have considered El to be best text of *The Canterbury Tales* because of its

appearance and thoroughly edited text (Blake 1985:15), with the result that most of the editions that are now used for scholarly purposes, such as the *Riverside Chaucer* (Benson 1987), are based on El. However, opinions about this manuscript have started to change in the last decades, to the extent that, as Blake (1985:67) suggests, ‘since the time of the Manly and Rickert edition [El] has been accepted as an edited text which does not reflect its copytext adequately’.



**Figure 8. The layout of the Ellesmere manuscript, fol. 225v**  
(from [www.liu.net.edu/cwis/CWP/library/sc/chaucer/chaucer.htm](http://www.liu.net.edu/cwis/CWP/library/sc/chaucer/chaucer.htm))

As for the spelling found in El, it was mentioned above that Ramsey (1982, 1986) analysed a number of features in the entire text of Hg and El, arguing that the scribes of these two manuscripts were two different people. Samuels (1988a) and Doyle (1995) reacted to this by showing on linguistic and palaeographical grounds that the variations in the spelling of the two manuscripts reflect changes in the practice of the same scribe. Samuels also analysed some orthographic features in a section of *The Canterbury Tales* (see Chapter 3) and showed that Scribe B spelled the same words differently in Hg and in El. This led him to conclude that

in Hg the scribe is likely to preserve more of Chaucer's metrically intended forms but in El to spell words according to his own habitual practice. ... Overall, the scribe's practice remains the same. However, there was a considerable period – perhaps almost a decade – between the copying of the two manuscripts, and each was produced for a very different purpose, Hg being a cheaper and more makeshift volume, El a larger, more carefully planned and expensively produced one. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that the scribe



should have set about each task differently, in Hg occasionally mixing the exemplar's form with his own, in E1 taking more care to present his own orthography consistently.

(Samuels 1988a:48)

Ramsey's theory has not found any supporters so far, while Samuels' theory has not yet been disproved. If it is indeed true that E1 displays Scribe B's own spelling practice, it means that the comparison of the language in this manuscript with the language found in Hg and in other authoritative manuscripts could give indirect information about the language of Chaucer. In fact, studies in Middle English dialectology (see McIntosh 1963, Benskin and Laing 1981) have shown that a scribe who did not copy his exemplar faithfully, but translated the dialect of the exemplar into his own dialect, might occasionally preserve the spelling of words as they occurred in the original text instead of translating them. The presence of such variants, called 'relicts', in a manuscript could vary according to the degree of translation of the text, because, as Benskin and Laing explain:

a *relict* is a form not part of a scribe's own dialect, but an exotic that is perpetuated from an exemplar whose dialect differs from that of the copyist. ... Relict forms comprise a smaller or larger proportion of a copyist's text according as he translates from the dialect of his exemplar more or less thoroughly. In normal use, 'relict' implies the co-occurrence of two separate dialectical elements in the same scribal output, and the mirror-copyist of a dialectally homogeneous text thus presents a trivial case of relict usage; usually, of course, it is inherently unrecognizable as such. A scribe who translates very consistently might yet reproduce an alien form from his exemplar by mistake. Such a relict would be a very isolated occurrence, and might be described as a 'show-through', the language of the exemplar here showing through the language imposed by the copyist.

(Benskin and Laing 1981:58)

Hence, a comparison of Scribe B's spelling in Hg and E1 should not only throw further light on Scribe B's practice, but also reveal forms that are representative of Chaucer's language.

### 2.3. Cambridge, Trinity College Library, MS R.3.2, folios 9–32

Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.2 (Tr) contains Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, followed by a number of Latin and French pieces by the same author (Doyle and Parkes 1978:163). Like Hg, Tr is an incomplete manuscript, for a number of quires, probably as many as five, has been lost from the beginning of the book. Tr has been dated ca. 1407–09 (Samuels 1988:46) and is one of the several copies of the *Confessio Amantis* commissioned by Gower himself. As was briefly mentioned above, Tr was copied by five scribes, referred to by Doyle and Parkes (1978) as A, B, C, D and E, according to the order in which their hands appear in the manuscript. Tr is thus an interesting manuscript because it is an example of collaboration among fifteenth-century professional scribes. The beginning of the fifteenth century saw an

increasing demand for vernacular texts and the subsequent need for speeding up the commercial production of books. This made stationers opt for simultaneous copying of manuscripts, which was done by teams of professional scribes chosen *ad hoc* among those who were available at the moment, even though they were not necessarily full-time copyists of literary books (Doyle and Parkes 1978:198–199).

Little is known about Scribes A, C and D of Tr, while, as already discussed above (section 1), Scribe B's identity has been recently discovered. Scribe E was Thomas Hoccleve, a Privy Seal clerk between 1387–88 and around 1426 (Brown 1971) and also a poet himself. Scribe D's identity is still unknown, but his hand has been identified in several other medieval manuscripts (cf. Doyle and Parkes 1978:177, Smith 1985), whereas Scribes A and C are so far completely unknown to palaeographers. It is also unclear in what way these five people were linked: very likely they were all professionals, but not all of them may have been full-time copyists of literary texts. In fact, Doyle and Parkes (1978:198) found that Scribe A's stint reveals imperfections typical of somebody who is not experienced in copying literary texts, and that the style of Scribe C's handwriting is similar to that found in legal documents. Furthermore, the presence of Thomas Hoccleve and Adam Pinkhurst in the group suggests that some or all of the other three scribes might, like them, also have been working in court chancelleries. These clerks were perhaps keen on copying manuscripts in their spare time in order to earn an extra income, since they were not paid regular salaries as chancellery copyists but instead received grants and annuities (see Brown 1971:265, 267).

Despite the fact that Tr was copied by professional scribes, it is not a work of high quality. The collaboration among these scribes seems to have lacked any kind of supervision, with the result that a number of imperfections characterise this manuscript. For example, the scribes were given different amounts of text to copy, and the transition between one hand and the other is not always smooth. In particular, Scribe B's stint is made up of just three quires of eight pages each, and lacks the last sixty-four lines of text, which were later added by Scribe C. Scribe E copied just two and a half leaves, and left a gap of one column which was never filled, with the result that that portion of text is missing altogether. In addition, running titles are not always present, and marginalia have been left out in some sections. Mooney suggests about the making of Tr that

Scribe D appears to have continued preparing copies of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* after Gower's death, even perhaps calling upon his friends Thomas Hoccleve and Adam Pinkhurst, with two other London scribes, to prepare a hasty copy – to preserve a reliable exemplar? – in Trinity College R.3.2.

(Mooney 2006:122)

Scribe B wrote his three quires in Anglicana Formata and Bastard Anglicana: the former was employed for the text and the commentary, the latter for the marginal headings, incipits, explicits and the Latin verses within the text (Doyle and Parkes 1978:170). In the text, however, he rarely used the double-compartment <a> typical of Anglicana Formata for minuscule *a*, as in the name *Laar* in folio 10r, l. 3.819,

shown in Figure 9. Instead, he chose the single-compartment *a* typical of Secretary, a script that was commonly used from the fifteenth century onwards, as in the words *another* and *place* in the previous line. For this manuscript the scribe ruled each page for two columns, a layout that was very likely imposed by Gower's exemplar, since it appears in at least fifteen of the forty-eight manuscript copies of the *Confessio Amantis* (Macaulay 1900–01, vol. 1: cxxxviii–clxvii; Doyle and Parkes 1978:165). However, in the first two quires he ruled the pages for forty-six lines, while in the third quire he ruled them for just forty-four lines. As a consequence, he lacked the space for copying the last sixty-four lines of his exemplar, and left this quire unfinished. This is very strange for a scribe like him, who seems to have been very experienced and accurate, and who ought to have realised that his stint was lacking the final section. However, it is possible that he simply preserved the layout which he found in his exemplar and accordingly only copied the text that was there, assuming that the missing lines would have been added in sequence at the beginning of a new stint by himself or another scribe (Doyle and Parkes 1978:165). It must be noted, however, that the last two quires display signs of hasty copying, such as an increased use of *þ* instead of *th*, which is peculiar, since *þ* was becoming obsolete.

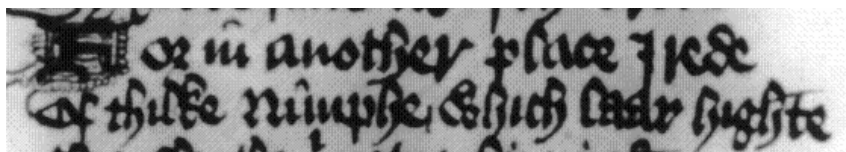


Figure 9. Different shapes of the letter *a* in Tr, fol. 10r

According to Samuels (1988b:25), Scribe B did not preserve the language of the exemplar in his stint of Tr, even though he probably copied it from a conventional Gower exemplar. This claim relies on the identification of Gower's language in two manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis*, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 3 (the 'Fairfax' manuscript) and Huntington Library, San Marino, California, El 26 A 17, i.e. the 'Stafford MS' (Samuels and Smith 1988:13). Nothing more precise can be said about the spelling of the exemplar of Tr, however, since it is still unknown which manuscript was used by Scribe B. It can only be noticed that the presence of Gowerian relicts like *takth* and *makth* in Tr, instead of the usual *taketh* and *maketh* found in Chaucer's manuscripts, suggests that the exemplar of Tr contained authorial variants. Since these forms are not attested across the board, the overall spelling in Tr very likely reflects the scribe's own practice. In his study on the development of Scribe B's spelling habits, Samuels (1988a:44) argued that 'the Trinity manuscript stands somewhat more than midway in a progression from Hg to El', meaning that Scribe B changed his scribal habits in the period of approximately ten years between the copying of Hg and El, and that the spelling in Tr represents the intermediate stage of this process. On the basis of the additional data from Tr, it would thus seem that Scribe B started off as a faithful copyist, and then reverted to his own spelling practice, regardless of the language of the exemplar. Since, unlike

Chaucer's, the language of Gower is known to us, it is possible to distinguish authorial forms from scribal forms in Tr, which is thus a manuscript that contains important evidence of Scribe B's own spelling. Throughout this study, variants used in Tr will therefore be compared with variants used in Hg and El, in order to determine whether the changes between the two Chaucerian manuscripts are really due to changes in the scribe's orthographic habits or to other factors.

#### **2.4. The Hatfield House fragment (Marquess of Salisbury), Cecil Papers, Box S/1**

The Hatfield House fragment, also called 'Cecil fragment', consists of a single leaf of vellum. It was partly cut and sewn into the spine of a sixteenth-century book found in Lord Salisbury's library at Hatfield House in 1958 (Campbell 1958). The page belongs to an unknown manuscript of *Troilus and Criseyde* and contains ten stanzas from Book 1, lines 764–833; some text is missing at the edges, where the page was trimmed. Despite the fact that there is very little material to analyse, Doyle and Parkes (1979:xxxv) attribute this fragment to Scribe B, on the grounds of the aspect of the handwriting being very similar to that of Hg, El and Tr. Like these three manuscripts, Hatfield is written in Anglicana Formata, and on the verso side of the fragment the scribe used the angular Secretary *a*, as he did in Tr (see Figure 9). Unfortunately, these are the only relevant features of this fragment, since neither side is decorated, apart from a red line that divides each stanza, and the initials have been cut out. Any further findings provided by the analysis of the spelling in the Hatfield fragment could therefore be significant in supporting the palaeographical evidence, and could be compared with the data provided by the other manuscripts copied by Scribe B.

#### **2.5. Cambridge, University Library, MS Kk 1.3, Part 20**

Cambridge, University Library, Kk.1.3 is also a fragment; it consists of a single leaf of vellum containing five stanzas from the *Prioress's Prologue* and *Prioress's Tale* on each side (PR ll. 8–77 according to the CTP lineation system), and belongs to a miscellaneous collection of fifteenth and sixteenth-century manuscripts (Manly and Rickert 1940, vol. 1:302). At least two scribes were responsible for this manuscript: one scribe wrote the text in Anglicana Formata, while the other added the incipit, the explicit and the running titles at a later stage. The capitals and the paragraph marks are in red ink, and, unlike in Hg, El, Tr and Hatfield, the initial letters of each line are also touched with red (Manly and Rickert 1940, vol. 1:303). Doyle and Parkes (1979:xxxv) are hesitant about attributing this fragment to Scribe B, although its spelling and punctuation are close to those found in other manuscripts copied by him (Manly and Rickert 1940, vol. 1:303). According to Doyle (1995:60, 64), the scribe's handwriting shows a considerable influence of the Secretary style, which is not found in the other manuscripts, not even in Tr, where the scribe makes regular use of the angular Secretary *a*. Furthermore, the appearance of the handwriting

makes Doyle think that the scribe held the pen in a different way, as if he were practising the use of a different script. This may be possible, since Secretary is a more modern script than Anglicana.

Because of the extremely limited amount of text contained in Kk, it is difficult to draw general conclusions about the spelling of this fragment. It is not uncommon that the spelling changes in different stretches of a manuscript for various reasons, such as a shift of exemplar (as I will show about TM in Hg in Chapter 5) or the translation of the copytext, as well as the accidental or deliberate introduction of changes in the text by the scribe himself. It seems, therefore, worthwhile to compare the language of Kk with the language of the four other manuscripts that were copied by Scribe B, in order to see whether this can confirm that Scribe B is really the copyist of this fragment, and also whether this manuscript contains forms that belong to Chaucer's language.

### 3. Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have introduced the scribe who is responsible for the two earliest copies of *The Canterbury Tales* and whose spelling system is going to be the object of this study. Even though the name of the scribe is no longer unknown, I will continue to refer to him as 'Scribe B', as this is the name that has been used by other scholars until very recently and therefore occurs in most of the works cited in the present study. I have also provided descriptions of five of the manuscripts copied by him, i.e. Hg, El, Tr, Hatfield and possibly Kk. As to the other five manuscripts that have recently been attributed to this scribe, I simply acknowledge their existence according to the evidence provided by others. If all of them are indeed by the same scribe – Chaucer's *Boece* in Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 393D is a doubtful case, for instance – it will certainly be worthwhile to analyse their language in a future study in order to support the palaeographical evidence, as Horobin has already done for *Piers Plowman* in Cambridge, Trinity College Library, B.15.17.

The discovery of the scribe's identity has very little effect on the outcome of my research. As I argued above, knowing the scribe's name and being certain that he was employed in London as a so-called writer of the court letter, i.e. a scribe 'trained in the correct wording and presentation for various kinds of legal documents, as are modern notaries' (Mooney 2006:109), has confirmed what several scholars had already suggested in the past. What is crucial to my study, however, is the possibility that Chaucer was still alive when the scribe was copying Hg and may have therefore supervised its preparation. This would mean that, as Blake has repeatedly suggested, Hg is the best text of *The Canterbury Tales*, and accordingly should preserve most of the authorial spelling. However, we are not sure about the relationship of Hg with Chaucer's original version of the text. Studies of the stemma of *The Canterbury Tales* place Hg very close to the original, possibly at only one remove from it. They thus confirm the superiority of Hg over the rest of the extant manuscripts, although they do not exclude the existence of an intermediate copy,

one that is now lost, between Chaucer's draft and Hg. Yet, in a study on another witness to *The Canterbury Tales*, British Library, MS Additional 35286 (Ad<sup>3</sup>), dating from the second quarter of the fifteenth century, Horobin (1997:20) suggests that neither Hg nor El is 'the' *Canterbury Tales*. He argues that studies on *The Canterbury Tales* should look beyond the evidence provided by Hg, El and the other manuscripts of the first quarter of the fifteenth century, in order to devote 'more attention to individual manuscripts beyond the Hg-El deadlock'. However, since this study concerns the language of the scribe of Hg and El, these two manuscripts, Hg in particular, will be the focal point of my investigation. Still, as I explained above, the data collected from Hg and El will be compared with the data from other authoritative texts throughout the entire textual tradition of *The Canterbury Tales*, in order to gain insight into the spelling system of Scribe B and indirectly into what variants might have been in Chaucer's working draft. Accordingly, the analysis of different groups of spelling variants that show variation between Hg and El will be the subject of the next four chapters.

## Variation in the spelling of long vowels

### 1. Introduction

In Chapter 1, I noted that no manuscript in Chaucer's hand has come down to us, and that Hg and El are believed to be the best evidence we have of Chaucer's language. Despite the fact that both manuscripts fit the same linguistic profile, i.e. the inventory of the variants in the *LALME* (1986, vol. III:299, LP 6400) that typify the language of a scribe in one or more manuscripts, and are example of Type III London dialect, they exhibit a number of significant differences as far as the spelling is concerned. In the same chapter, I also pointed out that some of these differences induced Ramsey (1982, 1986) to claim that Hg and El had been copied by two different scribes, whereas Samuels (1988a) forcibly argued against this suggestion, asserting that Hg and El were the products of the same copyist. Ramsey (1982:138, 1986) noticed that the first six words in (1) (items a. to f.) were spelled differently in Hg and El, so that, for instance, *thow* in Hg corresponded to *thou* in El. In addition, he showed the presence of 'both graphetic and graphemic variations between the two manuscripts' (Ramsey 1986:116), that is, different spelling forms (*thogh*, *though*) but also different letter types (*though*<sup>h</sup>) for the same words. These are listed in (1) (items g. to t.). On the basis of his findings, Ramsey claimed that these spelling features reflected the practice of two individual scribes:

- |        |                     |    |                             |
|--------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| (1) a. | <i>thow/thou</i>    | k. | <i>&amp;/and</i>            |
| b.     | <i>ellis/elles</i>  | l. | <i>-on/-oun</i>             |
| c.     | <i>thogh/though</i> | m. | <i>þ<sup>t</sup>/that</i>   |
| d.     | <i>down/down</i>    | n. | single vowel/double vowel   |
| e.     | <i>town/toun</i>    | o. | <i>ay/ey</i>                |
| f.     | <i>at the/atte</i>  | p. | <i>Ø/-e</i>                 |
| g.     | <i>h/h̄</i>         | q. | <i>y/i</i>                  |
| h.     | <i>d/d̄</i>         | r. | <i>-er/abbreviated -er-</i> |
| i.     | <i>-ogh/-ough</i>   | s. | <i>Ø/-n</i>                 |
| j.     | <i>-ow-/-ou-</i>    | t. | <i>with/w<sup>t</sup></i>   |

Samuels likewise carried out an analysis of Scribe B's spelling in Hg and El, and concluded that the differences found in these two manuscripts were not, as Ramsey had claimed, evidence of two scribes copying these manuscripts. Instead, he argued that the discrepancies were the result of ongoing linguistic changes as well as of a single scribe's different attitude towards the two texts (see also Chapter 2). To defend his first claim, Samuels argued that

in London ca. 1400 there was as yet no specific standard for scribes to aim at, but there were pressures on them to alter their habits nevertheless. The spelling practices current in London had only recently undergone a complete metamorphosis in the change from Type II to Type III; in addition, the period from 1400–20 was crucial for the development of Standard English, for it was from the competing and changing fashions in spelling at this time that the new written standard was to evolve. Some typical changes in train at this time are the replacement of *þ* and *ȝ* by *th*, *y* and *gh*, of *e* and *o* by *ee* and *oo* when denoting long vowels, of *þeigh* by *þough* and *though*, and of *say/seigh*, 'saw', by *saw* and *saugh*.

(Samuels 1988a:40)

Samuels (1988a:46–47), therefore, showed that changes in the scribe's spelling practice took place from Hg to El in the decade that separated the copying of these two manuscripts. To find evidence of such progression, he investigated, among other features, a number of spelling changes in several sections of four of the five manuscripts known to have been copied by Scribe B at the time, i.e. Hg, Hf, Tr and El. Samuels proposed that these texts had been produced in this sequence, and dated them as follows: ca. 1402–1404 for Hg, ca. 1407–1409 for Tr and ca. 1410–1412 for El. He did not suggest any specific date for Hatfield, but he thought that it could fit linguistically between Hg and Tr. The changes analysed by Samuels (1988a:47) were the following:

- |     |                                           |                                |
|-----|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (2) | a. <i>y</i> to <i>i</i>                   | h. <i>h</i> to <i>h̄</i>       |
|     | b. <i>ay</i> to <i>ey</i>                 | i. <i>þ'</i> to <i>that</i>    |
|     | c. <i>&amp;</i> to <i>and</i>             | j. <i>d</i> to <i>ḏ</i>        |
|     | d. <i>town</i> to <i>toun</i>             | k. <i>-on</i> to <i>-oun</i>   |
|     | e. <i>-er-</i> to abbreviated <i>-er-</i> | l. <i>-ogh</i> to <i>-ough</i> |
|     | f. single vowel/double vowel              | m. <i>with</i> to <i>w'</i>    |
|     | g. <i>thow</i> to <i>thou</i>             |                                |

Samuels saw that all of these changes occurred between Hg and El, though not at the same time. To give some examples, the variant *town* is found in Hg only, while the other manuscripts have *toun*, whereas the extended form of *with* is common in Hg, Hatfield and Tr, with the abbreviated form *w'* being mostly used in El.

Samuels also noticed that other differences between Hg and El could not be explained as the result of scribal progression towards a certain spelling system, but



that they constituted distinct scribal choices. With respect to the greater use of final *-e* and final *-n* in El, for instance, he suggested that

if we are to concentrate only on the differences, it can nevertheless be shown that this scribe has the same tendency throughout: to add final *-e* and *-n* when they contravene the metre and are not present in his exemplars. This latter can be proved from the Trinity Gower, which at 4.375 reads ‘Abouen alle othere men as tho’: the metre clearly requires *about[e]* with final *-e* elided, and the Fairfax manuscript has *Aboue*.

(Samuels 1988a:47)

He also commented upon the preference for Hg *say* and *saw* against El *saugh* for the past tense of the verb SEE as follows:

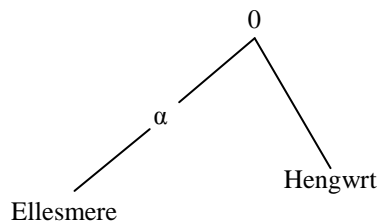
There are good reasons for believing that Chaucer’s own forms were *say* and *saw*, and these are commoner in Hg; but the scribe’s own normal form is *saugh* (with *seigh* as his earlier variant), and these, though also common in Hg, are usually in Tr and El.

(Samuels 1988a:48)

Samuels (1988a:48) concluded that some dissimilarities between the spelling of Hg and El were not due to a progress in the scribe’s orthographic practice, but they were the result of his different approach towards the manuscripts he was copying. Hence, in Hg, the cheaper volume, copied without too much planning, Scribe B occasionally mixed Chaucerian forms with his own; in El, the more carefully planned and expensive production, he used only his own spelling and tried to do so as consistently as possible.

Both Ramsey and Samuels carried out their analyses with the help of traditional methods, but the spelling differences that they noticed can now be investigated more thoroughly, thanks to the recent application of digital technology to the extant witnesses of *The Canterbury Tales*. This has made it easier for scholars to search the texts for any kind of linguistic data as well as to compare several versions of the same text when needed. Thus, in my analysis of Hg and El, for instance, I noticed that Hg generally exhibits several spelling variants for the same word, while El is characterized by a more uniform spelling system. Examples are Hg *grene* and *greene* vs. El *grene*. The overall impression given by the presence of these forms is that Hg was produced for the sake of issuing a complete version, perhaps the first one, of *The Canterbury Tales*, while El was supposed to be a de luxe copy of Chaucer’s work from the beginning. Hence, not only the spelling, as suggested by Samuels, but also the layout and the abundance of illustrations and decorations that characterise El are means to obtain a high-quality final product. In addition, some spelling variants in Hg look rather old-fashioned, such as the use of *þ* instead of *th*, or the occurrence of *theigh* for ‘though’ in WBP, FR and SQ, and this could be taken as evidence that in the textual tradition of *The Canterbury Tales* the exemplar of Hg was very close to Chaucer’s working copy. In his study of the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*, Robinson (1999:202) argues that, as far as this part of *The Canterbury*

*Tales* is concerned, it is possible to postulate that both Hg and El derive from the same archetype, the 'O' manuscript of *The Canterbury Tales*. However, while Hg is probably a direct copy of O, El is a copy of another manuscript, the alpha ( $\alpha$ ) exemplar, which directly descends from O, as illustrated below:



The fact that Hg is at one remove from the original copy while El is at two would explain why the spelling of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* in Hg and El differs at some points.

Although it is generally accepted that Scribe B is the copyist of Hg and El, it has not yet been determined whether the language found in both manuscripts is Chaucer's language, the scribe's or a mixture of both. Samuels believed that much of it was the scribe's own language, because he noticed that certain spelling forms that were typical of *The Canterbury Tales* were also used in Scribe B's stint of the *Confessio Amantis*. An example of this is the consistent use of *nat* in Tr, while the Gowerian form attested in the Fairfax manuscript is *not*. He therefore argued that

this imposition of an entirely different spelling-system on the Gower text is in itself interesting because it suggests (though it could hardly be held to prove) that the spelling so familiar to us from the Hengwrt and Ellesmere MSS is really that of Scribe B, not that of Chaucer. There may, of course, have been a closer similarity between Scribe B's and Gower's, and one could even posit the extreme view that Scribe B had learnt, or developed, his spelling system from continually copying Chaucer. However, Middle English scribes fall into various categories according to the consistency with which they copy literally or translate into their spelling, and Scribe B clearly belongs to the latter category. He transforms Gower's spelling with such obviously practised ease and consistency that it is difficult to believe that he was acting any differently when he copied Chaucer.

(Samuels 1988b:25)

In this study I intend to verify whether Scribe B, as Samuels suggests, was really a translator who changed his spelling practice between Hg and El: in the present chapter, I am going to examine those differences between Hg and El that involve the spelling of vowels. I have decided to focus on vowels here because I noticed that there are interesting differences between Hg and El as far as the spelling of long vowels is concerned, but that these differences do not always entail a shift from one graph in Hg to two graphs in El, as suggested by Samuels. In what follows, I will no

longer refer to Ramsey's study; on the one hand I disagree with the claim that Hg and El were produced by two different scribes, and on the other hand Samuels drew his conclusions on features that had also been analysed by Ramsey. Two of these features, the shift from single to double vowel for the spelling of long vowels and the shift from *-ow-* to *-ou-*, particularly attracted my attention because they do not seem to occur regularly. I therefore intend to focus on these changes because I doubt that they take place as systematically as described, and because I want to verify whether they are indeed due to a shift in the scribal practice. To do so, I will analyse in this chapter the following two features in a number of words:

- (3) a. The alternation between single and double graphs in the spelling of long vowels, such as Hg *clene* and *cleene* vs. El *clene*;
- b. The shift from a single to a double graph in words that contain long vowels, such as Hg *ben* vs. El *been*;

while I will discuss the above-mentioned shift from Hg *-o-*, *-u-* and *-ow-* to El *-ou-*, as in Hg *town* vs. El *toun*, in the next chapter.

It should be pointed out that according to the *Middle English Dictionary* the majority of the lexical items presented in what follows contain long vowels. Some of them are loanwords from French, in which the use of a double graph seems to be a device to indicate not only that the vowel is long but also that it is stressed, as in *cruèel* and *textuèel* (see Table 8). In addition, there are words whose stressed vowel is short in Modern English but was long in Middle English, such as *soong*, *seelde(n)* and *yeerd*. The long vowels in these ME words are the result of a sound change that occurred in late Old English and according to which, as Moore and Marckwardt explain,

all short vowels were lengthened when they were followed by **ld**, **mb**, **nd**, **ng**, **rd**, **rl**, **rn**, **[rz]**, or **[rð]**. Lengthening did not occur, however, before the consonant group if a third consonant followed, so that we have MnE **[tʃaɪld]** from late OE **ċild**, ME **[tʃi:ld]**, but MnE **[tʃildrən]** from OE **ċildru**, ME **[tʃildrən]**.

(Moore and Marckwardt 1990:68)

Finally, a few words such as *help* and *wel* (see Tables 3 and 5) are also included in my analysis, in order to show that the short vowels contained in them may also be represented as if they were long ones.

## 2. The alternation between single and double graphs for long vowels

According to Samuels (1988a:46–47), one of the differences between Hg and El is the spelling of words that contain long vowels, because the scribe tended to write these vowels with a single graph in Hg and with a double graph in El. Samuels argues that in the course of his career the scribe adapted his spelling practice to the

ongoing change from single to double vowel for the spelling of long vowels, in particular of *e* and *o*. However, I have noticed that in Hg, El and also Tr not all words containing long vowels undergo this shift. Some of them, in fact, are systematically spelled either with one graph only, as in *frely* and *homward*, or with two graphs only, as in *almoost* and *oonly*, while in a third group of words both single and double graphs are used for rendering the long vowel. The words belonging to the last group lend themselves to further investigation and are therefore divided into the following two categories:

- (4) a. words in which the long vowel is mostly represented by a single graph, as in *anon*, and whose variant with a double graph, as in *anoon*, is used less frequently;
- b. words in which the long vowel is mostly represented by a double graph, as in *yore*, and less often with a single graph, as in *yore*.

A third category consists of those words described by Samuels which exhibit a clearer shift from variants spelled with a single graph in Hg to variants spelled with a double graph in El; they will to be discussed in §3 of this chapter.

### 2.1. A single graph for long vowels

Almost all words in which the long vowels are generally spelled with a single graph in both Hg and El have a variant spelled with a double graph as well; however, this variant is found exclusively or more frequently in Hg than in El, as in the case of *greene*, which is only attested in Hg, in GP and KT. This means that for this particular group of words there is evidence of the reverse of what has been described by Samuels (1988a:47), as it can be observed that a double graph for the long vowel in Hg becomes a single one in El. In addition, several instances of words spelled with a double vowel in Hg are clustered in GP, KT and sometimes MI, and some forms are only attested in Hg and in no other extant witnesses of *The Canterbury Tales*, as shown by the variants *eech* and *laate* in §2.1.1 below. It is worth noting that GP, KT and MI are the first three parts of Structural Section I in Hg (cf. Blake 1985:45–46). This is considered to be a very stable section of *The Canterbury Tales*, because the texts included in it, GP, KT, MI, RE and CO, occur in this sequence in all but one of the witnesses of *The Canterbury Tales*, Ad<sup>3</sup>, in which CO is placed elsewhere in the text. This suggests that it is very likely that GP, KT and MI were always the first tales to be copied, and therefore that most scribes, even the less faithful ones, probably followed their exemplars very closely in these sections. The presence in Hg, especially at the beginning of the manuscript, of variants that decrease in El or disappear altogether is relevant to determining whether such variants are relicts from the exemplar or are scribal forms. Another observation to be made is that the spelling used in Tr for these words usually agrees with the predominant spelling of Hg and El.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Scribe B has usually been considered a Type B scribe, hence a translator. According to Benskin and Laing,

a copyist whose habit is to translate text into his own dialect takes time to get used to the language of his exemplar. The phenomenon of ‘working-in’ when reading unfamiliar hands is probably well-known to any scholar who has transcribed texts from old MSS. ... The mediaeval scribe in these circumstances begins by copying fairly closely, even *literatim*, until he reads his exemplar fluently and at a glance. For the first few folios or so, he produces a text of which the language is not his own, but that of his exemplar. As he gets used to his copy-text, so he converts with increasing fluency the language of the subsequent text into his own. It may well be that in many such cases what happens is that the scribe moves from copying in a purely visual way to copying via ‘the mind’s ear’. Instead of reproducing a perhaps laboriously interpreted visual image, the visual image is now interpreted at a glance; and what is held in the mind between looking at the exemplar and writing down the next bit of text is not the visual symbols, but the spoken words that correspond to them.

(Benskin and Laing 1981:66)

Hence, once the scribe feels more confident about the handwriting of his copytext, he unconsciously becomes less faithful to the original text and begins to introduce his own spelling variants. According to this theory, it could be argued that the forms with double vowel found in the first section of Hg are Chaucerian, and that the spelling with double vowel in El can be interpreted as an attempt to reproduce what Chaucer’s spelling was like and to regularise the orthography according to that model. Alternatively, one could posit that Chaucer was conservative in his spelling of long vowels and represented them with one graph only, while the scribe, who was already following the new fashion of doubling the graph to indicate vowel length, imposed his own practice on Chaucer’s spelling at the beginning of the manuscript, thus producing a mixture of old and new spelling features. Perhaps this could be attributed to the fact that the scribe already knew Chaucer’s handwriting, because he worked with him or he had already copied some of Chaucer’s works; he was therefore able to read his exemplar easily and copy it without hesitation.

Words in which the long vowel is usually spelled with one graph and more rarely with two graphs in both Hg and El can be categorised as follows:

- (5) a. one graph for the long vowel in both manuscripts; the alternative variants with two graphs are found only in Hg;
- b. one graph for the long vowel in both manuscripts; the alternative variants with two graphs are found more often in Hg than in El, as the number of these forms decreases dramatically in El;
- c. one graph for the long vowel in both manuscripts; the alternative variants with two graphs occur in both manuscripts as well, roughly with the same frequency and sometimes even in the same lines;

- d. one graph for the long vowel in both manuscripts; in Hg there are no alternative variants with two graphs or only very few, whereas they do occur or increase in El.

### 2.1.1. One graph in Hengwrt and Ellesmere; variants with two graphs in Hengwrt only

The lexical items chosen to represent category 5.a. above, in which variants with a double graph exclusively appear in Hg, are the following: BROTHERHOOD, CLEAN, EACH, GREEN, LATE, NOWHERE, STEEP and THREADBARE. An overview of the occurrence of their different forms in Hg, El and Tr is provided in Table 1.

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
BROTHERHOOD	bretherede	2	3	–
	bretherede	1 (GP)	–	–
CLEAN	clene	20	22+3	4
	cleene	2 (GP)	–	–
EACH	ech	44	51+3	4
	eech	6 (3GP, 2 MI, PD)	–	–
GREEN	grene	31	39	2
	greene	8 (4GP, 4KT)	–	1
LATE	late	7	7+1	2
	laate	1 (GP)	–	1
NOWHERE	nowher	8	10+1	1
	nowheer	2 (GP)	–	–
STEEP	stepe	1 (GP)	2 (GP)	–
	steepe	1 (GP)	–	–
THREADBARE	thredbare	1	3	–
	threedba(a)re	2 (GP)	0+1	–

**Table 1. Double graph for the long vowel mostly in Hg**

The variant *bretherede* occurs twice in Hg and three times in El (GP, FR, SH), while the scribe spells this noun *bretherede* once in Hg, in the line of GP that reads:

- (6) Or with a **bretherede** to been withhoolde      Hengwrt GP l. 513  
 Or with a **bretherhed** to been withholde      Ellesmere GP l. 513

The line in Hg in (6) illustrates an overall preference for vowels spelled with double graphs in Hg, while both *bretherhed* and *withholde* occur with one graph in the same line in El. The related word *bretheren* is used ten times in both manuscripts with this

spelling, and one of them is in line 254 of GP. This line belongs to a couplet that reads:

- (7) And yaf a c̄teyn ferme for the graunt Hengwrt  
 Noon of his **bretheren** cam ther in his haunt GP ll. 253–254

This couplet is missing from El, and is actually attested in only eight witnesses of GP, i.e. Ch, Cx<sup>2</sup>, Hg, Ld<sup>2</sup>, Pn, Py, Tc<sup>1</sup> and Wy, all of which however exhibit the variant with a single graph for the first vowel in *bretheren*. It is thus very likely that *bretheren* as well as *bretherhed* were the original spellings for these words. The variant *clene* appears in Hg, El and also Tr. Hg, however, has two instances of *cleene* in GP (ll. 133, 369). The first of them rhymes with *seene*, SEEN, and it is also found in Cp, Hg and Py, while the second occurrence of *cleene* is used in Hg only, although *cleen* is also attested in Nl. The use of *cleene* and *seene* at the end of the line in Hg implies that words containing an open (*cleene*) and a close (*seene*) long vowel can constitute a rhyming pair. This is not uncommon in *The Canterbury Tales* (cf. Kökeritz 1954:12–13), and it also shows that doubled vowel graphs are not used to distinguish between open or close long mid vowels. The word *ech* is usually spelled with a single vowel in the three manuscripts, but there are also six instances of *eech* in Hg (three in GP, two in MI and one in PD); all of them are found within the line, so that rhyme cannot have played a role here. The three instances of *eech* in GP (ll. 39, 371, 429) and the two in MI (ll. 312, 363) are only attested in Hg and in no other fifteenth-century witnesses, thus suggesting that this is a scribal variant. The adjective GREEN is usually spelled *grene* in both manuscripts, but it also occurs eight times as *greene* in Hg. Four of these occurrences are in GP and four in KT, and seven of these eight instances are at the end of the line. The variant *greene* in GP is attested in Hg only in l. 116, while it is shared by Cp and Hg in ll. 103 and 153, and by Cp, Hg, Nl (reading *green*) and Sl<sup>2</sup> in l. 609. Almost half of the occurrences of *grene* in Hg and El are rhyme words as well, which means that neither *greene* nor *grene* was specifically employed for rhyme purposes. In addition, *grene* rhymes three times in Hg and eight times in El with words spelled with *-ee-*, such as *seene* and *queene*.

The adverb *late* is usually spelled in this way, although the variant *laate* is employed once in Hg (GP l. 77) and once in Tr (l. 4.252). Hg is the only witness of *The Canterbury Tales* to exhibit *laate*, and the occurrence in Tr is also peculiar because *laate* never occurs in the Fairfax manuscript. Since, as I have pointed out (Chapter 2, §1), Fairfax contains the language of Gower, *laate* is not a Gowerian form either. Likewise, the variant *nowheer* occurs twice in Hg, in GP (ll. 251, 362). This reading is attested in no other witness of GP, whereas *nowher* is found in Hg, El and Tr, and occurs in GP as well. A word which occurs only twice in GP (ll. 201, 753) is the adjective *stepe*, meaning ‘staring’. In Hg *stepe* is used in l. 201, where the word occurs in the middle of the line: *steepe* occurs in l. 753, where the adjective rhymes with *chepe*, while in El both occurrences are spelled *stepe*. It is possible that *stepe* is the authorial spelling, since it is used within the line, i.e. in a position that is

not subjected to the rhyme constraint. This would also be supported by most of the fifteenth-century witnesses of GP, in which *stepe* is the most frequently used spelling. In fact, in l. 201 *steepe* occurs in Hg, Ps, Py and Cx<sup>1</sup>, and *steep* is used in Cx<sup>2</sup>, Ha<sup>4</sup> and Pn, while in l. 753 *steepe* is found only in Ad<sup>3</sup> and Py. Finally, the variant used more often in El is *thredbare* while in Hg it is *threedba(a)re*. The two instances spelled with *-ee-* in Hg are in GP, and comparison with the other witnesses of GP reveals that the variant *threedbare* in GP l. 262 is also found in Cx<sup>1</sup>, Cx<sup>2</sup> and Ld<sup>2</sup>, while in GP l. 292 Hg reads *threedbaare*, Ch, Cx<sup>1</sup> and Cx<sup>2</sup> *thredbare* and Ld<sup>2</sup> *threde bar*. All of the other witnesses exhibit *thredbare* in both lines.

### 2.1.2. One graph in Hengwrt and Ellesmere; more variants with two graphs in Hengwrt than in Ellesmere

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
ANON	anon	195	224+22	25
	anoon	47	20+2	2
BEARD	berd	18	21	–
	beerd	5 (GP, KT)	1	–
LEAN	lene	9	14+3	–
	leene	4 (3GP, KT)	1+1 (GP, CY)	–
	leen	1 (KT)	–	–
SEEK/SICK	seke	25	27+9	3
	seeke	3 (GP)	1	1
SANG/SONG	song	46	55+2	1
	soong	16	4	–
SPEAK	spek	3	4+2	3
	speke-	153	158+25	31
	speek(en)	6	3+1	1
WERE	were(n)	414	479+12	86
	weere(n)	63 (41GP, 12 KT)	6	3

**Table 2. Lower frequency of a double graph for the long vowel in El**

In the second group of words that regularly display one graph for the long vowel in both Hg and El, the alternative variants spelled with double vowel occur more often in Hg than in El: the number of forms with a double graph sometimes decreases dramatically in El. The words are ANON, BEARD, LEAN, SEEK/SICK, SANG/SONG, SPEAK and WERE.

As Table 2 illustrates, *anon* is the preferred form in Hg, El and Tr, while the variant *anoon* occurs less frequently than *anon* in Hg and even less so in El. However, in Hg *anoon* is used more often than *anon* in GP (5 occurrences in Hg vs. 1 in El) and KT (21 occurrences in Hg vs. 12 in El). Likewise, the noun BEARD is mostly spelled *berd*, while *beerd* is used five times in Hg, three times in GP and



twice in KT, but only once in EI (KT l. 1557, which has *berd* in Hg). Comparison with the other witnesses of GP reveals that the spelling *beerd* is shared by some of them, namely by Cx<sup>1</sup>, Cx<sup>2</sup>, Ii, Ld<sup>1</sup>, NI, Pn, Tc<sup>2</sup>, Wy, To<sup>1</sup> in l. 408, by DI, Ha<sup>2</sup> and Ma in l. 554 and by DI and En<sup>3</sup> in l. 590. None of these occurrences is found at the end of the line. The variants *lene* and *leen(e)* for both ‘lend’ and ‘thin’ are used in Hg, while *lene* is the preferred spelling in EI. As in the case of *anoon*, the forms of this word that are spelled with double vowel occur in Hg in GP (ll. 289, 593, 613) and KT (ll. 504, 2218). Some other manuscripts besides Hg read *leene* in GP, as this variant occurs in EI, En<sup>3</sup>, Py, Ad<sup>1</sup>, NI (*leen*) in l. 289, in En<sup>3</sup>, Py, NI in l. 593 and in Py in l. 613. *Leene* occurs once more in EI, in CY, hence in a tale that is not in Hg. *Se(e)ke* is a word that in Hg similarly exhibits three occurrences of the variant with a double graph in GP. One of them rhymes with *seke* in the lines of Hg and EI in (8):

- |     |                                                                  |              |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| (8) | The holy blisful martir for to <b>seke</b>                       | Hengwrt      |
|     | That hem hath holpen whan þ <sup>t</sup> they weere <b>seeke</b> | GP ll. 17–18 |
|     | The hooly blisful martir for to <b>seke</b>                      | Ellesmere    |
|     | That hem hath holpen whan þ <sup>t</sup> they were <b>seeke</b>  | GP ll. 17–18 |

The lack of visual rhyme suggests that in both manuscripts the spelling is a means to distinguish the words *SEEK* and *SICK*, since both of them contained a long vowel in ME (OE *sēcan* > ME *seke* > MnE *seek*; OE *sēoc* > ME *seke* > MnE *sick*). However, this is true only for EI, Ha<sup>4</sup>, Hg, Ps and Py, as the other witnesses of GP read *seke* twice in these lines. The other two occurrences in Hg (GP ll. 13, 512) are variants of the verb *SEEK*. The instance in GP l. 13 is spelled *seeken* in Ha<sup>4</sup> and Hg and *seeke* in La and Py, whereas the instance in GP l. 512 is spelled *seeken* in En<sup>3</sup>, Ha<sup>4</sup>, Hg and Py and *seeke* in Cp and Mm. The variant *soong*, used for the noun and the past tense of the verb *SING*, is found sixteen times in Hg, where it occurs alongside the form *song*- especially in GP, KT and MI, and just four times in EI, in GP, KT, NP. Three of the five instances in GP (ll. 710, 711, 714) are found in Hg and nowhere else; the other two (ll. 122, 672) occur in Hg and EI only. A double graph is also employed to write *speek(en)*, which is found six times in Hg (MA, ML, twice in SQ, PD, TM) and four in EI (SQ, TM, MA, PA) as the alternative spelling for the most frequently used form *spek(en)*. Finally, the verb *WERE* is also spelled with either *-e-* or *-ee-*. In Hg there are 63 instances of the variants *weere(n)*, mostly in GP (41 occurrences), as illustrated by the three examples provided in (9), and in KT (12 occurrences).

- |     |                                                     |              |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| (9) | In felaweshipe and pilgrymes <b>weere</b> they alle |              |
|     | That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde                 |              |
|     | The chambres and the stables <b>weeren</b> wyde     | Hengwrt      |
|     | And wel we <b>weeren</b> esed at the beste          | GP ll. 26–29 |

In felaweshiþ̄ and pilgimes **were** they alle  
 That toward Caunþbury wolden ryde  
 The chambres and the stables **weren** wyde  
 And wel we **weren** esed atte beste

Ellesmere  
 GP ll. 26–29

All of the instances of *weere(n)* clustered in GP in Hg are not attested in any other fifteenth-century witnesses of GP, with the exception of one in DI. In EI *weere* is found only six times, five of which are rhyme words. Three of these occurrences (CL l. 882, MO ll. 178, 574) have the same spelling in Hg, while the other three (CL l. 168, TM par. 94 and MO l. 60) are spelled *were* in Hg.

### 2.1.3. One graph in Hengwrt and Ellesmere; alternative variants with two graphs in both manuscripts

The third group of words to be discussed consists of items which usually exhibit a single graph for the long vowels in both Hg and EI, but which also display alternative variants with a double graph in both manuscripts. The number of forms spelled with a double graph is approximately the same in Hg and EI, with some of them even occurring in corresponding lines, as shown by the word *speed(e)* below:

- (10) a. Go now thy wey and **speed** thee heer aboute    Hengwrt MI l. 376  
           Go now thy wey and **speed** thee heer aboute    Ellesmere MI l. 376
- b. Hym thoughte he was nat able for to **speede**    Hengwrt PH l. 134  
           Hym thoughte he was nat able for to **speede**    Ellesmere PH l. 134

The words in question are: DEEP, HUNG, HELP, KEEN, KEEP, SPEED and YARD, and are displayed in Table 3.

The preferred spelling for DEEP in Hg and EI is *depe*. *Deep* occurs twice in both manuscripts, in the same lines of FR and L30. The variant *deepe* rhymes with *keepe* once in Hg, in GP ll. 129–130, and the same spelling is used for both words in two more witnesses, Cp and Ha<sup>4</sup>, while Ry<sup>1</sup> exhibits in these line the rhyming pair *deepe: mete*, which is found in few other witnesses (Cx<sup>1</sup>, Cx<sup>2</sup>, Ht, Ii, Pn, Tc<sup>2</sup> and Wy). By contrast, the variants *heng* and *heeng* for the past tense of the verb *hangen* seem to be interchangeable and neither of them is used in rhyming position; in Hg *heeng* is found in GP (ll. 160, 360, 676) and MI (ll. 64, 437), in other words only at the beginning of the manuscript. *Henge* is used once in GP l. 677 as well, but it also occurs in MA and ME, and only two of these three occurrences preserve their spelling in EI. A closer look at the other manuscripts of GP and MI reveals that *heeng* is not a very common form, as only EI and Lc, a non-authoritative manuscript dating from the second quarter of the fifteenth century, share most of these readings with Hg. More precisely, *heeng* is found in GP in l. 160 in Hg and Lc, in l. 360 in EI, Ha<sup>2</sup>, Hg, Lc, Mg, in l. 676 in Hg and EI; in MI it occurs in l. 64 of Hg and EI only, while in l. 437 it is attested in Ad<sup>1</sup>, Ha<sup>5</sup>, Hg, Lc and Mg.

		<b>Hengwrt</b>	<b>Ellesmere</b>	<b>Trinity</b>
DEEP	depe	17	17	1
	deep(e)	3 (IGP)	2	–
HUNG	heng	3	5	1
	heeng	5 (3GP, 2MI)	4+1	1
HELP	help-	88	86+9	19
	heelp	4	4	–
KEEN	kene	4	5	–
	keene	4 (GP, 2KT, MO)	3 (ME, SQ, MO)	–
KEEP	kepe	76	72+15	–
	keep(e)	21 (2 GP)	22+1	–
SPEED	spede(n)	9	8	1
	speede	5	6	18
	spedde	7	7	3
YARD	yerd	9	7	–
	yeerd	3	5	–

**Table 3. Words spelled with a double graph in both Hg and El**

Though the actual number of occurrences of the word KEEN is small, the variants *keene* and *kene* also seem to be used interchangeably; in Hg *keene* is found in GP, KT and MO, while *kene* occurs in FR, SQ, ME and FK. Almost all of these occurrences are at the end of the line, and the rhyme words, *gre(e)ne*, *se(e)ne*, *queene* and *sustene*, are accordingly spelled with either a single or a double graph. The only variant within the line (SQ l. 49) reads *kene* in Hg and *keene* in El. By contrast, the distribution of the variants *kepe* and *keep* for KEEP reveals that while the former is the most common spelling for this word, the latter occurs more frequently at the end of the line. All instances of *keep* in Hg, eleven of which are rhyme words, are preserved as such in El, while three occurrences of the same variant that occur within the line in El (once in CL and twice in MA) correspond to *kepe* in Hg. One of these three instances is found in the line from Hg in (11), in which both variants occur alongside, while in the corresponding line of El the scribe wrote *keep* twice.

(11) My sone **keep** wel thy tonge and **kepe** thy freend      Hengwrt MA l. 215

Likewise, the variant *spede*, meaning ‘assist’, ‘prosper’, is used slightly more often than *speede* in Hg and El. In line 796 of GP Hg reads *spede* while El reads *speede*; the same spelling with a double graph is also found in Cp, Ha<sup>4</sup> and Py. It is interesting to note that the variant *speede* is preferred in Tr. Finally, the noun *yerd* is spelled both *yerd* and *yeerd* in Hg and El, and ten of the twelve occurrences of this noun are clustered in NP, not surprisingly, since this tale is set in a farmyard. As illustrated in Table 4 (below), the scribe used *yerd* alongside *yeerd* until line 177 of

this tale in Hg, while he always used *yeerd* in El; from the next occurrence, in line 355, to the end of the tale he consistently wrote *yerd* in both manuscripts. Hg and El thus mostly agree in the use of the spelling variants, and a striking change occurs around line 355, since from that point onwards only *yerd* is attested in both of them. The only clue provided by Hg is that the first six instances of this word are found in quire 14 and the last of them, in line 355, is in rhyming position, whereas the other four occurrences are in quire 15, and the last one is likewise a rhyme word. It is possible that a shift in spelling practice had already taken place in the exemplar of Hg and El, assuming it was the same one, as clearly shown by El. Alternatively, the change of spelling variant might correspond with a change of the exemplar used for both Hg and El at this point of NP, as I will argue in Chapter 5 for TM. A third possibility is that in Hg the scribe copied his exemplar more faithfully in quire 15 than he had done in the previous one.

Nun's Priest's Tale	Hengwrt	Ellesmere
l. 27	Quire 14 yeerd	yeerd
l. 79	yeerd	yeerd
l. 131	yerd	yeerd
l. 146	yerd	yeerd
l. 177	yeerd	yeerd
l. 355	yerd:aferd	yerd:aferd
l. 399	Quire 15 yerd	yerd
l. 411	yerd	yerd
l. 434	yerd	yerd
l. 602	yerd:aferd	yerd:aferd

**Table 4. Occurrences of *ye(e)rd* in NP**

It seems at any rate unlikely that the different spelling forms are due to a shift in the scribe's own practice, because in both Hg and El Scribe B began with *yeerd* and then switched to *yerd*, which is the opposite of the ongoing change from one to two graphs for the spelling of long vowels. In addition, NP was probably one of the last tales to be copied in Hg, as indicated by the different colours of the ink used by the scribe (cf. Stubbs 2000: Observations). It is thus improbable that at that stage Scribe B needed to get used to the handwriting of the exemplar, a possibility that I raised above in connection with the use of variants with a double graph in the first section of Hg. Comparison of all fifteenth-century witnesses of NP shows that *yerd* is by far the preferred spelling, with *yeerd* being attested only in a few manuscripts, mainly Ad<sup>3</sup>, whose scribe was generally very fond of *-ee-*, El, Pw (five occurrences each) and Hg (three instances). Furthermore, the spelling with a single graph is shared by all witnesses when the word occurs in NP in rhyming position, in lines 355 and 602. This would suggest that *yerd* is the authorial spelling after all, while *yeerd* was introduced by the scribe. I will return to this point in Chapter 6.

The word HELP, which occur more frequently as a verb than as a noun, is the odd one out in this section, because this is a monosyllabic word containing a short vowel. Accordingly, it is usually spelled *help*, with the exception of four occurrences found in the middle of the same lines of KT, RE, MO and ML in both Hg and El, which are spelled *heelp*. The use of a double graph for a short vowel, as well as the agreement among the two manuscripts, suggest that in this case the four instances are possibly authorial, and that a certain degree of variation apparently characterised Chaucer's orthographic practice as well.

#### 2.1.4. One graph in Hengwrt and Ellesmere; most variants with two graphs in Ellesmere

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
MEEK(LY)	meke	21	13	–
	meeke	–	8	–
	mekely	10	9+1	–
NEED	nede	45	40+11	9
	neede	1 (GP)	4+1	4
SHE	she	940	937+35	239
	shee	2 (GP, CL)	9	–
THREE	thre	68	63+7	3
	three	5	10+5	–
WELL	wel	624	576+55	86
	weel	10	53+2	5

**Table 5. Words usually spelled with a single graph in Hg and El**

The words chosen to exemplify the last group, MEEK(LY), NEED, SHE, THREE and WELL, are usually spelled with a single graph for the vowel in both manuscripts. Unlike what has been shown so far, the variants with a double graph are very few, if any, in Hg, whereas they do occur or increase in El. However, like many of the variants spelled with a double graph that have been described so far, several of these occurrences are clustered in GP and KT.

The first example is *meke(ly)*, which is always spelled in Hg with a single graph, while the variant *meeke* occurs eight times in El. None of these occurrences in El is in rhyming position and three of them are clustered in TM, hence in prose. Furthermore, the occurrence of *meeke* in GP l. 69 is the only instance of this spelling variant in all of the extant witnesses of GP, the other witnesses all displaying *meke*. Similarly, *nede* is the preferred form for NEED in all three manuscripts, while *neede* is the variant used only in rhyming position, with one occurrence in Hg (GP l. 306), five in El, one of which is not attested in Hg (CY l. 532), and four in Tr. *Neede* in GP is also attested in Cp, El, Ha<sup>4</sup>, Ld<sup>2</sup>, Ps and Py, and *need* is found in En<sup>3</sup>. The related words *nedes*, *nedeful(le)* and *nedely* are never spelled with *-ee-* except once in El, which is shown in (12):

- (12) For he noght helpeth **needfulle** in hir **neede** Ellesmere ML l. 14

The vowel in the pronoun *she* is regularly represented by a single graph, while the variant *shee* is attested only sporadically in Hg and El. One of the two occurrences of *shee* in Hg is found in GP l. 453, where it rhymes with *charitee*, and there is only another witness of GP, Ha<sup>3</sup>, which also reads *shee* in this line. Likewise, the spelling *three* as a variant of *thre* is found in five lines of Hg and fifteen lines of El. All but one of these occurrences are rhyme words in both manuscripts. Four of the ten instances of *three* in El are found in NU, where they are attested together with four occurrences of *thre*. However, *three* is used at the end of the line or, in one case, before a virgule, thus before a pause, while *thre* is employed within the line and in particular when this word occurs as a determiner before a noun. In addition, the readings in NU ll. 226–228 Hg and El in (13) show that the text changed between the copying of Hg and El, and that the spelling of some words did likewise, since El *three*, rhyming with *bee*, replaced Hg *quod he*, a phrase in in which the pronoun *he* rhymed with *be*.

- |                                                 |                |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (13) Kepeth ay wel thise corones quod <b>he</b> |                |
| Fro Paradys to yow haue I hem broght            | Hengwrt        |
| Ne neuere mo ne shal they roten <b>be</b>       | NP ll. 226–228 |
| Kepeth ay wel thise corones <b>three</b>        |                |
| Fro Paradys to yow haue I hem broght            | Ellesmere      |
| Ne neuere mo ne shal they roten <b>bee</b>      | NP ll. 226–228 |

The last word in the present category is *wel*. Unlike the previous words, *wel*, mostly used for the adverb WELL, contains a short vowel, and yet the variant *weel* is also attested, especially in El. In particular, *weel* is employed in Hg and Tr only as a rhyme word, mostly rhyming with other words spelled with *-ee-*, with the exception of one instance in SQ, in which *weel* rhymes with *naturel*, as shown in (14).

- |                                                     |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (14) This Steede of bras that esily and <b>weel</b> | Hengwrt        |
| Kan in the space of o day <b>naturel</b>            | SQ ll. 107–108 |
| This steede of bras that esily and <b>weel</b>      | Ellesmere      |
| Kan in the space of o day <b>natureel</b>           | SQ ll. 107–108 |

When it occurs in El, *weel* is mostly found at the end of the line, although it also appears within the line. In addition, the use of this variant increases in this manuscript, thus showing a tendency to shift from a single to a double vowel for the spelling of this word, even though the shift is totally unjustified, since WELL contains a short vowel.

In this first section I have shown that words which are usually spelled with a single graph for the long vowel in Hg and El also display alternative variants with a

double graph. These variants, however, may occur in the two manuscripts in four different ways. There are, in fact, words in which the variants with a double graph are almost exclusively found in Hg, words in which the variants with a double graph are used more often in Hg than in El, words in which the variants with a double graph are equally used in Hg and El, sometimes even in the same lines, and finally words in which the variants with a double graph are rarely used in Hg, where they are mainly attested in GP and KT, while they occur more often in El. It seems that the spelling with a single graph for the long vowels is authorial, as clearly suggested by *bretheren* and *bretherhed*, *ech*, *late*, *stepe*, *heng*, *yerd*, *she* and *thre*. Variants with a double graph may be authorial when they are used in rhyming position, as shown by *cleene*, or in exceptional cases such as *heelp*, which is occasionally spelled with *-ee-* even though it contains a short vowel; otherwise they are very likely to be scribal. This shows that for the words analysed in this section, the spelling with two graphs for the long vowel is more common in Hg than in El. In addition, the instances spelled with a double graph in Hg are often found at the beginning of the manuscript, where they signal a difference between the first tales and the rest of *The Canterbury Tales*. This is very likely the result of scribal intervention. More evidence for the correctness of this conclusion must be sought in the analysis of the other spelling variants, that is, those in which a double graph is preferred to a single one for the spelling of long vowels.

## 2.2. Double graph for the representation of long vowels

In the previous section I dealt with words in which the long vowel is mostly spelled with a single graph, while the spelling with a double graph represents the alternative and usually less common variant. However, in Hg and El there are also lexical items in which the long vowels are only or predominantly represented by two graphs, such as *-ee-* and *-oo-*. Scribe B does so consistently in such words as *almost*, *leest*, *oonly* and *soone*, for instance, which only occur in this spelling and do not exhibit any differences between Hg and El. In another set of words, however, he usually writes the long vowels with two graphs and employs a single graph spelling less frequently. Examples of these words are presented in Table 6, which shows that in all these words the spelling with a double graph is preferred in the three manuscripts, while the alternative spelling with a single vowel is rather infrequent.

There are, however, some observations to be made concerning this apparent preference for using a double graph to write long vowels. The first one concerns the word *de(e)d*, for 'dead', which is primarily spelled with two graphs in Hg and El, even though the variants *ded* and *dede* are attested as well. *Ded* occurs just five times in Hg: twice within the line (MA, CL) and three times (RE l. 369, NP l. 81, MA l. 169) at the end of the line, where it rhymes with *hed*, *red* and *lustihed*, respectively. All of these instances are spelled *deed* in El, and the rhyme words are likewise written with two graphs. *Ded* is also found once in Tr, and is very likely to be the form used by Gower, since it regularly occurs in the Fairfax manuscript. It would seem that the change from Hg *ded* to El *deed* was a deliberate choice made by

the scribe, who in this way tried to limit the spelling of this word to only two variants, *deed* and *dede*, in EI. This is also suggested by a comparison of all witnesses of GP, which reveals that the three instances of *deed* that are attested in GP ll. 145, 148 and 781 in Hg and EI are shared by a small number of manuscripts, among which Cp and Ha<sup>4</sup>, all other manuscripts reading *ded(e)* in those lines.

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
DEAD	deed	69	74+1 (3GP)	15
	dede	15	14+1	–
	ded	5	–	1
EKE	eek	340	332+97	23
	eke	22	29	3
	ek	4 (GP, KT, FK, TM)	–	–
HELD	heeld	25	24	5
	held(e)(n)	6	5	1
MORE	moore	355	358+62	60
	more	3 (PD, SH, TM)	2 (PD, TM)	–
	mo	109	107+17	4
NONETHELESS	natheles	52	57+7	17
	natheles	5	3	1
NEARER	neer	12	14+2	2
	neere	–	–	1
	ner	5	3	2
SORE(LY)	soore	49	58+4	9
	sore	8	1+1	1
YEAR	yeer(e)	72	71+6	–
	yer(e)	8	5	–
	yeres	5	13	–
	yeeres	–	1	–
	yeris/yerys	9	1	–
	yeeris/yeeris	1	1	–
YORE	yoore	13	13	–
	yore	2	2	–

**Table 6. A double graph for long vowels is preferred to a single graph**

The variant *dede* is not only the less common spelling for DEAD, but also the only variant used in both Hg and EI for the noun DEED, as shown below:



		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
DEED	dede	48	46+17	18
	deede	–	2	3

**Table 7. Variants of DEED in Hg, El and Tr**

The item DEED is discussed in this section only for the sake of comparison with DEAD, as this is a word in which the long vowel is consistently spelled with a single graph in Hg and virtually always in El. The variant *deede* for DEED occurs only twice at the end of the line in El, in MI l. 405 and CL l. 1073; the instance in MI exhibits the same spelling in Ad<sup>1</sup>, El and En<sup>3</sup>, while it is spelled *dede* in all other witnesses of this tale. It is thus worth noting here that these two words behave differently despite the fact that they are to some extent homographs. In Tr the form *deede* is only used twice at the end of line and once within the line for this word.

The second observation to be made concerns the variants of the high-frequency adverb EEK, meaning ‘also’, which is spelled *ek*, *EEK* and *eke*. *Ek* is recorded just four times within the line in Hg, and its presence in GP, KT and TM suggests that the four occurrences are relicts from the exemplar, since these tales seem to display features that are old-fashioned (cf. §2.1 above). Apart from Hg, the occurrence in GP is only attested in three other manuscripts, Gg, Cp, which like Hg and El date from the first quarter of the fifteenth century, and Ry<sup>2</sup>, a text dating from the second quarter of the same century. *Eke* is the variant used in Tr to rhyme with *seke* and *cheke*, while in Hg 12 of the 22 instances of this spelling occur at the end of a line, where they form rhyming pairs with *biseke*, *cheke*, *meke*, *seke* and *speeke*. All instances of *eke* that are found at the end of a line in Hg preserve the same spelling in El, and so do two more occurrences of *eke* that are used in prose, in TM par. 269 and PA par. 385, while the eight remaining instances of this variant in Hg become *EEK* in El. However, in El there also are fifteen other instances of *eke* which are spelled *EEK* in Hg. Two of them are found within the line in WBT l. 1220 and SU l. 566, and the other thirteen are clustered in the section between paragraphs (pars) 299 and 306 of PA (folios 213v–214r in El), which are shown in (15).

- (15) **eeke** whan he herkneth nat benygnely þe cōpleyn̄te of the pouere **eeke** whan he is in heele of body / and wol nat faste whan oother folk fasten / with outen cause resonable **eeke** / whan he slepeth moore than nedeth / or whan he comth by thilke encheson / to late to chirche / or to othere werkes of charitee **eeke** / whan he vseth his wyf / with oute souereyn desir of engendrure / to honour of god / or for the entente / to yelde to his wyf the dette of his body **eeke** whan he wol nat visite the syke / 7 the prisoner / if he may **eeke** / if he loue wyf or child / or oother worldly thyng moore than reson requereth **eeke** if he flatre / or blaūdisē moore than hym oghte / for any necessitee **eeke** if he amenuse / or withdrawe the almesse of the pouere **eeke** if he apparilleth his mete / moore deliciously / than nede is / or ete it to hastily / by likerousnesse **eeke** / if he tale vanytes / at chirche / or at goddes seruyce / or þ<sup>t</sup> he be a talke<sup>r</sup> of ydel wordes / of folye / or of vileynye / for he shal yelde acounte of it<sup>r</sup> at the day of dome **eeke** / whan he biheteth / or assureth to do thynges / þ<sup>t</sup> he ne may nat pfourne **eeke** whan þ<sup>t</sup> he / by lightnesse / or folye / mysseyth / or scorneth his neigheboore **eeke** whan he hath any wikked suspecioū of thyng<sup>r</sup> ther he ne woot of it no soothfastnesse

Hengwrt PA pars 299–306

**Eke** / whan he herkneth nat benignely the compleint<sup>r</sup> of the poure **Eke** / whan he is in heele of body and wol nat faste whan hym oghte faste / with outen cause resonable **Eke** / whan he slepeth moore than nedeth / . or whan he comth by thilke enchesou to late to chirche / or to othere werkes of charite **Eke** / whan he vseth his wyf<sup>r</sup> with outen souereyn desir of engendrure to the hono<sup>r</sup> of god / . or for the entente / to yelde to his wyf<sup>r</sup> the dette of his body: **Eke** / whan he wol nat<sup>r</sup> visite the sike and the prisoner if he may : **Eke** / if he loue / wyf or child<sup>s</sup> / . or oother worldly thyng<sup>r</sup> . moore than resou requireth **Eke** / if he flatere or blandise / moore than hym oghte / for any necessitee **Eke** / if he amenuse or withdrawe the Almesse of the poure **Eke** / if he apparilleth his mete moore deliciously / than nede is / or ete to hastily by likerousnesse **Eke** / if he tale vanytees at chirche / or at goddes seruice / or that he be a talke<sup>r</sup> of ydel wordes / of folye / or of vileynye / . for he shal yeldē acountes of it<sup>r</sup> at the day of doome **Eke** / whan he biheteth / or assureth to do thynges / that he ne may nat<sup>r</sup> pfourne **Eke** / whan that he / by lightnesse or folie / mysseyeth / or scorneth his neigheboore **Eke** / whan he hath any wikked suspecioū of thyng<sup>r</sup> ther he ne woot of it no soothfastnesse

Ellesmere PA pars 299–306

This particular section of PA contains multiple examples of words in which the long vowel is represented by a double graph in Hg (*eeke*) and by a single one in El (*eke*), as described in §2.1 above. Interestingly, the occurrences in question are found in PA, which is another tale that generally displays outdated features. A comparison of the folios in Hg and El, where the thirteen instances of *eeke/eke* occur, reveals that there are also other differences besides the spelling of the vowels in these passages. First of all, *eeke* is written with a lower-case initial in Hg (see Figure 1), while *eke* displays an upper-case initial in El. In addition, in Hg the occurrences of *eeke* are

preceded by a small wedge, which probably stands for an unexecuted paraph sign, while the corresponding instances of *eke* in El follow a decorated paraph sign like one of those illustrated in Figure 2, which is taken from another section of PA, since the image of the manuscript leaf containing the same text in El was not available to me.

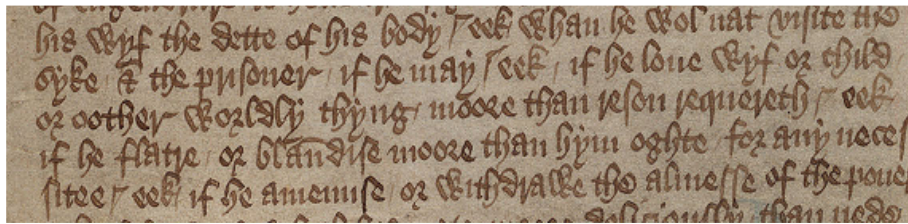


Figure 1. Instances of *eek* in the *Parson's Tale* in Hengwrt, fol. 245r

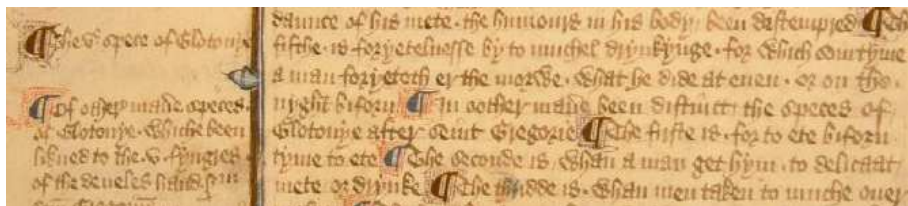


Figure 2. Paraphs in the *Parson's Tale* in El, fol. 225v  
(from [www.liunet.edu/cwis/CWP/library/sc/chaucer/chaucer.htm](http://www.liunet.edu/cwis/CWP/library/sc/chaucer/chaucer.htm))

That the wedges in this section of Hg stand for unexecuted paraph signs, rather than being punctuation marks can be seen in the detail from folio 248v provided in Figure 3. Here, similar wedges are placed just before a number of words, and are still visible under the paraph signs (which are darker in the image, as they are drawn with blue ink in the manuscript), both in the first and in the second line. By contrast, a wedge used as a punctuation mark, and thus indicating a pause, is visible in the second line after the words *humbleste of speche*, while in the following line, before the words *And whan*, there is another instance of a paraph sign which was not executed (both of them are lighter in the image, as they are written with the same brown ink of the text).

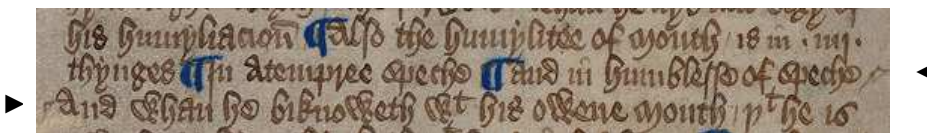


Figure 3. Paraphs in the *Parson's Tale* in Hengwrt, fol. 248v

Paraphs are marks that in manuscripts are often found at the beginning of smaller textual units, such as strophes, but in this context they seem to function as markers for the intonation, by indicating that the word they precede should be stressed. This function is reinforced in EI by the use of the capital letter after the paraph sign. However, it is unclear why in EI the scribe wrote *Eke* instead of *EEK* between paragraphs 299 and 306 of PA, since *EEK* is the spelling that he used for the other 112 instances of this word in the rest of the tale. Moreover, only seven of the 112 occurrences of *EEK* in EI, six of which are in the section of PA that is not attested in Hg, also begin with an upper-case letter preceded by a paraph sign. An explanation for this problem could be provided by the analysis of the context in which the thirteen instances of *Eke* occur. They are clustered in a section of eighteen lines of text, and each of them is followed by a *virgula*, i.e. a comma (punctuation is preserved in (15) and (16) for this reason), and by either *whan* or *if*, as in (16):

- (16) a. **Eke** / whan he is in heele of body                      Ellesmere PA par. 300  
       b. **Eke** / if he loue wyf or child<sup>8</sup>                              Ellesmere PA par. 302

In the two examples, the fixed expressions *Eke/whan* and *Eke/if* could be rhetorical devices employed for pronouncing the clauses with emphasis. These occurrences of the adverb are therefore spelled *Eke* to distinguish them from *EEK*, which mostly occurs in non-emphatic positions, and in PA is never followed by *whan* and *if*. This may be an archetypal feature, and it could explain why the only two occurrences of *Eke* in PA in Hg that are likewise placed at the beginning of two sentences (in pars 385, 387) are written with an upper-case letter and are preceded by a wedge. It is therefore possible that the thirteen instances of *EEK/Eke* discussed here are spelled *EEK* in Hg because the scribe did not understand that they were deliberately spelled *Eke*, as they were the first words of a series of emphatic sentences. As a result, when he copied Hg, he wrote *EEK* in those lines as he had done in the rest of the tale, thus ignoring the spelling of the exemplar, which probably read *Eke* as in EI.

The past tense of the verb *holden* is usually spelled *heeld*, the variant *held* occurring only twice in Hg (KT, CL) and once in EI (MO). *Helde(n)*, by contrast, is found four times in both Hg and EI, although only three times in corresponding lines of KT, FK and SH. The fourth occurrence in EI is attested in WBP l. 272, where *helde* stands for the present tense of the same verb, even though in Hg there is the more commonly used variant *holde*. Thus, lines 271–272 in WBP read as follows:

- (17) And seyst it is an hard thyng for to **wolde**                      Hengwrt  
       A thyng that no man wol his thankes **holde**                      WBP ll. 271–272  
       And seyst it is an hard thyng for to **welde**                      Ellesmere  
       A thyng<sup>7</sup> þ<sup>1</sup> no man wole his thankes **helde**                      WBP ll. 271–272

The variants *wolde* and *holde* are not restricted to Hg, as they are attested in thirteen and fourteen other manuscripts, respectively, of which Ch, Ha<sup>4</sup>, Hg and Ra<sup>3</sup> belong

to the O group, and as well as in all incunabula except Cx<sup>1</sup>. According to the *MED*, *wolde* is a northern form of the verb *welden* ‘control’, and it cannot be excluded that both *wolde* and *holde* are due to scribal misinterpretation of the *-e-* as an *-o-* at an early stage of the textual tradition. However, it is also possible that the word is authorial, as Chaucer often employed dialectal variants in rhyming position, e.g. *myrye*, *myrye* and *merye* for MERRY. In addition, we know that some Northern forms belonged to his repertoire, as shown by his preference for the Northern variant *agayn* instead of the Southern *ayein* (see Chapter 5 for both MERRY and AGAYN).

The word MORE for the comparative form of the adjective and for the adverb is normally spelled either *mo* (from OE *mā*) when it means ‘more in number’ and refers to count nouns, or *mo(o)re* (from OE *māra*) when it means ‘larger, greater’ and refers to mass nouns, as shown in (18):

- (18) it hadde ben necessarie **mo** conseilours 7 **moore**                      Hengwrt  
deliberacioun                                                                                              TM par. 285

*Moore* is the most frequently used variant both alone and in compounds like *moore ouer*, whereas there are just three instances of *more* in Hg (PD l. 66, SH l. 149 in *namore* and TM par. 413 in *more ouer*) and two in El (SH l. 5 and TM par. 591 in *more ouer*). It is possible that these occurrences in both texts are relicts from the original manuscript, especially as two of them are in TM. The third variant, *mo*, is also attested in Hg, El and Tr, and is often used at the end of the line, probably for rhyme purposes. The widespread use of the form *moore* in *The Canterbury Tales* seems to be a characteristic of Hg and El in particular, as a search for this word and compounds in all other witnesses of GP, MI and WBP reveals that *more* is the most frequently used form. *Moore*, however, occurs alongside *more* in a small number of manuscripts, three of which, Ad<sup>3</sup>, Ch and Ha<sup>5</sup>, are very close to Hg and El in the textual tradition of *The Canterbury Tales* in at least two of the three tales. In addition, the only two occurrences of this word in the Hatfield fragment are spelled *moore*, which is also the preferred form in Tr, although it cannot be a Gowerian feature, as it never occurs in the *Confessio Amantis* in the Fairfax manuscript. It is worth noting that in the rubric added later in the left margin of folio 57v in Hg, under the text of the unfinished *Cook's Tale* (see Chapter 2, §1), the scribe wrote ‘Of this Cokes tale maked Chaucer *na moore*’ (Figure 4), suggesting that the spelling with double vowel must have been the scribe’s preferred form.

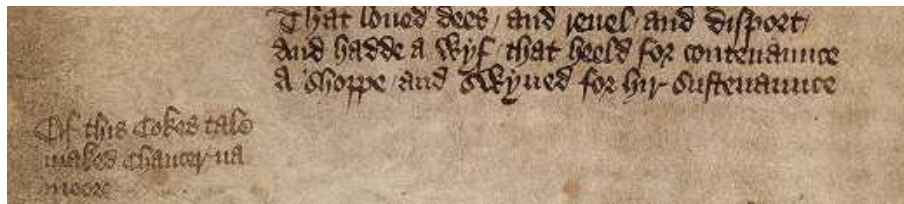


Figure 4. Scribal note added under the unfinished *Cook's Tale* in Hg, fol. 57v

The adverb *nathelees* is usually spelled with *-ee-* in the final syllable, with the exception of five instances in Hg, three in El and one in Tr, where it occurs as *natheles*. One of these instances is in paragraph 337 of PA in both manuscripts, hence in a prose section. Similarly, the adverb *neer* is preferred in all three manuscripts, while *ner* occurs more rarely and mostly in rhyming position. The occurrences of *ner* in Hg and the corresponding rhyme words are the following:

- (19) That Theseus hath taken hym so **ner** : **Squier** Hengwrt KT l. 581  
 And with the staf she drow ay **ner** and **ner** : **voluper** Hengwrt RE l. 384  
 And as he dorste he drow hym **ner** and **ner** : **Anthiphoner** Hengwrt PR l. 68

Both instances of *ner* in PR l. 68 are preserved in El, and one is also found in Kk, in which the same line reads:

- (20) And as he durste he drow hym **ner** and [erasure] Kk PR l.68

The other three instances are spelled *neer* in El. Two of them are at the end of the line, and the rhyme word is adapted only in RE l. 384, where it becomes *volupeer*. In El there is another instance of *ner* in KT l. 992, which reads *neer* in Hg; in this case the rhyme word is the same, *daunger*, in both manuscripts. In addition, there is one more occurrence of *neer* at the end of the line in PD l. 638, which rhymes with *Pardoner* in Hg and El. The evidence provided by the rhyme shows that *ner* is used more often than *neer* at the end of a line, and that when *neer* is used instead, the scribe fails to achieve the visual matching of rhyme words. This suggests that *ner* might be the authorial spelling, or at least that it is the variant employed for the sake of rhyme.

The adverb *soore* is another example of a word that is mostly spelled with a double graph in all three manuscripts. The variant in which the long vowel is spelled with one graph only, *sore*, occurs primarily in Hg, while only one and two instances are found in Tr and El, respectively. All of the occurrences of *sore* in Hg are attested in tales where *soore* is used as well: KT, MI, WBP, MO, NP, ME and NU. The two instances of *sore* in El are provided in (21):

- (21) a. This knyght auyseth hym and **soore** siketh Hengwrt WBP l. 1201  
 This knyght auyseth hym and **sore** siketh Ellesmere WBP l. 1201  
 b. – (Hengwrt lacks CY)  
 Supposynge though we **sore** smerte Ellesmere CY l. 152

In Hg *soore* is often found at the end of the line, while *sore* is found as a rhyme word only once, in WBP l. 610, where it rhymes with *bifore*:

- |                                                 |                 |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| (22) That euere was me yeuen ther <b>before</b> | Hengwrt         |
| But afterward repented me ful <b>sore</b>       | WBP II. 609–610 |
| That euere was me yeuen ther <b>bifoore</b>     | Ellesmere       |
| But afterward repented me ful <b>soore</b>      | WBP II. 609–610 |

In El *soore* always rhymes with words that are spelled with a double vowel, such as *bifoore*, *moore*, *goore* and *hoore*, while in Hg there are two occurrences of this variant as well, which rhyme with *rore* (NP l. 68) and *gore* (TT l. 78). This suggests that *sore* may have been the original spelling for this word. Similarly, *yeer* is the most frequently used form for the noun YEAR in Hg and El, and the variants *yere* and *yeere* are always found in rhyming position, as shown by these examples in (23) from Hg and El, respectively. Normally, however, *yere* is preferred in Hg and *yeere* in El; in the latter manuscript there are also two occurrences of *yeere* in prose, in the section of PA that is missing from Hg. By contrast, *yer* occurs three times in both Hg (KT, CL, PD) and El (all of them in KT), and two of these instances of *yer* in each manuscript are rhyme words. The long vowel is usually spelled with a single graph in the inflected forms *yeres* and *yeris*, with the exception of Hg *yeerys* and El *yeeres* in KT l. 1964, and El *yeeris* in FK l. 567, where Hg displays *yeris*.

- |                                                                                   |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (23) a. This passeth <b>yeer</b> by <b>yeer</b> and day by day                    | Hengwrt KT l. 175   |
| This passeth <b>yeer</b> by <b>yeer</b> and day by day                            | Ellesmere KT l. 175 |
| b. And fully .xx. wynter <b>yeer</b> by <b>yere</b>                               | Hengwrt MO l. 61    |
| And fully twenty wynter <b>yeer</b> by <b>yeere</b>                               | Ellesmere MO l. 61  |
| c. That from hir burthe knewe hi <sup>r</sup> <b>yeer</b> by <b>yeere</b>         | Hengwrt CL l. 402   |
| And from hi <sup>r</sup> birthe knewe hi <sup>r</sup> <b>yeer</b> by <b>yeere</b> | Ellesmere CL l. 402 |

Finally, the adverb *yo(o)re* is usually spelled *yoore* in Hg and El, while *yore* occurs in both manuscripts only twice. The form *yoore* is usually a rhyme word, as in:

- (24) And doon hir nedes as they han doon **yoore** Hengwrt/Ellesmere ML l. 76

Ten of the thirteen instances in Hg and eleven of the thirteen instances in El are found at the end of a line, where they rhyme with *loore*, *(na)moore* and *soore*. *Yore*, by contrast, occurs in the same position only once in Hg, in CL l. 1140, where it rhymes with *ther fore*, while in El the corresponding rhyming pair reads *yoore: therfoore*. In Hg *yore* is also found within the line in MI l. 351, and is spelled *yoore* in El, although this is the only witness of MI that exhibits *yoore* in this line, as all other witnesses have variants with a single graph for the long vowel. In El *yore* is found in KT ll. 955 and 1083, and in both cases it corresponds with *yoore* in Hg. Since three of the four occurrences of *yore* in Hg and El are attested in KT and MI, it is possible that they are relicts.

The words described in this section show a clear preference for the spelling with two graphs, while one graph is used in a smaller number of variants. However, even though the spelling with one graph is less common, it may be authorial, as these words are often found at the beginning of Hg, in GP and KT, as shown by *ek* and *yore*, as well as in prose in both manuscripts, as shown by *more* and *eke*. The reason why the tales at the beginning of Hg differ from the rest has been explained in §2.1 above. As for the prose tales, they are relevant because they consist of rather long texts, in which constraints such as rhyme and metre do not operate. It is possible that when the scribe copied these long texts, he proceeded very mechanically, and this may have induced him to preserve authorial spelling variants more often than he did in the verse sections. It is also possible that the prose sections contain old-fashioned spelling forms because, as I will argue in Chapters 5 and 6, Chaucer probably wrote PA and TM some time before he started to work on *The Canterbury Tales*, and that the scribe preserved them simply because they were clearly authorial. In addition, the presence of a single graph in rhyming words, such as *ner*, as well as anomalies in the spelling of rhyme pairs, as in *soore: rore*, suggest that forms spelled with a single graph may be authorial. It is, however, impossible to determine whether the spelling with one graph is the only one that can be considered authorial, as the possibility cannot be excluded that both variants were in Chaucer's language as well as in the scribe's repertoire. It is from clues such as the spelling of words in rhyming position and the clustering of similar variants in one or more tales, possibly in more witnesses, that one can try to establish which spelling forms were presumably attested in the archetype. I looked for these clues when analysing the words I discussed in the previous sections, and I am going to do the same in the next one, where I will deal with words that show a clear shift from a single to a double graph for the spelling of long vowels.

### 3. The shift from single to double graphs for the representation of long vowels

Having dealt with words in which the long vowel is mostly represented by either a single or a double graph, in this section I will consider those words in which the scribe's practice generally tended to shift from using one vowel in Hg (as in *ben*) to using two vowels in El (as in *been*). In such words, the spelling with a single graph is generally preferred in Hg. In some cases, such as Hg *moder* vs. El *mooder*, the variant with a single graph is the only one that is found in Hg, while it is either completely or almost completely replaced by the variant with a double vowel in El. In the vast majority of the cases, however, single as well as double graphs are used for indicating long vowels in both Hg and El, even though the single graph is very often preferred in Hg, while a double graph is predominant in El. This is shown by the preference for *hom* upon *hoom* in Hg, while the reverse is attested in El.



### 3.1. The shift from one graph in Hengwrt to two graphs in Ellesmere for long vowels

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
CRUEL	crewel	3 (2KT, CL)	–	–
	cruel	18	2	–
	crueel	–	20+2	5
MOTHER	moder	59	–	–
	mooder	–	60+5	11
SELDOM	selde(n)	7	2	1
	seelde(n)	–	5	2
TEXTUAL	textuel	3	–	–
	textueel	–	3	–

**Table 8. Shift from one graph in Hg to two graphs in El**

Some examples of words whose long vowel is exclusively spelled with a single graph in Hg are provided in Table 8. The words *moder* and *textuel* exhibit the spelling with one graph in Hg and occur as *mooder* and *textueel* in El. It is striking that each manuscript displays only one of the two variants, and comparison with the other fifteenth-century witnesses at line 607 of MI (in 25) shows that, apart from El, only Ha<sup>4</sup> and En<sup>3</sup> read *mooder* and *moodir*, respectively. All other witnesses of MI agree with Hg and exhibit *moder* in this line.

- (25) My **moder** yaf it me so god me saue                      Hengwrt MI l. 607  
       My **mooder** yaf it me so god me saue                     Ellesmere MI l. 607

The shift from one to two vowels also occurs in the word *textuel*, which shows this spelling three times in Hg, twice in MA and once in L37, all of which correspond to *textueel* in El. Similarly, the adjective *cruel* always occurs in Hg with one graph for the *-e-*, which according to the *MED* is a long vowel, while in El *crueel* is by far the preferred variant. Only twice in El did the scribe preserve the spelling *cruel*; one of them is in line 293 of SU, where *cruel* rhymes with *fel*, which contains a short vowel. It is possible that rather than indicating vowel length, the spelling with a double graph in *crueel* is meant to be a marker of stress, since this is a French loanword. Many words that were borrowed from French preserved the original stress pattern in Chaucer's language, as in *cruél* and *licóur*; these words are thus stressed on the second syllable, which contains a fully articulated long vowel (Davis 1987:xxvi–xxvii). The variant *crewel* is attested three times in Hg, two of which are in KT, and it is not preserved in El. I will refer to *crue(e)l* once again in Chapter 5, when dealing with items that show the use of alternative spelling variants alongside a default one. In that context, I will argue that *crewel* is possibly a somewhat old-fashioned spelling, and since both this variant and *cruel* are spelled with one graph in Hg, it is likely that these forms with a single graph are authorial, while those with

a double graph found in El are scribal. In Tr, the scribe used a double graph for the adjective *crueel* as well, while all occurrences of this word in the Fairfax manuscript are spelled *cruel*. This suggests that Gower did not use a double graph for the *-e-* in these words; it follows that if the Fairfax manuscript and Tr are closely related, the spelling *crueel* in Tr is very likely to be a scribal variant. Finally, the adverb *selde(n)* occurs in Hg with merely one vowel, and this spelling is preserved only twice in El, while the other five instances of this word change into *seelde(n)*. This is also the spelling used for two of the three occurrences in Tr.

### 3.2. Partial shift from one graph in Hengwrt to two graphs in Ellesmere for long vowels

The words discussed so far provide examples of a fairly regular shift from one graph in Hg to two graphs in El for the spelling of long vowels. However, in a larger group of lexical items this shift is only partial, as the scribe did not systematically use only one variant of these words in each manuscript, but generally preferred to spell the long vowels with one graph in Hg and with two graphs in El. Thus, in the items in Table 9, the double graph is often used in both manuscripts; however, what deserves attention is that the number of words spelled with a single graph for the long vowel clearly decreases in El, and sometimes they are not even attested.

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
BE	be(n)	1098	870+178	165
	bee(n)	430	659+162	84
CLEAR(LY)	cler(e)	9	1+1	–
	cleer(e)	12	21	–
FLEE	fle	14	3+1	–
	flee	13	23+2	–
GREAT	gret(e)	186	122+15	29
	greet	214	288+33	38
HEAD	hed(e)	6	1+1	–
	heed	84	90+5	6
HEED	(taken) hede	11	–	2
	heede	1	11+6	–
HOT(LY)	hote	8	–	–
	hoote	21	29	12
SEE	see	40	67+2	6
	seen(e)	69	69+9	18
	se	122	96+4	21
	(y)sen(e)	8	8	–

**Table 9. Partial shift from one graph in Hg to two graphs in El**

The verb *be(e)n* is one of the words in which the shift from one to two graphs for long vowels takes place. All variants of BE found in the manuscripts analysed here, i.e. *be*, *bee*, *ben* and *been*, may stand for the infinitive, the indicative present plural, the imperative singular, the present subjunctive and the past participle of BE. In some cases, the same variant can even be used within the same line for different verbal forms, as shown in the line represented in (26), where *be(e)n* occurs twice, first as the present indicative and then as the past participle.

- (26) Housbondes **been** alle goode and han **been** yoore Hengwrt ML l. 174  
 Housbondes **ben** alle goode and han **ben** yoore Ellesmere ML l. 174

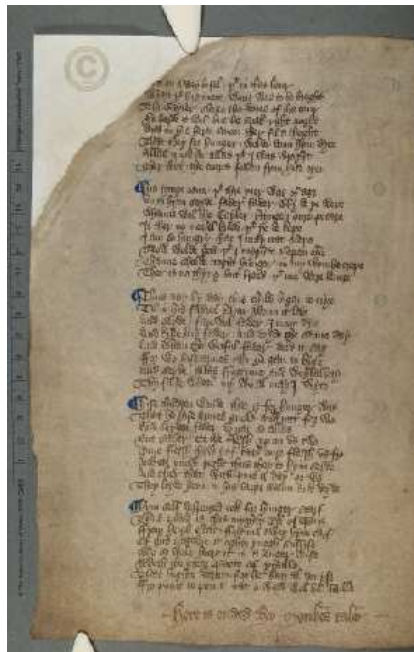
Although *been* is the commonly preferred spelling in Hg and El, the number of occurrences of this variant increases substantially in El. By contrast, *ben* is used 220 times in Hg, but occurs just 31+3 times in El. Only five of these occurrences in El are also spelled *ben* in Hg, while all the other instances occur as *be* or *been* in this manuscript. *Been* is also by far the preferred spelling in Tr. Likewise, *be* and *bee* are found in Hg, El and Tr, and even though *be* is the preferred choice in all manuscripts, the occurrences of this variant slightly decrease in El, where *bee* is used as a rhyme word, while *ben* or *been* occur within the line, as shown by the following lines:

- (27) a. If I so ofte myghte han wedded **be** Hengwrt WBP l. 7  
 For I so ofte haue ywedded **bee** Ellesmere WBP l. 7  
 b. Thou shalt **be** wedded vn to oon of tho Hengwrt KT l. 1493  
 Thou shalt **ben** wedded vn to oon of tho Ellesmere KT l. 1493  
 c. But **be** a leo $\bar{w}$  bothe in word and dede Hengwrt KT l. 917  
 But **been** a leo $\bar{w}$  bothe in word and dede Ellesmere KT l. 917

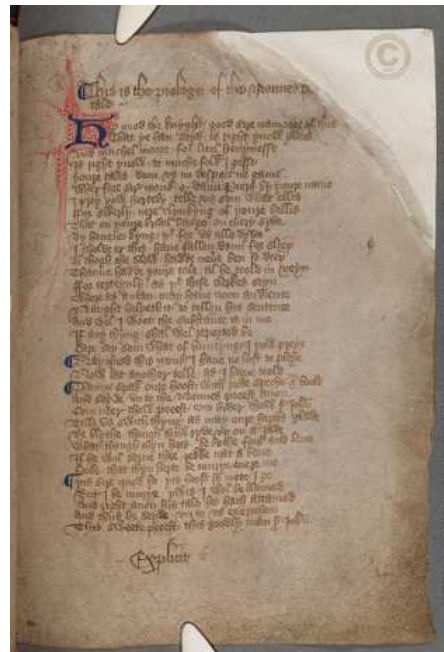
In Hg the variant *bee* occurs only twice, in GP l. 60 and FK l. 746; the spelling of the instance in FK is preserved in El, while *bee* in GP l. 60 becomes *be* in El. In this line the variant *bee* is also found in En<sup>1</sup> and La, while the reading *be* is shared by most witnesses of GP. *Bee* is attested more often in El, and is also found three times in Tr, where *be* is the predominant spelling. In all three manuscripts, *bee* always occurs at the end of a line, and it rhymes with words that are likewise spelled with *-ee*, such as *chastitee*, *pardee* and *see*, thus suggesting that this spelling is chosen for the sake of the rhyme. The interesting thing, however, is that *bee* does not seem to be an authorial form, but a scribal variant that was probably used to achieve regularity at the end of some of the lines that did not match orthographically in Hg. In fact, in Hg several occurrences of *be* rhyme with words that are spelled with double *-ee*: some of them retain their spelling in El, as in the lines from RE in (28a), while others change into *bee*, as in the lines from MO in (28b).

- (28) a. A gilour shal hym self bigiled **be** Hengwrt  
 And god that sitteth heighe in **magestee** RE II. 401–402  
 A gylour shal hym self bigyled **be** Ellesmere  
 And god þ<sup>t</sup> sitteth heighe in **Trinitee** RE II. 401–402
- b. With tonge vnnethe may discryued **be** Hengwrt  
 He twies wan Ierusalem the **Citee** MO II. 148–149  
 With tonge vnnethe may discryued **bee** Ellesmere  
 He twyes wan Ierusalem the **Citee** MO II. 148–149

In addition, if the occurrences of *ben* and *been* in Hg are compared, it can be seen that they have a different distribution across the manuscript. Most occurrences of *ben* are clustered in Section III, in NP (seventeen times) and MA (six times), as well as in Sections IV and V, in TM (50 *ben* vs. 81 *been*) and especially in PA (104 *ben* vs. 12 *been*). By contrast, *been* is attested only fourteen times in Section III of Hg, in L29 and MO, and never in the ensuing parts of this section, i.e. L30, NP, L36 and MA, where the only variant that is used is *ben*. The different distribution of *ben* and *been* in Section III of Hg suggests an interruption in the copying process; this conclusion is confirmed by the fact that two different inks were used in this section: one for L29 and MO and another for L30, NP, L36 and MA, as shown in Figure 5:



Hg fol. 98v (the end of MO)



Hg fol. 99r (the beginning of NP)

Figure 5. Different inks in Structural Section III of Hengwrt, quire 14

Folio 98v of Hg is written in a darker colour, while the ink used for writing the rubric ‘*Here is ended the Monkes Tale*’ at the end of this folio as well as the entire folio 99r is much lighter. The same lighter ink is used until the end of folio 111v, which simultaneously corresponds with the end of MA, of Section III and of quire 15. On the basis of the codicological aspect of Section III of Hg, which comprises quires 13 to 15, Stubbs (2000: Observations) argues that ‘quires thirteen and fourteen which contain the Monk’s Tale may have been prepared some time before the texts of the Nun’s Priest and the Manciple were added’, implying therefore that NP and MA are later additions to this section. This suggestion is substantiated by my data on the distribution of *ben* and *been*. *Been* is employed regularly in the other four sections of Hg: it is virtually the only variant found in Structural Sections I and II, where there are just one and eight instances *ben*, respectively, and is also widely used in Section IV. In El *been* is employed systematically, while *ben* occurs more rarely, being found primarily in KT (11 *ben* vs. 47 *been*), MI (4 *ben* vs. 13 *been*), ML (4 *ben* vs. 25 *been*) and four times in the quire of PA that is missing from Hg.

Comparison with the manuscripts dating from the first quarter of the fifteenth century shows that *been* is a variant that is not frequently used in GP, MI and NP. On the whole, fewer than ninety occurrences are attested in all witnesses of GP: they occur mainly in El (21), Hg (15), DI (8), Ps (7) and NI (5). In MI approximately one in three occurrences of this form is spelled *been*; this variant is mainly found in Hg, El, DI and Ps. As to NP, *been* is never attested in Hg, while it is always used in El; in this tale only DI and Gg share the reading *been* with El throughout. Other witnesses read *been* in some of the seventeen occurrences of this verb; those in which it occurs more frequently than *ben* are Ph<sup>3</sup> and Ps (11), Ma (10), En<sup>3</sup> and NI (8), Ad<sup>1</sup> and Ad<sup>3</sup> (6). Hence, it would seem that *ben* is an older form than *been*, as also confirmed by the *Oxford English Dictionary*. It is peculiar to find only the old-fashioned variant *ben* in NP and MA, which are tales that were copied later than most of the other tales, since the spelling suggests that Chaucer had already written these texts or drafts of them some time before he started to work on *The Canterbury Tales*, but inserted them in his *Tales* only later. As I will argue in Chapter 6, a possible explanation for these variants is that the scribe adhered to the exemplars of these two tales and relative links more faithfully than he had done in the previous part of Section III. In addition, *been* is attested in a small number of fifteenth-century witnesses of GP, MI and NP, which makes it unlikely that this was the form present in Chaucer’s original manuscript. The variant *been* must have been introduced at an early stage in the tradition, as attested by Hg and El, and was subsequently retained in several witnesses, including some O manuscripts, such as Ad<sup>1</sup>, En<sup>3</sup> and Ad<sup>3</sup>, which directly descend from the original papers and thus contain archetypal features.

For the adjective CLEAR and the related adverb CLEARLY, the variants with single and double graph are used interchangeably in Hg, although the form *cleer(e)* is preferred to *clere*. In El *cleer(e)* is the most frequent spelling; there are just two instances of *clere*, one of which, in L7 l. 11, is spelled *cleere* in Hg, while the other is not attested in Hg. *Cleere* and *clere* (*cler* is found only once in Hg) appear very

often in rhyming position, but in both manuscripts the use of either variant sometimes results in mismatching pairs of spellings at the line ends, as those in (29):

- |      |                                                   |                |
|------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (29) | And after that he song ful loude and <b>clere</b> | Hengwrt        |
|      | And kiste his wyf and made wantown <b>cheere</b>  | ME ll. 601–602 |
|      | Cecile may eek be seyde in this <b>manere</b>     |                |
|      | Wantynge of blyndnesse for hir grete light        | Ellesmere      |
|      | Of Sapience and for hir thewes <b>cleere</b>      | NU ll. 99–101  |

One occurrence of this word in GP in Hg, shown in (30), reads *cleere*, and the same variant is also attested in El.

- |      |                                              |                   |
|------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| (30) | Gyngle in a whistlynge wynd as <b>cleere</b> | Hengwrt GP l. 170 |
|------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------|

*Cleere* is also found in this line in Cp and Ha<sup>4</sup>, that is, in the two manuscripts copied by Scribe D, who was one of the four other scribes involved with Scribe B in the production of Tr. All other witnesses of GP read *clere* in this line, and this may be an indication that *cleere* is a scribal variant.

The double graph is also frequently employed for the words FLEE, GREAT and HEAD. In Hg, *fle* occurs once at the end of a verse line and ten times in prose, six in TM and four in PA, while *flee* is found nine times in rhyming position and twice in TM. The fact that in Hg *fle* is often found in the prose sections, while *flee* is the variant employed in rhyming position, suggests that both variants might have been part of Chaucer's repertoire. In El, by contrast, *flee* is generally the preferred spelling, and one of the few occurrences of the variant *fle* in this manuscript is in the line of MI that reads:

- |      |                                           |                     |
|------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (31) | This Nicholas anon leet <b>fle</b> a fart | Hengwrt MI l. 618   |
|      | This Nicholas anon leet <b>fle</b> a fart | Ellesmere MI l. 618 |

In this line, *fle* is also found in Hg as well as in 22 other witnesses, while *flee* occurs in just twelve manuscripts. It is possible, therefore, that the shift from one to two graphs of this word reflects an attempt to use just one spelling variant in El, rather than preserving the spelling of the exemplar. As for the word GREAT, *greet(e)* is the variant used more frequently in Hg, El and Tr, although it regularly occurs alongside the form spelled with a single graph, *gret(e)*. The variant *grete* (114 instances in Hg vs. 120+14 in El) is well preserved in El, as it is used for the weak declension of this adjective and for its plural forms. By contrast, *gret*, used for the strong declension of this adjective, almost disappears in El (72 instances in Hg vs. 2+1 in El); this manuscript displays only three instances of *gret* in the prose sections: one in PA par. 723, hence in the part of PA that is missing from Hg, and two in TM. Only one of

these two occurrences is similarly spelled *gret* in Hg, while the other one reads *greet*, as shown in (32).

- |         |                                                                                                                                               |                          |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| (32) a. | Now as to the seconde point where as youre wise<br>conseilours conseiled yow to warnestore youre hous w <sup>t</sup><br><b>gret</b> diligence | Hengwrt<br>TM par. 363   |
|         | Now as to the seconde point ¶ Where as youre wise<br>conseillours conseilled yow to warnestoore youre hous<br>with <b>gret</b> diligence      | Ellesmere<br>TM par. 363 |
| b.      | And for ther is <b>greet</b> pil in werre therfore sholde a man<br>fle 7 eschewe werre in as muchel as a man may goodly                       | Hengwrt<br>TM par. 700   |
|         | And for ther is <b>gret</b> pil in werre therfore sholde a man<br>flee and eschue werre in as muchel as a man may<br>goodly                   | Ellesmere<br>TM par. 700 |

The spelling *gret* is therefore typical of Hg, as almost all of these occurrences are spelled *greet* in El (214 instances in Hg vs. 288+33 in El). It is likely that both *gret* and *grete* are authorial, while *greet* is a scribal variant. *Greet* in fact occurs fifteen times in GP and five times in MI, but it is used in very few fifteenth-century witnesses of this section, two of which are Hg and El. Similarly, the spelling *heed* is mostly used for HEAD in Hg and El, as well as in Tr, while *hed(e)* is found only occasionally in Hg and even more rarely in El. Hg displays five instances of *hed*, all of which are spelled *heede* in El, and one of *hede* in KT l. 196, which is a rhyming word for *rede*, and it is preserved in El, as illustrated in (33). A second instance of *hede* is found in El, in the section of PA that is missing from Hg.

- |      |                                                                                                                           |                             |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (33) | She gadreth floures party white and <b>rede</b><br>To make a subtil gerland for hir <b>hede</b>                           | Hengwrt<br>KT ll. 195–196   |
|      | She gadereth floures party white and <b>rede</b><br>To make a subtil gerland <sup>8</sup> for hi <sup>7</sup> <b>hede</b> | Ellesmere<br>KT ll. 195–196 |

In a number of words the long vowels are spelled with either one or two graphs in Hg, but only with two graphs in El, as shown by the items HEED and HOT. Unlike the word HEAD, which occurs mostly as *heed* in all manuscripts, as shown above, the noun HEED, in the expression *taken heed*, is spelled *hede* eleven times and *heede* just once in Hg, while it is always spelled *heede* in El. Similarly, the variant *hote* is preferred in Hg for the adjective HOT and the related adverb HOTLY meaning ‘passionately’, although *hote* occurs in this manuscript as well; El, by contrast, only exhibits *hote*. The variant with a double graph is consistently used by Scribe B in Tr, despite the fact it is never found in the Fairfax manuscript, where *hote* is used instead. The sole occurrence of *hote* in Tr l. 4.1247 (fol. 27v) is a verb, meaning ‘was called’. In Hg *hoot(e)* occurs in several tales, among which GP, where *hote* is never used, and KT until line 953; after that line there are only three instances of *hote* (KT ll. 1461, 1525, 1998), which seems to suggest that a shift took place at this

point of the manuscript. These are, in fact, the only occurrences of this variant that are clustered in a certain part of the text; the others occur at random in different tales.

Finally, although both a single and a double graph are employed in Hg and El for a number of forms of the verb SEE, as in *se(e)*, *se(e)n* and *se(e)ne*, the spelling with one graph is widely used for the variant *se* in Hg, as well as in Tr, but decreases in El, where *see* is preferred instead. It is worth noting that one of the variants spelled with a single graph, *sen*, occurs only in Hg and a few other manuscripts, in the following lines:

- (34) a. Heere may men **sen** þ<sup>t</sup> dremes ben to drede      Hengwrt NP l. 243  
 b. Affermeth dremes and seith þ<sup>t</sup> they ben      Hengwrt  
 Warnyng of thynges þ<sup>t</sup> men after **sen**      NP ll. 305–306

The same spelling is also attested in Ln and Tc<sup>1</sup> for NP l. 243 and in Dd, Ha<sup>3</sup>, Ch, Ht and To<sup>1</sup> for NP l. 306, while most witnesses read *se* or *see* in the first line and *seen* or rarely *sene* in the second. *Sen* is probably a relict from Chaucer's original papers, as this old-fashioned variant is also found in Dd, an early manuscript, as well as in Ch and Ha<sup>3</sup>, two manuscript of the O group in NP. In addition, as the examples in (34) show, the spelling *sen* is used both within the line and in rhyming position, where it rhymes with *ben*, which, as I argue above in this section, is not a modern form either. Interestingly, both occurrences of *sen* are in NP, hence in Structural Section III of Hg, which is written with the same yellow ink used for the title of the poem in folio 2r. According to Stubbs (2000: Observations), 'the material in the yellow ink was the last part of the Hg manuscript to be copied, since it seems to include certain "finishing" features'. Even so, this section does not merely display forms of the language that are considered modern from our perspective, as in my analysis I found several examples of outdated spelling variants in NP, such as the spelling *lowde* for *loude* (cf. discussion of LOUD in the Chapter 4; §4.2) or the use of *ben* for *been*, discussed above. The presence of variants that are probably archetypal in a section that was copied after the other tales, when the scribe had become accustomed to the hand of the exemplar, suggests that he preserved the variants *sen* that very likely were in Chaucer's original copy, instead of changing them into *seen* as he did in El.

Among the variants spelled with a double graph, i.e. *see* and *seen(e)*, all of the five occurrences of *seene* attested in Hg are rhyme words that are clustered in GP and KT, and most of them become *sene* in El. In particular, the reading *seene* in GP l. 134 is shared by Cp, Hg, Ld<sup>1</sup>, Mm and Ry<sup>1</sup>, while all other witnesses of GP read *sene*; similarly, three of the four instances of *seene* in KT are spelled *sene* in El. By contrast, three of the four occurrences of *sene* in Hg (in SQ, ME, FK), which are rhyme words as well, preserve their spelling in El, and only the instance in line 1218 of WBT becomes *seene* in El. Some of these changes are probably meant to correct disturbances of the rhyme pattern in Hg, as in this manuscript *seene* rhymes twice



with *grene* in KT, while *sene* rhymes once with *Queene* in WBT. The latter instance is shown in (35):

- |                                                  |                   |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| (35) And but I be to morn as fair to <b>sene</b> | Hengwrt           |
| As any lady Emperice or <b>Queene</b>            | WBT II. 1218–1219 |
| And but I be tomorn as fair to <b>seene</b>      | Ellesmere         |
| As any lady Emperice or <b>queene</b>            | WBT II. 1218–1219 |

In E1, conversely, all occurrences of *sene* rhyme with words spelled with one graph only, such as *grene*, *kene*, for instance, while *seene* rhymes once only with *kene*. The presence of *sene* in E1 might thus signal an attempt to preserve the original spelling as well as to match the spelling of rhyming words, although orthographic consistency is not always achieved in the two manuscripts when this word is used at the end of a line, as illustrated in (36):

- |                                                  |                  |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| (36) And blynd he was as it is ofte <b>seen</b>  | Hengwrt          |
| A bowe he bar and Arwes brighte and <b>keene</b> | KT II. 1107–1108 |
| And blynd he was as it was often <b>seene</b>    | Ellesmere        |
| A bowe he bar and Arwes brighte and <b>kene</b>  | KT II. 1107–1108 |

### 3.3. Preference for one graph in Hengwrt vs. two graphs in Ellesmere for long vowels

A drastic shift in the spelling of long vowels can be seen in the words in Table 10, in which the single graph is predominant in Hg, and is substituted by a double graph in E1 in the vast majority of the cases. Some of the words in which this pattern can be observed have induced scholars to claim that the spelling habits of the scribe changed through time (Samuels 1988a:46), that he was more faithful to his exemplar in Hg and less so in E1 (Blake 1985:67), or even that the different spelling variants should be attributed to two different scribes (Ramsey 1982). I collected a number of relevant examples of words that testify to this change in Table 10, in order to see whether my analysis could cast more light on this matter.

		<b>Hengwrt</b>	<b>Ellesmere</b>	<b>Trinity</b>
DEADLY	dedly	26	1	–
	deedly	6	32+20	9
DEAL	(-)del	24	4	3
	(-)deel	6	31+2	–
DISCREET(LY)	discret-	11	3	–
	discreet-	6 (2GP, 3CL, PH)	14+4	–
INCREASE	encres	14	8	–
	encrees	8	14+2	–
FEAST	feste	47	17	1
	feeste(s)	6	37+2	–
GREATLY	gretly	6	0+2	–
	greetly	5	11+2	3
HE	he	2536	2548+387	690
	hee	6 (4GP, 2ML)	11+1	1
HERE	her(e)	123	6+2	1
	heer(e)	93	208+26	21
HEAR	here	11	2	1
	heere	61	69+2	28
HEST	heste	13	3	1
	heeste	1	11+2	2
HOLY	holy	70	3	–
	hooly	2 (GP, SU)	72+34	6
HOME	hom	44	7	1
	home	–	–	1
	hoom	15	52	13
HOMELY(NESS)	homly	4	–	–
	hoomly	1 (GP)	5+1	–
	homlynesse	1	1	–
MEAD/MEADOW	mede	10	5	1
	meede	3	7	8
	meeth	2	3	–
MEAN	mene	26	9+1	2
	meene(s)	2	19+3	7
NATURAL(LY)	naturel(ly)	13	4	–
	natureel(ly)	1	10+3	1
SIEGE	sege	3	1	–
	seege	1	3	1
SHEEN	shene	6	3	–
	sheene	4	7	–
SWEET	swete	48	3+2	–
	sweete	8 (GP, KT, MI, L30)	55+1	4

**Table 10. Preference for one graph in Hg vs. two graphs in El for long vowels**

Unlike the related adjective DEAD (see §2.2), the form DEADLY, which functions both as adverb and as adjective, shows a very clear shift from one graph in Hg to two in El, since only one of the 26 occurrences of *dedly* in Hg, in FK l. 332, is preserved in El, where otherwise *deedly* is used throughout. Almost all instances of this adverb are clustered in PA, and only three of the 25 occurrences attested in Hg read *deedly*, the rest being spelled *dedly*. In El, by contrast, *deedly* is the only variant found in PA, and since El contains the entire version of this tale, this form is also used for the occurrences that are not attested in Hg. It is interesting to note that such a systematic shift from *dedly* in Hg to *deedly* in El occurs in a prose section, in which the scribe simply copied his exemplar without having to take into consideration features such as rhyme and metre. Nevertheless, he regularly used one variant in Hg and the other in El, and this strongly suggests that the choice of either a single or a double graph was the result of a deliberate plan. As I have already discussed with reference to other forms, the variant with one graph might be authorial, and in this case, if it can be shown that PA contains other old-fashioned spelling forms, it would be possible to argue that *dedly* was in Chaucer's manuscript. *Deedly* is also the only variant found in Tr, despite the fact that this form is never attested in the Fairfax manuscript.

Similarly, the spelling *del*, meaning 'part, amount', occurs primarily in Hg, while *deel* is by far the form more frequently used in El. This word occurs both as a single word and as part of such compound adverbs as *euery de(e)l*, *neuer a de(e)l* and *som de(e)l*. In El there are only four instances of the variant *del*, always in the word *somdel*. In addition, the adjective DISCREET, also when it is a part of the adverb DISCREETLY, is usually spelled *discret* in Hg and *discreet* in El. Two of the six instances of *discreet* in Hg are in the following lines of GP:

- (37) a. **Discreet** he was and of greet reuēnce      Hengwrt GP l. 314  
 b. But in his techyng ~~discreet~~ and benygne      Hengwrt GP l. 520

In line 314 the same spelling is used in El and Ps, while in line 520 it also occurs in Ch, Cx<sup>1</sup>, El, Ha<sup>2</sup>, Lc, Mg and Wy, thus showing that in GP *discret* is the preferred variant in most of the other witnesses, and that the spelling with a double graph probably was not present in the ancestor of Hg and El. The same can be argued about the item INCREASE, both noun and verb, because, even though *encre*s and *encrees* occur in both manuscripts, the variant *encre*s is used more frequently in Hg, while *encrees* is preferred in El. Accordingly, the variant *encrees* in GP, which is found in Hg, in the line that reads:

- (38) Sownyng<sup>r</sup> alwey **thencrees** of his wynnyng<sup>r</sup>      Hengwrt GP l. 288

is attested only in Hg, El, Ad<sup>1</sup>, En<sup>3</sup> and in no other fifteenth-century witness of GP. *Fe(e)st* is another word in which the spelling with one graph is less frequent in El,

and yet the collation of MI l. 498 in all fifteenth-century versions of this tale shows that in this line the variant *feeste* is shared by only ten witnesses. The most authoritative of them are Hg, El and Ad<sup>3</sup>, which is also an O manuscript that descends independently from the archetype of *The Canterbury Tales* (Robinson 1997:80). In this case, the fact that most manuscripts agree in displaying the variant spelled with one graph suggests that *feste* is an authorial form, whereas *feeste* is a variant introduced at an early stage of the textual tradition of MI.

The adverb GREATLY occurs as *gretly* and *greetly* in Hg, while *greetly* is preferred in El. The only two occurrences of *gretly* in El are found in the section of PA that is missing from Hg (in paragraphs 806 and 818), although *greetly* occurs twice in this section as well. In Hg each variant is attested once in the middle of the verse line, *greetly* in MO l. 384 and *gretly* in ME l. 585. The other occurrences are in the prose sections: *gretly* occurs four times in TM, while *greetly* is found twice in TM and three times in PA. The two forms are usually interchangeable in Hg, although it may be noted that in the prose sections they are clustered in a particular way, since the scribe wrote *gretly* in TM, paragraphs 53 and 133, then switched to *greetly* in paragraphs 385, 398, 577 and 695, and finally wrote *gretly* again in paragraph 848 of TM as well as in paragraphs 291 and 363 of the subsequent *Parson's Tale*. The first two occurrences of this word in TM are attested in quire 28, while all the other ones are in quire 29 of Hg. As I will argue more extensively in Chapters 5 and 6, these two quires present codicological differences that are to some extent supported by variation in the spelling of words, all of which might be caused by a shift of exemplar. In such cases, then, *gretly* and *greetly* might have been attested in two different copytexts. Even though in the light of what was argued above, *gretly* would look like the authorial form, it is possible that both forms were in the author's repertoire, perhaps as old-fashioned and more modern variants of the same word, and that the presence of one or the other variant in *The Canterbury Tales* merely suggests different dates of composition of the texts in which they are attested. In Tr the scribe spelled the adverb *greetly* in all three occurrences of this word.

The use of the double graph is also attested in the pronoun HE, which is usually spelled *he* in both manuscripts, although there are six instances of *hee* in Hg and twelve in El. All of these occurrences, which are exceptions with respect to the overall preferred spelling *he*, are rhyme words. Four of the six instances of *hee* in Hg are used in GP, in lines 215, 341, 437 and 566, while the other two are in ML, in lines 390 and 397. None of these spellings is shared by El, although the rhyming words are *contree* (twice), *superfluytee*, *pardee*, *Nynyuee* and *tree* in both Hg and El. Apart from Hg and El, *hee* is attested in GP in just a few manuscripts, and only DI shows this reading in all the lines mentioned, although this is due to the fact that its scribe used *hee* for almost all occurrences of this pronoun in GP. (See also Chapter 6 for *hee* as a word subjected to the rhyme constraint.)

The variants *her* and *here* for the adverb HERE are likewise used in Hg more often than *heer* and *heere*, but their number decreases dramatically in El. In this manuscript, the forms spelled with *-ee-* are clearly predominant, while there are

merely six occurrences of *her*, two of which are not attested in Hg, and two of *here* in KT and TT. In Hg 25 of the 63 instances of *heere* are found at the end of the line, and almost all of these occurrences preserve their spelling in El. By contrast, *here* is a rhyme word only in five lines, as 46 occurrences of this variant are found within the line and the other 54 at the beginning of it. It is worth noting that in Hg the scribe consistently wrote ‘*Here bigynneth/endeth...*’ in the incipit and explicit of each tale, while in El he always wrote ‘*Heere bigynneth/endeth...*’ in the same contexts. The spelling with the double graph found in El seems therefore to have been intentionally chosen for these expressions, which explains its consistent use throughout the entire manuscript. *Heere* is also the only form attested in El in thirteen lines of GP, MI, and NP that are neither incipits nor explicits of tales, and in which Hg reads *here* six times and *heer(e)* seven times. Comparison of these thirteen lines in all fifteenth-century witnesses of GP, MI, and NP shows that *here* is used in most of them. By contrast, *heer(e)* is primarily found in Cp, Ha<sup>4</sup>, Dd and Gg among the early manuscripts, as well as in Ad<sup>1</sup>, and especially En<sup>3</sup>, among the late manuscripts which, like Ha<sup>4</sup> and Gg, belong to the O group. Finally, *heer(e)* is the preferred spelling for the adverb in Tr as well, even though the Gowerian form used in the Fairfax manuscript is *hier(e)*.

Unlike the adverb *HERE*, the verb *HEAR* is predominantly spelled *heere* in both Hg and El, and most of the occurrences, 50 of 61 in Hg and 52 of 69 in El, are rhyme words. The variant spelled with a single graph occurs less frequently; there are eleven instances of *here* in Hg, only three of which are in rhyming position, and two in El, both of them within the line. In addition, the variants *her* and *heer* are never used for the verb. The collation of seven lines in which *HEAR* occurs in rhyming context, i.e. GP ll. 169 and 858, MI l. 456, NP ll. 432 and 444, WBP ll. 802 and 830, in all the fifteenth-century witnesses of these tales shows that just a few manuscripts support the reading *heere* found in Hg and El. In line 169 of GP, the variant *heere* is shared by Cp, El, Ha<sup>4</sup> and Hg:

(39) And whanne he rood men myghte his brydel **heere** Hengwrt GP l. 169

and *heere* in line 858 is also found in Ad<sup>3</sup>, Cp, En<sup>3</sup>, Hg and Sl, while El exhibits a different reading, as shown in (40), a reading which according to Robinson (2000a:§2) is a scribal innovation.

(40)	And he bigan with right a murye <b>cheere</b>	Hengwrt
	His tale anoon and seyde as ye may <b>heere</b>	GP ll. 857–858
	And he bigan with right a myrie <b>cheere</b>	Ellesmere
	His tale anon and seyde in this <b>manere</b>	GP ll. 857–858

Likewise, in the five above-mentioned lines of MI, NP and WBP *heer(e)* is attested in Hg and El and only a few other manuscripts, among which the early Cp, Ha<sup>4</sup> and Dd and the late but authoritative Ad<sup>1</sup> and En<sup>3</sup>. Hg and El also agree at NP l. 57,

where they display the variant *here* within the line, like most other fifteenth-century witnesses, but unlike Ad<sup>1</sup>, Cp, En<sup>3</sup> and Gg, which read *heer(e)*. Conversely, they disagree in the lines shown in (41), as *here* is only found in Hg.

- |         |                                                                           |                      |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| (41) a. | Yis god woot lohn I <b>here</b> it euery del                              | Hengwrt MI l. 183    |
|         | Yis god woot lohn I <b>heere</b> it euery deel                            | Ellesmere MI l. 183  |
| b.      | Lo <b>here</b> the wise kyng <sup>r</sup> daun Salomon                    | Hengwrt WBP l. 35    |
|         | Lo <b>heere</b> <sup>laudi/</sup> the wise kyng <sup>r</sup> daun Salomon | Ellesmere WBP l. 35  |
| c.      | From hous to hous to <b>here</b> sondry tales                             | Hengwrt WBP l. 547   |
|         | Fro hous to hous to <b>heere</b> sondry talys                             | Ellesmere WBP l. 547 |

In these three lines, non-rhyming *heer(e)* is also found in Ad<sup>1</sup>, En<sup>3</sup> and Ha<sup>4</sup> in MI, as well as in Dd and En<sup>3</sup> in WBP

It can thus be observed that in Hg *heere* is generally preferred to *here* as a rhyme word, although it may also rhyme with words spelled with single *-e-* such as *frere*, *manere*, *matere* and *prayere*, as shown in the following example:

- |      |                                                               |                |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (42) | And stille he sit <sup>r</sup> and biddeth his <b>prayere</b> | Hengwrt        |
|      | Awaitynge on the reyn if he it <b>heere</b>                   | MI ll. 455–456 |
|      | And stille he sit <sup>r</sup> and biddeth his <b>preyere</b> | Ellesmere      |
|      | Awaitynge on the reyn if he it <b>heere</b>                   | MI ll. 455–456 |

In addition, in Hg both *heer(e)* and *her(e)* occur in free variation within the line, and *here* is used line-initially for the adverb only, while in El *heer(e)* is the most frequently used variant, and forms with a single medial *-e-* are simply rare. In Hg and El *heere* is also used more regularly for the verb than for the adverb: this may simply be due to the fact that most occurrences of the verb are rhyme words. However, it may also indicate a specific function of this variant as, unlike the adverb, only forms with final *-e*, i.e. *here* and especially *heere*, are employed for the verb. The evidence provided by the collation of a number of lines in GP, MI, WBP and NP shows that *here* is the variant that is generally preserved by most fifteenth-century scribes, while *heer(e)* is found only in a number of early manuscripts, and in the authoritative Ad<sup>1</sup> and En<sup>3</sup>, both in rhyming and in non-rhyming positions. This could be evidence of the possibility that both *her(e)* and *heer(e)* in Hg are authorial, with *he(e)r* as the preferred variant for HERE and *he(e)re* for HEAR, while the widespread use of *heer(e)* in El suggests more strongly that this form was purposely chosen by the scribe for his later manuscript. Occasionally, the use of the common variant *heere* for both the adverb *he(e)r* and the verb *he(e)re* induced the scribe to gloss some lines in order to avoid confusion between the two meanings of this word, ‘hear’ and ‘here’. This is shown by the glosses *audire* and *hic* added in WBP l. 35 of El in example (41) above, as well as in the following lines from PH in Hg:

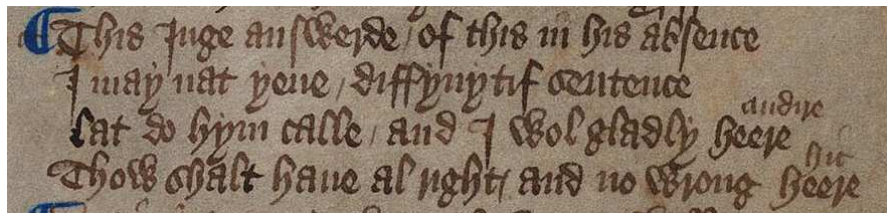


Fig. 6. Glosses for two instances of *heere* in fol. 193v of Hengwrt

The forms *heste* and *holy* are primarily used in Hg, whereas the scribe preferred the variants *heeste*, meaning ‘command’, and *hooly* in El. The only occurrence that at present can be compared with all fifteenth-century witnesses of *The Canterbury Tales* is *heste* in MI l. 402. The collation of this word shows that *heest(e)* is found in just nine manuscripts, among which the authoritative Ad<sup>3</sup>, Ch and El, *hest(e)* being the variant more commonly used in all the other witnesses. The same goes for the variant *hooly*, which seems to be characteristic of El. This conclusion can be drawn from the analysis of six occurrences of this adjective, five of which are in GP, in lines 17, 178, 481, 739 and 517, and one in MI l. 322. In Hg the scribe wrote *holy* for the first four instances in GP and the one in MI, and *hooly* in line 517 of GP. Most of the witnesses of GP and MI read *holy* in all these lines as well, whereas *hooly* occurs almost exclusively in El.

The word HOME and its derivatives HOMELY (adjective as well as adverb) and HOMELINESS are also affected by spelling changes between Hg and El. Thus, the variant *hom* decreases markedly in El, while *hoom*, which is also used in Hg but to a lesser extent, increases. In addition, four instances of *homly* (one in SU, three in ME) for the adjective occur in Hg alongside one of *hoomly* (in GP), but the variant spelled with one graph completely disappears in El, where *hoomly* is used instead. Likewise, the sole instance of *homlynesse* in Hg becomes *hoomlynesse* in El (TM par. 716). The shift from one to two graphs does not affect all words derived from HOME, though, because the adverb *homward* is always spelled with a single graph in all manuscripts. As for the distribution of the variants *hom* and *hoom*, I found that both of them are often used in the same tale. Since the two forms occur in GP and WBP, I compared all fifteenth-century witnesses of these sections and noticed that the reading *hoom* is attested in only a few manuscripts, among which Hg and El, which suggests that the variant with a double graph must have been introduced by Scribe B. More interestingly, when these two manuscripts read *hom*, in GP l. 116 and WBP l. 528, most witnesses agree with them, thus implying that this reading must have been in the original text. Finally, the variant *hoom* is the preferred one in Tr, even though only *hom* and *home* are used in the Fairfax manuscript, and is also the only spelling found in ACE. This suggests that *hoom* might be a scribal variant, thus leaving *hom* as the form used by Chaucer.

The shift from one graph in Hg to two graphs in El can also be seen in the following items: MEAD and MEADOW, MEAN, NATURAL(LY), SIEGE and SHEEN. *Me(e)de* is mostly used for MEAD and MEADOW, but it also stands for Modern

English ‘bribery’ and ‘reward’; the variant spelled with one graph is preferred in Hg, while *meede* mostly occurs in El. *Mede* is preserved in the latter manuscript mainly when it stands for MEADOW, and once for MEAD. This word is also spelled *meeth* twice in both manuscripts (MI ll. 75, 192), a different spelling variant with a double graph for the long vowel, and *mede* once in Hg (KT l. 1421); the latter occurrence is spelled *meeth* in El. The word MEAN, used for the verb and the noun, exemplifies an even more complete shift from *mene* in Hg to *meene* in El. Yet, an analysis of three instances of this word in the lines from Hg displayed in (43) shows that *meene* is attested in just a few manuscripts, while *mene* is the preferred variant in most fifteenth-century witnesses of GP and MI.

- |         |                                                                                    |                           |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| (43) a. | To Caunterburyward <sup>8</sup> I <b>mene</b> it so                                | Hengwrt GP l. 793         |
| b.      | By Seinte note ye woot wel what I <b>mene</b><br>This Absolon ne roghte nat a bene | Hengwrt<br>MI ll. 583–584 |
| c.      | He woweth hi <sup>7</sup> by <b>meenes</b> and brocage                             | Hengwrt MI l. 189         |

In examples (43a) and (43b), *meene* does not occur in Hg and El either, while it does so in example (43c). However, these two manuscripts and Ii are the only witnesses that display this variant in line 189 of MI, which is not enough to claim that *meene* was the form used by Chaucer. The non-authorial nature of *meene* is also suggested by the evidence that in El five of the ten occurrences of *mene* are clustered at the beginning of the manuscript, in GP and KT, where they occur within the line, and three other instances (MI l. 583, L7 l. 93, CY l. 705) rhyme with *bene* and *clene*. By contrast, the variant *meene* occurs in El alongside *mene* in MI and ML, but from ML on is virtually the only form used in the rest of the manuscript.

The shift from one to two graphs for the spelling of the long vowels also affects the adverb and adjective NATURAL(LY), which are spelled much more often with a single graph in Hg than in El. The variant with two graphs is used for the sake of the rhyme only once in both manuscripts, in GP l. 418, where *natureel* rhymes with *deel*. However, this spelling is found in just a few witnesses apart from Hg and El, in Cx<sup>1</sup>, Cx<sup>2</sup> and Wy (reading *natureell*), the corresponding rhyme word being likewise spelled *deel* in all of them. In this line all other fifteenth-century witnesses of GP exhibit variants whose long vowels are spelled with a single graph: *naturel(e)*, *naturell(e)* and *naturalle*. As I have argued in §3.1 above for the variant *crueel*, the double graph in *natureel* could also be a way to indicate stress, rather than the quality of the vowel. The spelling with a double graph prevails in El also for the word SIEGE, as three of the four instances that are attested in *The Canterbury Tales* are spelled *sege* in Hg, but *seege* in El. The sole occurrence of *seege* in Hg, in GP l. 56, also exhibits the same spelling in El, Ha<sup>3</sup> and Mg. Other than that, the variant *seege* is not found in any witnesses of GP.

Similarly, the scribe preferred *shene* in Hg and *sheene* in El for the adverb SHEEN, meaning ‘brightly’. All occurrences of this word are at the end of the verse line, but their spelling does not always agree with that of the rhyme word, as shown



in (44). The distribution of this variant is quite interesting, because in Hg the scribe wrote *sheene* four times from the beginning of GP until KT l. 210 and then, still in KT, he switched to *shene*, which he subsequently used in the rest of the manuscript. The spelling variants employed in GP and KT are the same in both Hg and El, with the exception of KT l. 210, which reads *sheene* in Hg and *shene* in El. By contrast, in the four instances found in ML, SQ, ME and FK, Hg *shene* regularly changes into El *sheene*. The variant *sheene* occurs twice in both manuscripts, in the lines in (44):

- |         |                                                        |                |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (44) a. | A xp̄ofre on his brest̄ of siluer <b>sheene</b>        | Hengwrt        |
|         | An horn he bar the bawdryk̄ was of <b>greene</b>       | GP ll. 115–116 |
|         | A Cristophere on his brest̄ of siluer <b>sheene</b>    | Ellesmere      |
|         | An horn he bar the bawdryk was of <b>grene</b>         | GP ll. 115–116 |
| b.      | A peyre of bedes gauded al with <b>greene</b>          | Hengwrt        |
|         | And ther on heenḡr a brooch of gold ful <b>sheene</b> | GP ll. 159–160 |
|         | A peire of bedes gauded al with <b>grene</b>           | Ellesmere      |
|         | And ther on henḡr a brooch of gold ful <b>sheene</b>  | GP ll. 159–160 |

Yet, apart from Hg and El only three other fifteenth-century manuscripts, Cp, Nl and Py, show this variant in the same lines; Cp, reading *scheene* in l. 160, is the most authoritative among them. The rhyme words *sheene* seem to be a problem in the lines from El in (44), as the use of the double graph prevents them from matching orthographically with *grene*. The rhyming pair *sheene: grene* occurs twice more in El (in SQ and ME), while it reads *shene: grene* in Hg; however, also in Hg there are two occurrences of a mismatching pair, *shene: queene* (in ML and FK), which becomes *sheene: queene* in El. This is an example that illustrates a more general issue concerning Scribe B's treatment of rhyme words in Hg and El, which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

The last example of the shift from one to two graphs for the spelling of long vowels in Hg and El is provided by the item SWEET, which is mostly used for the adjective but may also occur with the meaning 'sweetly' and 'sweat', as in the following lines from MI:

- |         |                                                    |                   |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| (45) a. | To smellen <b>swete</b> er he hadde kembd his heer | Hengwrt MI l. 505 |
| b.      | That for youre loue I <b>swete</b> ther I go       | Hengwrt MI l. 516 |

This word is primarily spelled *swete* in Hg and *sweete* in El. In El there are only five instances of *swete*: four of them are verbs (MI ll. 516, 517, L33 l. 26 and CY l. 467) and one is an adjective (WBP l. 708). The three occurrences found in MI and WBP are also attested in Hg, where they exhibit the same spelling, probably because, with the exception of MI l. 516, they are rhyme words. All of the eight instances of *sweete* attested in Hg are preserved as such in El, where the number of occurrences of this spelling variant increases dramatically. There is, moreover, only one

manuscript besides Hg and El, Ps, which agrees with the reading *sweete* in GP ll. 5 and 267 and in MI ll. 20, 75, 119 and 159. This may not be coincidental, especially because Ps is a manuscript that was copied from a conflated exemplar, i.e. a text copied from more than one manuscript source, but in which numerous corrections were inserted on the basis of ‘a manuscript of high textual quality’ (Crow 1942:98–99). The presence of *sweete* in the same lines of Hg, El and Ps could thus be evidence of a link between Ps and Hg or El, possibly of a direct line of descent from O for all three manuscripts, as suggested by Robinson in his stemmatic analysis of GP (Robinson 2000b), although this would be limited to readings like *sweete* in which such agreement can be shown. Among the early manuscripts, Cp and Ha<sup>4</sup> read *sweete* in four and three of these six lines, respectively, while *swete* is the preferred spelling in the majority of the other witnesses. *Swete* occurs twelve times in Hg at the end of the line, twice as a verb and ten times as an adjective, and it rhymes eight times with words that likewise contain a long vowel and that are also spelled with *-e-*, such as *tete*, *Crete*, *quiete* and *lete*. In three lines, however, *swete* rhymes with words that are spelled with *-ee-* (*swete: meete* in CO ll. 9:10, SH ll. 363:364 and PR ll. 230:231), while the remaining instance of this word occurs in the rhyming sequence *swete: quiete: heete* in the following stanza of ML:

- (46) With his Custaunce his holy wif so **swete**  
 To Engelond been they come the righte way  
 Wher as they lyue in ioye and in **quiete** Hengwrt  
 But litel while it lasteth I yow **heete** ML ll. 1031–1034

Similarly, a few words that rhyme with *sweete* in El are spelled with single *-e-*, such as *prophete* (another French loanword, used in ML l. 126 in its abbreviated form *pphete*) and *for lete* (PR l. 206), as shown in the examples in (47).

- (47) a. Wedden his child vnder oure lawes **swete** Hengwrt  
 That vs was taught by Mahoun oure **pphete** ML ll. 125–126  
 Wedden his child vnder oure lawes **sweete** Ellesmere  
 That vs were taught by Mahoun oure **pphete** ML ll. 125–126
- b. ¶ This welle of m<sup>cy</sup> Cristes moder **swete** Hengwrt  
 I loued alwey as after my konnyng  
 And whan þ<sup>t</sup> I my lyf sholde **forlete** PR ll. 204–206  
 ¶ This welle of mercy Cristes mooder **sweete** Ellesmere  
 I loued alwey as after my konnyng  
 And whan þ<sup>t</sup> I my lyf sholde **for lete** PR ll. 204–206

Finally, a search for the instances of *swe(e)te* in all fifteenth-century witnesses of GP, MI and WBP, amounting to a total number of twenty occurrences, shows that *sweete* occurs mainly in El (17 instances) and Hg (6 instances), in Cp (11 instances)

and Ha<sup>4</sup> (7 instances), both copied by Scribe D in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, and in Ps (12 instances), while seven more occurrences are found in other manuscripts. The tendency to spell long vowels with a double graph, therefore, seems to be a peculiarity of El in particular and of a few other manuscripts besides El. As I have argued above, the presence of *sweete* in Cp, Ha<sup>4</sup> and Ps might suggest that it is an authorial form. However, since the evidence for this is found in just a few manuscripts, I prefer to argue that *sweete* was probably introduced at an early stage in the textual tradition of the tales considered here, perhaps in Hg and El, and then preserved by just a few other witnesses.

### 3.4. Summary

My findings for this section may be summarized as follows: the examples that I have discussed here show that there was a change from one to two graphs which took place between Hg and El in a number of words containing a long vowel. The most striking example of this shift is provided by the systematic use of *here* in the incipit and explicit of each and every tale in Hg, while in these lines El always reads *heere*. However, this is not a shift that affects all long vowels systematically, because I have explained that Scribe B often used a double graph for the spelling of long vowels in both manuscripts, as well as in Tr. What can be noted is that the scribe generally tended to use one graph in Hg and two in El; further evidence is however necessary to argue that such a shift indicates that the scribe partly preserved the spelling of the exemplar in Hg, while fully adopting his own spelling in El.

The analysis of the items presented here shows that several words that are spelled with a double graph in Hg are found at the end of the line, such as *cleere* and *heere*. There is clearly a constraint on the selection of one form over another; I have referred to this above as the ‘rhyme constraint’. This rhyme constraint could be one reason for the persistence of spelling variants in this manuscript, despite the fact that they are no longer current in positions elsewhere in the line or, indeed, in prose. However, this also begs the question of why the scribe would change the spelling in El, sometimes at the expense of what would otherwise have been instances of spelling consistency at the line ends. In rhyming position words can, in fact, exhibit forms like *cheere* and *peere* (which are always spelled with *-ee-*), but also *manere*, *prayere*, *matere* and *swere* (which are always spelled with *-e-*), as well as *appere* vs. *appeere*, *clere* vs. *cleere*, *here* vs. *heere* and *yere* vs. *yeere* (which occur with both spellings). It seems therefore that the spelling with one or two graphs for the long vowel is an authorial device used for rhyming purposes, although this is not fully understood or preserved by the scribe, whose choice very often seems to depend on his own spelling preference. I will explain this more fully in Chapter 6. Furthermore, *he(e)r* is frequently followed by a preposition like *of*, *about* or *inne* to form compound adverbs like *heer aboute*, while *he(e)re* never is. This distribution is so consistent that it can be seen either as a spelling habit shared by both author and scribe, and thus a feature that the scribe preserved faithfully, or as a feature that Scribe B, who was a trained copyist, used regularly and thus introduced in these

manuscripts as well. Finally, since *e* and *o* are the vowels that show a significant change from one to two graphs, I also considered the possibility that the variation attested might reflect a different pronunciation of these sounds, i.e. open vs. close long vowels (cf. Kökeritz 1954:13–14). In some words in Hg, e.g. like DEAD and DEED, HEAD and HEED, the open long *e* is primarily spelled with two graphs, as in *deed* and *heed*, while the close long *e* is spelled with one graph, as in *dede* and *hede*. Other words, however, do not exhibit such a clear-cut difference, as exemplified by the verb HEAR and the adverb HERE, which apparently were already homophones at the time. In Hg the verb HEAR is mostly spelled *heere*, while the adverb HERE occurs more frequently as *her(e)* than *heer(e)*. Even though the stressed vowel in HEAR and HERE is a close long *e*, they are thus spelled in either way. The use of one or two graphs for the long vowels is very likely unrelated to the quality of the vowels, as suggested by Elliot (1974:32). In order to find out more about this, it is necessary to understand to what extent the language of Hg is a reflection of Chaucer's own language and how much of this language is preserved in E1. On the basis of the analysis of the items discussed in this section, I suggest that the following variants are very likely to be authorial: *cruel*, *ben*, *clere*, *fle(e)*, *gret(e)*, *sen*, *dedly*, *discret*, *encres*, *feste*, *gre(e)tly*, *he(e)re*, *hom*, *mene* and *swete*.

#### 4. Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have discussed the use of single and double graphs for the orthographical representation of long vowels; my findings can be summarized as follows. First of all, I have not found any evidence that the shift from a single graph in Hg to a double graph in E1 took place systematically, as the complete shift can be seen in just a small number of words. However, I noticed that both variants are employed for the spelling of long vowels, and in some words the use of the double graph increases in E1, especially when this spelling is already used frequently in Hg. In those words that are commonly spelled with one graph in Hg, the same spelling is often preserved in E1 as well, and the corresponding variants with a double graph are well represented in Hg and are sometimes even less frequent in E1. In addition, the widespread use of words spelled with a single graph in E1 shows that this convention for representing long vowels was still in use. Secondly, comparison with all fifteenth-century witnesses of GP, MI, WBP and NP shows that often Hg or E1, or both, disagree with most other witnesses with respect to the use of a double graph for long vowels, thus suggesting that this variant was introduced by the scribe in one or both of these manuscripts. Thirdly, Scribe B might have chosen to adopt a spelling system that was as regular as possible in E1 in order to lend more authority to a text that was supposed to become a prestigious edition of *The Canterbury Tales*. However, it cannot be excluded that for certain words both variants were in Chaucer's exemplar as well. We know that Chaucer employed different spelling variants such as Midlands *myrie*, South Eastern *mury* and West Midlands *mery* for the word MERRY, mainly for the sake of rhyme (Burnley 1983:128). Hence, it is very likely that he also used forms with either a single or a double graph when necessary,

especially in rhyming position. The evidence provided by forms that occur at the end of the verse lines shows that the rhyme constraint could be one reason for using two spelling variants in Hg, but this does not explain why Scribe B sometimes changed the spelling in El without regard for consistency between rhyme words.

I thus believe that the linguistic differences concerning the spelling of long vowels in the Hg and the El manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* are due to the scribe's different attitude towards these two texts, and not so much to a development in his spelling practice resulting from the ongoing spelling changes. It is very likely that Scribe B partly copied his exemplar and partly imposed his own spelling on the language of Hg, while he paid more attention to the spelling in El, to the extent of showing signs of scribal hypercorrection when he used a double graph in words that would normally not exhibit it, as in *hee*, *shee* and *three*. The scribe clearly had more time to copy El than he had for Hg, since in El he wrote many letters with extra strokes that are sometimes abbreviations, but very often just decorative marks. Examples of these marks are the tails added to the ascenders of the letters *t* (ᵗ) and *d* (ᵈ), and to other letters like *f* (ᶑ) and *g* (ᶒ), the bar drawn across the ascender of crossed *h* (ḥ), and the hook often added to final *-r* (Ṛ). In addition, a double graph is often found in El at the end of words that occur at the line end or within the line but in proximity of a pause, thus before a *virgula* (/), which, as mentioned before, stands for both a comma and a period (as in Fig. 6 above, after the word *calle*). In these cases the double graph could also have a decorative function, serving as a line filler. Alternatively, a final double graph could simply be due to the fact that when a short pause occurred in the process of copying, the scribe was automatically induced to produce a somewhat more elaborated version of the letter in question. Lastly, a double graph seems to be used in French loanwords, such as *cruel* and *natureel*, to indicate syllable weight.

On the basis of my findings, I therefore propose that the presence of a double graph in the spelling of long vowels in Hg and El may be influenced by the fact that the shift from a single and a double graph for representing vowel length was taking place at the time in which Scribe B was active as a professional copyist. However, what we see in Hg and El is not a change in the scribal practice that reflects an ongoing linguistic change, but rather a scribal attempt to normalise the spelling of El, to the extent of using a double graph even when it was unnecessary, as in *shee* and *three*. It is very likely that all this was done for the sake of producing a high-quality manuscript.



## Variation between *-ow-*, *-o-* and *-ou-*

### 1. Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 3, §1, Samuels (1988a:47) describes a number of shifts which took place in Scribe B's spelling practice during the time that elapsed between the copying of Hg and El, and argues that they were the result of the linguistic changes which were occurring in the London dialect at the beginning of the fifteenth century. In the previous chapter, I dealt with the changes that affected the spelling of long vowels in particular; in what follows I am going to examine the shifts from *-on* to *-oun* (as in *reson* to *resoun*), from *-ow-* to *-ou-* (as in *town* to *toun*, *thow* to *thou*) and from *-ogh* to *-ough* (as in *thogh* to *though*). I believe that these three types of change exemplify a more general variation that took place between Hg and El, namely the tendency to replace Hg *-ow-*, *-o-* and less frequently *-u-* with El *-ou-*. Consequently, as in the case of the shift from one to two graphs for the spelling of long vowels (Chapter 3), I would like to argue against Samuels that this is not a linguistic change, but a change in spelling practice that reflects the scribe's intention to impose a regular pattern on the language of El. As I will proceed to show in this chapter, what appears to be going on is that Scribe B regularised this spelling feature in El, because in this manuscript he made sure that he spelled words more consistently than he had done in Hg. It is also very likely that in order to decrease spelling variation in El, the scribe made a selection among authorial forms, when more of them were attested in the exemplar, and that he employed in this text only those variants which he considered more representative of Chaucer's usage, basically regularising the authorial spelling when necessary.

The above-mentioned spelling changes mostly affected words containing the sounds [u] and [u:], which in Chaucer's spelling system could be represented by *-o-*, *-u-*, *-ow-*, *-ou-* and *-o(u)gh*. Examples are the words *sonne* and *but*, which contain [u], as well as *yow*, *shoures* and *droghte*, which contain [u:]. *Sonne* also exemplifies the practice, introduced by Anglo-Norman scribes in the thirteenth century (Scragg 1974:44), of using *o* instead of *u* in order to avoid misreading, and thus misspelling, words in which *u* was adjacent to the letters *m*, *n*, and *i*. With the letter *i* not being dotted, words like *sume* and *sinne* could easily be confused because of the series of minims, i.e. the basic lowercase down strokes of which the letters *u*, *v*, *m*, *n* and *i*

were composed. To prevent mistakes, scribes connected the top and the bottom of the minims of the letter *u* with two horizontal strokes, and thus wrote *some* instead of *sume*. This spelling change was just a graphical device, which did not reflect a change in pronunciation for the vowel in question.

In Hg and in El, words containing the sounds [u] and [u:] may have either one and the same spelling or different spelling forms. More precisely, while some words, such as NOW and OUT, are consistently spelled in just one way, that is, with *-ow-* or *-ou-*, respectively, other words, such as MOUTH, are written in either way, i.e. *mowth* or *mouth*. The use of two or more spelling variants for the same word is not a feature characteristic of the Chaucerian manuscripts only, as it is also found in Tr. Yet, by comparing Tr with Hg and El, it can be seen that there is more evidence of this practice in Hg than in El. In Hg the scribe often spelled the same words with both *-ow-* and *-ou-*, as in *brown/broun*, *down/down* and *town/toun*, while in El he either wrote these words with *-ou-* only, as in *broun* and *down*, or he had a clear preference for *-ou-*, as illustrated by the very frequent use of *toun* and the rarer use of *town* in this manuscript. Likewise, Scribe B preferred *-ou-* in El for several words that he had spelled with simple *-o-* and, to a lesser extent, simple *-u-* in Hg, as exemplified by Hg *reson* and *honur* vs. El *resoun* and *honour*. As for the differences in the spelling of words that display *-ogh* in Hg, it can be seen that the scribe tended to change this into *-ough* in El. The shift from Hg *-ow-* to El *-ou-* generally occurs more often than the shifts from *-on* to *-oun* or from *-ogh* to *-ough*, unless the words spelled with *-ow-* are inflected, as shown by the variants *towne(s)* and *ynowe*. These words, in fact, exhibit the *-ow-* spelling in Hg, as well as in El, in the following two cases. The first is when they retain the final *-e* typical of a ‘petrified’ dative, which is usually found in phrases consisting of a preposition followed by a noun (cf. Moore and Marckwardt 1990:61), as in the examples in (1);

- (1) a. And ther with al he broghte vs **out of towne** Hengwrt GP l. 568  
 b. For **out of towne** was goon Arueragus Hengwrt FK l. 643

The second is when they display ending *-es* of the genitive case and the plural number, as shown in the following two lines, respectively:

- (2) a. And right at the entryng<sup>r</sup> of the **townes** ende Hengwrt FR l. 237  
 b. The grete **townes** se we wane and wende Hengwrt KT l. 2161

The figures in Table 1, which give the number of words spelled with *-ow-* and *-ou-* in Hg and El, show that the *-ow-* spelling is not the preferred one in either of the two texts, although it occurs more often in Hg than in El. By contrast, the *-ou-* spelling is by far the most frequently used one in both manuscripts, and is the preferred one in El. As previously explained, the larger number of *-ou-* words in El is due to the fact that not only words that are spelled with *-ow-* in Hg, are written with *-ou-* in El, but also words that are spelled with *-o-* and *-u-*.



	<b><i>-ow-</i> words</b>	<b><i>-ou-</i> words</b>
Hengwrt	3029	5604
Ellesmere	2402+27 <sup>1</sup>	6611+915

**Table 1. Words spelled with *-ow-* and *-ou-* in Hg and El**

Scribe B's treatment of lexical items that contain the sounds [u] and [u:] therefore looks rather peculiar and calls for further explanation. The use of different spelling variants for the same word, even in the same text, is not uncommon in Middle English (see Scragg 1974: chs 2–3). This usually reflects the presence of various spelling forms for the same word, either in the scribe's exemplar or in the scribe's active repertoire, that is, the kind of lexis that a scribe chooses when he writes freely, thus without copying from an exemplar. Alternatively, a scribe can also resort to his passive repertoire, which comprises all those words that are known to him but that he writes only under the constraint of an exemplar, increasing in this way the number of possible spelling variants in his text. Scribe B did not differ from other scribes in this respect, as he often used several spellings for one word, as exemplified, for instance, by the presence of both *thou* and *thow* in the following line of the *Reeve's Tale* in Hg:

- (3) He seyde **thou** lohn **thow** swyneshed awak<sup>r</sup> Hengwrt RE l. 342  
 He seyde **thou** lohn **thou** swynesheed awak Ellesmere RE l. 342

However, his behaviour in copying Hg was different from El, because his preference for using *-ou-* in El for words that are spelled with *-ow-*, *-o-* and *-u-* in Hg cannot be caused by a simple shift in practice. The reason for making this assumption is that he did not turn all words spelled with *-ow-*, *-o-* and *-u-* in Hg into *-ou-* words in El consistently; as a result, Hg *thow* largely changes into El *thou*, whereas Hg *yow* is preserved as such throughout El.

In addition, the widespread use of *-ou-* in El as compared to Hg cannot be the result of a linguistic change, as suggested by Samuels. If this were the case, most forms that in Samuels' view would be considered old-fashioned, such as *yow*, would exclusively occur in Hg, the older manuscript, while modern forms, such as *you*, would be used in El, the later manuscript. This is not what we find in Hg and El, as only in certain cases, such as Hg *grownd/ground* vs. El *ground*, does the choice of *-ou-* entail the adoption of the modern spelling. In other cases, such as Hg *brown/broun* vs. El *broun* and Hg *toun/town* vs. El *toun*, the scribe opted for what is in retrospect the old-fashioned *-ou-* variant in El. The *MED* entries for the words *brown* and *town* show that these words may occur with either the *-ow-* or the *-ou-*

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<sup>1</sup> As explained in Chapter 1, the figures occurring after the plus sign indicate instances in El that are found in those sections which are missing from Hg.

spellings in texts written before 1400, while *-ow-* is the most common spelling after that date. The *MED* lists nine occurrences of *town* in pre-1400 texts, seven of which are inflected forms (*towne*, *townes*); similarly, *brown* occurs only twice in texts that are dated before 1400. As to the bureaucratic documents, the preferred form in *ACE* is *town(e)*, which occurs almost twice as often as *toun(e)*. From all this it appears that Scribe B did not follow the current practice for the spelling of these words, but that he instead spelled them according to a particular preference. By doing so, he went against the general trend of development of the spelling forms in question.

The opposite is found as well, however, because on several occasions Scribe B wrote the same word with what is now considered the older spelling in Hg and with the modern one in El, as shown by the following example from the *General Prologue*, in which the abbreviated forms for PARSON found in Hg and El are respectively *psou* and *pson*:

- (4) Than þ' the **psou** gat' in Monthes tweye      Hengwrt GP l. 704  
 Than þ' the **pson** gat in Monthes tweye      Ellesmere GP l. 704

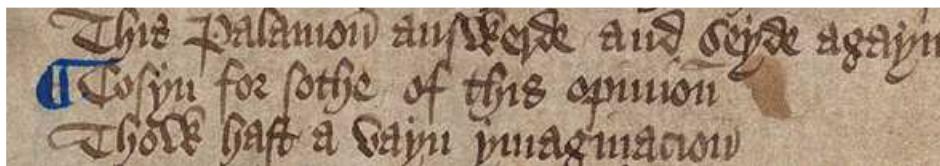
This is further evidence for the fact that other factors must have been at play in the spelling differences identified here, and that the increased use of *-ou-* in El is not simply the result of a linguistic change, as suggested by Samuels. There are three factors that might have played a role here, i.e. the scribal adherence to the copytext, the scribe's own spelling habits, and possibly the adoption of a particular orthographic convention that was not part of the scribe's own repertoire. I will further explore these possibilities by analysing examples of the relevant spelling variants found in Hg and El as well as in Tr. As explained in Chapter 2, Samuels (1988a:46) suggests that Tr was copied after Hg and before El, thus representing an intermediate stage in the development of the scribe's spelling habits. Accordingly, data from Tr will also be included in the following analysis, in order to find out whether there was any development in scribal practice, and, in view of the general question addressed in this study, whether these changes can provide any evidence of Chaucer's practice. The words in which there is a shift from Hg *-o-*, *-u-* and *-ow-* to El *-ou-* are here divided into the following three categories, which will be discussed in the subsequent sections:

- (5) a. items in which Hg *-(i)on* in Hg corresponds to El *-(i)oun*  
 b. items in which Hg *-or* and *-ur* corresponds to El *-our*  
 c. items in which Hg *-ow-* in Hg corresponds to El *-ou-*

## 2. Words ending in *-(i)on* and *-(i)oun* in Hengwrt and Ellesmere

The analysis of words ending in *-io(u)n* shows that the suffixes *-(i)on* and *-(i)oun* are used in free variation in Hg, while *-(i)oun* is usually the preferred choice in El. There is no evidence of any regular shift from Hg *-(i)on* to El *-(i)oun*, as only some lexical items displaying this inflection undergo a total change from Hg *-(i)on* to El

-(i)oun (§2.1). In a small number of words this shift may occur alongside other spelling changes (§2.2), whereas most words are only affected by a partial change, meaning that the number of words spelled with -(i)on decreases in E1 but does not disappear altogether (§2.3). It must be noted here that in both Hg and E1 the endings of many lexical items that are discussed in this section are graphically represented by the letter *o* followed by two minims, and that there is either a tail after the two minims ( $\overline{ow}$ ) or a macron above them ( $\overline{ou}$ ), as shown by the words *Palamo $\overline{w}$* , *opiniou $\overline{u}$*  and *ymaginacio $\overline{w}$*  in Figure 1:



**Figure 1. Abbreviation marks in Hengwrt, fol. 15v**

Robinson and Solopova (1993:37) observe in their guidelines for the transcription of the manuscripts of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* that the tail after two minims 'could be a diacritic mark used for distinguishing n from u', thus not a macron, i.e. an abbreviation mark drawn above the final *u*, which signals that the following letter *n* is missing. Yet, the evidence from Hg and E1 is that Scribe B was not consistent in his use of a tail after two minims preceded by the letter *o*, and that in words such as the rhyming pair *latoun: down* in MI ll. 65–66, he wrote four minims in a row for the ending *-un*, without any mark to distinguish the final *-n* from the previous *-u-*. In addition, he never added a tail to the final *-n* in other words, such as *agayn*, *been*, and *(a)down*. I therefore conclude that the combination formed by *o* followed by two minims with a tail or a macron ( $\overline{ow}$ ,  $\overline{ou}$ ) should be considered as an abbreviated form of the ending *-oun*.

### 2.1. Total shift from Hengwrt *-(i)on* to Ellesmere *-(i)oun*

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
COMPOSITION	composicions	1 (SQ)	–	–
	composicioū(s)	2 (GP, KT)	3 (SQ, GP, KT)	–
LATTEN	laton	1	–	–
	latoun	1	1	–
	latoū	3	4	–
LION	leon(s)	2 (MO, SQ)	–	3
	leonesse	–	–	1
	leoun	5	6	–
	leoū	19	22+1	3
	lioū	1	–	–
LESSON	lesson	1 (GP)	–	1
	lessoū	1 (L13)	2	1
SESSION	sessions	1 (GP)	–	–
	sessiouns	–	1 (GP)	–

**Table 2. Items showing a total change from Hg *-(i)on* to El *-(i)oun***

The total shift from Hg *-(i)on* to El *-(i)oun* affects the words presented in Table 2; if a word occurs in Tr as well, it is listed in the third column. In most cases the spelling *-(i)oun* is already attested in Hg alongside a few instances of *-(i)on*, which change into *-(i)oun* in El. This is shown by the variant *composicio(u)n* of the item COMPOSITION, which is only used in rhyming position and occurs twice with *-ou-* and once with *-o-* in Hg, but is always spelled *composicioū* in El. Likewise, the word LATTEN<sup>2</sup> occurs three times as *latoū* (GP, FK, PD), once as *latoun* (MI) and once as *laton* (TT) in Hg. Four of these occurrences are spelled *latoū* and one is written *latoun* in El. LION is a word that displays only *-o-* in two instances in Hg: *leons* in MO l. 263 and *leon* in SQ l. 257; the variant *leoun* occurs in just five lines, while all other occurrences are likewise spelled *leoun*, but with an abbreviated final *-n*. In the three lines of Hg represented in the examples in (6), *leoun* rhymes with *adown* twice and with *sown* once, and it is the ending of these rhyme words that becomes *-oun* in El. In this manuscript *leoun* is the only spelling variant employed for this noun, mostly in its abbreviated form *leoū*.

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<sup>2</sup> ‘A mixed metal of yellow colour, either identical with, or closely resembling, brass; often hammered into thin sheets. Now only *arch.* and *Hist.*’ (*OED* s.v. *Latten*).

- (6) a. That in oure fyr he fil bakward **adown** Hengwrt  
 And he vp stirte as dooth a wood **leoun** WBP II. 767–768  
 That in oure fyr he fil bakward **adoun** Ellesmere  
 And he vp stirte as dooth a wood **leoun** WBP II. 767–768
- b. That myghte han late a fart<sup>r</sup> of swich a **sown** Hengwrt  
 The frere vp stirte as dooth a wood **leoun** SU II. 443–444  
 That myghte haue lete a fart<sup>r</sup> of swich a **soun** Ellesmere  
 The frere vp stirte as dooth a wood **leoun** SU II. 443–444
- c. He slow and rafte the skyn fro the **leoun** Hengwrt  
 He of Centauros leyde the boost **adown** MO II. 100–101  
 He slow and rafte the skyn of the **leoun** Ellesmere  
 He of Centauros leyde the boost **adoun** MO II. 100–101

The variant *lesson* that is found in GP l. 709 in Hg corresponds to *lessoū* in El, while in L13 l. 17 both manuscripts exhibit *lessoū*. The reading *lesson* in the line in (7):

- (7) Wel koude he rede a **lesson** and a Storie Hengwrt GP l. 709

is shared by 21 witnesses of GP, two of which, Hg and La, are the only early ones. By contrast, the word *sessions* occurs once in the line in (8):

- (8) At **sessions** ther was he lord and sire Hengwrt GP l. 357

and this spelling is also found in most witnesses of GP, especially in the early manuscripts, with the exception only of El and Gg, which read *sessiouns*. The presence of this variant in El confirms my hypothesis that the widespread use of *-ou-* in this manuscript is the result of Scribe B's idiosyncratic choice for the spelling of [u] and [u:].

## 2.2. The shift from Hengwrt *-(i)on* to Ellesmere *-(i)oun* and other spelling changes

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
COMPLEXION	complexcion	1 (GP)	–	–
	cōplexions	1 (NP)	–	–
	complexioū	2 (KT, NP)	2 (GP, FK)	–
	cōplexioū	1 (FK)	–	–
	compleccioū(s)	–	3 (KT, 2NP)	–

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
OPINION	opynyon(s)	2 (GP, KT)	–	–
	opinion(s)	–	2 (KT, WBT)	1
	opinioū	2	9	1
	opinyoū	1	–	–
	opynyoū	5	–	–
	opynyoun	1	–	–
SALVATION	sauacion	3 (PA)	–	–
	sauacioū	7	8+2	–
	saluacion	1 (TM)	–	–
	saluacioū	1	5+3	–

**Table 3. Various spelling changes in the same words**

Table 3 shows that in certain words, such as *complexio(u)n*, *opinio(u)n* and *saluacio(u)n*, the shift from Hg *-(i)on* to El *-(i)oun* occurs alongside other changes that seem to contribute to the intention of achieving a more regular spelling in El than in Hg. The word COMPLEXION displays four spelling variants in Hg, while in El it is spelled either *complexioū* or *compleccioū*. The two endings *-xioun* and *-cioun* must have been interchangeable, since, as illustrated by the examples provided in (9), words ending in either of them could form a rhyming pair without any consequences for the pronunciation.

(9)	Hengwrt	Ellesmere
KT I. 1617: 1618	<i>complexioū : diuisioū</i>	<i>compleccioū : diuisioū</i>
NP II. 104: 103	<i>cōplexions : replexions</i>	<i>compleccioūs : repleccioūs</i>
NP I. 135: 136	<i>complexioū : Ascencioū</i>	<i>compleccioū : Ascencioū</i>
FK II. 74: 73	<i>cōplexioū : constellacioū</i>	<i>complexioū : constellacioū</i>

OPINION is an example of a lexical item in which the spelling changes between Hg and El do not affect only the ending but the whole word; in Hg there are five different forms of this word, as shown in (10), as against two in El (see below):

(10)	<i>opynyon(s)</i>	GP I. 183, KT I. 1949
	<i>opynyoun/opinioū-opinyoū</i>	GP I. 339, KT I. 622, WBT I. 836,
		NP I. 415, ME I. 265, PD I. 273
	<i>opinyoū/opinioū-opinioū</i>	KT II. 235, 411, 1269

I treat variants like *opinioū* and *opinioū* as abbreviated forms of the same word, *opinioun*, because, as I have argued above and as exemplified by the words *Palamoū*, *opinioū* and *ymaginacioū* in Figure 1, final *-u* with a macron (*ū*) and final *-u* with a tail (*ū*) seem to have been allographs for this scribe. All instances presented in (10) are spelled *opinioū/opinioū* in El, with the exception of those in KT I. 1949 and WBT I. 836, which read *opinion(s)*. In El, therefore, the scribe preferred to write

this word with final *-oun* and medial *-i-*, as he spelled it with final *-on(s)* only twice, and never used medial *-y-*. *Opinion* is never a rhyme word in either manuscript, as in the line from El in (11), while the abbreviated forms of this word are found both within the line, as in the example from Hg in (11), and at the end, as illustrated in Figure 1.

- (11) This was the olde **opynyo** as I rede      Hengwrt WBT l. 836  
       This was the olde **opinion** as I rede      Ellesmere WBT l. 836

Likewise, in Tr there is one occurrence of *opinion* within the line, and one of *opinio* in rhyming position, as shown in (12):

- (12) a. Diuerse **opinion** ther is              Trinity l. 3.2114  
       b. The trouthe of myn **opinio**          Trinity l. 3.2246

The last item considered here, in which the shift from Hg *-ion* to El *-ioun* takes place alongside other spelling changes, is *sauacio(u)n*. The spelling with *-ion* occurs in Hg in the variants *sauacion* (PA pars 19, 211, 443) and *saluacion* (TM par. 203), and disappears in El, while the variant ending in *-ioun* is used most frequently in both manuscripts. In particular, *sauacioun* is the preferred choice in Hg as well as in El, while the variant with medial *-l-*, *saluacioū*, occurs once in Hg (ME l. 443) and eight times in El. Five of these occurrences (NU l. 75, TM par. 203 and PA pars 211, 213, 443) are in sections that are also present in Hg, while the remaining three occur in the part of PA which is missing from Hg. Hence, the spelling of this word in Hg and El varies in two respects: the *-ion* ending disappears and the variants beginning with *salua-* increase in El. Only once, in ME l. 433, does Hg *saluacioū* correspond to El *sauacioū*. It is worth noting that the change from *-ion* to *-ioun* affects only those occurrences that are in the prose sections. According to the *MED* entry for *savacioun*, the spelling *sauacio(u)n* and *saluacio(u)n* were interchangeable in ME, while in *ACE*, i.e. in the bureaucratic language of the period, there are four instances of *sauacion* and only one of *saluacion*.

### 2.3. Partial shift from Hengwrt *-(i)on* to Ellesmere *-(i)oun*

In the examples discussed so far, the scribe almost invariably replaced the ending *-(i)on* in Hg with *-(i)oun* in El. There are, however, several words in which he did not always do so, since the ending *-(i)on* decreases in El but does not disappear altogether, thus showing no more than a scribal tendency to prefer *-ou-* in El. These words are presented in Table 4.

The first example is provided by the word *CONDITION*. Despite the fact that *condicio(u)n* is mostly spelled with *-ou-* in Hg and El, there are four occurrences of *condicion* in Hg. Three of them are in TM, and correspond to *condicioun* in El, while the fourth one is found in the first line of ML, and is spelled *condicion* in both

manuscripts. It is possible that these four variants in Hg are authorial, and that only the occurrence in ML preserves its original spelling in El because it is positioned at the beginning of a tale, a point at which the scribe probably slowed down to follow his exemplar more carefully (Benskin and Laing 1981:66). Another instance of *condicion* occurs in El, but it is not attested in Hg. In Tr the scribe wrote *condicioū* in all four occurrences of this word, although in the Fairfax manuscript there are two instances of *condicioun* and two of *condicion*.

The partial shift from Hg *-(i)on* to El *-(i)oun* can also be seen in the items PARSON and PRISON. For the word PARSON the scribe preferred *person* in Hg and *persoun* in El, mostly in their abbreviated forms, *psou(u)n*, although he preserved three instances of *person* in El, in RE ll. 23, 57 and L37 l. 23. There are four occurrences of this noun are in GP (ll. 480, 702, 704, 706), and three of them exhibit the shift from Hg *-o-* to El *-ou-*, while in lines in (13), the pattern is reversed.

- (13) Than þ<sup>t</sup> the **psouD** gat in Monthes tweye      Hengwrt GP l. 704  
 Than þ<sup>t</sup> the **pson** gat in Monthes tweye      Ellesmere GP l. 704

In these four lines of GP, the variant *persoun* (in its abbreviated and unabbreviated forms) is shared by most of the manuscripts dating from the first quarter of the fifteenth century, i.e. Cp, Dd, Ha<sup>4</sup> and Gg, and only La reads *person* in GP ll. 702, 704 and 706 (unabbreviated only in the first line). Both variants are used in all other fifteenth-century witnesses of GP, and *person* is well attested in several late witnesses, such as Ad<sup>1</sup>, Cx<sup>1</sup> and Cx<sup>2</sup>, all dating from the last quarter of the century.

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
CONDITION	condicion	4	1+1	–
	condicioū	12	17+7	4
	condicioun	2	–	–
PARSON	person/psou	9	4	–
	persouū/psouū	3	9	–
PRISON	prison	14	8+1	2
	prisoun	–	1	1
	prisoū	28	33	–
REASON	reson	57 (TM 31, PA 12)	13+2 (TM 6, PA 2+2)	31
	resoun	1	0+1	–
	resoū	23 (TM 5, PA 11)	70+16 (TM 30, PA 21+17)	3
SAMPSON	sampson	9	5	–
	sampsoun	2	–	–
	sampsoū	4	9+1	–



		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
SEASON	seson	5	3	1
	sesoū	5	7+1	–
TREASON	treson(s)	3	3	5
	trayson	3	–	–
	tresoū	3	5	1
	tra(y/i)soū	1	2	–

**Table 4. Partial change from Hg *-(i)on* to El *-(i)oun***

For the word PRISON, the variant *prisoun* is preferred in both manuscripts, while *prison* is used less frequently. Nine occurrences of Hg *prison* are spelled *prisoun* in El, although the reverse is found as well, as three occurrences of this word in KT (ll. 237, 492, 734) are spelled *prisoun* in Hg but *prison* in El. The variant *prison* never occurs in rhyming position, while *prisoun* is found both within and at the end of a line. The scribe's tendency to prefer the *-ou-* variant seems to be part of a general development, since, according to the *MED*, *prisoun* is the most frequently used spelling, as opposed to *prison*, which is the variant employed for the inflected forms, such as *prisons* and *prisone*, and to *prisun*, which is an early spelling variant of this word. In Hg and El there are only the following two instances of inflected forms of PRISON, one in each manuscript:

- (14) a. But now is he in **prisone** in a Caue Hengwrt MO l. 75  
 b. visytinge in **prisone** and in maladie Ellesmere PA par. 975 (not in Hg)

By contrast, *prison* is the only variant attested in *ACE*, and this suggests that the modern form had already been adopted in the bureaucratic language.

The marked preference for *-ou-* in El is also shown by the noun REASON, as most of the occurrences of the variant *reson* are found in Hg, while *resoun*, almost exclusively spelled in its abbreviated form *resoū*, is definitely preferred in El. There is no evidence that *reson* is employed for rhyming purposes, since most of the occurrences of this variant in Hg, 31 in TM and 12 in PA, are in the prose sections, and almost all are spelled *resoun* in El. Likewise, twelve of the thirteen instances of *reson* in El exhibit the same spelling in Hg, and five of them occur within the verse line, while the other eight are found in prose sections. The remaining occurrence of *reson* in El is in PA par. 449, and corresponds to Hg *resoū*. *Reson* is the preferred spelling in Tr, where *resoū* occurs only three times, all within the line. In this respect, Tr resembles Hg more than El, and does not reflect the language of Gower as represented in the Fairfax manuscript. In this text, in which *reson* is found 21 times and *resoun* 13 times, the two variants are interchangeable to a considerable extent. Finally, *reson* is the only spelling found in *ACE*.

The name *Sampso(u)n* is spelled in either way in both manuscripts, although the scribe preferred *Sampson* in Hg and *Sampsoun* in El. Most of the occurrences of this

name are in MO and PD. In the *Monk's Tale*, there are three occurrences of *Sampson*, in ll. 17, 25, 33 in folio 89v, and three of *Sampsoun*, in ll. 54, 57, 77 in folio 90r of Hg, all of them within the verse line. It is interesting to see that the different spelling variants occur on two consecutive leaves, and that at the bottom of folio 89v the colour of the ink is lighter than at the top of folio 90r, as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

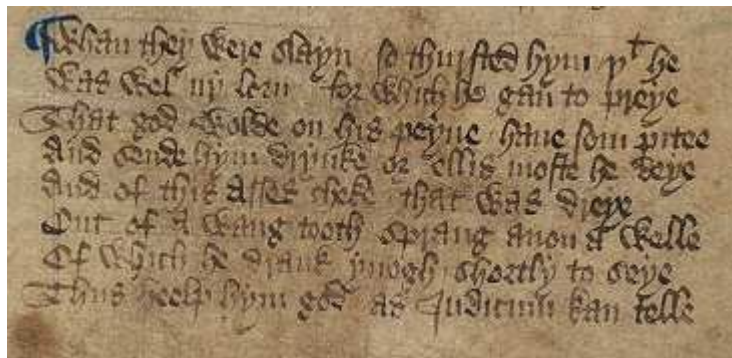


Figure 2. Lighter ink in fol. 89v of Hengwrt (bottom)

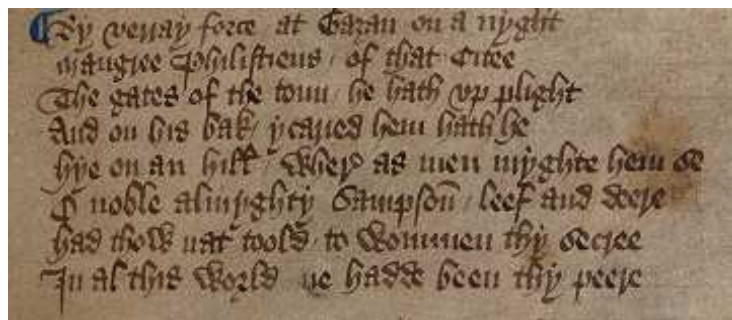


Figure 3. Darker ink in fol. 90r of Hengwrt (top)

As in a similar instance discussed in Chapter 3 (cf. *ben* vs. *been*), different hues of ink could suggest that the scribe took a break, a long or even a short one – perhaps just to stir the ink – and when he resumed copying, he spelled the name in a different way, possibly no longer according to the exemplar (see example in (16) below). The same explanation, however, does not apply to the five occurrences of *Sampso(u)n* that occur in PD, and that are given in (15).

- (15) a. And thurgh thy dronke nose semeth the soun  
 As thogh thou seydest ay **Sampsoū Sampson** Hengwrt  
 And yet god woot **Sampson** drank neūe no wyn PD II. 225–227
- b. Nat at the Rochel ne at Burdeux toun Hengwrt  
 And thanne wol he seyn **Sampson Sampson** PD II. 243–244

These words are clustered in folio 198v of Hg, a leaf that does not display any signs of interruptions of the process of copying, and yet the noun is spelled variably as well. The spelling of the two occurrences of *Sampsoun* that are found at the end of a line is very likely determined by the rhyme constraint, *soun* and *toun* being the rhyme words. As for the other three instances, they show a preference for *Sampson*, as most of the non-rhyming occurrences of this variant do in Hg. The distribution of this word suggests that both *Sampson* and *Sampsoun* were in the original text, but in different positions in the line, and that the scribe mostly preserved both of them, instead of normalising their spelling as he did elsewhere. The first occurrence of the noun in the sequence *Sampsoū Sampson* in PD I. 226 is thus another exception, like the three instances in MO II. 54, 57 and 77 described above. This word was probably spelled *Sampson* in the exemplar, but the scribe wrote *Sampsoū* under the influence of the following instance of the same word, while a few lines below, in PD I. 244, he did not make the same mistake in the same context. Although *Sampson* is used more frequently in Hg than in El, the reverse can be seen in the following line from MO, in which *Sampson* may be a relict from the original text:

- (16) This **Sampsoū** neūe Ciser drank ne wyn Hengwrt MO I. 57  
 This **Sampson** neūe Ciser drank ne wyn Ellesmere MO I. 57

The words *seso(u)n* and *treso(u)n* are the last two examples of partial change from Hg *-on* to El *-oun*. Both *seson* and *sesoun* are, in fact, used frequently in Hg, whereas *sesoun* is the preferred variant in El. Only one of the three occurrences of *seson* in El has the same spelling in Hg, the other two instances, in GP I. 19 and KT I. 1626, being spelled *sesoun* in Hg. The word TREASON is characterized not only by changes in the ending but also within the word, because in Hg this word is normally spelled *treso(u)n*, but also occurs as *trayson* in NP I. 503, SQ II. 131, 498 and *traysoū* in NP I. 297. In El the variant *trayson* disappears altogether, while *treson* is attested only three times in this manuscript, one of which is spelled *tresoū* in Hg (PH I. 91). All other occurrences in El are the variants ending in *-oun*, i.e. *traysoun* and *tresoun*.

To conclude, the data presented here show that *-(i)on* is employed more often in Hg and much less frequently or not at all in El, where *-(i)oun* is used instead. In addition, in Hg the ending *-(i)oun* is found more often than *-(i)on* in words that occur at the end of the line, and almost all of them are preserved in El. By contrast, the suffix *-(i)on*, which mostly occurs within the verse line and in the prose sections in Hg, that is, in positions that are not subjected to the rhyme constraint, often turns

into *-(i)oun* in El. Finally, abbreviated forms of the *-(i)oun* ending are widely used in both manuscripts. Although the words analysed show that, on the whole, there is a tendency to replace Hg *-(i)on* with El *-(i)oun*, there are cases in which the ending *-(i)on* is found in El while *-(i)oun* is used in Hg for the same word, as in PA par. 449, which reads *resoū* in Hg and *reason* in El, or WBT l. 836, which reads *opynyoū* in Hg and *opinion* in El. There are also cases in which the Hg *-(i)on* spelling is preserved in El, as in *condicion*, occurring in the first line of ML in both manuscripts, despite the fact that *condicioun* is the generally preferred spelling. Even though there are just a few instances of identical variants in Hg and El, they show that the shift from Hg *-(i)on* to El *-(i)oun* may not reflect a shift in the scribe's practice after all. On the basis of the evidence provided by Hg and El, it might be argued that both *-(i)on* and *-(i)oun* were present in Chaucer's spelling repertoire. In particular, given the distribution of the words spelled in either way in Hg, it would seem that Chaucer used both endings, although he had a slight preference for *-(i)on* in prose and within the verse line and for *-(i)oun* in rhyming position.

### 3. Words in which Hengwrt *-or-* and *-ur-* become Ellesmere *-our-*

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
HONOUR(ABLE)	honur	2	–	–
	honorable	9	9	–
	honorable	–	–	1
	honour-	89	92+3	5
HONOURED	honored	2	1	–
	return	2 (TM, PA)	0+2 (PA)	–
RETURN	retur-	2 (PA)	2 (PA)	–
	retour-	10	13	–
	treasure	23	18+4	–
TREASURE	tresour	–	5 (4 TM, MO)	–

**Table 5. Change from Hg *-or-* and *-ur-* to El *-our-***

The tendency to use *-ou-* more often in El than in Hg also affects a very small number of words that are spelled with *-or-*, *-ur-* and *-our-* in Hg, and which occur more often with the *-our-* spelling in El. Some examples are presented in Table 5.

Two instances of the variant *honur* are found in TM, in pars 711 and 718 on folio 231v, while all other occurrences of this word are spelled *honour* in both Hg and El. The related verb *honored* exhibits this spelling twice in Hg, in GP l. 50 and CL l. 1120, but only once in El, where it is preserved in the same line of CL. The corresponding adjective is always spelled *honorable* in Hg and El, whereas the sole instance found in Tr reads *honorable*.

The various forms of the verb RETURN are usually spelled with medial *-our-* in Hg and El; medial *-or-* in the two variants *retorne* (TM) and *retorneth* (PA) in Hg

becomes *-our-* in El. Two instances of *retorneth* are attested in El, but both of them are in the section of PA that is missing from Hg. There are no spelling changes affecting the two occurrences spelled with medial *-ur*, *retorne* and *returnyng* in PA, which exhibit the same spellings in Hg and in El. In contrast, the spelling *tresor* for the word TREASURE is always found in Hg and very frequently in El. There are, however, five instances of *tresour* in El: four of them are clustered in TM, where *tresor* is never used, and one is found within the line in MO (see 17a), where *tresor* also occurs, but now in rhyming position, as shown in (17b). The widespread use of the variant *tresor* in both manuscripts, three instances of which are rhyme words (WBP ll. 203:204 *stoor: tresoor*, MO ll. 145:147 *tresor: Nabugodonosor* and ME ll. 25:26 *hoor: tresor*), suggests that this form was preferred both by Chaucer and the scribe. It is very likely that *tresour* simply reflects the scribal tendency to transform medial *-o-* into medial *-ou-*. However, the occurrence of *tresour* in TM and in medial position in MO, that is, in two older tales, in El may also indicate that these variants are relicts from the original papers, and that *tresour* is therefore a Chaucerian variant as well.

- |         |                                              |                     |
|---------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (17) a. | Glorie and honour regne <b>tresor</b> rente  | Hengwrt MO l. 213   |
|         | Glorie and honour regne <b>tresour</b> rente | Ellesmere MO l. 213 |
| b.      | The myghty trone the p̄cious <b>tresor</b>   |                     |
|         | The glorious ceptre and roial maiestee       | Hengwrt             |
|         | That hadde the kyng Nabugodonosor            | MO ll. 145–147      |
|         | The myghty trone the precious <b>tresor</b>  |                     |
|         | The glorious ceptre and Roial magestee       | Ellesmere           |
|         | That hadde the kyng Nabugodonosor            | MO ll. 145–147      |

In this section I have argued that the items described in this section show that variants spelled with *-ou-*, which are often already present in Hg, remain the same or increase in El. It is not entirely clear whether this is due to the preservation of the original spelling or to the introduction of scribal variants. It seems also improbable that the use of *-ou-* in El is due to a systematic change from Hg *-o-* into El *-ou-*. The presence of the variant *tresour* in TM in El, for instance, suggests that variants spelled with *-ou-* might have also been in Chaucer's original text.

#### 4. Words mostly spelled with *-ow-* in Hengwrt and with *-ou-* in Ellesmere

The words analysed in what follows have been selected to find evidence of a possible change from Hg *-ow-* to El *-ou-*. They show that while the use of *-ow-* is rather common in Hg, this spelling decreases or disappears altogether in El, the text where *-ou-* is preferred. Words that are spelled with *-ow-* in Hg may be old-fashioned variants, such as *bowntee* and *bownde*, but they may also be forms found in Modern English, such as *town* and *down*. Likewise, the *-ou-* spellings of some

words in El correspond to what we now consider modern form of the language, as in *bountee*, but also to old-fashioned variants, such as *toun* and *doun*. In addition, there are words which are no longer spelled with *-ow-* in El and words that preserve the *-ow-* spelling in this manuscript, such as *thow*. All this suggests that the replacement of Hg *-ow-* with El *-ou-* does not reflect a systematic change from an old-fashioned spelling to a modern one, but only a preference for using the *-ou-* spelling in El. The scribe's main aim in El was to normalise the spelling rather than innovate it or adhere to current developments in the orthography. In what follows, I have divided the words chosen to exemplify the preference for *-ow-* in Hg and *-ou-* in El into three groups: a first one which contains those words that are no longer spelled with *-ow-* in El (§4.1), a second one which consists of those words in which the *-ow-* spelling mostly decreases but does not entirely disappear in El (§4.2), and a third one which comprises those words in which *-ow-* occurs alongside *-ou-* and *-o(u)gh* in both manuscripts (§4.3).

#### 4.1. Words that are never spelled with *-ow-* in Ellesmere

The words that occur with *-ow-* and *-ou-* in Hg but are never spelled with *-ow-* in El are presented in Table 6. Some of these words occur only once in *The Canterbury Tales* and in all of them Hg *-ow-* becomes El *-ou-*; some examples are the items EMBROIDERED, CICLATOUN<sup>3</sup> and YOWLING.

In the case of the item CICLATOUN in lines 22–23 of the *Tale of Thopas* the spelling change affects the rhyme word as well, as in the example in (18):

(18)	Of Brugges were his hosen <b>brown</b>	Hengwrt
	His Robe was of <b>Syklatown</b>	TT ll. 22–23
	Of Brugges were his hosen <b>broun</b>	Ellesmere
	His Robe was of <b>Syklatoun</b>	TT ll. 22–23

In addition, the use of *-ou-* in El does not always correspond to a modern spelling, as shown by Hg *yowlyng* in KT l. 420, which changes into *youlyng* in El. *Yowling* is, in fact, the form that is still used in Modern English for this word as the present participle of the verb YOWL: ‘to cry out loudly from pain, grief, or distress’ (*OED*, s.v. *yowl*, v.).

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<sup>3</sup> ‘A precious material much esteemed in the Middle Ages ... perhaps “scarlet cloth” ... cloth of gold or other rich material’ (*OED* s.v. *Ciclatoun* Obs.).

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
ARMOUR	armowre	1	–	–
	armour	1 (TT)	2	–
BOUNTY	bowntee	2 (PA)	–	–
	bountee	34	34	–
	bontee	–	2	–
BOUND	bownde	1 (PA)	–	–
	-bound-	24	25+3	–
EMBROIDERED	browded	1 (MO)	–	–
	(em)brouded	1 (GP)	2 (GP, MO)	–
BROOK	browke	1 (NP)	–	–
	brouke	1 (ME)	2 (NP, ME)	–
BROWN	brown	2 (GP, TT)	–	–
	broun	4	6	–
DOUBT	dowte	2 (SH, PA)	–	–
	doute	27	29+3	–
DOWN	(a)down	55	–	–
	(a)doun	120	176+8	9
GROUND	grownd-	3	–	–
	ground-	24	27+5	8
MOUTH	mowth	3 (PA)	–	–
	mouth	29	32+9	–
	mouþ	–	1 (TM)	–
POUND	pownd	1 (GP)	–	–
	pound	9	10+6	–
RESOUND	resown-	2 (KT, SQ)	–	–
	resoun-	–	2 (KT, SQ)	–
ROUND	rownd	1 (GP)	–	–
	round(e)	12	13	–
SHOUTING	showt-	2 (NP)	–	–
	shout-	1 (KT)	3 (KT, 2 NP)	–
SUPPER	sowpe	2 (PA)	–	–
	soupe-	11	5	–
	soper	5	13	–
CICLATOUN	syklatown	1	–	–
	syklatoun	–	1	–
THOUSAND	thowsand	1 (FK)	–	–
	thousand	40	42+1	–
WOUND	wownd-	3 (2 KT, PA)	–	–
	wound-	25	28+5	–
YOWLING	yowlyng	1 (KT)	–	–
	youlyng	–	1(KT)	–

Table 6. Words in which *-ow-* never occurs in EI

Almost all of the other words are found more than once in *The Canterbury Tales*. Some of these instances are spelled with *-ow-* in Hg, although this variant often represents the exception with respect to the more common spelling with *-ou-*. Examples of this are the words that are spelled in Hg *armowre*, *bowntee*, *bownde*, *browke*, *brown*, *dowte*, *grownd*, *mowth*, *pownd*, *resownen*, *rownd*, *sowpe*, *thousand*, *wownde(s)* and *wounded*. In Hg both *armowre* and *armour* occur in TT at the end of lines 107 and 154, respectively; both of them are spelled *armour* in El, although the rhyming word in line 110, *sowre*, meaning ‘sour’, remains unchanged in El, as shown in (19):

- (19) Whan I haue myn **Armowre**  
 And yet I hope þ ma fay  
 That thow shalt w<sup>t</sup> this launcegay      Hengwrt  
 Abyen it ful **sowre**      TT ll. 107–110
- Whan I haue myn **Armour**  
 And yet I hope þ ma fay  
 That thou shalt w<sup>t</sup> this launcegay      Ellesmere  
 Abyen it ful **sowre**      TT ll. 107–110

Likewise, the two occurrences of *dowte* in Hg, in PA par. 17 and SH l. 406, become *doute* in El, even though in SH l. 405 the rhyme word is *snowte* in both Hg and El, as shown in (20). In all other cases the word is spelled *doute* in both manuscripts.

- (20) What yuel thedam on his Monkes **snowte**      Hengwrt  
 For god it woot I wende with outen **dowte**      SH ll. 405–406
- What yuel thedam on his Monkes **snowte**      Ellesmere  
 For god it woot I wende w<sup>t</sup> outen **doute**      SH ll. 405–406

The variant *bowntee* occurs twice in PA, in pars 294 and 319, and in par. 203 of the same tale there is also the only occurrence of *bownde* in this manuscript. The other instances of these two words are spelled with *-ou-* in both manuscripts. In Hg the word *browke*, meaning ‘use’, in NP l. 480, occurs alongside *brouke*, meaning ‘enjoy’, in ME l. 1064, but in El both words are spelled *brouke*, as shown in (21).

- (21) a. So mote I **browke** wel myne eyen tweye      Hengwrt NP l. 480  
       So moote I **brouke** wel myne eyen tweye      Ellesmere NP l. 480
- b. As euere hool I mote **brouke** my tresses      Hengwrt ME l. 1064  
       As eu<sup>e</sup> hool I moote **brouke** my tresses      Ellesmere ME l. 1064

In addition, *brown* is used twice at the end of line in Hg, while *broun* occurs four times in non-rhyming position, and all of these instances are spelled *broun* in El. Similarly, the noun GROUND is spelled *grownd(e)* in Hg, while *ground(e)* is the only variant used in Hg for the verb and in El for both word classes. The three instances



of *grownd(e)* in Hg are in GP l. 455, ML l. 1055 (both rhyme words), and SQ l. 631. *Ground(e)* is the only spelling used in Tr for the noun as well as the verb. The variant *mowth* is used only three times in Hg, all of them in PA, while all other occurrences of this word are written *mouth*. The spelling *mowth* does not occur in El, but in TM par. 533 there is the only instance of *mowþ*, used at the end of a line of prose. *Pownd* in GP l. 456 rhymes with *grownd* and becomes El *pound*, like the other nine occurrences of this word. *Resowneth* in KT l. 420 and *resowned* in SQ l. 405 are the only two occurrences of the verb RESOUND in Hg: both words are spelled *resoun-* in El. As will be shown below, the noun SOUND can also occur as *sownd* and *sound* in Hg, while only the latter spelling is used in El. *Rownd* is found once in Hg, in GP l. 591, though elsewhere this adjective is always spelled *round* in Hg and El. *Showtynge* and *showtes* are found in NP ll. 567 and 575, and they occur in Hg alongside one instance of *shoutynge* in KT l. 2089. Both Hg and El display instances of the verb *soupe(n)* spelled with *-ou-*, while the variant *sowpe* is attested twice in Hg only, in PA par. 216, and becomes *soupe* in El. However, both *soper* and *souper* are used for the related noun in Hg, whereas *soper* is the only variant that is found in El. *Thousand* is the regular spelling for this word in Hg, El and also Tr, although in Hg in FK l. 897 the scribe wrote *thowsand*. Similarly, Hg *wownde(s)* in KT ll. 152 and 897 and *wownded* in PA par. 456 are spelled with *-ou-* in El, and *wound-* is the variant used more frequently for the noun and the verb in both manuscripts.

Finally, the word DOWN, which occurs very frequently in *The Canterbury Tales*, shows variation between *-ow-* and *-ou-* in Hg, but is always spelled with *-ou-* in El. The variants *(a)down* and *(a)doun* are thus found in Hg, whereas only *(a)doun* occurs in El as well as in Scribe B's stint of Tr, where all nine occurrences of this word are spelled *doun*. The change from *-ow-* to *-ou-* likewise affects the adverb *downwards*, which exhibits this spelling in Hg but occurs as *dounwards* in El. Variants spelled with either *-ow-* or *-ou-* are found only in the following tales: KT, MI, RE (Section I), WBP, WBT, SU (Section II), MO (Section III), ML, FK, TT and TM (Section IV), while only one of the two forms is used in the other tales. Interestingly, PA (Section V) displays only *-ow-* forms, while NP, MA (Section III), SQ, NU, CL, PH, PD, SH and PR (Section IV) exhibit only *-ou-* forms. Hence, the distribution of the spelling variants in the five structural sections of Hg reveals that the scribe tolerated variation between *(a)down* and *(a)doun* in Sections I, II and in the first half of Section III. However, from NP onwards until the end of Section III, where there is also evidence of a change of ink, he used only *(a)doun*, with the exception of *vpanddown* in L36 l. 2, which is a rhyme word. In Section IV Scribe B employed both variants in some tales, although he generally preferred *(a)doun*, while *(a)down* is the only form that he used in Section V. It should be noted here that the five sections were not copied in the order in which they are arranged in Hg, and that Section III should follow Section IV (cf. Chapter 2), but the presence of *(a)down* in the first two sections in particular as well as in PA suggests that it may be an archetypal spelling.

However, there is even stronger evidence that *(a)down* is an authorial variant. In Chapter 3, I discussed the variation between *ben* and *been* in Section III of Hg, and argued that even if the second half of this section was probably one of the last parts of Hg to be copied, it contained the old-fashioned spelling variant *ben*, which might therefore be authorial. A similar pattern can be noticed for the distribution of *(a)down* and *(a)doun* in this section, and the collation of the five instances of this word in all fifteenth-century manuscripts of L30 and NP reveals that *(a)down* occurs in almost all of them. In the light of this evidence I believe that *(a)down* should be considered an authorial variant as well. The variant *(a)doun* is generally preferred in Hg, where it occurs twice as often as *(a)down*, and is also the only one used in E1, the manuscript that was copied later, even though this form is older than *(a)down*. It seems likely that both variants were in Chaucer's text and that only *(a)down* was deliberately chosen for E1, because the scribe had to preserve the more old-fashioned spelling of the exemplar in order to give authority to the text of E1. Evidence for possible scribal intervention is provided by the rhyme, as only three of the 28 occurrences of *(a)down* that are found at the end of a line in Hg rhyme with words ending in *-own*, i.e. *crown* in RE l. 121 and *town* in SU l. 70 and L36 l. 2. All other occurrences of *(a)down* rhyme with words that end in *-oun*, such as *disposicioun* in KT l. 520. This suggests that the two spelling variants were pronounced in the same way and thus were perfectly interchangeable, at least for Scribe B, whose active repertoire must have included both forms, since he was a bureaucratic scribe and *down(e)* occurs alongside *doun(e)* in ACE. However, it is very likely that *(a)down* was the word used in the exemplar in order to obtain acoustic and visual rhymes. This is something that, according to Burnley's analysis of selected passages from *The Canterbury Tales* (1989:29), Scribe B did not always preserve in Hg but successfully restored in E1, possibly because of a personal concern for orthographic consistency at the end of the lines or, more likely, because he understood or was told that this had been Chaucer's intention to begin with (see also Chapter 6).

#### 4.2. Words in which the use of *-ow-* usually decreases in Ellesmere

After having dealt with words which exhibit both *-ow-* and *-ou-* spellings in Hg but which are never spelled with *-ow-* in E1, I will analyse words in which *-ow-* usually decreases in E1 but does not disappear altogether, as shown in Table 7. In all these words the spelling with *-ow-* is attested in Hg as well as in E1, even though usually there are fewer instances written in this way in the latter manuscript. In most cases this is due to a partial change from Hg *-ow-* to E1 *-ou-*, as a result of which some of these words still preserve the *-ow-* spelling in E1. Examples of this are the words *c(o)rown*, *powped*,<sup>4</sup> *prowd-*, *rowm*, *sown*, *thow* and *town*. There are, however, a few words, such as *kowthe*, *lowde*, *sowded* and *sowple*, which are spelled with *-ow-* in E1

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<sup>4</sup> 'To produce a short blast of sound, as with a horn; to blow, toot; to make a gulping sound in drinking'. *Obs.* (OED s.v. *Poop* v.<sup>1</sup>)

and *-ou-* in Hg. They are rather interesting as a class, as they show once again that it is improbable that a categorical shift from Hg *-ow-* to El *-ou-* was taking place in the scribe's practice. Rather, it is more likely that the frequent use of *-ou-* in El simply reflects a deliberate choice for one spelling instead of the other, while some exceptional *-ow-* variants in this manuscript may testify to the spelling that was used in the exemplar, and may thus reflect Chaucer's own practice.

The partial change from Hg *-ow-* to El *-ou-* can be seen in the word CROWN, both a noun and a verb, which is usually spelled with *-o-* and *-ou-* but which also occurs with *-ow-* in Hg and El. *Corown-* is found once in Hg (MO l. 367), and corresponds to *coron-* in El, whereas *crown-* occurs five times in Hg and three times in El. Hence, only two of the six occurrences that are spelled with *-ow-* in Hg are preserved in El as such; the others become El *-ou-*. A third occurrence of El *crown-* (KT l. 169) corresponds to Hg *coroun-*. The variant *corones(s)* is found almost exclusively in NU in both manuscripts, and it is also the only spelling variant used in this tale. In addition, the verb form *powped* occurs twice in Hg, in NP l. 579 and in L36 l. 90. The first occurrence rhymes with *howped* and the spelling of both rhyme words is preserved in El, while the second one occurs within the line and reads *pouped* in El. Likewise, the variants *rowm* and *rowmer* occur in Hg, in RE ll. 206 and 225, respectively, but only the first instance is preserved in El, while the second one is spelled *rōmer*, which might be a scribal mistake.

The spelling variants *sown-* and *soun-* for SOUND are used in Hg and El in different ways. In fact, in Hg both forms are employed for the noun SOUND and *sownde* occurs once in ML l. 1052 as an adjective, while in El *soun-* is the only spelling that is used for both word classes. By contrast, the related verb *sownen* invariably occurs with the *-ow-* spelling in both manuscripts. This means that the change from Hg *-ow-* to El *-ou-* only affects nouns and adjectives, which consequently are always spelled with *-ou-* in El, but not verbs. It could therefore be argued that in Hg, and especially in El, different spellings indicate different grammatical categories of words. In other words, what we see here is a restriction of particular forms to particular grammatical categories, as a result of which the verb is always characterised by the *-ow-* spelling, which is most likely authorial, while the noun and the adjective are, at least in El, always spelled with *-ou-*.

The second person pronoun singular displays several spelling variants, i.e. *þow*, *þou*, *thow*, *thou*. As will be shown below, forms spelled with *þ*, i.e. *þow* and *þou*, are rarer in Hg and El than in Tr. In the Chaucerian manuscripts there is evidence of a scribal preference for *thow* in Hg and for *thou* in El for the singular pronoun, even though the two variants co-occur in both manuscripts and sometimes even in the same line, as in example (22).

- |                                                                             |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (22) <b>Thow</b> mayst <sup>r</sup> syn <b>thou</b> hast wisdom and manhede | Hengwrt KT l. 427   |
| <b>Thou</b> mayst <sup>r</sup> syn <b>thou</b> hast wisdom 7 manhede        | Ellesmere KT l. 427 |

		<b>Hengwrt</b>	<b>Ellesmere</b>	<b>Trinity</b>
CROWN	corone(s)	8 (7 NU)	9 (7 NU)	4
	c(o)row-	6	3	–
	c(o)rou-	5	7	–
HOW	how	251	264	107
	hou	1 (KT)	20	7
COULD	kowde	3 (NP, L36, MA)	2 (GP, PA)	–
	kouthe	2 (GP)	3 (GP, 2KT)	7
	koude	133	135+12	13
	couthē	–	–	1
LOUD	lowde	2 (NP, L36)	0+1 (L30)	–
	loude	25	26	–
POOPED	powped	2 (NP, L36)	1 (NP)	–
	pouped	–	1 (L36)	–
PROUD(LY)	prowd-	2 (SU, NU )	1 (PA)	–
	proud-	25	24	–
ROOMY	rowm	1	1	–
	rowmer	1 (RE)	–	–
	rōmer	–	1 (RE)	–
SOLDERED	soude	1 (PR)	–	–
	sowded	–	1 (PR)	–
SOUND	sown-	21	11+1	–
	soun-	10	20+1	1
SUPPLE	sowple	–	1 (MO)	–
	souple	1 (MO)	–	–
THOU	thow	497	64+38	12
	þow	1	–	4
	tow	1 (TM)	–	–
	thou	39	477+51	126
	þou	–	–	15
	verb+tow	82	76+1	17
	verb+tou	–	7	–
TOWN	town	47	–	1
	towne(s)	12	11+1	–
	toun	18	66+5	4
YOU(R)	yow	666	654+50	29
	yowre	4 (SH, 3 TM)	2 (ML, NU)	–
	you	3	14	–
	youre	594	605+32	10
YOUTH	yowthe	2 (GP, L7)	6	–
	youthē	16	12	7

**Table 7. Items in which -ow- mostly decreases in EI**

The incidence of *thow* decreases dramatically in E1, because in this manuscript this variant is found in some tales only, few of which display more than five instances of this spelling. The only exceptions are KT, NU and PA, in which *thow* is found 26, 11 and 36 times respectively, though it must be noted that all but one of the occurrences in PA are in the section that is missing from Hg. In the cases in which the pronoun is suffixed to the verb and displays the variant with assimilation of the consonant, i.e. *-tow* as in *hastow* or *-tou* as in *shaltou*, *-tow* is the form that is almost always used in all three manuscripts, while *-tou* is scarcely used at all. The seventeen occurrence of *-tou* in E1, seven in TM, three each in MI and SU and one each in KT, ML, ME and MA, are very likely examples of scribal hypercorrection, exactly as it happens in E1 for the spelling of *how* (see below).

*Thou* is also the preferred spelling in Scribe B's stint of Tr, where this variant occurs alongside *pou*, *thow* and *pow*. However, *thou* is surely a scribal form, since only *pou* and *pow*, the variants that are consistently used in the Fairfax manuscript, correspond to Gower's usage. The widespread use of *p* instead of *th* in the Fairfax 3 and 'Stafford' manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis* is one of the several features analysed by Samuels and Smith (1988:16) who conclude that these manuscripts are reliable examples of Gower's language. Samuels (1988a: 43–44, 1988b:25) believed that even though Scribe B largely imposed his own spelling habits on his stint of the *Confessio Amantis*, he also preserved several Gowerian forms, such as *pou* and *pow*. It is on the basis of these relicts that Samuels could argue that the scribe's copytext was 'a conventional Gower exemplar', possibly the Fairfax manuscript. The idea of an authoritative exemplar for Tr is reinforced by Mooney (2006:122, n. 97), who, as I observed in Chapter 2, has recently proposed that Tr may be a hasty copy prepared after Gower's death in order to preserve a good exemplar of the *Confessio Amantis* for commercial purposes. Proportionally, there are many more words spelled with *p* in Scribe B's three quires of the *Confessio Amantis* than in his two entire versions of *The Canterbury Tales*, and the numerous instances of *pow* and *pou* in Tr against just one instance of *pow* in Hg are examples of this. Incidentally, the sole occurrence of *pow* in Hg is in par. 786 of TM, in a line in which *thow* occurs as well, and must be a scribal feature. As can be seen in the detail from folio 232v in Hg in Figure 4, *pow* is the last word of the second line and, despite the use of *p*, the word still extends beyond the right margin.

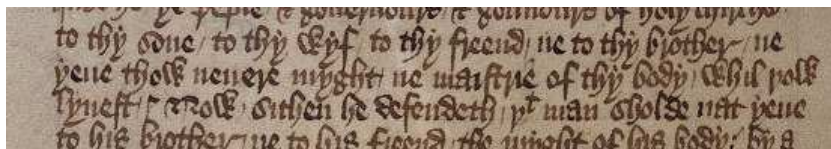


Figure 4. *pow* written beyond the right margin in fol. 232v of Hengwrt

Clearly, the scribe chose this variant in order to use less space and write as little as possible beyond the vertical ruling that delimited the right margin. It is interesting to note here that the scribe could have also written *pou* instead of *pow*, and take up

even less space on the parchment. Yet, as I will explain in Chapter 5, §3, Scribe B never employs the variant *thou* for the personal pronoun in quire 29, where this instance of *how* occurs, while he does so in the previous one. This is probably caused by a change of exemplar between the copying of the two quires.

In Tr *þ* not only occurs in the spelling of pronouns, but also in other words, such as *þat*, *þanne*, *feineþ*, *þe* and *forþi*. By contrast, in Hg and El Scribe B used *þ* very frequently for writing *þ'*, the abbreviated forms of THAT (see Chapter 6), and only occasionally for the inflection *-eþ* of the third person singular present tense of verbs, or for words such as *þou* and *þilke*. These variants that are spelled with *þ* in Hg and El are mainly attested in the prose sections. In these tales, they are mostly found at the end of the lines, thus confirming the suggestion made above with respect to *þou* that the scribe employed *þ* when he needed either to write quickly or to fit as many words as possible into a line, as in the following example from TM:

- (23) and if ye wol werke wikkednesse and youre wyf  
**restreyneþ þilke** wikked þ'pos Hengwrt TM par. 124

As can be seen in Figure 5 below, *restreyneþ* and *þilke* are the last two words of the last line in folio 219r of Hg, and it is clear that the use of *þ* here is meant to fit these words in the line and the page. By contrast, the words *soothly*, *fifthe* and *þilke* in the previous lines are all spelled with *th*. On the whole, the use of *þ'* decreases dramatically in El, as it occurs only 1061+173 times, against 2178 occurrences in Hg, while the extended form of THAT is found 3616+715 times in El and 2502 times in Hg.

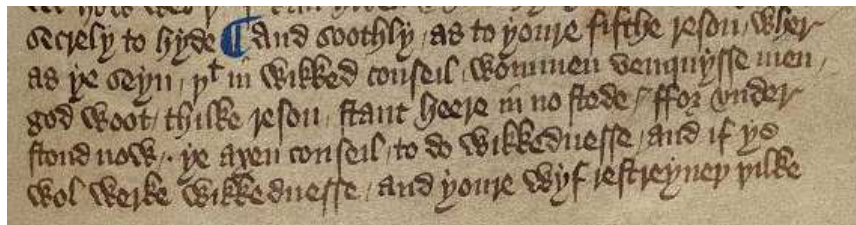


Figure 5. Words spelled with *þ* in fol. 219r of Hengwrt

The variants attested for the second person plural pronoun are *yow*, *you*, *ye*, *yowre* and *youre*. The scribe wrote *yow* in Hg and El fairly consistently, and this is also the only spelling found in Tr. The variant *you* occurs only three times in Hg, in FK l. 821, TM pars 86 and 306, all of which are spelled *yow* in El, and fourteen times in El, ten of which are in KT, two in TM, one in WBT and one in L10. In contrast, *youre* is the most frequently used spelling for the possessive in Hg and El, and it is also the only form occurring in Tr. There are four instances of *yowre* in Hg, one in SH and three in TM, which are spelled *youre* in El, and two in El, i.e. in ML and NU, which are spelled *youre* in Hg. The small number of these variants suggests

that they are relicts from Chaucer's original draft, although it should be noticed that YOU and YOUR were treated differently in Hg and El, with *yow* being preferred to *you* and *youre* to *yowre* in both manuscripts; this pattern is also confirmed by Tr.

The shift from Hg *-ow-* to El *-ou-* also affects the word *how*, which usually occurs with this spelling in both manuscripts. There are, however, several instances of *hou*: one in Hg (KT l. 1426) and twenty in El (six in KT, three in ML and TM, two in SQ and PD, one in MI, RE, WBP and WBT). In *ACE* there are only four occurrences of *hou*, against 47 of *how*. The presence of *hou* instead of *how* in El may be seen as a form of scribal hypercorrection (cf. Chapter 2), as I argued for the verbal suffix *-tou* above, because it shows that the practice of preferring *-ou-* to *-ow-* for words that displayed both variants was extended to words that were usually spelled in just one way.

The last item in which a partial change from Hg *-ow-* to El *-ou-* can be seen is TOWN. This word is spelled both *town* and *toun*, with a clear preference for *town* in Hg and *toun* in El. All 47 occurrences of *town* in Hg become *toun* in El and the sole instance of *town* in El is in PA, but is not attested in Hg. In contrast, the eleven occurrences of *towne(s)* in Hg retain the same spelling in El; only once, in KT l. 2161, does Hg *townes* correspond to a different word in El, i.e. *toures*. *Town* is thus the preferred form in Hg, and is preserved in El only when the word is inflected as in *towne* and *townes*, all other occurrences being always spelled *toun*. In Tr there are four instances of *toun* and one of *townes* where the Fairfax manuscript has *townes* (l. 3.1380), the variant *town* never occurring in this manuscript. One instance of *toun* is also attested in l. 804 of the Hatfield fragment from *Troilus and Criseyde*.

The shift from *town* to *toun* is therefore not, as Samuels believes, the result of a modernising process, because *town* is the modern spelling while *toun* is the old-fashioned one, and very likely also the authorial form. Evidence for this conclusion is provided by the occurrences that are found in rhyming position in Hg, since *town* mostly rhymes with words that end in *-oun*, as in the following example from GP:

- (24) And eek<sup>r</sup> with worthy wommen of the **town**  
 For he hadde power of **confessioun**                      Hengwrt GP ll. 217–218

Only three of the 23 occurrences of *town* that are found at the end of a line in Hg rhyme with a word spelled with *-ow-*, namely *down*, as shown in (25). This, however, does not constitute a pattern, since in Hg, in CL l. 1005 *town* rhymes with *down* (in l. 1003). By contrast, *towne* is used four times at the end of a line, and always rhymes with words that are spelled in the same way, i.e. *sowne* (GP l. 589), *rowne* (FR l. 272, TT l. 123) and *gowne* (SU l. 586); all these spelling variants are preserved in El. The presence of modern forms in the older manuscript could be explained by the fact that the scribe was a clerk working for the government, and that he introduced forms that were current in the bureaucratic language in his literary manuscripts. In the documents collected for *ACE*, *town* and *towne* occur 34 and 72

- (25) a. And eek his scrippe and sette hym softe **adown** Hengwrt  
His felawe was go walked in to **town** SU II. 69–70
- b. Woot ye nat where ther stant a litel **town** Hengwrt  
Which þ<sup>t</sup> clepid is Bobbe **vpanddown** L36 II. 1–2
- c. [...] whan she saw that Romayns wan the **town** Hengwrt  
[.]he took hir children alle and skipte **adown** FK II. 693–694

times, respectively, while *toun* and *toune* are found 23 and 33 times, respectively. *Town(e)* is therefore the predominant form in bureaucratic language, although *toun* has not yet disappeared. This is not surprising, since it is the bureaucratic language, not that of Chaucer, which is claimed to be the ancestor of Standard English (Samuels 1963:88).

It is interesting to compare the spelling of TOWN with that of DOWN (see §4.1 above), because even though both words are affected by the change from Hg *-ow-* to El *-ou-*, in Hg *town* is preferred to *toun*, and *doun* to *down*, while in El *toun* and *doun* are the only variants used for both words, with the exception of the inflected forms *towne* and *townes*. This is recapitulated in Table 8:

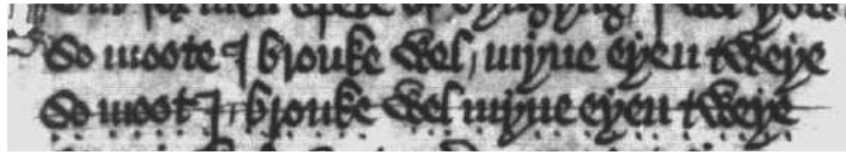
		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
DOWN	(a)down	55	–	–
	(a)doun	120	176+8	9
TOWN	town	47	–	1
	towne(s)	12	11+1	–
	toun	18	66+5	4

**Table 8. Occurrences of DOWN and TOWN**

Such preference for different variants of two words that are actually minimal pairs (TOWN-DOWN) induced Ramsey (1982:137) to argue that Hg and El were copied by two scribes with obviously different spelling habits. However, what emerges from the comparison of these two words is just another example of what has been shown so far, namely that *-ow-* tends to be used alongside *-ou-* in Hg, while *-ou-* is very often the preferred or only spelling in El. This does not necessarily mean that two different people copied the same text, since spelling was not yet standardised at the time, and – as Mann (2001:97) has shown – a scribe could change the spelling of some lines even when by mistake he copied them twice on the same page. Scribe B did so, for instance, in the text of the *Nun's Priest's Tale* in El that is reproduced in Figure 6, as he accidentally copied line 480 twice, and wrote *moote* the first time but *moot* the second time.

It could be postulated that both *-ow-* and *-ou-* were used by Chaucer in certain words but that he had a preference for *-ou-*, and that the change from Hg *-ow-* to El *-ou-* was just a scribal attempt to reflect such preference. This would also explain





**Figure 6. Scribal mistake in Ellemere, fol. 184r**  
(from Thomas 2006)

why the words TOWN and DOWN exhibit the forms *toun* and *doun* in El, thus in effect showing the older spelling. The analysis of the three occurrences of the variant *toun* in GP (ll. 217, 240, 622) in the fifteenth-century witnesses of *The Canterbury Tales* shows that Hg always reads *toun*, while other early manuscripts, such as El, Cp and Ha<sup>4</sup>, display *toun*. Hg is therefore the exception when compared with other authoritative manuscripts. In addition, the occurrences of *toun* in GP ll. 217 and 240 rhyme with *confessioun* and *champioun*, respectively, exactly like *toun* in GP l. 480, which rhymes with *religioun*. Similarly, the use of *doun* in WBP in Hg is not supported by comparison with the early manuscripts, while the use of *doun* is. *Down* occurs, in fact, three times in WBP, in ll. 753, 767 (rhyming with *leoun*) and 777 (rhyming with *Alisoun*), and only three manuscripts, Hg, Ht and Ry<sup>1</sup>, exhibit the same spelling in all three lines. A few other witnesses, Bo<sup>2</sup>, He, Nl, Si, Sl<sup>2</sup> To and Wy, read *doun* in one or two of the three lines, but none of these texts is an early one, while all other manuscripts read *doun*. By contrast, the variant *doun* is used five times in WBT in Hg: four of these occurrences are at the end of a line, where they rhyme with words ending in *-ioun*; this spelling is also found in the vast majority of the fifteenth-century manuscripts of WBP, including the early ones.

In this section I have provided examples of words in which a total or partial change from Hg *-ow-* to El *-ou-* took place. I have also presented various kinds of evidence that suggest that it is probably incorrect to consider this change to be linguistic, because the different spelling variants seem to result from a deliberate choice. The absence of a linguistic shift can thus explain why in certain cases *-ow-* forms are found in El, while the corresponding word in Hg is spelled with *-ou-*. Examples of this are the word *soude*, meaning ‘united’, in Hg, PR l. 127, which is spelled *sowded* in El, and the rhyming pair *souple: vncouple* in MO ll. 414–416, which is spelled *sowple: vncowple* in El, even though both manuscripts read *souple* for another occurrence of this word in GP l. 203. Examples are also *kowde* and *kowth(e)*, the two exceptional spelling variants used for the third person singular of the perfect tense of *connen*. *Kowde* is found three times in Hg, in NP, L36 and MA (all of them read *koude* in El), while *kowth(e)* occurs twice in El, in GP l. 14 (*kouthe* in Hg) and in PA par. 692 (not attested in Hg), but never in Hg. Both *kowde* and *kowth(e)* are old-fashioned forms, because the regular spelling of this verb in both manuscripts is *koude*. Yet, while the presence of *kowde* in Hg may be explained by the fact that the *-ow-* spelling is often used in this manuscript, the presence of *kowthe* in El is exceptional. *Koude* is also the preferred spelling variant in Tr, occurring alongside *kouthe* and *couthe*. In Hg the word *kowde* rhyme twice, in NP

l. 513 and L36 l. 94, with *lowde*, a word that is otherwise spelled *loude* in both Hg and El. The variant *lowde*, which is found once in El in a line that is not attested in Hg, L30 l. 4/11, seems to be an old-fashioned spelling for this word. A similar spelling is that of the noun *clowde*, which occurs twice in Hg and El (MO l. 680, PA par. 111) and once in El only (L30 l. 4/12, rhyming with *lowde*), and which is never spelled *cloude* in any of the manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*. It should be noticed that all occurrences of *kowde* and *lowde* in Hg are in quire 15, in folios 106r, 108v and 109r, respectively. This is a quire entirely written in the same yellow ink that is used for the heading of the first page of GP, L30, NP (in quire 14), L20, L17 and twelve lines of FK (see Stubbs 2000: Inks in Hengwrt). In her observations on section III of the Hengwrt manuscript, Stubbs suggests that

the material in the yellow ink was the last part of the Hg manuscript to be copied, since it seems to include certain ‘finishing’ features. However there are other possibilities and a definitive order of copying is impossible to establish at the present time

(Stubbs 2000: Observations, Section III).

It is therefore possible that the exceptional spelling of these words indicates that these lines were written by Chaucer before 1387, the year in which he presumably started to work on *The Canterbury Tales*, but were added to the *Tales* later.

Other examples of old-fashioned use of *-ow-* variants in El are the single occurrences of El *crowned* (KT l. 169), which corresponds to Hg *corouned*, and El *prowdly* in PA par. 355, which is spelled *proudly* in Hg, whereas Hg *prowde* in SU l. 519 and Hg *prowdly* in NU l. 473 correspond to El *proude* and *proudly*, respectively. Likewise, *wowke* for WEEK occurs twice in El in KT l. 681, where Hg reads *wyke*, and in FK l. 453 where Hg has a different reading, i.e. *day*. Finally, *youth* is the regular spelling for this noun both in Hg and El, although there are two instances of *yowthe* in Hg, in GP and L7 (spelled *youth* in El), and six in El, in ML, WBP, ME, L20, MO and NU (spelled *youth* in Hg). There is evidence from the rhyme words that both spelling variants represented the same sound, as rhyming pairs like *yowthe: nowthe* in GP ll. 463–464 in Hg and *youth: nowthe* in El are attested alongside pairs whose spelling was changed completely, as in TT ll. 22–23, which reads *Syklatown: brown* in Hg and *Syklatoun: broun* in El.

### 4.3. Words in which *-ow-* occurs alongside *-ou-* and *-o(u)gh* in both manuscripts

In the two preceding sections I have shown that Hg *-ow-* is either completely or partly substituted by *-ou-* in El. In a third group of words, variants spelled with *-ow-* occur alongside variants spelled with *-ou-*, *-ogh* and *-ough* in both manuscripts; also in these words the use of *-ou-* generally increases in El. This is exemplified in Table 9 by the items ENOUGH, LAUGHED, LOW, PLOUGH, SLOW, SWOUGH and THOUGH.

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
ENOUGH	ynow	28	1+3	2
	ynowe	5	4+1	1
	ynowh	–	–	1
	ynogh	21	5	1
	ynogh̄	–	23+2	3
	ynough	3	1	–
	ynough̄	3	25+7	5
LAUGHED	lowe	1	–	–
	lawe	1	–	–
	logh	2	–	–
	lough(e)	4	2	–
	lough	2	7	–
	laughe-	15	16+3	1
LOW	lowe	32	27+2	4
	logh	3	1	–
	logh̄	–	1	–
	lough	–	1	–
	lough̄	–	3+1	–
PLOUGH	plow	2 (NP, SH)	–	–
	plogh	2	–	–
	plogh̄	–	2	–
	plough	1	–	–
	plough̄	–	3	–
SLOW	slow(e)	36	34	–
	slough	–	4 (2KT, L30, L36)	–
SWOUGH	swogh	2	1	–
	swogh̄	–	1	–
	swowgh̄	1	–	–
	swough̄	1	4	–
THOUGH	thogh	187	42+2	18
	thogh̄	–	25+2	6
	though	27	68+9	6
	though̄	–	91+20	–
	theigh	7	–	–

**Table 9. Items in which *-ow-* occurs alongside *-ou-* and *-o(u)gh***

In each of the three manuscripts considered here, Scribe B employed most of the seven different variants for the adverb and adjective ENOUGH listed in Table 10, in which the manuscripts are arranged in chronological order of copying, starting from Hg, the earliest one:

	ynogh	ynogh̄	ynough	ynough̄	ynow	ynowe	ynowh
Hg	21	0	3	3	28	5	0
Tr	1	3	0	5	2	1	1
El	5	23+2	1	25+7	1+3	4+1	0

**Table 10. Variants of ENOUGH in Hg, Tr and El**

As the distribution of this word in Hg, Tr and El shows, the variants *ynogh* and *ynow* are preferred in Hg, while *ynogh̄* and *ynough̄* are used much more often in the other two manuscripts. The ‘crossed h’ found in the variants *yno(u)gh̄* is, as I discussed in Chapter 3, one of the several decorative strokes that abound in El, and its presence suggests that the scribe had more time to copy this manuscript than Hg (see also Chapter 6). The use of variants written with either *-ow-* or *-o(u)gh* for the item ENOUGH does not reflect different functions of the same word. In fact, both *ynow* and *yno(u)gh* are used in Hg for either the adjective or the adverb, while in El, where *ynow* has almost disappeared, the adjective as well as the adverb are spelled *yno(u)gh*, as shown by the lines in (26):

(26)	Hengwrt	Ellesmere	
	<i>adjective</i>		
	And haddest gold <b>ynow</b> and Emelye	<b>ynough</b>	KT 1. 1972
	Certes Grisilde I hadde <b>ynogh</b> plesance	<b>ynogh</b>	CL 1. 792
	Thus endeth my tale and god vs sende Taillynge <b>ynough</b> vn to oure lyues ende	<b>ynough</b>	SH II. 433–434
	<i>adverb</i>		
	That ye han seyde is right <b>ynow</b> ywis	<b>ynough</b>	L30 1. 2
	Were in this world is right <b>ynogh</b> for me	<b>ynogh</b>	WBP 1. 2
	Namoore of this for it is right <b>ynough</b>	<b>ynough</b>	PD 1. 634

In addition, the variant *ynowe*, which is listed in the *Chaucer Glossary* as a plural form, is used as such in all three manuscripts, with the sole exception of the line in Hg shown in (27) below. In the line in El *ynogh* collocates with the noun *folk*, which, according to Benson (1987:xxxiv), usually occurs in combination with a plural verb, and therefore should be followed by *ynowe*, as indeed happens in Hg. *Ynogh* in El could therefore be a mistake made by the scribe.

(27)	And oother folk <b>ynowe</b> this is thende	Hengwrt ML 1. 157
	And oother folk <b>ynogh</b> this is thende	Ellesmere ML 1. 157

As for the distribution of specific variants in each manuscript, in Hg there are three instances of *ynough* within the line and three of *ynough̄* in rhyming position.

Very likely the crossed *h* in these instances is not an abbreviation for a word-final *-e*, as it was in Latin manuscripts, because – as Parkes (1969:xxix) suggests – the stroke on the ascenders of letters like *đ* and *h* in English manuscripts of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was often employed as an embellishing mark. Crossed *h* is found in *yno(u)gh* as well as in other words in Hg, and this practice increases significantly in El. *Ynow* is used 28 times in Hg, while this variant almost totally disappears in El, where these occurrences are spelled either *ynogh* or *ynough*, with the exception of one instance in L20 l. 36. This single occurrence of *ynow* is preserved in El, together with its rhyme word *yow*, in a somewhat problematical section of both manuscripts. The section in question is Link 20, which is the *Squire-Merchant Link* in Hg, but the *Squire-Franklin Link* in El, and thus contains the words addressed to the Squire by the Merchant in Hg and by the Franklin in El (cf. Chapter 2, §1). The colour of the ink used to write Link 20 in Hg shows that it was one of the last additions made by the scribe to this manuscript, and this has led scholars to question the authenticity of these lines (cf. Blake 1985:87–89). In addition, the attribution of the speech to two different speakers in Hg and El indicates that changes were made between these two manuscripts. According to Mann (2001:82–86) the version in Hg is not a very good adaptation of the original text, and was made by the scribe to fit the link between two tales that he had copied in the wrong order. By contrast, the version in El is the original one, because it connects the tales in Chaucer's original order, which was SQ and FK, and is better in terms of metre and meaning of the text. *Ynow* occurs three more times in El, in CY, always at the end of the line, but these occurrences are not attested in Hg. The variant *ynowe* is always found within the line in Hg, and in four of the five occurrences that are attested it corresponds to the same word in El. Probably, as I previously showed with reference to *townes*, this is due to the fact that *ynowe* is a plural form, and is thus inflected. Only one instance of Hg *ynowe*, in (27), becomes El *ynogh*, and one more instance of *ynowe* as a rhyme word is attested in El but not in Hg, because it is in CY, a tale missing from this manuscript. In Hg, forms spelled with *-ow-*, *ynow* and *ynowe*, are the only variants that are used for this word in TM, in folios 225r and 234r (*ynow*), and in folio 225v (*ynowe*). In El the first two occurrences are spelled *ynogh* and *ynough*, respectively, while the third one preserves the spelling *ynowe*.

The variants *ynough* and *ynogh* are frequently used in El, while *ynough* is attested only once and *ynogh* occurs five times altogether: three of them, in GP l. 375, MI l. 443 and WBP l. 336, display the same spelling in Hg, while the other two, in ML ll. 157 and 774, are spelled *ynowe* and *ynow* in Hg. In one line, MO l. 47, Hg *ynogh* corresponds to El *anon*; this is probably a scribal mistake, as *anon* occurs in the preceding line:

- |                                                           |              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| (28) Out of a wang <sup>r</sup> tooth sprang anon a welle | Hengwrt      |
| Of which he drank <b>ynogh</b> shortly to seye            | MO II. 46–47 |
| Out of a wang <sup>r</sup> tooth sprang anon a welle      | Ellesmere    |
| Of which he drank <b>anon</b> shortly to seye             | MO II. 46–47 |

Variants spelled with *h̄* (crossed h) are common in Tr as well, as there are eight instances of *yno(u)gh̄* as against only one of *ynough* in the three quires copied by Scribe B. These are very likely not Gowerian forms, since the variant that is found more often in the Fairfax manuscript is *ynowh*, and only one example of this spelling, which is thus a relict, is found in Tr, in l. 3.2462. Other variants spelled with *-ow-* that are attested in Tr are *ynowe*, which occurs once, rhymes with *drowe* and is also found in the Fairfax manuscript, and two occurrences of *ynow*. Apparently, Chaucer's language influenced the scribe's practice much more than Gower's language did, because *ynowh* does not occur either in Hg or El while *ynow(e)* and *ynough* are found in Tr. Since the *-o(u)gh* spelling is the preferred one in Tr, either Scribe B had an exemplar whose language was no longer Gowerian, which would therefore exclude the Fairfax manuscript as a possible exemplar (see Samuels and Smith 1988:13), or he changed the spelling in his copy, as proposed by Samuels (1988b:25). Moreover, in Tr the scribe wrote the final *-h* of this word with a bar on the ascender, which is something he often did in El as well.

Another word that is spelled variably is *lowe/lo(u)gh*, which is employed for the adjective and adverb 'low' as well as for the past tense of the verb *laughen*. The variant *logh* occurs three times in Hg as an adjective in the fixed expression *heigh and logh*, and twice as the past tense of *laughen*. In El the spelling *logh* in the adverbial phrase is preserved twice in ML and it is changed into *lough̄* once in GP. The other occurrences of the adjective and adverb are spelled *lowe* in Hg and only three of them, GP l. 524, WBT l. 1074, TM par. 853, change into *lough* and *lough̄* in El, while the others remain unchanged. There are only two exceptions in Hg, one in MO l. 378 and another in CL l. 425, which have completely different readings in El, as shown in (29):

- |                                                             |                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (29) a. As any feend that lyth ful <b>lowe</b> adoun        | Hengwrt MO l. 378   |
| As any feend that lith in <b>helle</b> adoun                | Ellesmere MO l. 378 |
| b. And for he saugh þ <sup>t</sup> vnder <b>lowe</b> degree | Hengwrt CL l. 425   |
| And for he saugh that vnder <b>heigh</b> degree             | Ellesmere CL l. 425 |

In addition, the occurrence in GP l. 524 is rather interesting, because in Hg it reads:

- |                                                      |                   |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| (30) What so he weere of heigh or <b>lowe</b> estaat | Hengwrt GP l. 524 |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|

This variant is preserved as either *low* or *lowe* in almost all other witnesses of GP, while *lough* is found in El only, suggesting that this is a scribal change, possibly in

agreement with the authorial spelling of the fixed expression *heigh and logh*. In GP l. 817 Hg has adjectival *logh* as in Sl<sup>1</sup>. *Lough* is found in Ad<sup>3</sup>, Pw, Ch, El, Ld<sup>1</sup>, and *lowgh* in Fi; all other 35 witnesses have *low(e)*, while *lowh* is only attested once in Ry<sup>2</sup>. *Lowe* is therefore the most frequent spelling for the adjective, while *logh* is probably an old-fashioned variant that is mainly preserved in fixed expressions, even though it often undergoes the change to *lough*. As mentioned above, *logh* is also used twice in Hg for the verb; these two occurrences are spelled *lough* in El. *Logh*, however, is never a verbal form in El, while *lough(e)* and *laugh(e)* are. *Lough* is also used in Hg alongside *logh* for the same verb, and is preserved in El, while two more forms appear in Hg, *lowe* (L2 l. 4) and *lawe* (PD l. 639), which are respectively spelled *loughe* and *laughe* in El.

A similar change from Hg *-ow-* to El *-ough* also affects the words *plo(u)gh* and *slow(e)*, the last one of which is the adjective ‘slow’, the noun ‘mud’ and the past tense of the verb ‘slay’. The word *plo(u)gh* belongs to this group because it has three variants, one of which, *plow*, occurs twice in Hg, in NP l. 177 and SH l. 288, and is no longer attested in El, as both instances become *plo(u)gh* in this manuscript. The other two variants in Hg are *plogh* (KT l. 29, MI l. 574), spelled *plough* in El, and *plough* (L1 l. 49), spelled *plogh* in El. Hence, *plogh* and *plough* are the only spelling variants found in El for this word. Four of these instances occur at the end of a line, and the spelling of the rhyme words is changed accordingly, as in the lines in (31):

- |                                                 |              |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| (31) And wayke been the oxen in my <b>plogh</b> | Hengwrt      |
| The remenant of the tale is long <b>ynogh</b>   | KT ll. 29–30 |
| And wayke been the Oxen in my <b>Plough</b>     | Ellesmere    |
| The remenant of the tale is long <b>ynough</b>  | KT ll. 29–30 |

The spelling *slow(e)* occurs several times in Hg and El, but three instances of Hg *slow* correspond to El *slough*, as shown by the examples in (32):

- |                                                                                   |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (32) a. He faught <sup>r</sup> and <b>slow</b> hym manly as a knyght <sup>r</sup> | Hengwrt KT l. 129   |
| He faught <sup>r</sup> and <b>slough</b> hym manly as a knyght <sup>r</sup>       | Ellesmere KT l. 129 |
| b. Al thogh the <b>slow</b> hadde neu <sup>e</sup> ben so deep <sup>̄</sup>       | Hengwrt L30 l. 12   |
| Al thogh the <b>slough</b> had neu <sup>2</sup> been so deep                      | Ellesmere L30 l. 12 |
| c. To kepen hym and his capil out of the <b>Slow</b>                              | Hengwrt L36 l. 64   |
| To kepen hym and his Capul out of <b>slough</b>                                   | Ellesmere L36 l. 64 |

*Slough* is never attested in Hg, *slogh* is never found in any of the three manuscripts, while *slew* is used once in Hg for the past tense, in MO l. 114, where El reads *slow*. Spelling variants other than those with *-ow-* and *-ou-* are also employed for the item SWOUGH, meaning both ‘sound’ and ‘swoon’. While the related verb ‘swoon’ is regularly spelled *(a)swown-* in Hg, El and Tr, the noun shows variable spellings, especially in Hg. In this manuscript, the scribe wrote *swough* (KT l. 1121), *swogh*

(CL l. 1100), *swow* and *swowne* (SQ ll. 469 and 468), all of which occur as *swough* in El, as well as *swowgh* (WBT l. 773) and *swogh* (MI l. 433), which correspond to El *swogh* and *swogh*, respectively.

Finally, a word that shows a change from Hg *-o-* to El *-ou-*, though it never occurs with *-ow-*, is **THOUGH**. This word is spelled *thogh*, *though* and *theigh* in Hg, while it occurs as *thogh/thogh* and *though/though* in El. Scribe B preferred *thogh* in Hg but *though* in El, and he never wrote this word with a crossed *h* in Hg, whereas he did so very often in El. There are only 27 occurrences of *though* in Hg; eleven of them are found in Section III. As the figures in Table 11 show, *thogh* is the preferred variant in the first part of this section, while in the second part the two variants are used interchangeably, with a slight preference for *though*. I argued in Chapter 3, §3.2, that the second part of Section III generally displays spelling variants that are authorial as well as rather old-fashioned, which may indicate that these tales were copied from exemplars that had been written some time before Chaucer started to work on *The Canterbury Tales*. In this case the variation between *thogh* and *though* suggests that very likely both forms were in the exemplar. Comparison with all witnesses of L30 and NP shows that most fifteenth-century scribes wrote *though*, with or without crossed *h*, in these lines, while only a few of them wrote *thogh*. Ad<sup>3</sup> and He are the only two manuscripts among them that display this variant in all of these lines.

Tale	thogh	though
Link 29	2	1
Monk's Tale	7	2
Link 30	1	2
Nun's Priest's Tale	2	3
Link 36	1	1
Manciple's Tale	–	2

**Table 11. Variants of **THOUGH** in Section III of Hengwrt**

It may thus be concluded that apparently not only Scribe B but also most fifteenth-century scribes considered *though* to be more Chaucerian than *thogh*, and they therefore preserved it in their manuscripts. In Tr Scribe B used both *thogh* and *though/though*; *thogh* is however the preferred form here, as well as in the Fairfax manuscript, thus suggesting that this is a Gowerian variant. By contrast, forms with medial *-ou-* are used less frequently and are probably scribal. *Theigh* is an old-fashioned form characteristic of the London dialect Type II, which appears only seven times in Hg in three tales, WBP, FR and SQ. Horobin (2003:34) shows that the same variant is also attested in FR l. 27, SQ ll. 317, 604 and WBP l. 53 in other authoritative witnesses of these tales, i.e. Ad<sup>3</sup>, Bo<sup>2</sup>, Ch, Ha<sup>4</sup> and Ha<sup>5</sup>, and he argues that although by the early fifteenth century *theigh* had been superseded by *though* in the London dialect, it had not yet completely disappeared. *Theigh* was possibly preserved by fifteenth-century scribes because it had a literary connotation, while



*though* was the spelling commonly used in written records. In El three of the seven instances of *theigh*, in WBP l. 53 and FR ll. 27, 166, are spelled *thogh*, while the other four, in FR ll. 226, 311 and SQ ll. 317, 604, read *though*.

To conclude, the items analysed in this section show that in the case of words whose variants spelled with *-ow-* occur alongside variants spelled with *-ou-* and *-o(u)gh*, the use of *-u-* increases in El. Once again, the preference for *-ou-* in El may yield what we now know are modern forms, such as El *ynough* vs. Hg *ynow* and El *though* vs. Hg *thogh*, as well as old-fashioned forms, such as El *lough* (adjective) vs. Hg *lowe* and El *slough* vs. Hg *slow*. As explained in the previous chapter, spelling variants that are occasionally found in a manuscript in which the scribe constantly translated the language of the original text are relicts (Benskin and Laing 1981:58–59), and are indicative of the language that was in the exemplar. Hence, the words that are spelled with *-ow-* in Hg but not in El might be relicts from the Chaucerian exemplar that disappeared in the heavily normalised El. Thus, the fact that variants such as *toun*, *doun* and *lough*, which are old-fashioned from to our modern point of view, are used very frequently in the manuscript that was copied later, suggests that the scribe deliberately chose to use them systematically in El. Both variants were very likely attested in Chaucer's original manuscript, and it is possible that in Hg the scribe added even more variants which were homophones, though not homographs. Evidence for this is provided by rhyme words, as in Hg *-ow-* and *-ou-* are adjacent in rhyming pairs, such as *town: confessioun*. As a result, Hg displays a higher incidence of orthographic mismatch at the end of lines than El, while in the same context El exhibits a more consistent, although not necessarily more modern, spelling.

## 5. Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have examined the spelling of words that contain long and short *u*, and have tried to establish whether the changes from *-on* to *-oun*, from *-ow-* to *-ou-* and from *-ogh* to *-ough* reflect a systematic change from Hg *-ow-* and *-o-* to El *-ou-*. I did not find any evidence of a change from Hg *-o-* and *-ow-* to El *-ou-* as a result of a scribal progression towards a more modern spelling, as suggested by Samuels (see Chapter 3, §1). I did notice, however, that spelling variants with *-ou-* are much more common in El than in Hg, even though some of them are now considered old-fashioned forms of the language. I regard these variants as a sign of the scribe's intention to normalise the spelling in El, irrespective of the direction in which this spelling would eventually move. In addition, comparison with the other fifteenth-century witnesses of GP, MI, WBP and NP shows that Hg, and El to some extent, often disagree with most other witnesses when they exhibit variants with *-ou-* for [u] and [u:], thus suggesting that these forms are not authorial but were introduced by the scribes in their manuscripts. This assumption is in agreement with what I proposed in Chapter 3 with respect to the use of a double graph for the spelling of long vowels in El.

The data presented in this chapter, therefore, do not support Samuels' theory that the shift from Hg *-o-*, *-u-* and *-ow-* to El *-ou-* is one of the linguistic differences between the Hg and the El manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* that show a progression in the scribe's spelling practice. On the whole, it seems that the scribe only tried to impose a regular pattern on the spelling of El, and that he aimed to regularise it as much as possible by using fewer spelling variants than he had done in Hg, even though he did not entirely succeed.

## Degrees of spelling variation in Hengwrt and Ellesmere

### 1. Introduction

In the previous two chapters I suggested that the changes that affect the spelling of words containing vowels in general and long and short [u] in particular could be caused by an attempt on the part of Scribe B to impose a regular pattern on the orthography of El. Spelling variation in Hg would thus result on the one hand from a mixture of Chaucerian forms plus scribal forms and on the other hand from the use of different variants by Chaucer himself. In contrast, the spelling in El, which is more uniform though never wholly regular, could be due to a deliberate choice by the scribe, or perhaps by an editor who supervised his work (see Chapter 2), or even by the author himself, who wanted a high-quality copy of *The Canterbury Tales* to be produced. El is thus a manuscript in which the spelling received also considerable attention, and an effort was evidently made to make it as regular as possible. The use of different spelling forms in Hg and El, however, is not only restricted to the words discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. A comparison of the texts of the two manuscripts reveals that several other words display more than one spelling form, and that the use of these variants may differ between Hg and El. Several studies that attempted to cast light on the language of Chaucer have dealt with such spelling differences between Hg and El (cf. Samuels 1988b, Benson 1992, Horobin 2003). Even though the words investigated are often the same, AGAIN, WORK and SAW are some of them, scholars have not always agreed on which of the variants attested were likely to be authorial.

Since the object of my study is to try and distinguish authorial forms from scribal ones in order to determine which spelling changes occur between Hg and El and why, I will now turn to those words that for the most part exhibit different spelling variants in Hg and whose spelling may not be preserved in El. In doing so I will identify three categories of words, as listed in (1), and I will deal with them in sections 2, 3 and 4 of this chapter:

- (1) a. words for which a default spelling is mostly used, with alternative variants occurring only occasionally, such as default *chirche* vs. *cherche*;

- b. words for which two or more spelling variants are used in free variation, such as *bifore* vs. *biforn*;
- c. words that either do or do not show word division, such as *to day* vs. *today*.

## 2. One default spelling alongside one or more spelling variants

Like other Middle English manuscripts, Hg and El exhibit different spelling variants for the same words. A number of lexical items usually display one form which is used commonly, the default spelling, and one or more alternative variants that are attested less frequently. This is shown, for instance, by *moost(e)*, which is the default spelling for MOST, with the variant *meeste* occurring only three times in Hg and twice in El. The most exhaustive description of words belonging to this category is provided by Horobin, who argues that when identical spelling variants are clustered in the same portions of text in Hg and El, they are probably copied from a common exemplar. Horobin (2003:42–44) discusses, for instance, the word AGAIN(ST), showing that in both Hg and El the variants starting with *ag-* are used more frequently than those starting with *ay-*. These less common variants are usually clustered in the same sections of the two manuscripts, and Horobin (2003:43) suggests that ‘the most likely explanation is that the use of these spellings reflects a change in usage in a common exemplar for these tales, or a change of the exemplar itself, preserved by direct scribal transcription’.

In my analysis of lexical items that show one main spelling and one or more secondary variants, I noticed that this is an even more complicated issue than Horobin suggests. By selecting those words that display several spelling variants in Hg and El, I established that in some cases the use of such variants in El is similar to that in Hg (§2.1), that in other cases the main spelling variant is the same in both manuscripts, though the alternative spellings differ considerably between Hg and El (§2.2), while in some other cases, the variants in Hg and El may differ completely (§2.3).

### 2.1. Similar spelling variants in Hengwrt and Ellesmere

The words discussed in this section show a number of spelling variants which are approximately used in the same way in both Hg and El; for all of them, a main variant is normally found in both manuscripts, while one or more alternative forms may occur, but less frequently. Relevant forms from Tr are, as usual, provided for comparison. The lexical items that were chosen to represent this feature are: AGAIN(ST), ARE, CHURCH, MIRTH, MOST, OFTEN, SO, SUBTLE, TAUGHT, THEN, TOMORROW, WHEN, WORK and YET, and the number of occurrences of each is provided in Table 1.

		<b>Hengwrt</b>	<b>Ellesmere</b>	<b>Trinity</b>
AGAIN(ST)	again(s)	1	0+3	–
	agayn(s)	173	172+51	–
	ageyn(s)	16	17+3	–
	ayein(s)	9	10+1	37
	ayeyn	–	–	4
ARE/BE (pres. ind. plur.)	ar(e)	4	4+1	–
	arn	2	2+2	–
	beth	1	5	–
CHURCH	chirche	37	42+30	3
	cherche	6	1	1
MIRTH	myrthe	14	15+2	–
	murthe	4 (2GP, ME, CL)	3+1 (ML, CL, L28, L33)	–
MOST (adverb)	moost	45	43+11	15
	mooste	11	12+1	2
	meeste	3 (KT, SQ, CL)	2 (KT, CL)	–
OFTEN	ofte	91	84+30 (1 oft)	38
	often	13	19	3
SO	so	1163	1164+172	318
	(al)swa	3	4	–
SUBTLE(LY)	subtil(e)	17	14	1
	soutil	–	2 (KT)	–
	subtilly	16	16+1	–
	sotilly	1 (WBT)	1 (ME)	–
TAUGHT	-taught(e)	29	29+3	5
	taght(e)	1 (PD)	–	2
THAN/THEN	than	289	284+44	36
	thanne	281	279+63	53
	thāne	–	7	7
	tho	39	40+3	40 (1 þo)
	then(ne)	1	2+1 (1 thē)	–
TOMORROW	tomorwe	12	16	4
	to morwe	8	5	–
	tomorn	2	2	–
WHEN	whan	572	586+81	135
	whanne	20	12+5	10
WORK	werk-	116	116+36	8
	wirk-	5	4+1	–
	werch	7	5+2	5
	wirche	5	9+1	–
YET	yet	245	255	65
	yit	8	5	6

Table 1. Similar spelling variants in Hg and El

The word AGAIN(ST), meaning both ‘again’ and ‘against’ in ME, exhibits two main differences in its spelling variants: in both Hg and El it is more frequently spelled with initial *ag-*, i.e. *again(s)*, *agayn(s)*, *agein(s)* and *ageyn(s)*, and the alternative spelling is provided by variants that begin with *ay-*, i.e. *ayein(s)* and *ayeyn(s)*. In addition, the medial vowel can either be *-ai-* or *-ei-*, as shown by the examples provided above. These different variants have been dealt with in several studies, leading to somewhat contradictory conclusions, as shown by the contrasting opinions of Samuels (1988b:26), who argues that only forms starting with initial *ag-* should be considered to be authorial, and Horobin (2003:44), who proposes that ‘the spelling “*ayein/ayeyn*” represents at least part of Chaucer’s own usage’.

The study of all occurrences of this word in Hg and El reveals that AGAIN(ST) is predominantly spelled with initial *ag-*; this is illustrated by the following overview of all the spelling variants of AGAIN(ST) attested in Hg, El and Tr, which I have also classified according to their grammatical function:

Variant	Word class	Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
<i>again</i>	adverb	1	0+1	–
<i>agains</i>	preposition	–	0+2	–
<i>agayn</i>	adverb/preposition	125	131+24	–
<i>agayns</i>	preposition	48	41+27	–
<i>ageyn</i>	adverb/preposition	14	17+3	–
<i>ageyns</i>	preposition	2	–	–
<i>ayeyn</i>	adverb/preposition	–	8	4
<i>ayeyns</i>	preposition	–	2+1	–
<i>ayein</i>	adverb/preposition	8	–	37
<i>ayeins</i>	preposition	1	–	–

**Table 2. Spelling variants of AGAIN(ST)**

*Agayn* is by far the preferred spelling in both manuscripts, both when it is used as an adverb in the sense of ‘again’ or ‘back’, and when it represents the preposition ‘against’. The variant *ageyn* occurs less frequently, and it is primarily employed in Hg and El for those adverbs that occur in rhyming position. Only four instances of this variant in Hg are prepositions; they are found in a prose section, TM, where the only two occurrences of *ageyns* are also attested, but neither variant is preserved in El, where the six words are spelled *agayn(s)*. Prepositional *ageyn* occurs just once in El, in the middle of the following line:

- (2) Wher fore **agayn** this lusty somʔes tyde Hengwrt SQ l. 134  
 Wherefore **ageyn** this lusty Somʔes tyde Ellesmere SQ l. 134

Forms ending in *-s*, i.e. *agayns* and more rarely *ageyns*, are only used for the preposition and never for the adverb, as in:

- (3) It is **agayns** the proces of nature                      Hengwrt FK l. 637

The variants spelled with initial *ay-* are *ayein(s)* in Hg and *ayeyn(s)* in El, and the few occurrences ending in a final *-s* are prepositions. *Ayein* and *ayeyn* are employed eight times in each manuscript, though not always in the same lines, with the function of adverb as well as preposition, as in:

- (4) a. And ther I lefte I wol **ayein** bigynne                      Hengwrt KT l. 34  
       And ther I lefte I wol **ayeyn** bigynne                      Ellesmere KT l. 34
- b. And loude he soongr **ayein** the sonne shene              Hengwrt KT l. 651  
       And loude he songr **ayeyn** the sonne shene              Ellesmere KT l. 651

In Hg *ayein* is attested twice in KT and ME (in l. 1069, where it rhymes with *certeyn*), and once in RE, NP, SQ and TM, that is, in Structural Sections I, III and IV of this manuscript. Only four of these occurrences (KT ll. 34, 651, SQ l. 662, ME l. 1016), none of which is a rhyme word, are preserved as *ayeyn* in El, while the remaining four instances are spelled either *agayn*, when they are within a line or in a prose passage (RE l. 147, NP l. 589, TM par. 268), or *ageyn* when in rhyming position (ME l. 1069). The other four occurrences of *ayeyn* in El (CO l. 16, SQ ll. 88, 119, PA par. 375) are spelled with initial *ag-* in Hg. Likewise, the preposition *ayeins* occurs just once in Hg, in CL l. 320, while in El there are three occurrences of *ayeyns* in KT l. 929 (spelled *agayns* in Hg), CL l. 320 and L1 l. 46/1 (not in Hg). In Tr there are no forms of this word with initial *ag-*, while *ayein* is used for both the adverb and the preposition, and *ayeyn* is employed four times for adverbs in rhyming position. This very likely reflects Gower's spelling, since forms with initial *ag-* are also not attested in the section of Fairfax that corresponds to the three quires copied by Scribe B, and occur very rarely in the rest of this manuscript.

Some observations can thus be made on the use of these spelling variants. First of all, the use of different forms does not correlate with different grammatical categories, as both adverb and preposition show either initial *ag-* or initial *ay-*. Secondly, according to the *MED*, ME *again* was chiefly a Northern and North Midland form until 1400, when it became established in London English, whereas ME *aȝein* and *ayein* were mainly Southern and South Midland forms (see also *LALME* vol. I, map 220 for forms with *-g-*, map 221 for forms with *-y-* and map 222 for forms with *-ȝ-*). The widespread use of *agayn* in the Chaucerian manuscripts is therefore rather innovative, especially in view of the fact that forms with initial *ag-* are found less frequently than those with initial *ay-* in the Signet, Privy Seal and Chancery documents collected in *ACE* and dating from the period 1417–1462. In these texts, the adverb AGAIN is spelled 22 times with initial *ag-*, eight times with initial *ay-* and twice with initial *aȝ-*, whereas the preposition AGAINST is spelled 59 times with initial *ay-*, thirteen times with initial *aȝ-* and only nine times with initial *ag-*. Forms beginning with *ay-* are used more regularly than the others, as variants

spelled with initial *ag-* make up just one third of all occurrences. This suggests that initial *ay-* was still the most commonly used form in the bureaucratic language of the fifteenth-century. In addition, forms with initial *ay-* are also characteristic of Gower's language, as they are always used in the Fairfax manuscript, with the exception of three occurrences of *agayn* in Book 5. In his stint of the *Confessio Amantis* in Tr, Scribe B preserved Gower's spelling, and even though it is not known which manuscript served as the exemplar for his copy, it seems obvious that *ay-* forms must have been present in it. Hence, if the scribe preserved the original spelling in Tr, why would he translate, rather than merely copy, the text of Hg and El? Moreover, if he really was a bureaucratic clerk, as Mooney (2006:106–112) claims, why would he use *ag-* forms against the common practice of his colleagues and probably his own? I believe that Scribe B did not translate this word in Hg and El either, but that he simply preserved the forms of AGAIN that he found in his copytext. This begs the question of why, in this case, Chaucer himself used a variant that was rather modern and typical of northern dialects, instead of the form that was currently used in London. The most appropriate answer to this question is that provided by Samuels, who argues:

It is thus difficult to escape the conclusion that *agayn(s)* was an exceptionally progressive form for Chaucer to use. Since it was to form part of the written Chancery Standard in the fifteenth century, it was doubtless well enough known as a spoken form in the late-fourteenth-century London. We may surmise that Chaucer's adoption of it was due to his having encountered it more than most Londoners as a man of travel and affairs, but, since so pronounced a feature is more likely to have been adopted earlier in his life, it might equally well be due to his period of service as a page at Hatfield, Yorks., in the later 1350's.

(Samuels 1988b:30)

Forms beginning with *ay-* may have been present in Chaucer's repertoire as well, as these forms were typical of the London dialect of his time, and occasionally he might have used them, too. The fact that a small number of occurrences of *ayein(s)* in Hg and *ayeyn(s)* in El are attested in the same lines in these manuscripts may mean that such forms were present in a common ancestor and were preserved as such. Perhaps better evidence for the possible authority of *ay-* variants is to be found in the agreement of Hg (*ayein*) with Cp, Ha<sup>4</sup> (*aʒein*) and La (*aʒeine*) in NP l. 589, a line in which Hg disagrees with El (*agayn*). Likewise, the variant *ayeyns* is attested in the following line of the *Miller's Prologue* (L1) in El, a line that is not present in Hg:

(5) And eũe a thousand goode **ayeyns** oon badde Ellesmere L1 l. 46/1

Interestingly, this is the second line of a couplet that occurs in just thirteen manuscripts in the entire tradition: Ad<sup>1</sup>, Ad<sup>3</sup>, El, En<sup>3</sup>, Gg, Ha<sup>4</sup>, Ha<sup>5</sup>, Ht, Ii, Nl, Ps, Py and To<sup>1</sup>. According to the stemmatic commentary provided in the CD-ROM of the



*Miller's Tale*, all of these, except Ht and Nl, are O manuscripts, which suggests that this couplet must have been in the archetype of Ml. Only three other O manuscripts lack these two lines, Hg, Ch and Hk, probably because in Chaucer's original text it was unclear whether the couplet had to be copied or not. As Robinson argues,

it appears too that some pages may have had lines, or whole passages, either first written within the text but marked for deletion, or written elsewhere on the page but marked as additions to the text. This meant that at each such point, the scribe would have the option of deleting or adding the passages in question. Each of the first generation of copyists from these originals seems to have made a slightly different set of decisions.

(Robinson 2003:131)

Hence, if line 46/1 of the *Miller's Prologue* was in the archetype, it follows that the variant *ayeyns* contained in it must be authorial.

The influence of a Northern dialect on Chaucer's language is not only shown by the variant *agayn*, but also by other forms that are found in both Hg and El, such as the spellings *ar*, *are* and *arn* for the present indicative plural of ARE instead of *be(e)n*, which is the dominant form for BE. In Hg there are very few occurrences of *ar* (RE twice, SH), *are* (ML) and *arn* (CL, TM), and all of them are preserved as such in El, with one exception given in (6):

- (6) Now **ar** we dryuen til hethyng 7 til scorn      Hengwrt RE l. 190  
       Now **are** we dryue til hethyng<sup>r</sup> and til scorn    Ellesmere RE l. 190

According to *LALME*, the distribution of these forms in Chaucer's time is as follows: *ar* is a Northern variant (see *LALME*, vol. I, map 118), *arn* is sporadically used in the South East Midlands, Southern and South West Midlands (see *LALME*, vol. I, map 120), while *be(n)* is a Southern variant of BE (see *LALME*, vol. I, map 124). The use of *ar* in RE is thus justified by the fact that Northern features are employed in this tale in order to characterise some of the speakers. By contrast, there is no such explanation for *ar(e)* and *arn* in the other tales; they simply seem to be alternative variants to the predominant forms *be(e)n*. However, even though *ar(e)* and *arn* occur so rarely in Hg, all instances of these variants are attested in El as well. This suggests that they are relicts from the original exemplar, and thus forms that belonged to Chaucer's repertoire, but were used very infrequently. If Scribe B really came from Surrey, as Mooney (2006) believes, *arn* would have been in the scribe's repertoire, since this form was attested in the dialect of that area.

One more variant of BE, *beth*, should be mentioned here, even though this is not a Northern but a Southern form (see *LALME*, vol. I, map 128), as it is occasionally used in Hg and El for the present indicative plural of BE as well. In Chaucer's language *beth* mostly stands for the imperative plural of BE, and as such it is also spelled *beeth* in two lines of Hg (in SQ, PD) and in four of El (SH, MA, twice in CY), although two instances in CY are not attested in Hg. In both manuscripts, *beth*, the imperative plural, is sometimes employed to address one person formally, as can

be concluded from the use of the polite pronoun *yow* (see Burnley 1983:17–22) in line 644 of CL:

- (7) This warne I yow þ<sup>t</sup> ye nat sodeynly  
 Out of your self for no wo sholde outraye Hengwrt  
**Beth** pacient<sup>r</sup> and ther of I yow praye CL ll. 642–644

However, the Southern variant *beth* standing for the indicative present plural is also attested once in Hg and five times in El instead of the more common *be(en)*. The sole occurrence of *beth* in Hg is in the paragraph from TM that is shown in (8), although in this instance *beth* is not retained in El, where *been* is used twice in the same paragraph instead.

- (8) he seith þ<sup>t</sup> wordes þ<sup>t</sup> **ben** spoken discretly by Hengwrt  
 ordinaunce **beth** honycombes TM par. 145  
 he seith that wordes þ<sup>t</sup> **been** spoken discretly Ellesmere  
 by ordinaunce **been** honycōbes TM par. 145

El, by contrast, exhibits five instances of *beth* meaning ‘are’, found in the following lines, in all of which Hg reads *be(en)*:

- (9) a. That seith þ<sup>t</sup> hunterys **been** none holy men Hengwrt GP 1. 178  
 That seith that hunters **beth** nat hooly men Ellesmere GP 1. 178  
 b. I sey this þ<sup>t</sup> they maked **been** for bothe Hengwrt WBP 1. 126  
 I sey yis that they **beth** maked for bothe Ellesmere WBP 1. 126  
 c. As **been** thise tydyues terceletz and Owles Hengwrt SQ 1. 640  
 As **beth** thise tidyues tercelettes and Owles Ellesmere SQ 1. 640  
 d. for c<sup>t</sup>tes gold ne siluer **ben** noght so mucche Hengwrt  
 worth as the goode wyl of a trewe freend TM par. 192  
 for c<sup>t</sup>tes gold ne siluer **beth** nat so mucche Ellesmere  
 worth as the goode wyl of a trewe freend<sup>ð</sup> TM par. 192  
 e. þ<sup>t</sup> we **be** w<sup>t</sup> oute synne we deceyuen vs Hengwrt  
 selue and trouthe is nat in vs PA par. 275  
 that we **beth** with oute synne we deceyue Ellesmere  
 vs selue and trouthe is nat in vs PA par. 275

Interestingly, the variant *beth* in GP 1. 178 is only attested in Ad<sup>1</sup>, En<sup>3</sup>, El, Ht, Ra<sup>3</sup> and Tc<sup>1</sup>, while La is the only early manuscript to read *bepe*. Ad<sup>1</sup> and En<sup>3</sup> date from the last quarter of the fifteenth century but they are classified among the O manuscripts in a number of tales, as Ra<sup>3</sup> and Tc<sup>1</sup>, two texts dating from the third

quarter of the century (cf. Barbrook et al. 1998, Robinson 2000a). As to the presence of *beth* in WBP l. 126, the form occurs only in El and Ch, another O manuscript, although in Ch (fol. 73v) this variant is struck through and *were* is written above it, while *beþ* is found in Ln. It would seem that despite the fact that *beth* is not a form typical of Chaucer's language, its presence in early and in late but authoritative manuscripts, as well as in the exemplar of Ch, may indicate that this is a relict from Chaucer's original papers.

Another word that displays Northern features is the adverb *so*, which appears consistently as *so* in all three manuscripts; the dialectal variant *swa* occurs only in RE, in the speeches of the two students Aleyn and John, who are thus characterised as Northerners. It occurs three times in both Hg and El, in lines 110, 120 and 165 (here in *alswa*), while a fourth instance is spelled *swa* in El but *so* in Hg:

- |                                                |                     |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (10) I is thyn awen clerk <b>so</b> haue I sel | Hengwrt RE l. 319   |
| I is thyn awen clerk <b>swa</b> haue I seel    | Ellesmere RE l. 319 |

Since in this line too, the speaker is one of the two students from the North, *swa* is the authorial form, while the reading in Hg is probably a correction or a mistake made by the scribe, which was restored in El. More such changes made by Scribe B and concerning the Northern variants found in RE are described by Horobin (2000b, 2001).

Hg and El display the same spelling variants for the word MIRTH, *myrthe* being the most frequently used spelling, while *murthe* occurs only four times in both manuscripts, always in the middle of a line, although the only occurrence actually shared by both texts is in CL l. 1123. The variant *myrthe* shows the reflex of OE *-y-* in *-i-* typical of the East Midland dialect, whereas *murthe* exemplifies the reflex of OE *-y-* in *-u-*, which is characteristic of the Western and South Western dialects, as shown in the map in Figure 1. Two occurrences of *murthe* in Hg are found in GP, where the word MIRTH occurs four times within fourteen lines (ll. 759–773), and a comparison of all witnesses of this section shows that this variant is used in only two manuscripts of GP other than Hg, i.e. Ad<sup>3</sup> and To<sup>1</sup>. More precisely, *murthe* is attested in line 759 in Ad<sup>3</sup>, Hg and To<sup>1</sup>, in lines 766 and 767 in Ad<sup>3</sup> and To<sup>1</sup>, and finally in line 773 in Hg only. The presence of *murthe* in Hg as well as in Ad<sup>3</sup> and To<sup>1</sup> suggests that it may be an authorial variant, since these three manuscripts possibly descend from the archetype of *The Canterbury Tales* (cf. Robinson 2000a: §4.1.2). This evidence is further supported by Horobin (2003:147), who argues that even though the central features of the orthography in Ad<sup>3</sup> correspond to the London Type III and IV dialects, there are also some West Midland features, which are clustered in the opening folios of the manuscript as a result of *literatim* copying.



Figure 1. Reflexes of OE *y* in ME dialects

Hg and El likewise agree in the spelling of the word *MOST*, whether it refers to the adverb as in

(11) To yow my lady þ<sup>t</sup> I loue **moost** Hengwrt KT l. 1907

or to what Davis et al. (1979) refer to in *A Chaucer Glossary* as the ‘superlative ‘greatest’’, which it is regularly spelled *moost* when it is indefinite (as in 12a), and *mooste* when it is definite (as in 12b).

(12) a. Of studye took he **moost** cure and **moost** heede Hengwrt GP l. 303  
 b. In al his wele and in his **mooste** pryde Hengwrt KT l. 37

All but two occurrences of this variant are attested with the same spelling in the corresponding lines of Hg and El. The variant of this word that occurs more rarely is *meeste*, which is attested only three times in Hg, in KT l. 1340, SQ l. 292 and CL l. 131. The first two instances are found within the line in the fixed expression *to the meeste and (to the) leeste*; the third occurrence is at the end of the line, where it rhymes with *heste* but also with *leeste*:

- (13) That neu<sup>e</sup> yet<sup>r</sup> refuseden thyn **heste**  
 And we wol lord if þ<sup>t</sup> ye wol assente  
 Chese yow a wyf<sup>r</sup> in short tyme at the **leeste** Hengwrt  
 Born of the gentileste and of the **meeste** CL ll. 128–131

The variant *meeste* is preserved in El in KT and CL, but not in SQ, as shown in (14):

- (14) Hath plentee to the **meeste** and to the leeste Hengwrt SQ l. 292  
 Hath plentee to the **mooste** and to the leeste Ellesmere SQ l. 292.

The presence of *meeste* within the line as well as in a rhyming context suggests that this is an authorial variant, possibly one that occurs only in fossilised expressions as shown in (13) and (14) above. This might also be a reason why this variant never occurs in Tr, where only *moost* and *mooste* are attested.

For the word OFTEN, the scribe used the main spelling variant *ofte*, as well as an alternative but rarer spelling *often* in both Hg and El. These two variants occur in a number of tales, in particular in GP, MI, WBP, WBT, ML and FK in both manuscripts, and in KT and ME only in El, although the variant *often* is never attested in TM and PA. This could be due to the fact that in Chaucer's language the final *-e* of *ofte* could be elided before a vowel (cf. Kökeritz 1954:18); *often* was therefore only employed when an extra syllable was necessary for the rhythm, which was never the case in prose. In addition, *often* does not seem to have been specifically chosen to prevent elision of final *-e* in pronunciation when the following word begins with a vowel, as both *ofte* and *often* equally occur before words that begin with a consonant or a vowel. *Ofte* is regularly used in Tr as well, while *often* occurs only three times, in lines 3.890, 3.894 and 3.1301. These are also the only three instances of *often* that are found in the section of the Fairfax manuscript corresponding to the three quires copied by Scribe B, and they show that here the scribe probably preserved the spelling of the exemplar from which he was copying. The spelling *ofte* is also the preferred one in the expression *ofte tyme(s)*, the variant *often tyme(s)* occurring only three times in Hg, all of which are preserved in El, and six times in El.

Alternative spelling variants are also used alongside *subtilly* and *subtil(e)* for the adverb 'subtly' and the adjective 'subtle'. These variants are *sotilly* in Hg WBT l. 929 and in El ME l. 759, and *soutil*, which occurs twice in El within the line in KT (ll. 1172, 1191). The sole occurrence of the adjective in Tr is spelled *subtil*, although the reading in the Fairfax manuscript is *soutil*. Likewise, there is only one instance of *taghte* in Hg, since *taught(e)* is the form that is normally used in this manuscript. *Taghte* is very likely the archetypal spelling, which is preserved in rhyming position, as shown below, where it rhymes with *draghte*. This is the preferred spelling for the word DRAUGHT in Hg (see §2.3), while *draughte* is preferred in El, as can be seen by the fact that the scribe adapted the spelling of both words in order to obtain full rhyme in the lines from PD in (15):

- (15) Drynketh a **draughte** taak kepe eek what I telle  
 If þ<sup>t</sup> the goode man þ<sup>t</sup> the bestes oweth  
 Wol euery wike er þ<sup>t</sup> the cok hym croweth  
 Fastynge drynken of this welle a **draghte** Hengwrt  
 As thilke holy lew oure eldres **taghte** PD II. 32–36
- Drynketh a **draughte** taak kepe eek what I telle  
 If that the goode man that the beestes oweth  
 Wol euery wyke er that the Cok hym croweth  
 Fastynge drynke of this welle a **draughte** Ellesmere  
 As thilke hooly lew oure eldres **taughte** PD II. 32–36

The variant *(y)taght* is also attested twice in another manuscript copied by Scribe B, the Kk fragment of the *Prioress's Tale*, in which it occurs once within the line, hence where the rhyme constraint does not operate, and once at the end of the verse line:

- (16) As hym was **taght** to knele adoun and seye  
 His Aue Marie as he goth by the weye  
 Thus hath this widwe hir litel child **ytaght**  
 Our blisful lady cristes moder deere  
 To worshipe ay and he forgat it naght Kk PR II. 55–59

In Tr there are five occurrences of *taught(e)*, while *taghte* is found twice in the following lines:

- (17) And after þat he **taghte** hym selue Tr I. 3.2497  
 Which crist vpon this erthe **taghte**  
 Now may men see moerdre 7 manslaghte Tr I. 3.2543–2544

It is unlikely that these are Gowerian forms, because in the Fairfax manuscript the spelling consistently used for 'taught' is *tawht(e)*, with the exception of four occurrences of *taght(e)* in the Prologue and in Books 2 and 8, hence in sections that were not copied by Scribe B. However, given that both instances of *taghte* in this manuscript occur consecutively in folios 19r and 19v, it cannot be excluded that they are relicts from the exemplar used for Tr, and that the scribe, who was familiar with this variant because of his work on the Chaucerian manuscripts, preserved them as such.

In Hg, El as well as in Tr the words THAN and THEN are commonly spelled *than* and *thanne*, even though some differences in the use of these two variants can be noticed, and less commonly *tho*. In Hg and El *than* does not often occur at the beginning of verse lines (59 times out of almost 300 instances in Hg and El each) and never at the beginning of prose sentences in TM and PA. The variant *thanne*, by contrast, is found both at the beginning and within the verse lines, and it is also the only form found at the beginning of prose sentences. This variant also occurs in Tr

and El in its abbreviated version, *thāne*; in El it is found once in KT and TM and five times in PA, three of which are in the section that is missing from Hg. Finally, there are tales in which the two variants do not co-occur. Hence, WBT only exhibits *thanne* and *tho* but not *than*, while all three variants occur in WBP, and *than* but not *thanne* is the variant attested in CO. The variant that is found alongside *than(ne)*, and that is used more rarely in both manuscripts, is *tho*. Almost all occurrences of this form are found in the corresponding lines of several tales in Hg and El (KT, ML, WBP, WBT, L10, L11, ML, SQ, L17, FK, NU, CL, TM and L37), but never in any of the tales belonging to Structural Section III of Hg. The only exceptions are in the following lines, in which the two manuscripts also display textual differences:

- |         |                                                  |                      |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| (18) a. | Yet soong the larke and Palamon right <b>tho</b> | Hengwrt KT l. 1354   |
|         | Yet song the larke and Palamon <b>also</b>       | Ellesmere KT l. 1354 |
| b.      | <b>Thus</b> shewed he the myghty dukes wille     | Hengwrt KT l. 1678   |
|         | <b>Tho</b> shewed he the myghty dukes wille      | Ellesmere KT l. 1678 |
| c.      | Ten of the Clokke it was <b>so</b> as I gesse    | Hengwrt L37 l.5      |
|         | Ten of the Clokke it was <b>tho</b> as I gesse   | Ellesmere L37 l.5    |

Twelve instances of *tho* are clustered in NU, and are the preferred form in this tale, where *than(ne)* occurs only eight times. Cooper (1989:358) suggests that NU was written before 1386–87 and was included in *The Canterbury Tales* only later. It is possible, therefore, that *tho* was in the original papers and that the scribe preserved it. This would be partly due to the fact that this spelling of the adverb is found in the same lines in Hg and El, and partly to the fact that it often occurs in the same positions in the line, i.e. at the beginning and, more crucially, at the end. Of all occurrences in Hg, for instance, sixteen are found at the beginning of a line, fifteen at the end, and only the remaining nine within the line. The occurrence of *tho* in Tr is proportionally higher than in either Hg or El, because even though *than* and *thanne* are the variants that occur more regularly in this text, *tho*, once spelled *þo*, in line 4.1438, is often employed as an alternative variant. Moreover, in Tr *than* is used more often at the beginning of lines than *thanne* (29 vs. 11 instances, respectively), which is the reverse of the pattern found in Hg and El. This suggests that the choice of the variants in the Chaucerian as well as in the Gowerian manuscripts is very likely to be authorial rather than scribal.

Unlike THAN and THEN, the word WHEN is usually spelled *whan* in Hg, El and Tr, while *whanne* is used less frequently. Furthermore, despite the similarity between *than(ne)* and *whan(ne)*, the distribution of *whan(ne)* is totally different from that of *than(ne)*, as *whan* is the most commonly used form, regardless of the position in the sentence, though of course it never occurs in rhyming position. In Hg ten of the twenty occurrences of *whanne* are clustered in TM, one instance in quire 28 and nine in quire 29, and they are used alongside 62 instances of *whan*, while the other ten occurrences of *whanne* are found in GP, KT (three times), MO, NP, SQ (twice),

and PA (twice). Apart from Hg, the reading *whanne* is attested in GP l. 169 in three other fifteenth-century manuscripts: La, Pw and To<sup>1</sup>. Likewise, in NP l. 538 *whanne* also occurs in Dl and Ph<sup>3</sup>. In El *whanne* is used even more rarely than in Hg: the first occurrence is found in WBP, and the others are in ME, SQ, TM (seven occurrences), MO (twice), CY, PA (four occurrences). The instance in WBP l. 59 exhibits substantially different readings in Hg and El, as shown below:

- (19) **Where kan ye seye** in any maner age  
 That heighe god defended mariage      Hengwrt  
 By expres word I pray yow telleth me      WBP l. 59–61
- Whanne saugh ye euere** in manere Age  
 That hye god defended mariage      Ellesmere  
 By expres word I pray yow telleth me      WBP l. 59–61

In this line *whan(ne)* occurs instead of *where* only in Bo<sup>1</sup>, El, Ha<sup>4</sup>, Ph<sup>2</sup> and Si, and these manuscripts share similar readings of the whole line as well. This is very likely due to scribal revision at an early stage of the manuscript tradition, since Bo<sup>1</sup>, Ph<sup>2</sup> and Si, together with Gg, belong to the same group of witnesses, i.e. group *g* according to recent studies on the extant witnesses of WBP (see Barbrook et al. 1998). In addition, Robinson (1997:86) argues that ‘particularly notable is the frequency with which group *g* manuscripts are joined by El and (to a slightly lesser degree) Ha<sup>4</sup>’, which explains why the same reading is found in these two manuscripts as well. In her study on Chaucer’s metre and scribal editing in the early manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*, Solopova (1997:147) explains that in this line of WBP the textual changes produce a less regular rhythm, and therefore she excludes the possibility that they could be authorial. All this suggests that WBP l. 59 in El is not Chaucerian and also that the variant *whanne* is probably scribal. This may be also why the reading attested in the equivalent line in Hg was adopted in Benson’s edition of *The Canterbury Tales*, despite the fact that the base text for this edition is El. In the light of this assumption, it could be argued that the other occurrences of this variant are also scribal. The use of *whanne* decreases in El, and most occurrences are found in TM both in Hg and El; since this is the old-fashioned form (OE *hwanne*), it is possible that this variant was deliberately introduced to give a more authoritative – because old-fashioned – aspect to the text. *Whan* is also the most frequently used form in Tr (135 occurrences), while *whanne* occurs just in ten lines: this reflects the relationship between the two variants in the entire Fairfax manuscript, although in the section of Fairfax that corresponds to Scribe B’s stint of Tr there are roughly twice as many occurrences (21) of *whanne* as in Tr (10).

Similarities between Hg and El are also found in the spelling of the adverb TOMORROW, which occurs as either *tomorwe* or *to morwe* in these manuscripts as well as in Tr. There is, however, another variant that reads *tomorn* and is found only twice in Hg and El, in the following lines:



- |         |                                             |                       |
|---------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (20) a. | And but I be <b>to morn</b> as fair to sene | Hengwrt WBT l. 1218   |
|         | And but I be <b>tomorn</b> as fair to seene | Ellesmere WBT l. 1218 |
| b.      | <b>To morn</b> bifore the Erchedeknes knee  | Hengwrt FR l. 288     |
|         | <b>Tomorn</b> bifore the Erchedeknes knee   | Ellesmere FR l. 288   |

These two occurrences are glossed in the *Riverside Chaucer* (III.1245 and 1588, respectively) ‘in the morning’, this interpretation may account for the different spelling, and would also suggest that they were considered authorial forms, even though according to the MED both *tomorwe* and *tomorn* simply mean ‘tomorrow’.

The last two items exhibiting a default spelling along with one or more alternative variants in both Hg and El to be discussed here are WORK and YET. The variant *werk* is by far the most frequently used form for the noun and the verb, and I assume it is authorial. The alternative spelling forms are *wirk*, *werch* and *wirche*. The form *wirk-* is uncommon in both Hg and El, and is mostly used for the gerund *wirkyng(e)*. The variants *werche(n)* and *wirche*, which are only used for the verb, are likewise rather infrequent, and often serve as rhyme words for the two variants of CHURCH attested in *The Canterbury Tales*, i.e. *cherche* and *chirche*, which are thus included in this discussion. In Hg *werche(n)* occurs within the line as well as at the end of it, while *wirche* is always a rhyme word, as in example (21) below. In El all instances of *werche(n)* except one (NU l. 545) occur within the line, while *wirche* is preferred as a rhyme word, as this variant is found within the line only twice, in WBP l. 347 (Hg *werke*) and in PA par. 608 (not in Hg). All of the five occurrences of *wirche* in Hg are preserved in El, as illustrated in the lines in (21):

- |      |                                                   |                |
|------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (21) | I seigh to day a corps born to <b>chirche</b>     | Hengwrt        |
|      | That now a monday last I seigh hym <b>wirche</b>  | MI ll. 243–244 |
|      | I saugh to day a cors yborn to <b>chirche</b>     | Ellesmere      |
|      | That now on monday last I saugh hym <b>wirche</b> | MI ll. 243–244 |

whereas three occurrences of Hg *werche* (KT l. 1899, MI l. 478, ME l. 417) turn into El *wirche*, very likely because of the change of the rhyme word from *cherche* to *chirche*, as shown in the following example:

- |      |                                                      |                |
|------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (22) | And he drogh hym a part out of the <b>cherche</b>    | Hengwrt        |
|      | And seyde I noot I saugh hym here noht <b>werche</b> | MI ll. 477–478 |
|      | And he drough hym a part out of the <b>chirche</b>   | Ellesmere      |
|      | And seyde I noot I saugh hym heere nat <b>wirche</b> | MI ll. 477–478 |

In MI l. 478 only eighteen witnesses of this tale share the reading *werch(e)* with Hg, but some of them, Ad<sup>1</sup>, Ch, Cp, Dd, En<sup>3</sup>, Gg and La, are either early or authoritative manuscripts, while most of the other witnesses, including also El and Ha<sup>4</sup>, read

*wirche*. Similarly, the rhyme word in l. 477 is *chirche* in the vast majority of the witnesses, with the result that in several of the above-mentioned authoritative texts *werche* rhymes with *chirche*, while the pair *werche: cherche* is only attested En<sup>3</sup>, Gg and Hg. The same discrepancy between the spelling of these rhyme words is shown in lines 121–122 and lines 244–245 of MI, where only El and Ha<sup>4</sup> agree with Hg, which, however, reads *wirche: chirche*. This suggests that both *werche* and *wirche* must have been in the original text. *Werche* was probably Chaucer's preferred spelling for this word, sometimes also in rhyming position, because it is attested in several authoritative manuscripts. By contrast, *wirche* was the variant employed as a rhyme word for *chirche*, which is the most frequently occurring spelling for CHURCH in both manuscripts. As the figures provided in Table 1 show, the variant *cherche* is attested only six times in Hg and once in El (NU l. 546). Four of the six occurrences of *cherche* in Hg are found in rhyming position, while the other two occur within the line in the word *holicherches* in RE ll. 63–64, two lines before another occurrence of the same word, which is spelled *chirche*:

- (23) For **holicherches** good moot been despended  
 On **holicherches** blood þ<sup>t</sup> is descended  
 Ther fore he wolde his holy blood honoure Hengwrt  
 Thogh þ<sup>t</sup> he holy **chirche** sholde deuoure RE ll. 63–66
- For **hooly chirches** good moot been despended  
 On **hooly chirches** blood that is descended  
 Therefore he wolde his hooly blood honoure Ellesmere  
 Though that he hooly **chirche** sholde deuoure RE ll. 63–66

It follows that if *wirche* always rhymes with *chirche* in Hg and El, the four rhyming pairs *werche: cherche* in Hg (KT l. 1900, MI l. 477, ME l. 418, NU l. 546) are probably relicts, in which the spelling of CHURCH had been adapted to rhyme with the authorial *werche*. In El the first three pairs were turned into *wirche: chirche*, while the spelling of the last one, in NU ll. 545–546, was preserved, as shown by the collation of the two lines in (24):

- (24) These soules lo and þ<sup>t</sup> I myghte do **Werche** Hengwrt  
 Here of myn hous ppetuelly a **cherche** NU ll. 545–546
- These soules lo and þ<sup>t</sup> I myghte do **werche** Ellesmere  
 Heere of myn hous ppetuelly a **cherche** NU ll. 545–546

In Tr, *werk(es)* and *werche*, spelling forms that are also attested in the Fairfax manuscript, are the two variants employed for the noun and the verb, respectively, and *werche* rhymes once with *cherche*. This is likewise the only variant used in the Fairfax manuscript for CHURCH, although *cherche* occurs just once in Scribe's B stint of Tr, while *chirche* is found three times within the line, where the absence of the rhyme constraint allows the use of a non-Gowerian form. *Chirche* is the variant preferred by Chaucer as well as by the Chancery scribes, as it is attested 62 times in

*ACE* as against six occurrences of *cherche* and six of *churche*, two reasons, therefore, for supposing that the variant *chirche* was introduced in Tr by Scribe B himself.

Finally, the adverb YET is spelled either *yet* or *yit*, two forms for which there is evidence in the London dialect of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Samuels 1988b:27). *Yet* is definitely the preferred variant in Hg, El and Tr, while only a few occurrences of *yit* are attested in these manuscripts and are very likely to be relicts. *Yit* occurs in rhyming position three times in Hg and El and always in Tr, which suggests that it is an authorial variant, both a Chaucerian and a Gowerian one. This can be argued to be the case especially in view of the fact that the instances of *yit* that are found at the end of the line in Hg are preserved in El, and that YET is consistently spelled *yit* in the Fairfax manuscript, with the exception of fourteen occurrences of *yet*: eight in the Prologue, five in Book 1 and one in Book 5. The three instances of *yit* that are rhyme words in Hg and El are in the lines shown in (25): the occurrences in (25a) and (25b) rhyme with *quyt*, while *yit* in (25c) rhymes with *smyt*.

- |         |                                                     |                     |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (25) a. | But nathelees I wol nat telle it <b>yit</b>         | Hengwrt L3 1.37     |
|         | But nathelees I wol nat telle it <b>yit̄</b>        | Ellesmere L3 1.37   |
| b.      | I fayled neuere of my trouthe as <b>yit̄</b>        | Hengwrt FK 1. 861   |
|         | I failled neūe of my trouthe as <b>yit</b>         | Ellesmere FK 1. 861 |
| c.      | And thogh youre grene youthe floure as <b>yit̄</b>  | Hengwrt CL 1. 120   |
|         | And thogh̄ youre grene youthe floure as <b>yit̄</b> | Ellesmere CL 1. 120 |

The other instances of *yit* are found in non-rhyming position: five of them are in Hg, in MI (2), NP, Link 17 and Link 20, while two are in El, in ME 1. 1029 and TM par. 720. None of these occurrences is spelled *yit* in the corresponding line of the other manuscript. The collation of all variants of YET in all fifteenth-century witnesses at lines 347 and 493 of MI and at line 588 of NP, in which Hg reads *yit* and El reads *yet* within the line, shows that even if *yet* is usually the preferred variant, even among most early manuscripts, *yit* is probably archetypal. *Yit* is found in all three lines in Ad<sup>3</sup>, En<sup>3</sup> and La, in two of the three lines in Ad<sup>1</sup> and Gg, and in one line only, in Cp, MI 1. 493. These are manuscripts that are very close to the archetype because they are either O manuscripts (Ad<sup>1</sup>, Ad<sup>3</sup>, En<sup>3</sup> and Hg), or because they belong to the first quarter of the fifteenth century (Cp and La). Finally, *yit* is attested in Hg in Links 17 and 20, which according to Blake (1985:45) are scribal and were added later to this manuscript, while according to Samuels (1991) and Mann (2001:83–90) they are Chaucerian and were only edited by the scribe to adapt them to the tales they introduced in Hg (see the discussion in Chapter 2, §1). The evidence of *yit* within the line suggests an authorial nature of these links and, as far as these occurrences are concerned, the scribal preservation of Chaucer's spelling in Hg:

- (26) a. I haue my sone snybbed and **yit** shal                    Hengwrt L20 l.16  
           I haue my sone snybbed and **yet** shal                    Ellesmere L20 l.16
- b. And **yit** she hath an heep of vices mo                    Hengwrt L17 l. 11  
           And **yet** she hath an heep̄ of vices mo                    Ellesmere L17 l. 11

In the bureaucratic language *yit* is the preferred form, as in *ACE* there are nineteen instances of this variant, together with eleven of *ȝit*, while there are only thirteen occurrences of *yet* and one of *ȝet*.

To conclude, in this section I have identified the following spelling features as possible authorial forms: *agayn(s)* and *ayeyn* for AGAIN(ST); *ar*, *arn* and *beth* for the present indicative of BE; *chirche* for CHURCH; *murthe* for MIRTH; *moost(e)* and *meeste* for MOST; *swa* for SO; *taghte* for TAUGHT; *tho* for THEN; *to morn* for TOMORROW; *werche* and *wirche* for WORK; *whan* for WHEN and *yet/yit* for YET.

## 2.2. Similar default spellings in Hengwrt and Ellesmere but different alternative variants

In the previous section I showed that for some lexical items the scribe frequently used the same main and alternative variants in Hg and El. In what follows, I will discuss those words in which the default variant in these manuscripts is mostly the same, while the alternative spelling varies consistently between the two texts. The words represented in Table 3 have been chosen to exemplify this tendency, as they show discrepancies between the main and the secondary variants in Hg and El. In addition, I will discuss the same kind of spelling variation in a number of inflectional morphemes, i.e. the plural endings *-is*, *ys-* and *-es*, as in *eris*, *erys* and *eres*, as well as the inflections *-eth/-ith* and *-ed/-id* for the present and past of verbs, as in *clepeth* and *clepid*.

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
ASK	axe-	58	47+7	20
	axing(e)	2	1	1
	axyngē	1	2	–
	aske-	11 (5FK, 5CL, TM)	21+1 (2KT, 4MI, 4ML, CL, 5FK, 5TM, CY)	2
CHEER	cheere	63	47+1	2
	chere	–	–	1
	chiere	2 (GP, WBP)	18+1	1
CRUEL	cruel	18	2	–
	cruel	–	20+2	5
	crewel	3 (2KT, CL)	–	–
	cruwel	1 (TM)	–	–

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
CRUELTY	crueltee	5	6+1	1(crueltee)
	creweltee	1 (PA)	–	–
CRUELLY	cruelly	3	4	–
	crewelly	1 (KT)	–	–
MERCHANT	marchant-	23	52+7	–
	marchaunt-	24	5+2	–
SITH	sith(e)	69	64+8	2
	sithen	8	7	5
	siththe	1	1	–
	sitthe	–	5	–
SUCH	swich(e)	344	343+55	–
	swilk	4 (RE)	–	–
	slyk	1 (RE)	4	–

**Table 3. One default spelling but with different minor variants in Hg and El**

In Hg and El, the verb *ASK* is usually spelled with initial *axe-*, as in *axe*, *axeth*, *axed*, although a few occurrences with initial *aske-* are also attested. In Hg these less common variants are clustered in three tales in Section IV, FK, CL and TM, while in El they are found both at the beginning of the manuscript, in KT and MI, and in other parts of it, in ML, CL, FK, TM and CY. All occurrences of *aske-* in FK, one in CL l. 103 and one in TM par. 713, are likewise spelled *aske-* in Hg and El, while Hg *axe-* corresponds to El *aske-* twice in KT and four times in MI and ML. Forms spelled *aske-* are twice as frequent in El as in Hg; the increased use of *aske-* instead of *axe-* in El is exemplified by the line from MI shown in (27), in which the scribe did not use the same variant *axe* for both occurrences of the word in El, as he had done in Hg:

- (27) **Axe** noght why for thogh thou **axe** me                      Hengwrt MI l. 371  
**Axe** nat why for thogh thou **aske** me                      Ellesmere MI l. 371

The distribution of the two variants in Hg and El suggests a preference for *axe-*, although it also shows that both *asken* and *axen*, deriving respectively from OE *ascian* and *axian*, were still used in Middle English. It is, however, relevant to note that *aske-* occurs alongside *axe-* at the beginning of El, in KT and MI, as well as in TM, where Hg always shows *axe-*, with the exception of one instance of *asken* in par. 713. In addition, El *aske-* completely replaces Hg *axe-* in ML, while only one of the five occurrences of Hg *aske-* in CL is preserved in El. It is not clear which variant is authorial, but some insight in this matter can be obtained by comparing the seven occurrences of this verb in MI in the manuscripts of this tale dating from the first quarter of the fifteenth century. As shown in Table 4, all instances of this word in MI are spelled *axe-* in Cp, Gg, Hg and La, while this spelling variant is attested in

five of the seven occurrences in Ha<sup>4</sup> and three of the seven in Dd and El, although not in the same lines.

	Cp	Dd	El	Gg	Ha <sup>4</sup>	Hg	La
MI l. 9	axed	<b>asked</b>	<b>asked</b>	axed	axed	axed	axed
MI l. 11	axed	<b>asked</b>	<b>asked</b>	axed	axed	axed	axed
MI l. 227	axed	axed	axed	axed	axed	axed	axed
MI l. 359	axeth	<b>asketh</b>	<b>asketh</b>	axeth	axeth	axeth	axeth
MI l. 371	axe	<b>aske</b>	axe	axe	<b>aske</b>	axe	axe
MI l. 371	axe	axe	<b>aske</b>	axe	<b>aske</b>	axe	axe
MI l. 475	axed	axed	axed	axed	axed	axed	axed

**Table 4. *Axe-* in the early fifteenth-century versions of MI**

The predominant use of *axe-*, and the occurrence of the same spelling in most of these early manuscripts, suggest that this must be the authorial form, whereas *aske-* is probably scribal. This suggestion is supported by the clear preference for *aske-* in *ACE*, where 35 instances of this spelling are attested, against only four of *axe-*, thus indicating that *aske-* must have been the form adopted by the Chancery scribes. *Axe-* is also the preferred variant in Tr, but in this case we are certain that it is authorial, because this is the form that is predominantly used in the Fairfax manuscript; there are just two occurrences of *asketh* in Tr: one in l. 3.2747, which reads *asketh* also in Fairfax, and one in l. 4.1940, which is spelled *axeth* in Fairfax.

The default spelling for the word CHEER in Hg and El is *cheere*; the variant *chiere* occurs twice in Hg at the end of a line in GP and WBP, where it rhymes with *manere*, as shown below:

- (28) a. And peyned hire to countrefete **chiere** Hengwrt  
 Of Court<sup>r</sup> and been estatlich of manere GP l. 139–140  
 And peyned hir<sup>r</sup> to countrefete **cheere** Ellesmere  
 Of Court<sup>r</sup> and to been estatlich of manere GP l. 139–140
- b. Nat of my body in no foul manere Hengwrt  
 But c<sup>̄</sup>teynly I made folk swich **chiere** WBP ll. 485–486  
 Nat of my body in no foul manere Ellesmere  
 But c<sup>̄</sup>tein I made folk swich **cheere** WBP ll. 485–486

Comparison of all witnesses of GP and WBP shows that *chiere* in GP l. 139 is attested in Cx<sup>1</sup>, Hg, Py, Tc<sup>2</sup> and Cx<sup>2</sup> (*chyere*), while *chier(e)* in WBP l. 486 occurs in Bo<sup>2</sup>, Gl, Hg, La, Mc, Mm, Py and Ra<sup>3</sup>. Hence, with the exception of Hg and La, this variant is not found in any of the other early manuscripts. In addition, even though recent findings about the textual tradition of WBP and GP (see Barbrook et al. 1998:839, Robinson 2000a:§3.4) have shown that Bo<sup>2</sup> and Ra<sup>3</sup> are O manuscripts in GP and WBP, the use of *chiere* in line 486 of WBP is unlikely to be authorial, as

there is too little supporting evidence from the manuscripts for this claim. In fact, Ra<sup>3</sup> also exhibits the variant *chiere* in the three lines of GP (ll. 728, 747, 857) in which almost all other witnesses read *cheere*, thus showing that this spelling is probably scribal; by contrast Bo<sup>2</sup> reads *chiere* only once in l. 486 of WBP, while all instances of this word in GP are spelled *chere*.

The variant *chiere* also occurs 18+1 times in EI, in several tales; only two of these occurrences are at the end of the line, where they rhyme with *frere* and *matiere*, as shown in (29):

- (29) a. This worthy lymytour this noble frere            Hengwrt  
           He made alwey a manere louryng **cheere**    L1 ll.1–2  
           This worthy lymytour this noble frere            Ellesmere  
           He made alwey a maner louryng **chiere**        L1 ll.1–2
- b. If that I lye or noon in this matere            Hengwrt  
           Mayus that sit<sup>r</sup> with so benygne a **cheere**    ME l. 497–498  
           If that I lye or noon in this matiere            Ellesmere  
           Mayus that sit w<sup>t</sup> so benygne a **chiere**        ME l. 497–498

The evidence provided by the rhyme words *manere* in Hg in (28) and *frere* in EI in (29) suggests that in three of four occurrences the orthographic rhyme with *chiere* is spoiled, and that in ME l. 498 the equally mismatching rhyme *matere: cheere* in Hg is restored in EI by spelling both words as *matiere: chiere*. Since, as will be shown in §2.3, *matiere* is exclusively used in EI, and since the variant *maniere* never occurs in any of the witnesses of GP and WBP, it follows that the original spelling must have been *chere*, while *chiere* is probably scribal in Hg as well as in EI.

The variant *chiere* was also used by Gower, as it is the form that occurs most frequently in the Fairfax manuscript, while *chere* is found only seven times, six of which are rhyme words. In the section of the Fairfax manuscript that corresponds to Scribe B's stint of Tr, there are only three occurrences of *chere* and one of *chiere*, in l. 4.747, but in Tr Scribe B employed *chiere* for the non-rhyming instance in (30):

- (30)     With þat hir **chiere** away she swerueth    Tr l. 4.1408

and *che(e)re* for the three rhyme words in (31):

- (31) a. Shal no man knowe by his **cheere**            Tr l. 3.1081  
       b. That I ne make hem alle **cheere**            Tr l. 3.1194  
       c. Whan he has come and made hī **chere**        Tr l. 4.747

Although it cannot be concluded with certainty that *chiere* was introduced by Scribe B, as it might already have been in his exemplar, it is very likely that *cheere* reflect his habit of using a double graph for representing long vowels (cf. Chapter 3).

The spelling of the adjective CRUEL ‘cruel’, as well as of the derivative CRUELLY and CRUELTY shows that the variant spelled with medial *-u-*, *cruel-*, is vastly preferred in both Hg and El, with the variant *crueel* being regularly employed only for the adjective in El. The spelling with a double graph is probably a way to indicate that the stress should fall on the second syllable, this being a French loanword, as already argued for the same item in Chapter 3, §3.1. Such forms with double *-e-* are very likely to be scribal; this is also suggested by their presence in Tr, where they do not reflect Gower’s spelling, since all occurrences of this word in the Fairfax manuscript are spelled *cruel*, while for the noun we find *crualte*. In Hg, forms with medial *-w-* are used as alternative spellings, though they never occur in El. In Hg *crewel(ly)* is primarily attested in KT (ll. 445, 799, 1445), hence at the beginning of the manuscript, and the variant *crewel* is found in CL l. 539, while *cruwel* and *creweltee* occur once in TM par. 677 and in PA par. 134, respectively, thus in two tales that are at the end of the manuscript and that, like GP, exhibit old-fashioned spelling variants. According to the *MED* the spelling *crewel* is attested before 1400 in the *House of Fame*. All other occurrences are recorded in quotations dating from the fifteenth century, including one from the *Legend of Good Women*, another work by Chaucer. In the *Legend of Good Women*, *crewel* occurs nine times against one instance of *cruelly*, while in the *House of Fame* there are three instances of *cruel* against one of *crewel*. These figures are provided by the *Chaucer Concordance* (Ne Castro 2007), which is based on the text of the *Riverside Chaucer* (Benson 1987), and are employed here for the sake of comparison with variants from *The Canterbury Tales*. Even though it is undeniable that the texts of Chaucer’s *Works* in Benson’s edition display the language of a number of selected manuscripts which have undergone a certain degree of editing as well, they support the evidence from Hg that the variants *crewel(ly)*, *cruwel* and *creweltee* in Hg might be relicts from Chaucer’s original version.

The noun MERCHANT is discussed here because it displays two spelling forms in Hg and El, *marchant-* and *marchaunt-*, the first of which, as I will explain below, is the default variant in both manuscripts. They occur both in the text and in the running titles of the *Merchant’s Tale* as follows:

		<i>marchant-</i>	<i>marchaunt-</i>
<b>Hengwrt</b>	text	23	10
	running titles	–	14
<b>Ellesmere</b>	text	26+6	4+2
	running titles	26+1	–

**Table 5. *Marchant-* versus *marchaunt-* in Hg and El**

As the figures in Table 5 show, the spelling *marchant-* is preferred in both manuscripts, while *marchaunt-* occurs more frequently in Hg than in El. However,



the spelling *Marchaunt* is found in the heading of every recto folio of the *Merchant's Tale* in Hg, while *Marchant* is the corresponding form at the top of each page of the same tale in El. The explanation for the use of different spelling variants in the running titles of the two copies of the same tale is that in Hg these headings were added later by another scribe, who, according to Doyle and Parkes (1979:xliii), 'worked as a partner or supervisor' of Scribe B. Doyle (1995:52) also explains that in El 'running titles are provided on or across both pages of each opening by the main hand in the same ink as the text below'. Hence, if the instances from the running titles in Hg are excluded, as the titles were not written by the main scribe, it follows that *marchant-* is the preferred variant in both Hg and El. The occurrences of *marchaunt-* in El may be relicts from the original text, which is possibly the reason why this was the spelling chosen for the running titles in Hg. This theory is supported by the evidence provided by lines 27–28 of Link 20, which in Hg erroneously connects the *Squire's Tale* with the *Merchant's Tale* instead of the *Franklin's Tale*, and which, as I noticed above, was probably adapted by the scribe to suit the wrong tale order (see Chapter 2):

- |                                                            |                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| (32) That knowe I wel sire quod the <b>Marchant</b> c̃teyn | Hengwrt L20 ll. 27–28   |
| I prey yow haueth me nat in desdeyn                        | (SQ–ME link)            |
| That knowe I wel sire quod the Frankeleyn                  | Ellesmere L20 ll. 27–28 |
| I prey yow haueth me nat in desdeyn                        | (SQ–FK link)            |

Even though in Link 20 in Hg there are two occurrences of *marchant-* and two of *marchaunt-*, which are not attested in El because in this manuscript the word *Frankeleyn* is used instead, the metre in line 27 is clearly affected by the substitution of *Frankeleyn* by *Marchant c̃teyn*, which, as Mann (2001:83) suggests, 'is a lame attempt at patchwork, as empty of meaning as it is metrically inept; it loses balance by juxtaposing two unstressed syllables (Márchănt cĕrtéyn) in a very clumsy way'. This change is therefore likely to be scribal, and the same can also be suggested about the use of the spelling *marchant* for this word.

Differences in the use of minor variants in Hg and El are also shown by the word *SITH*, which primarily stands for the conjunction 'since' and less frequently for the adverb 'then', as in SH l. 48 in (35) below. The alternative spelling in both manuscripts is *sithen*, which is a form that is used occasionally for the adverb with the meaning 'afterwards', as in:

- |                                                  |                   |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| (33) This child Maurice was <b>sithen</b> Empour | Hengwrt/Ellesmere |
| Maad by the Pope and lyued cristenly             | ML l. 1023–1024   |

In addition, the scribe used two other forms of this word: *siththe* and *sitthe*. *Siththe* occurs once in El, in the line in (34), and once in Hg, although in another tale, as illustrated in example (35e) below.

- (34) If he ne may nat lyue chast his lyf                    Hengwrt ME l. 202  
       **Siththe** he may nat lyuen chaast his lyf                Ellesmere ME l. 202

By contrast, *siththe* is attested five times in El and never in Hg: in the lines that read *siththe* in El, Hg exhibits either *sith*, *sithen* or *siththe*, as shown in (35):

- (35) a. If euer **sith** I highte hogge of ware                Hengwrt L3 l.12  
       If eʔe **siththe** I highte Hogge of Ware                Ellesmere L3 l.12
- b. He yaf the lord and **sith** al his meynee                Hengwrt SH l. 48  
       He yaf the lord and **siththe** al his meynee            Ellesmere SH l. 48
- c. And **sith** of Rome the Empour was he                Hengwrt MO l. 591  
       And **siththe** of Rome the Empour was he            Ellesmere MO l. 591
- d. And **sithen** hath he spoke of eʔychone                Hengwrt L7 l. 58  
       And **siththe** hath he spoken of euerichone            Ellesmere L7 l. 58
- e. Fortune was first freend and **siththe** a foo            Hengwrt MO l. 637  
       Fortune was first freend and **siththe** foo            Ellesmere MO l. 637

In view of the fact that *siththe* occurs more than once in El, and thus cannot be considered a mere scribal mistake, it is probable that these instances are relicts, just like the two occurrences of *siththe*, which is the variant that is closest to the spelling of its OE antecedent *sippan*.

The variants used for SUCH are also interesting, because *swich* is the default spelling, while *swilk* and *slyk* are attested in RE only, in the language of the two Northern scholars. I have argued in this chapter that Northern spelling features occurring in RE are likely to be authorial. However, the examples in (36) show that *swilk* and *slyk* are used differently in Hg and El:

- (36) a. **Swilk** as he fyndes or tak **swilk** as he brynges            Hengwrt RE l. 210  
       **Slyk** as he fyndes or taa **slyk** as he brynges            Ellesmere RE l. 210
- b. Herd thow euere **slyk** a sang er now  
       Lo **swilk** a couplyngʔ is ymel hem alle  
       A wilde fyr on thair bodyes falle                                Hengwrt  
       Wha herkned euere **swilk** a ferly thyngʔ                RE l. 250–253  
       Herdtow eʔe **slyk** a sang er now  
       Lo **whilk** a cowplyngʔ is ymel hem alle  
       A wilde fyr vp on thair bodyes falle                            Ellesmere  
       Wha herkned euere **slyk** a ferly thyngʔ                RE l. 250–253

The form *swilk* never occurs in El, while *slyk* is attested only once in the same line of Hg and El (RE l. 250), and is found three more times in El only, in lines that

display *swilk* in Hg. Both variants are typical of the Northern dialect, although they have different origins, *slyk* deriving from Old Norse *slikr* and *swilk* deriving from OE *swilc/swelc*. The form *slyk* from Old Norse is thus regularly employed in El, and replaces the native English form *swilk* used in Hg, with the exception of line 251, in which El *whilk*, a Northern variant for WHICH deriving from OE *hwilc*, is used instead of Hg *swilk*, with the result that two words of OE origin are employed in the same line in both manuscripts.

According to Horobin (2000c:17), ‘a number of differences between the Hg and El texts of the *Reeve’s Tale* reveal attempts by the El scribe or editor to increase the representation of Northern dialect, and to regularise inconsistencies found in Hg’. An example that is often used to exemplify such scribal interference in El is the improved spelling of the adjective *lang* with final *-e* in the line from El in (37):

- |                                                     |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (37) This <b>langr</b> nyght ther tydes me na reste | Hengwrt RE l. 255   |
| This <b>lange</b> nyght ther tydes me na reste      | Ellesmere RE l. 255 |

This instance shows that the scribe did not realise that *lang* in Hg was the required form, which was supposed to stand for the Northern variant of this adjective, as in the Northern dialect final *-e* was no longer pronounced (see Mossé 1952:35). However, the use of *slyk* in the lines of El discussed above cannot be dismissed as yet another correction made by the scribe or editor. Even though both *slyk* and *swilk* are attested in the Northern dialect, *slyk*, the form that derives from ON, seems the best variant for characterising the two scholars in RE as Northerners. It is possible that *slyk* was in the author’s original papers, and was therefore chosen for El, because, like *agayn*, it was one of the Northern forms that belonged to Chaucer’s repertoire.

In the rest of this section I will deal with spelling variation in a number of inflectional morphemes which present the same characteristics as the words described above. I will focus on the morphemes that mark the plural of nouns, for which Hg and El usually agree on the widespread use of the plural ending *-is/-ys*, as in *erys* ‘ears’. However, as exemplified by the words EARS, TEARS and, to a lesser extent, YEARS, there is a second spelling variant ending in *-es*, as in *eres*, which is frequently used in El. In addition, I will discuss verbal inflections in order to show that *-ed* is the default spelling for the past tense verbs in Hg and El, even though the inflections *-yd/-id* are also found, in Hg in particular, as shown in Table 6.

The variants *(e)erys* are the only spellings used in Hg for the plural of EAR, while in El *erys* is used alongside *(e)eris* and *eres*. Two of the ten occurrences ending in *-is* or *-ys* in El are in GP and five are clustered in TM, although one instance of *eres* is attested in this tale as well; *eres*, by contrast, is found once in KT, WBT, SU, L28, TM, and three times in CL.

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
EARS	(e)erys	18	5	–
	(e)eris	–	5	–
	eres	–	8	–
TEARS	teeris	4	14	–
	te(e)rys	17	–	–
	teeres	–	7	–
YEARS	ye(e)ris	5	2	–
	ye(e)rys	5	–	–
	ye(e)res	4	13	3
ENDING-ED	-ed	default	default	default
	-yd	22	–	1
	-id	42	2	1
CLEP-	clepyn	2	–	–
	clepith	5	–	–
	(y)clepyd	14	–	–
	(y)clepid	30	2	1
	clepe(n)	23	25+8	4
	clepeth	8	13+1	–
	(y)cleped(e)	5	44+7	12

**Table 6. Spelling variation in inflectional morphemes**

Similarly, variants of the item TEARS ending in *-es* are only found in EI: there are four occurrences are in KT, one in CL and two in PA. Three of these instances occur in rhyming context, and the rhyme word for each of them is changed accordingly, as shown in (38):

- (38) a. Infinite been the sorwes and the **teerys** Hengwrt  
 Of olde folk<sup>r</sup> and folk of tendre **yeerys** KT ll. 1963–1964  
 Infinite been the sorwes and the **teeres** Ellesmere  
 Of olde folk and eek of tendre **yeeres** KT ll. 1963–1964
- b. With flotry berd and ruggy asshy **heerys** Hengwrt  
 In clothes blake ydropped al with **teerys** KT ll. 2019–2020  
 With flotry berd and rugged Asshy **heeres** Ellesmere  
 In clothes blake ydropped al with **teeres** KT ll. 2019–2020
- c. Ful lyk a moder with hir salte **terys** Hengwrt  
 She batheth bothe hir visage and hir **herys** CL ll. 1084–1085  
 Ful lyk a mooder<sup>r</sup> with hi<sup>r</sup> salte **teeres** Ellesmere  
 She bathed bothe hi<sup>r</sup> visage and hi<sup>r</sup> **heeres** CL ll. 1084–1085

The variant *yeres* for the plural forms of YEAR is attested four times in Hg, although *yeris* and *ye(e)rys* occur twice as often, while *yeres* and *yeeres* are almost the sole forms found in El. In this manuscript, only two occurrences of *ye(e)ris* display the ending *-is*, probably because both of them are at the end of a line and on this occasion the scribe preserved the original spelling of the two rhyming pairs:

- |         |                                                               |                |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (39) a. | This white top̄ writeth myne olde <b>yerys</b>                | Hengwrt        |
|         | Myn herte is also mowled as myne <b>herys</b>                 | L2 ll. 15–16   |
|         | This white top̄ writeth myne olde <b>yeris</b>                | Ellesmere      |
|         | Myn herte is mowled also as myne <b>heris</b>                 | L2 ll. 15–16   |
| b.      | Neither his collect <sup>r</sup> ne his expans <b>yeris</b>   | Hengwrt        |
|         | Ne hise rootes ne hise othere <b>geris</b>                    | FK ll. 567–568 |
|         | Neither his collect <sup>r</sup> ne hise expans <b>yeeris</b> | Ellesmere      |
|         | Ne hise rootes ne hise othere <b>geeris</b>                   | FK ll. 567–568 |

The variant *yeres* is also used in Tr for the three occurrences of YEARS in (40), and comparison with the Fairfax manuscript shows that this spelling is also used in the corresponding lines of this text, suggesting that *yeres* is a Gowerian form:

- |         |                                        |                   |
|---------|----------------------------------------|-------------------|
| (40) a. | The tyme of <b>yeres</b> ouergeeth     | Trinity l. 3.1962 |
| b.      | And seuene <b>yeres</b> bisynesse      | Trinity l. 4.239  |
| c.      | So that with Inne tyme of <b>yeres</b> | Trinity l. 4.481  |

The situation in Hg and El, however, is different, as the evidence provided by the variants of EARS, TEARS and YEARS is that forms ending in *-is/ys*, which are mostly found in Hg, are likely to be authorial. In El the scribe tolerated greater variation, against the general tendency discussed above, and also employed the ending *-es*, which occurs rarely in Hg, in the words analysed here. The use of *-es* in El may be a scribal feature, a possibility which is supported by evidence from the bureaucratic language, as in *ACE* the item YEAR is spelled *yeres* eighteen times and *yerys* once. It may however also be an example of a more general change from Hg *-is* to El *-es*, which is better exemplified by the preference for *ellis* in Hg and *elles* in El, discussed in the next section.

A substantial difference between Hg and El can also be seen in the spelling of the ending of the simple past and past participle of weak verbs. The default variant for these tenses is *-ed* in both manuscripts, which is why no specific figures are provided for this ending in Table 6. Alongside this default spelling, Hg exhibits also a small number of inflected verbs in which the ending *-id/yd* is primarily used for the past participle, as shown in (41):

- |      |                                                           |                    |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| (41) | This clerk was clep <b>yd</b> hende Nicholas              | Hengwrt MI l. 13   |
|      | This clerk <sup>r</sup> was clep <b>ed</b> hende Nicholas | Ellesmere MI l. 13 |

and only a few times for the simple past, as in (42):

- (42) He clepyd it<sup>r</sup> valerie and Theofraste      Hengwrt WBP l. 649  
       He cleped it<sup>r</sup> Valerie and Theofraste      Ellesmere WBP l. 649

This confirms Horobin's (2003:53–4) claim that 'there is a greater tolerance of variation in the Hg treatment of unstressed vowels which may be written <e, i, y>, while E1 shows a clear preference for <e>'. However, it must be noted that this claim is made on the basis of the evidence provided by the variants (y)cleped, (y)clepid and (y)clepyd of the verb *clepen*, which is one of the few verbs in *The Canterbury Tales* that shows variants with unstressed *i/y* for the inflection of the simple past and past participle in Hg. I thus believe that there are two separate issues that need to be dealt with here. The first concerns the unstressed vowel that occurs in the verbal endings of the past and past participle in general; the second is the spelling of the verb *clepen* in Hg and E1 in particular, which is not representative of the spelling of all verbs, and therefore cannot be used safely as evidence for generalising about verbal inflections. I will consider both issues in what follows.

As I said above, the ending that is almost always used for the simple past and the past participle of weak verbs in Hg and E1 is *-ed*, although a search of all verbs that exhibit the inflections *-id* and *-yd* in Hg revealed that there are 64 instances of them in total. Most of the *-id* and *-yd* inflections in Hg are used to form the past of the verb *clepen*, i.e. *clepid* and *clepyd*, while only seventeen of them indicate the past tense of a small number of other verbs, such as *he(e)lyd* or *ywoundid* in (43), which usually occur with the *-ed* ending in this manuscript:

- (43) a. That<sup>r</sup> he ne wol nat suffre it **helyd** be      Hengwrt MI l. 569  
       b. For he was **heelyd** of his maladye      Hengwrt NP l. 235  
       c. and han **ywoundid** thy doghter in the  
           forseyde manere      Hengwrt TM par. 458

In Hg the inflection *-yd* is found more frequently than *-id* at the beginning of the manuscript, in Structural Sections I and II, as shown below, while *-id* is preferred to *-yd* in the rest of the text, especially in the prose sections, where *-yd* is attested only twice and *-id* 27 times.

Inflection	Section I	Section II	Section III	Section IV	Section V
-yd	9	2	2	8	1
-id	2	1	6	22	12

**Table 7.** *-yd/-id* inflections for the past tense in Hg

By contrast, the inflection *-ed* is the only one used in El, with the exception of the two occurrences of *clepid* that are attested in the following lines:

- (44) a. And by that lord that **clepid** is Seint yue Hengwrt SU l. 235  
 And by that lord þ<sup>t</sup> **clepid** is seint yue Ellesmere SU l. 235
- b. And by that lord that **clepid** is Seint Yue Hengwrt SH l. 227  
 And by that lord þ<sup>t</sup> **clepid** is Seint Yve Ellesmere SH l. 227

For the sake of comparison, I carried out a search of all verbs ending in *-ith* and *-yth*, instead of the default *-eth*, for the third person singular of the present indicative in the entire Hg manuscript. This showed that *-ith* occurs in verbs such as *seith/seyth*, from *seyn*, and *lith/lyth*, from *lyen*, but is also attested five times in the variant *clepith*, which is found once in SQ and four times in TM (see example (45) below). *Clepith* occurs in Hg along with eight other instances of the verb *clepen*, which, however, are spelled *clepeth*, whereas it is never attested in El. Therefore, it seems that in Hg there is a certain degree of variation in the use of *-i-*, *-y-* and *-e-* in the inflections of the present and past tense of verbs. However, this concerns only a small number of verbs, among which *clepen* shows this variation most frequently. All this shows that, when compared with most other verbs in Hg, *clepen* is characterised by different inflectional endings, and therefore deserves particular attention.

The forms for the past and past participle of the verb *clepen* are spelled both *(y)clepid*, *(y)clepyd* and *(y)cleped* in Hg, while *(y)cleped* is the variant that is almost always used in El, with the exception of the two above-mentioned instances of *clepid* in SU l. 235 and SH l. 227, which are probably relicts. The use of spelling variants in which the unstressed vowel in the suffix of the verb is represented by either *-i/y-* or *-e-* is, however, not random in Hg, as these variants seem to have different functions in this manuscript. Forms showing unstressed *-i/y-* in their endings, such as *(y)clepid*, are used 46 times, mostly for the past participle of the verb; the only exceptions to this are the occurrences in the following lines, in which unstressed *-i/y-* is used in the inflections of the third person singular (in 45) and plural (in 46) of the present indicative:

- (45) a. Hir maistresse **clepith** wommen a gret route Hengwrt SQ l. 374
- b. And yet more ouer<sup>r</sup> of thilke word that Tullius  
**clepith** consentynge Hengwrt  
 TM par. 413
- c. Lat vs now examyne the .iiij<sup>e</sup>. poynt<sup>r</sup> that Tullius  
**clepith** Consequent Hengwrt  
 TM par. 419
- d. And as touchynge the .iiij<sup>e</sup>. poynt<sup>r</sup> that Tullius  
**clepith** engendrynge Hengwrt  
 TM par. 422
- e) Now sire as touchynge to the poynt<sup>r</sup> that<sup>r</sup> Tullius  
**clepith** causes which þ<sup>t</sup> is the laste poynt<sup>r</sup> Hengwrt  
 TM par. 425

- (46) a. Bisyde a town men **clepyn** Baldeswelle      Hengwrt GP l. 622  
       b. Of .vj. feet<sup>r</sup> whiche men **clepyn** Exametron      Hengwrt L29 l. 91

Conversely, the forms *clepe(n)*, *clepeth* and (*y*)*cleped(e)*, displaying the vowel -e- in their suffixes, are employed 38 times in total in Hg and very rarely for the past tense. The variants *clepe(n)* and *clepeth* are the infinitive, the imperative and the present indicative forms of this verb, while only five occurrences of (*y*)*cleped(e)* are used for the simple past tense (in PA par. 215), and for the past participle (in GP, TM, KT, NU), as shown in (47):

- (47) a. I was at the dore of thyn herte seith ~ lhūs 7      Hengwrt PA  
       **clepede** for to entre      par. 215  
       b. This worthy lymytour was **cleped** huberð<sup>r</sup>      Hengwrt GP l. 271  
       c. That whilom was **ycleped** Scithia      Hengwrt KT l. 9  
       d. Which that **ycleped** was Valerian      Hengwrt NU l. 129  
       e. vp on the sentence of Ouyde in his book<sup>r</sup> þ<sup>t</sup>      Hengwrt TM  
       **cleped** is the remedie of loue      par. 10

Comparison of these exceptional lines with the corresponding lines in other fifteenth-century witnesses is possible only for lines 271 and 622 of GP, since the collations of all witnesses to the other tales are not yet available in digital format. In line 271 the variant *cleped* for the past participle is found in eighteen manuscripts, among which four early ones, Cp, Dd, El and La, as well as two late but authoritative manuscripts, Ad<sup>1</sup> and En<sup>3</sup>. In line 622, by contrast, the variant *clepyn* for the present plural indicative is only attested in Ad<sup>1</sup>, Bo<sup>2</sup>, En<sup>3</sup>, Hg and Ps, all of which are manuscripts that are very close to the archetype of GP (cf. Robinson 2000a:§3.4). It should also be noted that in these two lines variants of the verb *clepen* are used in several witnesses along with variants of the verb *callen*, which suggests that greater changes were made here at an early stage in the textual tradition of GP than just at the level of spelling. As for the use of *clepith* for the present indicative in Hg, four of the five instances of this variant are clustered in a small section of TM, between folio 225v and folio 226r, and they always occur in the clause *that Tullius clepith*. The form *clepeth* is attested in this tale as well, though only once before this section, in par. 392, and once after it, in par. 594. Since the four instances of *clepith* in TM are in quire 29, which is a section of Hg in which other anomalous variants, such as *muchil*, *neighebore* and *ney/ny*, are attested (see below), and they are found in what appears to be a fixed expression, I am inclined to treat them as relicts. All this suggests that the several occurrences of (*y*)*clepid* and (*y*)*clepyd* may likewise go back to the archetype of *The Canterbury Tales*. In this text they were spelled either with the inflection -yd, which was partly replaced with -id in Hg, or with -yd and -id, thus showing variation in Chaucer’s language. In El, all variants of this verb were reduced to just one, whose inflection was systematically spelled with unstressed -e-, as in (*y*)*cleped* in this line from GP:



- (48) His barge **yclepyd** was the Mawdelayne      Hengwrt GP 1. 412  
       His Barge **ycleped** was the Maudelayne      Ellesmere GP 1. 412

The possibility cannot be excluded that the use of *-ed* for the past participle of *clepen*, which is attested only four times in Hg, but is the norm in El, reflects some aspects of Chaucer's usage. The preservation of the prefix *y-* in *ycleped*, which is the spelling of eight of the 45 occurrences of the past participle in El, would corroborate the assumption that these forms are probably authorial. According to Horobin (2007:109), 'the <y> prefix derives from the OE <ge> prefix and was in the process of being dropped during Chaucer's lifetime. This is reflected in Chaucer's inconsistent use of the <y> prefix, which he frequently manipulated for metrical purposes'. In Chaucer's language *y-* therefore had a metrical function, as it provided an extra syllable when necessary, and could not be easily omitted without impairing the metre of the line. It follows that instances of verbs that exhibit this prefix are likely to be archetypal. Comparison with the bureaucratic language that is recorded in *ACE* reveals just one occurrence of *clepid* against eight of *clepe(d)*. In addition, *clepid* is found in one line of Scribe's B stint of Tr, even if neither *clepid* nor *clepyd* is used in the Fairfax manuscript, and therefore do not belong to Gower's repertoire.

In this section I have discussed forms that display similar default variants but different alternative spellings in Hg and El; my analysis suggests that the following forms are probably authorial: *axen* for ASK; *chere* for CHEER; *crewel(ly)* and *creweltee* for CRUEL(LY) and CRUELTY; *marchaunt* for MERCHANT; *sitthe* and *siththe* for SINCE and *slyk* for SUCH. In addition, it is likely that the inflectional morphemes, *-is/-ys* for the plural ending and *-id/-yd* for the past tense of verbs, *clepen* in particular, derive from the archetype.

### 2.3 Different default spellings in Hengwrt and Ellesmere

In the previous two sections, I showed that words that display a default spelling variant alongside one or more alternative variants in Hg and El may show a certain amount of agreement between the two manuscripts or may differ with respect to the use of the forms that are employed alongside the default spellings. The words analysed in this section and presented in Table 8 show that in certain cases Hg and El may also disagree as to the main spelling variants of words.

The four occurrences of the word COULTER, all clustered in MI (ll. 575, 588, 597, 624), show a disagreement between the spelling *cultour* in Hg and *kultour* in El. It must be noted that El is the only fifteenth-century witness of this tale that has the reading *kultour*. Variants of this word beginning with *k* are generally uncommon; beside the four instances attested in El and in editions of *The Canterbury Tales* that are based on this manuscript, the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* (2006) lists just another occurrence of *kultour* in Passus III l. 308 of *Piers Plowman*. This variant is attested in Schmidt's (1978) edition of the B-Text, which is based on Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17, the manuscript that according to Horobin and Mooney (2004) was copied by Scribe B. In addition, according to the *MED*,

there is one occurrence of the spelling *koltre* in line 195 of the *Glosses in Walter de Bibbesworth's Treatise* (1325), MS Cambridge, University Library Gg.1.1. As Michael Benskin suggests (personal communication), it cannot be excluded that the variant used in E1 is authorial. The unusual spelling *kultour*, in fact, may have been deliberately chosen by Chaucer to characterise the teller of the tale, the Miller, as if he was an uncouth person. This was probably not understood by any of the scribes who copied the *Miller's Tale*, including Scribe B when he copied Hg, and the presence of the variant in E1 may suggest that this copyist was told, perhaps by Chaucer himself, to write *kultour* and not *cultour* in this manuscript.

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
COULTER	cultour	4	–	–
	kultour	–	4	–
CUT	kitte	3	3	–
	(for)kit(eth)	4	–	–
	(for)kut(eth)	–	4	–
	kutte	–	1	1
	cutte	1	–	–
DRAUGHT	draght	8	1	1
	draught	2	9	–
ELSE	ellis	114	14+2	1
	elles	1	104+32	14
MATTER	matere	69	18	4
	mateere	–	34+2	14
	matiere	–	16	1
TOWN	town	47	–	1
	towne(s)	12	11+1	–
	toun	18	66+5	4

**Table 8. Different default spellings in Hg and E1**

A preference for initial *k-* in E1 is, however, also visible in the spelling of the verb CUT, although the more relevant feature in this word is the difference between the spellings with medial *-i-* and medial *-u-*, which represent reflexes of OE *y* in the East Midland (*kit*) and West Midland (*kut*) dialects, respectively (see map in §2.1. of this chapter). On the whole, forms of this verb that are spelled with medial *-i-* are preferred in Hg, while medial *-u-* is used more frequently in E1. However, the collation of all witnesses of WBP at line 696, which reads:

- (49) Slepynge his lemman **kitte** it w<sup>t</sup> hir sherys      Hengwrt WBP l. 696  
       Slepynge his lemman **kitte** it w<sup>t</sup> hir sheres      Ellesmere WBP l. 696

in Hg and E1, shows that the reading *kitte* occurring in this line is the preferred one in these two as well as in most of the other witnesses, while forms with medial *-u-*

are attested in thirteen manuscripts, of which only Ha<sup>4</sup> belongs to the early ones. In this case the use of medial *-u-* is surely not authorial, because the scribe of Ha<sup>4</sup> was an immigrant from the South West Midlands (Smith 1988a:59), and thus *kutte* is most likely a feature of his dialect. The same variant is attested once in Scribe B's stint of Tr, but in this case it is a Gowerian spelling, as *kutte* is found in the Fairfax manuscript. On the whole, the spelling of words containing a vowel that derives from OE *y*, such as MIRTH, MERRY and MUCH, shows different patterns of distribution of medial *-i-* and medial *-u-* in Hg and El. As I showed in section 2.1, *mirth* is the preferred variant for this word, while *murth* occurs very infrequently in both manuscripts. By contrast, the distribution of the variants of MERRY shows a clear preference for medial *-u-* in Hg and medial *-i-* in El, while MUCH is mostly spelled *much(e)* in both Hg and El, with just four instances of *mychel* in Hg (cf. §3 below for both words). I will return to this spelling variation in Chapter 6.

The words DRAUGHT and ELSE further exemplify the use of two different variants for the same word in Hg and El. *Draght* is the main variant in Hg, while *draught* is used only twice, in the following lines:

- |         |                                                       |                     |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (50) a. | A <b>draughte</b> of wyn ye of a rype grape           | Hengwrt L36 l. 83   |
|         | A <b>draghte</b> of wyn ye of a ripe grape            | Ellesmere L36 l. 83 |
| b.      | Drynketh a <b>draughte</b> taak kepe eek what I telle | Hengwrt PD l.32     |
|         | Drynketh a <b>draughte</b> taak kepe eek what I telle | Ellesmere PD l.32   |

By contrast, *draught* is the only form attested in El, with the exception of one occurrence of *draghte* in the line from Link 36, shown in (50) above. Since this word occurs three times in GP (ll. 135, 384, 398) and once in WBP (l. 459), I compared Hg with the other fifteenth-century witnesses of these two tales and noticed that *draghte* is almost exclusively used in Hg. In GP l. 135 another manuscript, Ht, agrees with Hg except for the rhyme word, which is *raghte* in Hg but *raught* in Ht, as shown in (51):

- |      |                                                    |                      |
|------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| (51) | Of grece whan she dronken hadde hir <b>draghte</b> | Hengwrt              |
|      | Ful semely after hir mete she <b>raghte</b>        | GP l. 135–136        |
|      | Of grece whan she hadde dronken hir <b>draght</b>  | Hatton donat. 1 (Ht) |
|      | Ful semely aftre hir mete she <b>raught</b>        | GP l. 135–136        |

According to Robinson (2000a:§3.1.1) Ht derives from the alpha exemplar (see Chapter 3), and is thus very close to O. In GP l. 384 only En<sup>1</sup> and Mm agree with Hg, in GP l. 398 Mm reads *draghete*, and in WBP l. 459 He, En<sup>2</sup> and Ld<sup>2</sup> read *draght(e)*; none of these manuscripts is, however, authoritative. All occurrences of this word in the other witnesses are characterised by spellings with medial *-au-* or *-aw-*. The use of *-a-* in Hg and *-au-* in El for this word is comparable to the preference for *-o-* in Hg and *-ou-* in El, which I interpreted in Chapter 4 as a possible

attempt on the part of the scribe to regularise the spelling in E1 according to what he thought – or was told – was Chaucer’s usage.

The variant *ellis* for ELSE is likewise preponderantly used in Hg, while *elles* is attested only once, in SU l. 158 at the end of line, where it rhymes with *belles*. The opposite is found in E1, where *elles* is the favoured variant, while *ellis* occurs only fourteen times in a number of tales, i.e. GP, KT, MI, L7, ML, FK, PH, SH (3), TM (2), L29 and MO. All of these occurrences are also attested with the same spelling in Hg, except one, which is represented in (52):

- (52) And it bihoueth þ<sup>1</sup> a man putte swich attempanc in his  
 defense / þ<sup>1</sup> men haue no cause ne matere to repreuen hym  
 þ<sup>1</sup> defendeth hym of excesse 7 outrage / Pardee ye knowe  
 wel þ<sup>1</sup> ye maken no defense as now for to defende yow but Hengwrt TM  
 for to venge yow / pars 565–567
- And it bihoueth that a man putte swich attempanc in his  
 deffense / that men haue no cause ne matiere to repreuen  
 hym that deffendeth hym of excesse and outrage / **for ellis**  
**were it agayn resou<sup>u</sup>** ¶ P<sup>1</sup> dee ye knowen wel that ye maken no Ellesmere TM  
 deffense as now for to deffende yow but for to venge yow / pars 565–567

The collation of the same paragraphs in Hg and E1 shows that *ellis* in E1 occurs in a phrase that was either omitted in Hg and reinstated in E1 or simply added in E1, and which displays the variant that prevails in Hg. The disagreement shown by Hg and E1 for the spelling of ELSE is found in the whole tradition of *The Canterbury Tales*, as far as it can be established through the analysis of all witnesses of GP, L1, MI, L30, NPT and WBP. In these tales and links, which contain seventeen occurrences of ELSE altogether, both variants are regularly used. Among the early manuscripts in particular, Cp, Ha<sup>4</sup> and La agree with E1 by exhibiting *elles* in most of the lines, whereas *ellis* occurs in Gg alongside *eth* as well as in Dd alongside *elles*. Furthermore, in Ad<sup>1</sup> and En<sup>3</sup>, two O manuscripts, *ellis* is clearly the preferred spelling, while *elles* is used only twice in Ad<sup>1</sup>. The presence of *ellis* in early manuscripts other than Hg, and especially in late but reliable manuscripts like Ad<sup>1</sup> and En<sup>3</sup>, suggests that this variant must have been present in the archetype of the tradition. *Ellis* was thus the form used by Chaucer, while *elles* was the variant chosen by the scribe for E1, once again in order to give a uniform character to the spelling of this manuscript. It follows that the occurrences of *ellis* in E1 should be treated as relicts from the exemplar. There is evidence in other texts that both forms were still in use in the fifteenth century, although *ellis* was becoming old-fashioned. In *ACE* there are ten instances of *ellis* against seventeen of *elles*; in addition, the *Chaucer Concordance* shows that *elles* is the form generally preferred in Chaucer’s works, with the exception of *A Treatise on the Astrolabe*, where *ellis* is used more commonly, and *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Romaunt of the Rose*, in which *ellis* is often used along with *elles*. Finally, comparison of Hg and E1 with Tr reveals that in the latter manuscript *elles* is also the preferred form. This is probably a feature of

Gower's spelling, not a scribal one, as *elles* is the default variant in the entire text of the *Confessio Amantis* in the Fairfax manuscript, while *ellis* occurs only once.

The spelling variants employed for the word MATTER show that the scribe was extremely consistent in Hg, where he always spelled the word *matere*, while in El he employed the three variants *mateere*, *matere* and *matiere*. There seem to be several reasons for such variation in El. First of all, *mateere*, the variant used most frequently, almost exclusively occurs in rhyming pairs in which the other word is likewise spelled with *-ee-*, such as *heere* and *cheere*, with the exception of two instances of this word in WBP l. 810 and SU l. 512, where *mateere* rhymes with *frere*:

- |         |                                                                 |                 |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| (53) a. | Loo goode men a flye and eek a <b>frere</b>                     | Hengwrt         |
|         | Wol falle in euery dyssh and <b>matere</b>                      | WBP ll. 809–810 |
|         | Lo goode men a flye and eek a <b>frere</b>                      | Ellesmere       |
|         | Wol falle in euery dyssh and <b>mateere</b>                     | WBP ll. 809–810 |
| b.      | To shewe swich a probleme to the <b>frere</b>                   | Hengwrt         |
|         | Neu <sup>re</sup> erst er now herde I swich <b>matere</b>       | SU ll. 511–512  |
|         | To shewe swich a p <sup>ro</sup> bleme to a <b>frere</b>        | Ellesmere       |
|         | Neuere erst <sup>r</sup> er now herde I of swich <b>mateere</b> | SU ll. 511–512  |

In addition, all of the four instances that are found within the line occur before a *virgula*, i.e. a punctuation mark that indicates a pause, as in the following line:

- |      |                                                 |                     |
|------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (54) | Of this <b>matere</b> / it oghte ynow suffise   | Hengwrt PD l. 106   |
|      | Of this <b>mateere</b> / it oghte ynogh suffise | Ellesmere PD l. 106 |

It seems plausible, therefore, to argue that the spelling with double *-ee-* in El is a scribal variant employed at the end of lines and paragraphs, in other words at the end of stretches of text that were followed by a pause, and which, as in the case of entire lines, the scribe probably read and copied one by one. The other two variants, *matere* and *matiere*, may also occur before a pause, but not so regularly as *mateere*. Moreover, since the variants *matere* and *mateere* simply are two orthographic representations of the same long mid vowel [e:], some attention should be devoted to the third form, i.e. *matiere*. This spelling is attested in El sixteen times, eleven of which are clustered in TM, while the other five occurrences are in ML, ME and PD. The clustering of this form in TM, which displays just one and two instances of *matere* and *mateere* respectively, is significant and may be taken as an indication that *matiere* is authorial. TM is very likely to be a close translation of Renaud de Louens' *Livre de Mellibee et Prudence*, which is the French version, translated after 1336, of Albertanus da Brescia's *Liber Consolationi et Consilii* (1246) (Benson 1987:17, Cooper 1989:314); it is thus possible that the spelling of the French word influenced Chaucer's own spelling. In addition, it is argued that TM was translated

around 1373 to stand alone as a political tract, and was revised later to be inserted in the frame of *The Canterbury Tales* (see Cooper 1989:311–312, Matthews 1985): this could explain the presence of somewhat outdated spelling variants in this text. Comparison with the other early witnesses of GP, L1, WBP and NP shows that Dd is the only manuscript that, like Hg, exhibits only *matere*, while both *matere* and *matiere* are attested in the other manuscripts. These two forms were certainly in use at the time, as they both occur in the documents collected in *ACE*, although *matere* is by far the preferred choice (100 occurrences in total), followed by *matiere* and *matire* (26 and 10 instances, respectively). *Matiere* is also the only variant used the Fairfax manuscript of the *Confessio Amantis*, hence the Gowerian form, although it occurs in B's copy only once, in the following line:

(55) The **matiere** in so litel throwe      Trinity l. 3.2117

All other instances of this word in Tr are spelled *matere*, when within a line, and *mateere*, when in rhyming position, the latter being the most frequently used variant, and, as I argued above, probably a scribal one.

Finally, the last example of a word that shows significant differences between Hg and El is TOWN. As I discussed in Chapter 4, when I dealt with this word in relation to the shift from Hg *-ow-* to El *-ou-*, the variant *town* is commonly used in Hg, but it almost totally disappears in El, where only the inflected forms *towne* and *townes* are preserved. Despite the great number of occurrences of *town* in Hg, this variant was most likely introduced by Scribe B at an early stage in the tradition of *The Canterbury Tales*. This can be assumed by comparing all witnesses of GP, MI, NPT and WBP, as thirteen of the 47 instances of *town* in Hg are found in these tales. The same variant occurs in other witnesses as well, but hardly ever in the early manuscripts; by contrast *toun* is generally used more often than *town* in the other manuscripts, and almost always in the early ones. In addition, seven of these occurrences are at the end of a line and their rhyme words almost always end in *-oun*, as in *confessioun* and *champioun*. An exception to this tendency can be seen in D1, a manuscript dating from the third quarter of the fifteenth century, which always agrees with Hg in the spelling of TOWN, but in which the scribe also changed the spelling of some of the rhyme words accordingly, as shown by *suspeciown* in the following example:

(56) As soone as day he wente out of the town	Hengwrt
This man gan fallen in <b>suspecioun</b>	NP ll. 211–212
As sone as day hee wentte owt of thee town	Delamere
This man gan falle in greet <b>suspeciown</b>	NP ll. 211–212

This is probably due to a scribal preference for *-ow-* over *-ou-*, as illustrated by the spelling *owt* for the word OUT in the previous line. The fact that Hg *town* is largely

replaced by *toun* in El may therefore indicate that this was the form used by Chaucer.

In this section I have discussed variants that usually exhibit different spellings in Hg and El. My findings suggest that both manuscripts may contain authorial variants, such as *kultour* for COULTER, *draght* for DRAUGHT, for ELSE, *ellis* for ELSE, *matiere* (and probably *matere*) for MATTER and *toun* for TOWN. It is interesting to note, however, that some of these variants are not attested in Hg, while they do occur in El, suggesting that in those cases the scribe was definitely making an effort to preserve Chaucer's language as much as possible when copying this manuscript.

## 2.4. Summary

In section 2 of this chapter I discussed a number of words which display a default spelling as well as one or more alternative variants in both Hg and El, showing that this pattern differs between the two manuscripts. In certain cases the differences are not substantial, because the frequency of the main spellings and the minor variants of those words is comparable in both manuscripts, as shown by *werk*, *wirk*, *werch* and *wirch* for WORK. In other cases, however, the default spelling is the same in both manuscripts, whereas the alternative variant changes, as shown by default variant *cheere* and the alternative variant *chiere*, which is used more often in El than in Hg. Finally, in a third group of words, the default spelling may vary between the two manuscripts, because either the scribe preferred one variant over the others in El, as Hg *ellis* but El *elles*, or one of the two manuscripts contained authorial variants, as shown by Hg *cultour* and El *kultour*.

## 3. Two or more spelling variants used in free variation

In the previous section I dealt with words that usually exhibit a default spelling alongside minor spelling variants. In this section I will describe words that occur in both manuscripts in free variation, i.e. words that regularly display two or more spelling variants which simply co-occur for no apparent reason, even though the number of these forms varies between Hg and El. The words which most clearly exemplify this aspect of the language of the two manuscripts, and that have thus been chosen to represent this category, are presented in Table 9.

The variants that are commonly used in Hg and El for the word BEFORE are *bifore* and *biforn*. Slightly different variants are *bifor*, occurring once in Hg, in ML l. 750, and *byforn*, which is found twice in Hg, in GP l. 592 and TM par. 332, and once in El, in PA par. 570. Although the two main variants generally co-occur in Hg, *biforn* is the only spelling attested in a number of tales: in RE (three instances), SQ (five instances), NU (three instances), SH (once) and PR (three instances); it is also the most frequently used form in the prose sections, TM and PA. As for the distribution of these two forms, *biforn* is found more often than *bifore* line-initially, while both variants are similarly used in the middle as well as at the end of a line.

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
BEFORE	biforn	84	87+14	–
	byforn	2 (GP, TM)	0+1	–
	bifor	1	–	–
	bifore	40	32+6	–
	bifoore	2	9	–
	toforn	–	1 (SQ)	–
	tofore	–	–	21
	afore	–	–	4
FURTHER(-)	ferther-	13	7+1	–
	forther	21	25+6	7
	ferre(r)	4 (GP, KT)	4 (GP, KT)	–
	ferreste	1 (GP)	1 (GP)	–
MERRY	merye/merie	5	5	–
	murye/murie	32	17	1
	myrie/myry(e)	14	31+4	–
MERRILY	myrily	8	6	–
	murily	2	4	–
MUCH	muche	69	63+19	1
	muchel	37	57+13	11
	muchil	12 (TM)	–	–
	mychel	4 (TM)	–	–
NIGH	neigh(e)	20	4	1
	ney	5	–	–
	ny(e)	8	29+3	1
	nyh	–	–	1
NEIGHBOUR	neghebore	11	–	–
	neighebore	20	32+11	–
NOT	noght	233	177+12	181
	naght	1	–	–
	naught	11	9+2	–
	nawght	2 (PA)	–	–
	nat	819	882+180	32
SAW	seigh	13	3	2
	saugh	31	119+6	20
	saw(e)	43	5	–
	say(e)	48	10	–
	s(e)y	2	0+1	–
	sigh(e)	–	–	10

**Table 9. Two or more spelling variants used in free variation**

All occurrences of *bifore* in rhyming position are preserved in El, where nine of them are spelled *bifoore*, a variant that is used only twice in Hg, in the following lines:



- (57) a. Whit was hir smok $\zeta$  and broyden al **bifoore** Hengwrt MI l. 52  
 b. Ne hadde soothly knowen ther **bifoore** Hengwrt CL l. 689

In both manuscripts *bifoore* is exclusively employed at the end of verse lines; in line 52 of MI this variant is found in Hg and El and in none of the other fifteenth-century manuscripts of this tale, while in WBP l. 609 it is attested in El and Gg only. Even though Hg, El and Gg are authoritative manuscripts, the occurrence of *bifoore* at the end of a line, a place in which the scribe tended to write double vowels in any case (see Chapter 6), suggests that this spelling cannot be authorial. Moreover, the instance in CL rhymes with *moore*, which I argued in Chapter 3 is very likely a scribal variant. The only occurrence of *tofor*n is found in the line in El shown in (58), and, according to Manly and Rickert (1940, vol. 6:531), also in Gg.

- (58) **Biforn** hym gooth the loude Mynstralcye Hengwrt SQ l. 260–263  
**Tofor**n hym gooth the loude Mynstralcye Ellesmere SQ l. 260–263

This might be a relict as well as a scribal change, and only a comparison of all witnesses of SQ can cast more light on this matter. However, according to the *Chaucer Concordance* the form *tofor*n is attested twice in *Boece* and nine times in *Troilus and Criseyde*; in this text the variant always occurs in the fixed expression *God tofor*n, which is spelled *God tofore* only once in rhyming context, thus suggesting that *tofor*n could be a relict. According to the poem written by Chaucer to Adam Scryveyn, the scribe had copied both *Boece* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, and must therefore have been familiar with this spelling variant. In addition, *tofore* is the preferred form in Tr, while *afore* occurs just four times in the section copied by Scribe B; the spelling of these four instances is exactly the same in the corresponding lines in the Fairfax manuscript. These are thus certainly Gowerian forms, and it is possible that the scribe, who was used to copying *tofore* from the Gower manuscript as well, did not hesitate to preserve *tofor*n in line 260 of SQ in El. The form *afor(e)* is widely used in ACE (156), along with other variants such as *bifore* (15), *byfore* (26), *biforn* (3), *before* (55) and *tofore* (4); its presence in Tr might indicate an influence from Chancery English on Gower's language. In the Chaucerian manuscripts it occurs only twice in the word *aforeseyd*, which is found in TM both in Hg and in El, in pars 386 and 861, as shown in (59):

- (59) a. whiche conseilours been ynow repreued  
 bi the resons **foreseyd** Hengwrt TM par. 386  
 whiche conseillo's been ynogh repreued  
 by the resoūs **aforeseyd** Ellesmere TM par. 386  
 b. to be doon on hem by the causes **aforeseyd** Hengwrt TM par. 860  
 to be doon on hem by the causes **aforeseyd** Ellesmere TM par. 860

The two variants *forther* and *ferther* are usually employed for the word FURTHER, both when used alone, as in (60):

- (60) a. She gropeth alwey **forther** w<sup>t</sup> hir hond      Hengwrt RE l. 302  
 b. Er that I **ferther** in this tale pace      Hengwrt GP l. 36

and when in combination with MORE, as in (61):

- (61) a. And **forther moore** I pray yow looketh wel      Hengwrt NP l. 307  
 b. Yet peynted was a litel **ferther moor**      Hengwrt KT l. 1211

The only exception is the word *forther ouer*, which is attested only once in PD and eleven times in PA. In this word, FURTHER is always spelled *forther*, as in the example in (62), since *ferther ouer* never occurs in Hg and El:

- (62) And **forther ouer** I wol thee telle al plat      Hengwrt PD l. 320

In both manuscripts there is evidence that *ferther* is preferred when the word occurs alone, while *forther* is more frequently selected for compound adverbs, hence when either *mo(ore)* or *ouer* follow; on the whole, *forther* is used more regularly than *ferther*. The collation of lines 307 and 333 in NP and of line 757 in WBP in all witnesses of these tales reveals that *forther* is the variant that occurs in both lines in all early manuscripts except Gg, which reads *ferther(e)*. *Ferther* is also the variant found in both Hg and El in GP l. 36, a line that is omitted in twenty witnesses, three of which, Cp, Dd and Gg, are early manuscripts. In the same line Ha<sup>4</sup> reads *ferpere*, while La displays *forther*. Ad<sup>1</sup> and En<sup>3</sup> exhibit *ferther* in all these lines, and since they are closely related to the archetype it is possible that this was the variant used in the original version. *Ferther* is also the only form that is recorded in the *MED*, together with just one occurrence of *ferther ouer*, which is attested in line 2.26.11 of Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe* (in the Benson-Robinson edition). Moreover, in *ACE*, forms that begin with *fer-* (15) are more frequent than forms beginning with *fur-* (4) and *for-* (1). *Forther* is the only variant attested in Tr; it occurs seven times in Scribe B's stint, although the Fairfax manuscript exhibits both *forther* and *further* in the same lines. There is thus enough evidence from several texts to suggest that *ferther* was the form used more commonly, but it is difficult to dismiss the presence of *forther* in the Chaucerian manuscripts as simply scribal. The occurrence of both forms in free variation in Hg and El suggests that both of them were probably in the archetype. In addition, the meaning 'further' is also carried by the more old-fashioned variants *ferre* and *ferrer*, two forms for the comparative of ME *fer*, while the superlative form is *ferreste*; all of these spellings are found in the following four lines from GP and KT:

- |         |                                                                        |                      |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| (63) a. | And ther to hadde he ryden no man <b>ferre</b>                         | Hengwrt GP l. 48     |
|         | And ther to hadde he riden no man <b>ferre</b>                         | Ellesmere GP l. 48   |
| b.      | The <b>ferreste</b> in his parisshe muche and lyte                     | Hengwrt GP l. 496    |
|         | The <b>ferreste</b> in his parisshe muche and lite                     | Ellesmere GP l. 496  |
| c.      | Now draweth cut <sup>r</sup> er þ <sup>t</sup> we <b>ferrer</b> twynne | Hengwrt GP l. 835    |
|         | Now draweth cut <sup>r</sup> er þ <sup>t</sup> we <b>ferrer</b> twynne | Ellesmere GP l. 835  |
| d.      | Thus was it peynted I kan seye yow no <b>ferre</b>                     | Hengwrt KT l. 1202   |
|         | Thus was it peynted I kan sey yow no <b>ferre</b>                      | Ellesmere KT l. 1202 |

The collation of the first three lines in all fifteenth-century witnesses of GP shows that the reading *ferrer* in l. 835 is found only in Hg and El, while the other manuscripts mainly read *ferther*. In contrast, *ferre* in GP l. 48, a line that is missing from eighteen manuscripts, is found in all witnesses that display this line because of the rhyme with *werre*. The same may be expected for the variant in KT, which rhymes with *sterre*, although this is not quite certain, as the digital collation of this word in all fifteenth-century witnesses is not yet available. Finally, several witnesses, Ch, Cp, Ha<sup>4</sup> and La among them, agree with the reading *ferreste* in line 496 of GP in Hg and El, although the variant *ferthest* occurs in a number of other texts, including the authoritative Ad<sup>1</sup>, Ad<sup>3</sup>, En<sup>3</sup> and Gg. These isolated variants, attested at the beginning of the manuscript both within the line and in rhyming position, may be relicts, which were replaced by modern forms in most witnesses of GP, unless this was prevented by the rhyme constraint.

The word MERRY occurs in more than one spelling form; the three main ones are *murye*, *myrie* and *merye*. *Murye* is preferred in Hg, *myrie* in El and *merye* occurs in both texts, although very infrequently and mostly at the end of a line. Burnley (1983:128) suggests that the presence of these variants in Chaucer's language was due to Chaucer's need to resort to words from different Middle English dialects for rhyming purposes, *merye* being a South Eastern form, *myrie* an East Midlands form and *murye* the West Midlands equivalent (see the map in Figure 1 in this chapter, and Chapter 6 for a more comprehensive discussion of spelling variation in lexical items containing vowels that are reflexes of OE *y*). Indeed, four of the five occurrences of *merye* are found in rhyming position, and the rhyming pairs *myrye*: *pirye* (and also *murye*: *purye*) and *murye*: *Mercurie* are likewise attested. However, *murye* and *myrie* are the most frequently used forms in Hg and El, and in the vast majority of the cases they are found in the middle and not at the end of a line. The co-occurrence of these two variants in Hg is exemplified by the line in (64), while the corresponding line in El shows the adoption of the *-u-* form for both variants:

- |      |                                                        |                    |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| (64) | His voys was <b>murier</b> than the <b>myrie</b> Orgon | Hengwrt NP l. 31   |
|      | His voys was <b>murier</b> than the <b>murie</b> Orgon | Ellesmere NP l. 31 |

The use of *-u-* variants of this word in El is uncommon, as in most of the cases there is a change from Hg *murye* and El *myrie* for the preferential spelling of this word. Horobin (2003:50–52) argues that the shift from Hg *merye* and *murye* to El *myrie* was caused by the pressure of ongoing linguistic changes on the scribe's orthographic practice. As a result of this, Scribe B preferred to use *-i/y-* in El for representing the reflex of OE *y*, as exemplified in this case by ME *myrie* deriving from OE *myrige*. However, it should be pointed out that in El all five instances of Hg *merye*, four of which are rhyme words, are preserved, and that *murye* still represents one-third of the total number of occurrences of MERRY. In addition, it is interesting to note that Scribe B would have been the only copyist of *The Canterbury Tales* who was affected by this linguistic pressure, since El is the only manuscript in which variants spelled with *-y-* occur frequently. Comparison of Hg and El with all other manuscripts of the first quarter of the fifteenth century and with Ad<sup>1</sup>, Ad<sup>3</sup>, Ch and En<sup>3</sup>, four later but authoritative texts, shows that *mery(e)* is undoubtedly the preferred variant in most of these witnesses.

	line	Hg	El	Ad <sup>3</sup>	Ch
GP	208	<i>merye</i>	<i>merye</i>	<i>merye</i>	<i>merie</i>
	235	<b>murye</b>	<b>murye</b>	–	<b>mury</b>
	757	<b>murye</b>	myrie	<b>mury</b>	<b>mury</b>
	764	<b>murye</b>	myrie	<b>murye</b>	<i>meri</i>
	782	<b>murye</b>	myrie	<b>mury</b>	<b>mury</b>
	857	<b>murye</b>	myrie	<b>mury</b>	<i>merye</i>
MI	32	<b>murye</b>	myrie	<i>mery</i>	<i>mery</i>
	139	<b>murye</b>	myrie	<i>mery</i>	<i>merye</i>
	158	<b>murye</b>	myrie	<i>mery</i>	<i>mery</i>
	389	<b>murye</b>	myrie	<b>murye</b>	<i>mery</i>
WBP	392	<b>murye</b>	myrie	<i>mery</i>	<b>mury</b>
	42	<b>murye</b>	myrie	<i>mery</i>	<i>mery</i>
L30	479	<b>murye</b>	myrie	<i>mery</i>	<i>mery</i>
	29	<b>murye</b>	<b>murie</b>	<i>mery</i>	<i>merie</i>
NP	31	<b>murye</b>	myrie	<i>mery</i>	<i>merie</i>
	31	<b>murier</b>	<b>murier</b>	<b>murier</b>	mirier
	31	myrie	<b>murie</b>	<b>mury</b>	myrye
	146	<i>merye</i>	<i>mery</i>	myry	myrye
	148	myrye	myrie	myry	<i>merye</i>
	251	myrye	myrie	myry	<b>murie</b>
	439	myrye	myrie	myry	<i>mery</i>
450	myrier	<b>murier</b>	<i>merier</i>	mirier	
471	myrie	myrie	<i>mery</i>	<i>mery</i>	

Table 10. Variants for MERRY in Hg, El, Ad<sup>3</sup> and Ch

More specifically, 23 occurrences of MERRY, attested in 22 lines of GP, MI, WBP, L30 and NP, show that Hg and El are unique in their use of *myrye* and *myrie*, while only Ad<sup>3</sup> and Ch, dating respectively from the second and third quarters of the fifteenth century, agree with Hg in a number of lines. As Table 10 shows, Ad<sup>3</sup> exhibits the same readings attested in Hg in ten lines, while Ch does so only in six, irrespective of whether the variant is *myrye* or *myrie*. In contrast, Ad<sup>3</sup> and Ch differ from Hg in the two lines in which this manuscript displays the single occurrence of *myrye* that is not a rhyme word, as shown by the following example:

- (65) Of herbeyue growyng in oure yerd ther **myrye** is                      Hengwrt NP l. 146  
       Of hbe yue growyng<sup>r</sup> in oure yeerd<sup>ð</sup> ther **myry** is                      Ellesmere NP l. 146  
       Of herbe yue growyng in our yerde there **myry** is                      Ad<sup>3</sup> NP l. 146  
       Of herbe yue growyng in oure yerde there **myrye** is                      Ch NP l. 146

The evidence provided by the collation of Hg and El with the above-mentioned manuscripts is also corroborated by the comparison with all fifteenth-century witnesses of *The Canterbury Tales*: Hg and El definitely differ from the vast majority of them because of their preference for *myrye* or *myrie* instead of *myrye*. This raises the question of whether these variants in Hg and El are authorial or not, given that Samuels and Smith (1988:19) argue that ‘Chaucer uses *i*, *y* normally but *e* occasionally in rhyme’ in words showing the reflex of OE *y*. The distribution of the two forms in Hg shows that *myrye* is frequently found in Structural Sections I and IV and very rarely in the other three sections of this manuscript (see Chapter 2, §2.1 for Structural Sections in Hg). *Myrie* and twice *myry*, by contrast, occur primarily in Sections III and IV, especially in NP, where five instances of *myrie* are attested alongside one of *myrier*, and in all links, i.e. L29, L21 (*myry*), L24, L25, L28 (*myry*) and L37. The table below shows the occurrences of the different variants in the five Structural Sections of Hg:

Structural Section	myrye	myrier	myrie	myrier
I	13	1	1	–
II	3	–	–	–
III	2	1	6	1
IV	13	2	6	–
V	1	–	1	–

**Table 11. Variants for MERRY in each Structural Section of Hengwrt**

As I explained in Chapter 2, quires 13–15 in Structural Section III of Hg were probably misbound at some point in time, and there is evidence in the text of Links 29 and 37 that Section III should actually follow rather than precede Section IV (Stubbs 2000: Observations). By inverting the order of Sections III and IV and thus

by re-establishing the sequence in which the quires were originally arranged, I, II, IV, III and V, we can see that the variants characterised by medial *-u-* are preferred in the first three sections, I, II and IV, and that their use decreases in the last two sections, III and V, in which *myrie* becomes the dominant form.

In E1, where *myrie* is preferred, Hg *myrye* is preserved in nine of the 32 instances of this word. This variant is also used in E1 for one occurrence of Hg *myry* and four of Hg *myrie*: two of them are in the following headings of Links 24 and 25 in E1, in which the text of both lines was modified to some extent:

- |         |                                                                                    |                    |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| (66) a. | Herke the <b>myrie</b> wordes of the worthy Hoost <sup>r</sup>                     | Hengwrt L24 l. 0   |
|         | Bihoold <sup>o</sup> the <b>murie</b> wordes of the Hoost <sup>r</sup> to the      | Ellesmere          |
|         | Shipman and to the lady Prioressse                                                 | L24 l. 0           |
| b.      | Bihoold the <b>myrie</b> talkyng <sup>r</sup> of the hoost <sup>r</sup> to Chaucer | Hengwrt L25 l. 0   |
|         | Bihoold the <b>myrye</b> wordes of the Hoost <sup>r</sup> to Chaucer               | Ellesmere L25 l. 0 |

In addition, there are three further instances of *myrye* in E1, which are found in two lines that are not attested in Hg, once again in two links, L14 and L29, as well as in a line that shows a different reading in Hg:

- |      |                                               |                      |
|------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| (67) | So loude cryde they with <b>loude</b> steuene | Hengwrt KT l. 1704   |
|      | So loude cride they with <b>murie</b> steuene | Ellesmere KT l. 1704 |

Hence, even though *myrie* is preferred to *myrye* in E1, both variants are still frequently used in this manuscript, and *murier* is the only form that occurs in E1 for the comparative form of the adjective. This suggests that both *myrie* and *myrye* in Hg and E1 are very likely authorial variants, but that *myrie* was probably the variant that was preferred by Chaucer, while *murie* was likely to be a conventional spelling used for this word in Chaucer's and especially in the scribe's orthographic practice. It is thus possible that the preference for *myrye* in Hg is scribal, and the rhyming pair *pyrye: myrye* in ME II. 973–974 would confirm this, as this is a clear example of scribal hypercorrection. This is no longer the case in E1, as the rhyming couple *pyrie: myrie* is attested in these lines instead. In E1, Scribe B opted to use *myrie* more systematically, as this was probably the authorial variant, even though in this manuscript too he preserved and even introduced a number of instances of *myrye*, in lines where the exemplar very likely read *myrie* and possibly also *merye*. Interestingly, it seems that both *myrie* and *myrye* were not considered Chaucerian forms by other scribes, who therefore used them irregularly. This would explain why, as evident from by the tales mentioned above, these variants are not well preserved in the textual tradition of *The Canterbury Tales*. Only the agreement of Ad<sup>3</sup> and Ch with Hg and E1 in some lines shows that those forms must derive from the archetype. Ad<sup>3</sup> and Ch are two O manuscripts that generally show features of the East Midland and London dialects (Blake 1997a:6–8, Horobin 2003:147–148), and

which are closely related to Hg. In particular, the stemmatic analysis of GP (Robinson 2000a:§3.4.2) shows that Ch probably descends, together with Hg and Ha<sup>4</sup>, from a common exemplar that was copied between O and Hg, which must have been a very good copy of O, and according to Robinson (2000:§3.4) ‘was a third copy of the *Tales* written by the same scribe who wrote El Hg, scribe B’. By the same token, as I already pointed out in my discussion of *murthe* (in §2.1 above), Horobin (2003:147) argues that Ad<sup>3</sup> exhibits several South West Midland forms in its opening folios, hence in GP, which are probably due to *literatim* copying: this would also explain the presence of *murye* in GP in Ad<sup>3</sup>.

Variants with medial *-y-* and medial *-u-* are also employed for the adverb MERRILY, although *myrily* is the preferred spelling for this word in both Hg and El, while *murily* is found in two lines from Hg and four from El. Two of the four instances in El (SH l. 301, PR l. 101) are likewise spelled *murily* in Hg, while the other two (SH l. 110, L25 l. 8) read *myrily* in Hg. These four lines occur in both manuscripts in three consecutive texts: SH, PR and L25, which belong to Section IV of Hg, where, as I have shown for MERRY, forms with medial *-u-* are predominant, very likely because of scribal interference. By contrast, *myrily* is attested twice in Section II and four times in Section III of Hg, and all of these instances, which are possibly authorial, are preserved in El. Scribe B’s preference for *murie* can also be the reason why the only occurrence of MERRY in his stint of Tr is spelled *murie* in the following line:

- (68) And tho thei ladde a **merie** lif      Fairfax l. 4.504  
       And tho they ladde a **murie** lyf      Trinity l. 4.504

In the Fairfax manuscript this word is spelled *merie* not only in this line but throughout the manuscript, showing therefore that *merie* is the authorial variant in the *Confessio Amantis* (see Samuels and Smith 1988:19 for the treatment of the reflexes of OE *y* in Gower’s language).

Hg and El show several variants for another word that is spelled with *y* in OE, namely, MUCH from OE *mycel*; four variants of this word, *muche*, *muchel*, *muchil* and *mychel* are employed in Hg, while only the first two occur in El and Tr. *Muche* and *muchel* are not exactly the forms to be expected in two manuscripts written in the London dialect of the late fourteenth century. According to Horobin and Mooney, who discuss the linguistic features of Trinity College, Cambridge, MS B.15.17, a manuscript of *Piers Plowman* that they attribute to the Scribe B,

the spelling ‘*muchel*’ is comparatively rare in the London dialect during this period; the majority of texts copied in Types II and III use the more common forms ‘*moche*’ and ‘*miche*’. The ‘*muchel*’ form is less common in the Eastern dialects of Middle English and is more frequently found in the West Midlands.

(Horobin and Mooney 2004:83)

Indeed, comparison of the spelling variants of MUCH in GP, WBP, L30 and NP in all early manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* reveals that Hg and El are quite exceptional because of their use of *muche* and *muchel* where the other manuscripts read *mochel*, *mechel* and more rarely *mychel*, as well as several other variants of these forms spelled with medial *-o-*, *-e-* and *-u-*. The only manuscript that agrees with Hg and El is La, which usually displays *much(el)*, although this is a dialectal feature, since, according to Horobin (2003:152), ‘the majority of the linguistic features of La point to a localisation in the South-West Midlands’. In Ad<sup>1</sup> and Ad<sup>3</sup>, two late and authoritative manuscripts, there are respectively two and three instances of *muche(l)*, while in all other witnesses of GP, WBP, L30 and NP *muche* and *muchel* are rarely preserved. *Muche* is, however, the predominant form in the documents collected in *ACE*, where 61 occurrences of this variant are attested against 43 of *moche*, six of *mych* and one of *mech*. *Moche*, in contrast, is found more frequently in the earlier London documents, written between 1384 and 1425, and thus closer to Chaucer’s time, which are collected in *A Book of London English* (Chambers and Daunt 1931). Both *muche* and *moche* were therefore employed in the bureaucratic language, and Scribe B, being a professional copyist, must have been familiar with these two variants. Nevertheless, he apparently preferred *muche*, and accordingly introduced this variant in the Chaucerian manuscripts. He probably did the same in his stint of the *Confessio Amantis*, because Tr reads *muche(l)* in all of the twelve lines in which Fairfax reads *moche(l)*. The scribal adoption of a form that might have been in Chaucer’s language, albeit not as the dominant variant, would also explain why *muche* and *muchel* were not preserved in the textual tradition of *The Canterbury Tales*. In spite of the fact that MUCH was going to be the standard form, most fifteenth-century scribes did not recognize *muche* and *muchel* as typical Chaucerian features, and thus did not use these variants in their copies of the *Tales*.

In addition to *muche* and *muchel*, Hg exhibits twelve instances of *muchil* and four of *mychel*, all of which are only attested in TM and are clustered in quire 29. This is the last quire of Section IV but it is also an anomalous one; it consists of ten leaves instead of eight, folios 225 to 234, and its two outer leaves, folios 225 and 234, differ from the others as they are not ruled with a plummet (a lead pencil). This outer bifolium was probably added later to a quire that was ready for use, in order to have enough pages to copy TM until the end. In addition, each of the first five folios is marked in the bottom left-hand corner with the Roman numerals I to V, and the numeral V is repeated in the same position on the verso side of the fifth leaf; this is unique, because despite the regular use of catchwords in Hg, the scribe did not employ Roman numerals in footers anywhere else in this manuscript. Stubbs argues:

There are immediately several observable inconsistencies in the make up of the one leaf and two quires which comprise Chaucer’s Tale of Melibeus. This tale may already have been copied in a flexible booklet before the Hg texts were joined. The text extends from the last leaf of quire 27, through quires 28 and 29. ... To adapt such a booklet for use in Hg, the opening text needed to be recopied onto the last leaf of the previous quire.

(Stubbs 2000: Observations, Section IV)



I suggest that it is possible that the scribe had two different exemplars for this tale: one from which he copied the text in quires 27 and 28 of Hg and another one for the text in quire 29. Codicological evidence for this assumption is provided by the last folio of quire 28, folio 224v, which is reproduced in Figure 2.

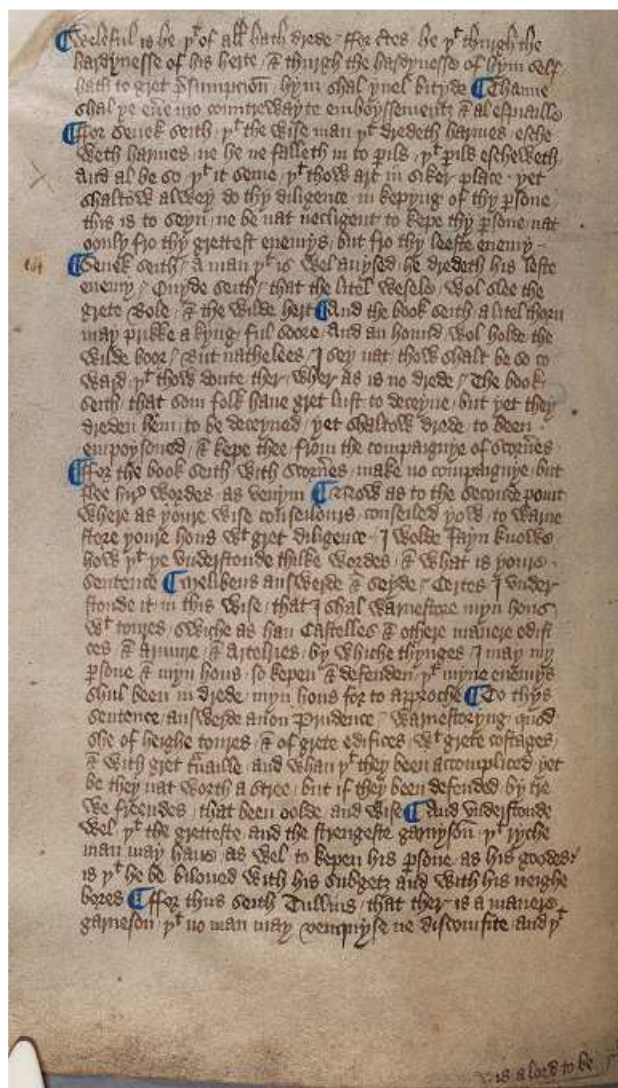


Figure 2. Longer lines at the foot of fol. 224v in Hengwrt

From the sixth line from the bottom, the colour of the ink becomes slightly darker after the paraph sign that precedes the words *And vnderstonde*, thus suggesting an

interruption in the process of copying, probably a short one since the ink is basically still the same. In addition, the last four lines are longer than the preceding ones and among the longest of that page, possibly because the scribe needed to fit more text than he had expected within that page. Different variants of the same words in quires 28 and 29 likewise indicate that something changed in the transition from one quire to the other. A shift of exemplar would thus explain why the forms *muchil* and *mychel* are exclusively found in quire 29, where they occur alongside *muche* and *muchel*, while *muche* and *muchel* are the only variants employed in the preceding part of the tale, in quires 27 and 28 (see Table 12) as well as in the rest of Hg.

folio	Quire 27		Quire 28							
	216		217	218	219	220	221	222	223	224
muche	–	1	–	1	1	1	–	1	1	–
muchel	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
folio	Quire 29									
	225	226	227	228	229	230	231	232	233	234
muche	–	1	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–
muchel	1	–	–	–	1	–	5	–	–	3
muchil	1	2	7	1	–	1	–	–	–	–
mychel	–	–	–	–	2	1	–	–	–	1

**Table 12. Variants of MUCH in the *Tale of Melibee* in Hengwrt**

*Mychel* is an old-fashioned spelling variant deriving from *mych*, which is a form that according to Samuels (1963:85) is characteristic of the London dialect Type I, the literary standard used in the majority of the Wycliffite manuscripts. *Muchil* is a fairly uncommon variant: only sixteen instances of this variant are recorded in the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* (2006), of which twelve are in Hengwrt, in TM, and one in Hoccleve's *Works*, two samples of London dialect Type III. The other three instances are in John Wyclif's *Works* (London dialect Type I), in *The Proverbs of Alfred* (number 15) contained in an *Old English Miscellany*, which shows Northern features like *sal* for SHALL as well as the use of thorn for *th*, and in the *Cursor Mundi*. *Cursor Mundi* is a poem written in a Northern dialect in the late thirteenth century, although the manuscript containing this variant, Bodleian Library MS. Fairfax 14, dates from the fourteenth century. Therefore, while *muche* and *muchel*, which are used systematically in Hg and El, are probably scribal forms (see below), the variants *muchil* and *mychel* that are attested only in Hg are rather puzzling. Given that they are clustered in a few leaves of TM, they might be relicts that in part illustrate Chaucer's own practice, in which *muchil* represented an old-fashioned variant, or possibly a Northern form acquired together with *again* during the time he spent in Yorkshire (see §2.1 in this chapter). However, the archetypal variant for MUCH must have been *moche(l)*, as this is the form that is found in most

authoritative manuscripts, also for some of the occurrences that read *muchil* in Hg. This is also the spelling that according to the *Chaucer Concordance* is widely attested in most of Chaucer's other works, with the exception of *Troilus and Criseyde*, which has only *muchel*.

The hypothesis that TM was copied from two distinct exemplars is also supported by differences in the spelling of the pronoun YOU. In TM, as in the rest of the manuscript, *thow* is used more frequently than *thou*, with 87 occurrences of *thow* against nine of *thou* (see Chapter 4, §4.2 for the overall figures). Yet, while *thow* is used throughout the tale, *thou* is only found in quires 27 and 28, and five of the nine occurrences are at the end of a line. It seems that in these two quires the scribe deliberately opted for *thou*, the shorter variant, at the end of those lines that would otherwise become too long and would therefore spoil the layout of the page. An example of this is provided in Figure 3, in which two occurrences of *thou* are visible at the end of two long lines, while *thow* is employed within the line.

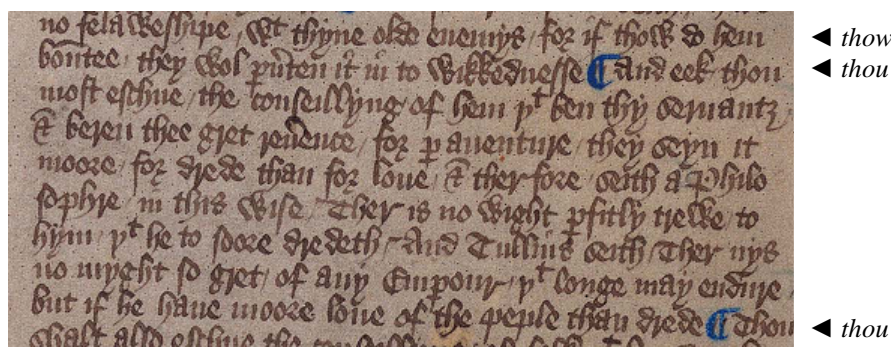


Figure 3. *Thow* vs. *thou* in fol. 221v in Hengwrt (TM)

In the following quire 29, however, the scribe used only *thow*, and on one occasion, in folio 226r, he wrote *thow* at the end of the last line, regardless of the fact that by using this variant he would go beyond the right-hand margin, as shown in Figure 4 in which the lines drawn for ruling the page and delimiting the space for writing are clearly visible:

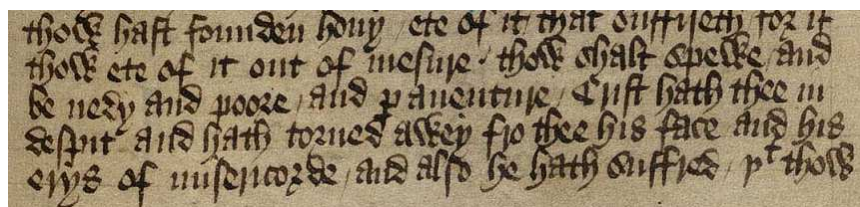


Figure 4. *Thow* written across the right margin of fol. 226r in Hengwrt (TM)

We can speculate about how the scribe proceeded in his copying of TM by looking at the variants of the word NEIGHBOUR, which is spelled both *neghebores* and *neighebores* in Hg, while only the latter variant is used in El. In quire 28 of Hg, the scribe began to write *neghebores*, which occurs twice in pars 40 and 52, and then shifted to *neighebores*, which is found in the third line from the bottom of folio 224v, the last leaf of quire 28. This is one of the long lines of folio 224v, a group of lines which, as I argued above (see also Figure 2), deviate from the overall layout of this page. The are four further occurrences of *neighebores* in the following quire 29, in pars 370, 381, 675 and 806 and fourteen instances of the same spelling are attested in PA. The shift from one variant to another in such a crucial point of the manuscript proves that something, most likely the exemplar, changed between quires 28 and 29, and that the scribe preserved the spellings he found in the two different exemplars.

There are likewise a number of spelling variants for the adjective and adverb NIGH meaning ‘close’: *neigh(e)*, *ny* and *ney* in Hg, and *ny(e)* and *neigh* in El. In Hg the forms *neigh(e)* are used more frequently than *ny*, while *ney* is found in NP, PA and TM. In TM *ney* is attested in three paragraphs, all of them in folio 225v, the first leaf of quire 29, in which I argued that old-fashioned forms of the language are often employed. In this quire there are also two instances of *ny*, in folios 226r and 229r. In addition, comparison of line 330 of NP in all witnesses of this tale shows that Hg is the only manuscript that exhibits the variant *ney*. In El NIGH is fairly consistently spelled *ny*, except for four instances of *neigh* and two of *nye*. Two occurrences of El *neigh*, in SQ ll. 423 and 430, show the same spelling in Hg, while the other two are spelled differently, as shown in (69):

- |         |                                                                              |                       |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (69) a. | For he was <b>ny</b> his exaltaciō                                           | Hengwrt SQ ll. 413    |
|         | For he was <b>neigh</b> his exaltaciō                                        | Ellesmere SQ ll. 413  |
|         | b. ne cosyns germayns ne noon oother <b>ney</b> kynrede                      | Hengwrt TM par. 400   |
|         | ne cosyns g <sup>2</sup> mayns ne noon oop <sup>2</sup> <b>neigh</b> kynrede | Ellesmere TM par. 400 |

Moreover, *nye* occurs twice in El, in the following lines:

- |         |                                                    |                     |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (70) a. | Men seith right thus alwey the <b>neighe</b> slye  | Hengwrt MI l. 206   |
|         | Men seyn right thus alwey the <b>nye</b> slye      | Ellesmere MI l. 206 |
|         | b. This <b>neighe</b> Nicholas stood in his lighte | Hengwrt MI l. 210   |
|         | This <b>nye</b> Nicholas stood in his lighte       | Ellesmere MI l. 210 |

In his stint of Tr Scribe B spelled this word *neigh*, *ny* as well as *nyh*; the form used by Gower must have been *nyh*, as this is the variant attested in the Fairfax manuscript for all three occurrences of NIGH.

Scribe B employed two main variants for the word NOT, *nat* and *noght*, writing *naught*, *nawght* and *naght* occasionally. According to Burnley (1983:61), ‘the variation between *nat* and *noght* is a feature of the London language of the period, in which the more northerly form *nat* was gradually replacing the earlier *noght*’. This can be clearly seen in Scribe B’s copies of *The Canterbury Tales*, and much less so in his stint of the *Confessio Amantis*. *Nat*, which is a feature characteristic of the London dialect Type III and also a more modern form with respect to all the other ones, is used primarily in both Hg and El. The number of occurrences of *nat* is greater in El than in Hg, thus reflecting the increased use of this variant over time. The more old-fashioned spelling *noght* is likewise attested in both manuscripts, although to a lesser extent, and the occurrence of this form decreases in El. There is, however, something striking about the distribution of *noght* in Hg, as almost 50% of the occurrences of this variant are found in Structural Section I, where it is used even more often than *nat*, which occurs more frequently in the other four sections. The difference in distribution between *nat*, *noght* and the more uncommon variants *naught* and *naght* in the five Structural Sections of Hg is summarised in Table 13:

Structural Section	noght	nat	naught	naght
I	105	91	4	–
II	27	123	–	–
III	17	76	3	–
IV	81	437	4	1
V	3	92	1	–

**Table 13. Variants for NOT in each Structural Section of Hengwrt**

*Noght* is seldom found in linking passages, and only a few occurrences of this variant are attested in Links 1 and 2 in Section I, as well as in Links 7 and 28 in Section IV. Each of the first two links exhibits six occurrences of *noght*, but in Link 1 *noght* is the preferred form, with *nat* being used twice as well, while in Link 2 *noght* is the only variant that is attested. Conversely, in Links 7 and 28 *nought* occurs only once, while *nat* is attested five and four times respectively, and is thus the preferred variant. Moreover, *noght* is employed as a rhyme word in seventeen of the 233 occurrences of NOT in Hg, all of which are preserved in El, while *nat* never appears in rhyming position. Scholars who have analysed the spelling variants of NOT in Chaucerian manuscripts tend to agree that both *nat* and *noght* seem to be used in free variation in Hg and thus reflect authorial usage, although they disagree on which of the two variants was Chaucer’s preferred one. Samuels (1988b:27) proposes *nat* as the preferred variant and *noght* as a convenient rhyme word, whereas Benson (1992:16) believes that both *nat* and *noght* were in the exemplar – or exemplars – of Hg, but ‘suspects’ that *noght* was Chaucer’s preferred form. Finally, Horobin (2003:70–76) does not deal with *noght* in particular, but compares all occurrences of NOT in all fifteenth-century manuscripts of WBP and shows that

the London Type III variant, *nat*, is found in a large number of them because it is an authorial form. He argues that

this form is quite widespread in dialects of Middle English and is found in texts copied in a variety of areas including both the West and East Midlands (see *LALME*, vol. I, map 276). Therefore it may be that its presence in these manuscripts is due to coincidence with the scribe's active repertoire rather than the deliberate preservation of an archetypal Type III form. However its consistent use in manuscripts of the period 1475–1500 is striking as in this period dialects forms of this kind were generally recessive and it may be that these scribes are more consciously reproducing traditional Chaucerian features rather than simply using their own forms.

(Horobin 2003:72)

The study of the other tales issued in digital format by the Canterbury Tales Project shows that *noght* is not preserved in all witnesses of these tales either. The collation of the 21 lines of GP which display *noght* in Hg with the corresponding lines in all other fifteenth-century witnesses shows that *noght* is used consistently only in Hg, and that eight and eleven occurrences of this variant are preserved in El and Ad<sup>3</sup>, respectively, while this form is hardly ever attested in all other witnesses. In GP *noght* occurs in rhyming context only once, in the following line:

(71) And of a myrthe I am right now bithoght	Hengwrt GP
To doon yow ese and it shal coste <b>noght</b>	ll. 767–768

and also in this case the same spelling is found only in Ad<sup>3</sup>, El, En<sup>1</sup>, Hg, Ht, Ld<sup>2</sup> and Tc<sup>2</sup>, while *nought* is preferred in most other witnesses, and other variants, such as *nowht*, *nouȝt*, *noute* and *not*, are used eight times altogether. The lack of preservation of *noght* in the vast majority of the versions of GP, which was almost certainly the first text to be copied in all manuscripts and is thus the part of the manuscript that most scribes would probably copy faithfully, does not support the hypothesis that *noght* was the preferred authorial spelling. Likewise, the presence of the same reading found in Hg and El in an authoritative manuscript such as Ad<sup>3</sup> is, in this case, not enough to prove that *noght* is authorial. The collation of all occurrences of *noght* in MI and WBP in all fifteenth-century witnesses of these tales does not provide evidence that this is an authorial variant. *Noght* is preserved only in a small number of manuscripts, among which Hg and Ad<sup>3</sup>, while it must be noted that apart from *nat* and *not* several other variants of NOT are attested, of which *nought* is the closest to *noght*.

I argued above that the clustering of most occurrences of *noght* in Section I of Hg cannot be used as evidence that this was an archetypal form which Scribe B preserved through a process of *literatim* copying at the beginning of the manuscript, and which he partly abandoned once he had become familiar with the handwriting of the exemplar. The use of *noght* in Section III of Hg likewise suggests that this variant is a scribal feature. As I explained in Chapter 3 with respect to BE, the

presence of either *ben* or *been* in this section of Hg supports the codicological evidence that L29 and MO were copied first, whereas NP, MA and their prologues were added at a later stage. The authorial variant *ben* is mainly attested in NP and MA, the texts that were copied last, and my explanation for this is that Chaucer had probably composed them some time before incorporating them into the frame of *The Canterbury Tales*. The figures reported in Table 14 show that the same can be observed for the variation between *nat* and *noght*. Even though in this case the difference is not as obvious as in the case of *be(e)n*, it should be noted that *nat* is attested throughout, while *noght* is used more frequently in MO than in the texts that were copied later. Therefore, if one excludes the few occurrences that appear in rhyming position, which may be authorial, it is likely that most of these instances of *noght* are scribal.

Tale	noght	nat	been	ben
Link 29	–	10	5	–
MO	12 (1 in rhyme)	21	9	1
Link 30	–	1	–	1
NP	1 (in rhyme)	26	–	17
Link 36	–	9	–	2
MA	4 (1 in rhyme)	9	–	6

**Table 14. Variants for NOT and BE in Structural Section III of Hengwrt**

Apart from *nat* and *noght*, a small number of minor variants are attested in Hg: *naught*, *nawght* and *naght*. The form *naught* can mean ‘not’ as well as ‘nothing’ and, like *noght*, it is a rhyme word in the pairs *naught: caught* and *naught: ytaught*. There are only eleven instances of this variant in Hg: six of them are preserved without spelling changes in E1 because they are rhyme words. Four other occurrences, in KT l. 1163, L30 l. 16, ML l. 302 and PA par. 405 are spelled *noght* in E1, and the last one, in MA l. 43, is replaced with another reading in E1, as shown in (72):

- (72) But al for **naught** for it auailleth noght<sup>r</sup>                      Hengwrt MA l. 43  
       But al in **ydel** for it auailleth noght<sup>r</sup>                         Ellesmere MA l. 43

Five occurrences of *naught* are also attested in the middle of a line in E1: in Hg three of them are spelled *nat* (KT l. 1905), *noght* (CL l. 647) and *naght* (TM par. 694), respectively, while the two instances in WBP l. 574/8 and CY l. 682 are missing from Hg. The single occurrence of *naght* in Hg, which becomes *naught* in E1, as shown in (73), is rather interesting for two reasons. First of all, this instance of *naght* is found in folio 231r, and thus in quire 29, which, as I suggested with respect to the spelling of MUCH, contains old-fashioned forms of the language. Secondly, *naght* is not a Chaucerian variant: instead, it is characteristic of Hoccleve’s language, which,

according to Samuels (1963), is another example of London dialect Type III, like Hg and El, and in which *naght* is attested alongside *nat* and *noght* (cf. Horobin 2000b).

- (73) þ<sup>t</sup> god yeue hym victorie or **naght** after that Hengwrt TM par. 694  
 Salomon seith  
 that god yeue hym victorie or **naught** After that Ellesmere TM par. 694  
 Salomon seith

I have shown that the same quire 29 contains all of the twelve instances of *muchil* that are attested in Hg, which is also a variant that is attested at least once in Hoccleve's language (see above), although his preferred spellings were *moche* and *mochil* (Samuels 1988b:29). Interestingly, Doyle and Parkes (1979:xlvi) identified Hoccleve's hand as Hand F in Hg (see Chapter 2), as he occasionally supplied some missing words and lines in this manuscript. Although he is not responsible for writing *naght* in folio 231r, as this is clearly the hand of Scribe B, one may wonder whether Hoccleve had any influence on the exemplar here. A second occurrence of *naght* in my corpus is found in the Kk fragment of the *Prioress's Tale*, as shown above in (16), where it rhymes with the Northern variant *yaght*.

An apparently older form, *nawght*, is attested only twice in Hg, in PA pars 165 and 320, but this spelling is not preserved in El, where each of these occurrences is instead spelled *noght*.

- (74) a. whan we doon dedly synne it is for **nawght** thanne to Hengwrt  
 reherse or drawn in to memorie the goode werkes þ<sup>t</sup> PA par. 165  
 we han wroght<sup>r</sup> biforn  
 whan we doon deedly synne it is for **noght** thanne to Ellesmere  
 rehercen or drawn in to memorie the goode werkes PA par. 165  
 that we han wroght<sup>r</sup> biforn
- b. Ypocrite is he that hideth to shewe hym swich as he is Hengwrt  
 and sheweth hym swich as he **nawght** is PA par. 320  
 Ypocrite is he that hideth to shewe hym swich as he is Ellesmere  
 and sheweth hym swich as he **noght** is PA par. 320

The variants *naught*, *nawght* and *naght* are not accounted for in Horobin's (2000b, 2004:81) analysis of Scribe B's spelling in Hg and El; I believe that they should have been, as they are probably relicts from the exemplar used by the scribe. *Naught* in particular must have been another variant Chaucer resorted to for rhyme purposes, and, according to the evidence provided by the collation of lines 755–756 of GP in (75), the same variant is attested in line 756 of GP in four early manuscripts (Hg, Ha<sup>4</sup>, Cp, El) as well as in two late but authoritative ones (Ad<sup>3</sup>, Ch):



- (75) Boold of his speche and wys and wel **ytaught**  
 And of manhode hym lakked right **naught** Hengwrt GP l. 755–756

Several other witnesses show variants with medial *-o-*; the O manuscripts Ad<sup>1</sup> and En<sup>3</sup>, reading *nowht*, as well as Gg, reading *nozht*, are among them. These forms spoil the orthographic rhyme with *tawht*, which is spelled with medial *-a-* in all fifteenth-century witnesses. It should thus be concluded that *nat* was surely Chaucer's preferred variant for NOT, and that *noght* was employed alongside *nat* for rhyming purposes. However, this does not account for the fact that most occurrences of *noght* that are found within the line may not descend directly from the archetype. It is possible that other variants for NOT were used alongside *nat* in Chaucer's manuscript, as shown by the occurrence of *noght*, *naught* and *nawght* in Hg, and that Scribe B changed the spelling of most of them to *noght* in Hg, and subsequently changed some of these occurrences to *nat* in El.

The variant that is commonly used in Scribe B's stint of the *Confessio Amantis* in Tr is *noght*, which must derive from the exemplar, since *noght* is almost the only spelling attested in the Fairfax manuscript and is therefore the authorial form that this scribe would tend to preserve. In the entire Fairfax manuscript, there are two instances of *nought* in the Prologue, one in Book 5 and sixteen in Book 8, in which, however, *noght* is still predominant. The spelling *nat* is found only in 32 lines in Tr, and, in his discussion of Scribe B's spelling in Tr, Benson (1992:3) suggests that 'this was apparently his own preferred form. It did not come from his exemplar; it had to come from Scribe B himself. It is a relict not of his exemplar but of his own usage'. There is little doubt as to the non-Gowerian nature of this variant, as it is never attested in the Fairfax manuscript; however, in the light of what I just argued about the variation between *nat* and *noght* in the Hg and El, I do not exclude the possibility that *nat* became part of Scribe B's linguistic repertoire as a result of the influence of Chaucer's language on his orthographic system. This variant is also attested in Chancery English; even though *not* (128) is the preferred form in ACE, *nat* (28), *noght* (22), *nought* (12) and *naught* (1) are employed as well. This means that the scribe was familiar with this spelling variant from his work on bureaucratic manuscripts as well.

Multiple variants are used in Hg for the past tense of the verb SEE: *say(e)*, *saw(e)* and *saugh* are the preferred ones, *seigh* occurs less frequently, and *sey* is attested only twice. In El, by contrast, *saugh* is the preferred spelling for this verb and just a few alternative variants occur alongside it; El *saugh* replaces most instances of Hg *say(e)*, *seigh*, *sey* and *saw(e)*, even though it is very likely that these were authorial variants. This can be safely argued, as in Hg *saw* is always used for the past tense singular, while *sawe* is used in seven of the eight occurrences of the past tense plural of the verb, the distinction between singular *saw* and plural *sawe*, shown in (76), being an old-fashioned one:

- (76) a. Thow **saw** thy child yslayn bifor thyne eyen      Hengwrt ML I. 750  
 b. Thy blisful eyen **sawe** al his torment      Hengwrt ML I. 747

The variant *sawe* is used only once for the past singular, in GP I. 144:

- (77) She wolde <sup>wepel</sup> if þ<sup>t</sup> she **sawe** a Mous      Hengwrt GP I. 144

All occurrences of *saw* are spelled *saugh* in E1, and only four of the seven instances of *sawe* used for the past tense plural are preserved in E1, which indicates that they are relicts, as Scribe B no longer made any distinction between singular *saw* and plural *sawe* in this manuscript. In E1 he used *saugh* also for the other three occurrences of the past plural, and on one occasion, as shown in (78), he mistakenly wrote *sawe* for the past singular:

- (78) Thow **saw** thy child yslayn bifor thyne eyen      Hengwrt ML I. 750  
 Thow **sawe** thy child yslayn bifore thyne eyen      Ellesmere ML I. 750

*Say* and *seigh* must be authorial variants as well, because in Hg they are used both within the line and in rhyming position. The scribe had to preserve in E1 the spelling of nine occurrences of *say*, two of *seigh* and one of *sey*, the latter with a change in ML I. 711 from Hg *sey* to E1 *say* (see (79c) below), because these were rhyme words: if he had changed their spelling into *saugh*, he would have spoiled the rhyme.

- (79) a. Was risen and romed in a chambre **anheigh**      Hengwrt  
 In which he al the noble Citee **seigh**      KT II. 207–208  
 Was risen and romed in a chambre **an heigh**      Ellesmere  
 In which he al the noble Citee **seigh**      KT II. 207–208
- b. Alite er he was mordred on a **day**      Hengwrt  
 His mordre in his auysion he **say**      NP II. 293–294  
 Alite er he was mordred on a **day**      Ellesmere  
 His mordre in his Auysiou he **say**      NP II. 293–294
- c. And whan þ<sup>t</sup> he this pitous lettre **sey**      Hengwrt  
 Ful ofte he seyde allas and **weilawey**      ML II. 711–712  
 And whan þ<sup>t</sup> he this pitous lettre **say**      Ellesmere  
 Ful ofte he seyde Allas and **weylaway**      ML II. 711–712

The variant *seigh* is thus preserved twice in rhyming context in E1, although a third instance of this form, which is not attested in Hg, is also found within the line in GP I. 193:

- (80) I **saugh** his sleues p'filed at the hond<sup>a</sup> Hengwrt GP I. 193  
 I **seigh** his sleues ypurfiled at the hond Ellesmere GP I. 193

The spelling *seigh* attested in this line in El is shared by only a few fifteenth-century manuscripts: Cp, Mm, Pw, Ry<sup>2</sup> and Lc; La shows the variant with final *-e* (*seighe*), while Dd and Gg read *sey*. By contrast, some authoritative manuscripts, Ha<sup>4</sup> and Ch, agree with Hg and read *saugh*, while others, Ad<sup>1</sup>, En<sup>3</sup>, and Ad<sup>3</sup>, display the variant *saw(e)*. Although the evidence from these manuscripts is not very helpful in determining which variant is authorial, it is likely that this instance of *seigh* is a relict, because it occurs in the first lines of GP, at a point in which the scribe was still getting used to the language of the exemplar, the phenomenon that Benskin and Laing (1981:66) call 'working-in' (see Chapter 3, §2.1).

The faithful preservation of variants from the original version can also explain the presence of *seigh* and *saugh* in Hg. As the distribution of the variants of SAW in Table 15 shows, not all of them occur in each section of in Hg.

Structural Section	seigh		saugh		saw(e)		say(e)		sey	
	Hg	El	Hg	El	Hg	El	Hg	El	Hg	El
I	9	2	16	35	10	–	2	1	–	–
II	–	–	–	21	2	–	19	2	–	–
III	–	–	–	6	–	–	7	7	1	–
IV	4	1	13	55	31	5	20	–	1	–
V	–	–	2	2	–	–	–	–	–	–

**Table 15. Variants for SAW in each Structural Section of Hengwrt**

Most occurrences of *seigh* are clustered in Section I, and only four of them are found in Section IV. Likewise, *saugh* is preferred to *saw* in Section I, while the reverse can be seen in Section IV. This may indicate that the scribe preserved most instances of *seigh* and *saugh* in the first part of Hg because he was not yet familiar with the language of the exemplar, and thus copied it faithfully. In addition, while *seigh*, *saugh* and *saw(e)* are for the most part used in sections I and IV, *say(e)* is found in all of the first four sections, but is almost the only form used in sections II and III. This largely coincides with the different stages in the process of copying of Hg that are described by Doyle and Parkes (1979:xxvi–xxxiii). Section II and half of Section III were written with two different inks, both of them lighter than the brown ink used for most of the tales in the other three sections, and must therefore have been copied later than Sections I, IV and V (cf. Stubbs 2000: Inks). Given that *say*, *saw* and *saugh* are East Midland forms for the past tense of SAW which were used in London as well (see LALME vol. I, maps 511, 512), all of these variants could have been in Chaucer's as well as in the scribe's repertoire. However, *sawe* is the sole variant used in the Chancery Standard (see Samuels 1988b:28–29), and thus the form with which Scribe B must have been most familiar, while *say(e)* and *saw(e)* are used

more frequently than *saugh* in Hg, suggesting that these were most likely the forms preferred by Chaucer. It follows that, despite the fact that *saugh* represents Chaucer's usage only in part, it is this form that eventually was chosen to normalise the spelling of SAW in EI, probably because, as I have already argued for other lexical items, it was regarded as the old-fashioned variant that best represented the author's spelling.

To conclude this section, the evidence presented here indicates that the occurrence of two or more variants of the same words in Hg and EI shows that the scribe, and probably also Chaucer, tolerated a certain degree of variation in their orthography, which is not unusual since at the time there was no standard spelling. In addition, different spelling variants may also be instances where the scribe adhered less strictly to the spelling of the original text, and allowed his own spelling practice to prevail. The evidence is not always as clear-cut as one would like, as the spelling habits of the scribe and the author overlapped to some degree, either because they wrote in the same dialect or because Chaucer's spelling influenced the scribe's practice to such an extent that it functioned as a model. The forms that I have identified in this section as possible authorial variants are the following: *bifore*, *biforn* and *tofor* for BEFORE; *forther* and *ferther* for FURTHER; *myrie* and *murye* for MERRY; *myrily* and *murily* for MERRILY; *mychel* and *muchil* for MUCH; *nat*, *nought*, *naught* and *nawght* for NOT as well as *say(e)*, *saw(e)*, *seigh* and possibly *saugh* for SAW. In addition, I have shown that in certain cases, differences in spelling may be due to a shift of exemplar. The best example of this is the transition between quires 28 and 29 in TM, which is characterised by a number of anomalous variants in quire 29, often clustered in the first folios. I have proposed that the use of different spelling variants in these quires, as shown for the words MUCH, YOU and NEIGHBOUR, was probably caused by a change of the exemplar used for copying TM. All the pieces of evidence collected in this section make it possible for us to distinguish variants that occur in free variation in Hg and EI because they are instances of authorial variation from forms that vary between the two manuscripts because of scribal variation, a distinction that is crucial in allowing us to gain some insight into the spelling system of the author as well as of the scribe.

#### 4. Lexical items affected by word division

In the previous sections I dealt with variation in items displaying a default spelling alongside one or more alternative variants, and subsequently with variation in items whose different spelling forms occur at random. I will now turn to a third group of words that show orthographic variation between Hg and EI: lexical items whose spelling may be affected by word division. In both manuscripts, Scribe B frequently divided words that consisted of at least two lexical items, mostly compound adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions, into their components, thus writing, for example, *ther fore* (see Figure 9 below for this word), *at the* and *wher as*. Although the scribe usually left a space between the two words, for example between *wher* and *as*, there are numerous instances of words which, despite the absence of an obvious break

between the two components, should be considered as consisting of two separate items. I will discuss them in what follows. Moreover, there is evidence that for a number of words, mainly adverbs, Scribe B also employed compound variants, as shown, for instance, by the occurrence of *therby* alongside *ther by*. Although these words frequently display both undivided and divided forms in Hg and El, two-word spellings are generally preferred in Hg, while one-word spellings are more common in El. The different pattern of word division seems to be a scribal feature rather than an authorial one, yet the data collected do not point towards a radical shift in scribal habits between Hg and El. Rather, they suggest a scribal tendency to replace two-word spellings, which I will argue are probably authorial, with one-word spellings, which are most likely scribal. In doing so, however, the scribe did not succeed in imposing a more regular pattern on El than he did on Hg. In contrast, there is evidence that word division may similarly affect some words in both manuscripts, and especially that the scribe often used both spelling variants in El. For the purpose of the discussion, I divided the items in question into three groups, each of them representing one of the three possibilities of spelling variation exhibited by the words analysed. In what follows, I will thus discuss items showing a similar use of word division in Hg and El (in §4.1), items showing a preference for two-word spellings in Hg but for one-word spellings in El (in §4.2) and items showing two-word spellings only in Hg against one-word and two-word spellings in El (in §4.3).

#### 4.1. Similar use of word division in Hengwrt and Ellesmere

The spelling of adverbs and conjunctions that begin with *ther*, *wher* and *with* as in *ther vpon*, *wher(e) as* and *with in(ne)*, shows little variation between Hg and El. For the most part the two constituents of these words are written separately in both manuscripts and, when attested, in Tr as well. There are a few exceptions to this pattern, which will be dealt with in §4.3 below. In contrast, a slight degree of variation between Hg and El is found in the spelling of the items listed in Table 16.

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
APART	a part	4	3	1
	apart	–	1	–
OVERALL	ouer al	20	17+1	3
	oueral	2	4	3
TODAY	to day	12	9	–
	today	–	2	–
UPRIGHT	vp right(e)	11	10	–
	vp right(e)	4	6	1 (vprightes)
WHEREOF	wher of	4	4+1	–
	wherof	–	0+1	75

Table 16. Some degree of variation in word division in Hg and El

These items usually display the two-word variants in Hg as well as in El. The one-word variants are often absent in Hg, or are used only infrequently, whereas in El they occur more regularly, even though they never represent the main variants. As a result, the spelling of these words shows greater variation in El than in Hg, suggesting that, as far as these items are concerned, the scribe was probably not aiming at imposing a regular pattern on the later manuscripts. This is also exemplified by the words discussed in the following two sections.

#### 4.2. From two-word spellings in Hengwrt to one-word spellings in Ellesmere

The items in this group show that the scribe used divided as well as undivided spelling variants in both Hg and El for compound words. In Hg, however, he clearly preferred to write these words as two separate lexical items, such as *som de(e)l*, while in El he often wrote them as one word. In compound words composed of three items, such as the adverbials *at the fulle* and *at the laste*, word division affected only the first two morphemes: *at the*. This is exemplified by the items in Table 17.

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
AT (-)	at the fulle	3	1	–
	atte fulle	4	6	–
	at the laste	26	8+1	–
	atte laste	20	39+2	18
	at the le(e)ste	11	6+1	–
	atte le(e)ste	5	10+1	–
(N)EVERMORE	(n)euere mo(ore)	43	13	–
	(n)eueremo(ore)	10	40+5	10
SOMEDEAL	som de(e)l	6	3	–
	somde(e)l	2	5	–
WITHIN	in with	6	4+2	–
	inwith	3	5	–

**Table 17. Preference for two word-spellings in Hg and one-word spellings in El**

As the examples in the table show, the adverbials AT FULL, meaning ‘completely’, AT LAST and AT LEAST are spelled *at the fulle*, *at the laste* and *at the leeste* in Hg and El, although variants spelled *atte fulle*, *atte laste* and *atte leeste* are attested in both manuscripts as well. Word division can occur between two of the three components of these adverbials: on the preposition *at* and the article *the*, which may merge in the assimilated form *atte*. This variant is found much more frequently in El, the later manuscript. Accordingly, *at the/atte fulle* as well as *at the/atte leeste* are invariably used in both Hg and El, although variants with *atte* are preferred in El. Likewise, both *at the laste* and *atte laste* occur in Hg, sometimes in the same tale and once, in PA, even in the same paragraph:

- |      |                                                            |             |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| (81) | for he maketh alwey a wikked knotte <b>atte</b> laste ende | Hengwrt     |
|      | alwey he maketh a but <b>at the</b> laste ende             | PA par. 420 |
|      | for he maketh alwey a wikked knotte <b>atte</b> laste ende | Ellesmere   |
|      | alwey he maketh a but <b>atte</b> laste ende               | PA par. 420 |

In El also *atte laste* is used more frequently than *at the laste*, which however represents the alternative variant in KT, MI, RE and WBT as well as the only form employed in CY, even though *atte laste* occurs in the prologue of this tale, Link 33. *Atte laste* is also the only expression found in Tr and must be a corrected version of the Gowerian variant *ate laste*, which is attested in Fairfax. There is no indication in either Hg or El as to why *atte laste* should be preferred to *at the laste*. Lack of space on the page is often a reason for using contracted forms of a word, but there is no evidence of this in relation to the use of these two variants in Hg, and especially in El. It seems likely that both forms were attested in the original papers, possibly because Chaucer's spelling habits changed in the course of time or more simply because he did not use a standard spelling. In Hg *at the laste* is used more frequently in Structural Sections I and IV, for instance, where it occurs nine and fifteen times, respectively, while *atte laste* is used only four times in Section I and five times in Section IV. In the other three sections the relationship between the two variants is inverted and *atte laste* is the preferred spelling. Sections I and IV include tales that were composed earlier and for this reason often contain old-fashioned, and thus probably authorial, spelling forms. Even though the scribe preferred *atte laste* in El, he preserved four instances of *at the laste* in KT, as shown below:

- |      |    |                                                         |                      |
|------|----|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| (82) | a. | Til <b>at the laste</b> aslaked was his mood            | Hengwrt KT l. 902    |
|      |    | Til <b>at the laste</b> aslaked was his mood            | Ellesmere KT l. 902  |
|      | b. | That <b>at the laste</b> c <sup>2</sup> teinly they dye | Hengwrt KT l. 1962   |
|      |    | That <b>at the laste</b> certainly they dye             | Ellesmere KT l. 1962 |
|      | c. | And <b>at the laste</b> he took conclusio <sup>W</sup>  | Hengwrt KT l. 1993   |
|      |    | And <b>at the laste</b> he took conclusiou              | Ellesmere KT l. 1993 |
|      | d. | Yet <b>at the laste</b> wasted is the tree              | Hengwrt KT l. 2156   |
|      |    | Yet <b>at the laste</b> wasted is the tree              | Ellesmere KT l. 2156 |

Scribe B also changed Hg *atte laste* into El *at the laste* three times in the lines in (83), thus preserving or reinstating what was probably the original spelling:

- (83) a. And **atte laste** he hadde of hym a sighte                      Hengwrt MI l. 257  
           Til **at the laste** he hadde of hym a sighte                      Ellesmere MI l. 257
- b. And **atte laste** the wardeyn yaf hem leue                      Hengwrt RE l. 92  
           And **at the laste** the wardeyn yaf hem leue                      Ellesmere RE l. 92
- c. And **atte laste** he chees hym for to wende                      Hengwrt WBT l. 888  
           And **at the laste** he chees hym for to wende                      Ellesmere WBT l. 888

The increased use of *atte* in E1 clearly suggests that this is a scribal feature. The preference for *atte* may be due to the influence of Chancery English on the scribe's practice. Comparison with the language of the documents that are collected in *ACE* shows that *atte* is used twice as often as *at the*, even though both expressions *at the last* and *atte last* occur just once. Professional scribes were apparently more used to writing *atte*, and Scribe B, who was one of them (see Chapter 2, §1), evidently did so in his literary manuscripts as well. Moreover, the choice for the variant *atte* may also be a means through which the scribe intended to normalise the spelling of the above-mentioned adverbials. A more comprehensive analysis of all occurrences of *at the* in *The Canterbury Tales* shows that this sequence is mostly affected by the change from divided spelling in Hg to undivided in E1 when *at the* is followed by the words *beste*, *fulle*, *laste* and *le(e)ste*, i.e. in fixed expressions similar to the one given in (85) below. When the same sequence is used in other contexts, as shown by the example in (84), it rarely changes between Hg and E1:

- (84) In Southwerk **at the** Tabard<sup>ð</sup> as I lay                      Hengwrt GP l. 20  
       In Southwerk **at the** Tabard<sup>ð</sup> as I lay                      Ellesmere GP l. 20

The figures for all occurrences of *at the* and *atte*, both in fixed expressions and in other contexts, in Hg and E1 are provided in Table 18, where they clearly demonstrate the point I made above:

	Hengwrt	Ellesmere
<i>at the</i> in fixed expressions	40	15+2
<i>at the</i> in other contexts	67	63+8
<i>atte</i> in fixed expressions	29	55+3
<i>atte</i> in other contexts	8	12+1

**Table 18. Occurrences of *at + the* in Hg and E1**

The distribution of all divided and undivided variants of *at the* in Hg and E1 shows that even though *at the* is generally preferred form in both manuscripts, the number of occurrences of *atte* almost doubles in E1. The higher figures in E1 are, however, determined by the increased number of fixed expressions that are spelled with *atte* in



this manuscript, rather than by a general tendency to use *atte* instead of *at the*. It would thus seem that, as I argued above, *at the* is the authorial variant, which was often spelled *atte* in several instances of the above-mentioned adverbs, possibly by Chaucer and certainly by Scribe B. Robinson (2000b) draws the same conclusion about the authority of this variant in his stemmatic commentary on particular readings in GP, when he comments on the variation *at the beste* vs. *atte beste* (an expression that occurs only three times in *The Canterbury Tales*) in all witnesses of the following line of GP, which reads:

- |                                                 |                    |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| (85) And wel we weeren esed <b>at the beste</b> | Hengwrt GP l. 29   |
| And wel we weren esed <b>atte beste</b>         | Ellesmere GP l. 29 |

In his analysis of this line Robinson argues that

the pattern of distribution suggests that scribes felt free to write *atte/at the* regardless of what was in the exemplar. However, the weight of support for *at the* across the lines of descent and in manuscripts near the head of each line of descent makes it unlikely that *atte* was the reading of O.

(Robinson 2000b:§2)

The adverbs *eueremo(ore)* and *neueremo(ore)*, both in their extended and in their abbreviated forms, *euemo(ore)*, are usually split into two words in Hg but joined into one word in El. In Tr, by contrast, Scribe B always wrote *eueremo(ore)* as well as *neueremo(ore)* as one word; this is also the way in which most of those variants are spelled in the Fairfax manuscript. The fact that there is no such variation in Tr suggests that both divided and undivided variants for these words were part of the scribe's repertoire. However, undivided spellings were probably in his active repertoire, and must have been the variants that he would have used himself, as well as the forms he would always preserve when he found them in an exemplar.

The last two words exemplifying the preference for undivided adverbs in El are *somdel* and *inwith*, meaning 'somewhat' and 'within'. Neither word is used very frequently in *The Canterbury Tales* and *inwith* is the alternative variant for the much more widely used *with inne*, which is always represented as two separate words. Even though the figures for these items are very small, even smaller after removing the occurrences of *in with* that are attested in El but not in Hg, they show that divided forms are employed more often in Hg than in the corresponding text in El, while the number of undivided forms increases accordingly from Hg to El.

#### 4.3. Two-word spellings in Hengwrt vs. one-word and two-word spellings in Ellesmere

The forms described in what follows only exhibit two-word spellings in Hg, which, as I will argue below, derive from the original text, while undivided forms are used alongside divided ones in El. The only exception is WHEREFORE, which, as I will

explain below, is spelled *wher fore* in Hg but displays only the undivided spelling *wherfore* in El. The items in question are listed in Table 19:

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
EFTSOON	eft soone(s)	8	5+1	–
	eftsoone(s)	–	3+1	1
FURTHERMORE	forther mo(ore)	12	7	2
	forthermo(ore)	–	5	2
SOMETIMES	som tyme	67	36+2	2
	somtyme	–	26+16	14
SOMEWHAT	som what	19	9+3	–
	somwhat	–	10+4	1
THEREBY	ther by	14	7+3	3
	therby	–	6+4	1
THERE TO	ther to	39	24+1	11
	ther to	–	17	2
THEREWITH	ther with	45	35+2	–
	therwith	–	9	–
UPON	vp on	303	234+13	9
	vpon	–	64+5	136
WHEREFORE	wher fore	39	–	–
	wherfore	–	40+11	–

**Table 19. Two-word spellings in Hg one-word and two-word spellings in El**

The word *eftsoone* occurs in its two-word variant, *eft soone*, in Hg and only five of eight occurrences of this spelling are preserved in El. The collation of all fifteenth-century witnesses in WBP l. 782 and MI l. 303, both of them reading *eft soones* in Hg, shows that this spelling is preserved in most of the early manuscripts, such as Cp, Ha<sup>4</sup>, Gg and La, as well as in later but authoritative ones, such as Ad<sup>3</sup> and Ch. Undivided forms of this word are however very common throughout the textual tradition; they may suggest different lines of descent for the texts in which they are found, although they may also reveal the scribal preference for a given spelling of this word. *Eftsones* is, for instance, attested in line 782 of WBP in two O manuscripts, Ad<sup>1</sup> and En<sup>3</sup>, which usually contain archetypal readings, as well as in line 303 of MI in En<sup>3</sup> alone.

The adverb *forthermo(ore)*, as well as the adverb and conjunction *wherfore*, are consistently divided into two words in Hg, whereas in El the one-word spelling either predominates, as in the case of the former word, or is the only one, as in the case of the latter. It is interesting to note that in Hg the scribe sometimes wrote the two words that composed these adverbs so close to each other that they look like one word; this can be seen in the examples provided in Figures 5 and 6.



Figure 5. *Forther mo* in fol. 199r of Hengwrt (PD I. 226)

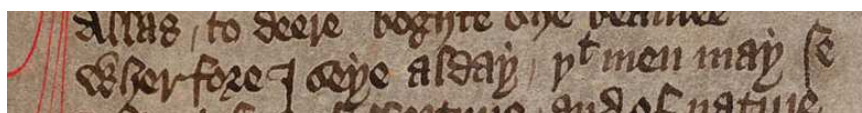


Figure 6. *Wher fore* in 195r of Hengwrt (L21 I. 8)

Instances like these are transcribed *forthermo* and *wherfore*, respectively, in the digital facsimile of the Hengwrt manuscript, although I believe that they should be treated as two-word variants, spelled *forther mo* and *wher fore*. This can be inferred from the way in which the scribe wrote the long *r* in these words. In their description of Scribe B's handwriting in Hg, Doyle and Parkes (1979:xxxvi) observe that 'long *r* is always joined to the following letter (or abbreviation) and stands out in final position by the wide sweep of its upstroke and right arm'. The long *r* in the words *forther mo* and *wher fore* in Figures 5 and 6 (to be distinguished from the 'round *r*' that follows the letter *o* in the same words, i.e. *forther mo* and *wher fore*) is clearly not joined to the following letter, and also has a rather wide right arm. Similar examples in which long *r* does not occur in word-final position are provided by the words *sarmone* in folio 202v (in Figure 7) and *boterflye* in folio 151r (in Figure 8), in which long *r* is likewise followed by *m* and *f*, respectively, and in both of which there is no doubt as to the fact that the long *r* is joined to the letter that follows, and thus does not have a 'right arm' following the upstroke.

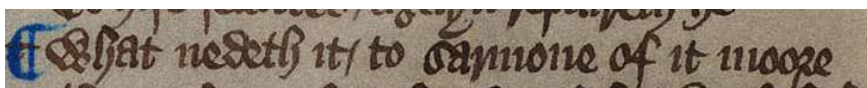


Figure 7. *Sarmone* in fol. 202v of Hengwrt (PD I. 551)

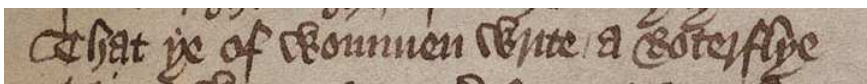


Figure 8. *Boterflye* in fol. 151r of Hengwrt (ME I. 1060)

In words like *forthermo* and *wherfore*, in which word division can occur after the 'long *r*', it is sometimes difficult to decide whether they display a divided or an undivided variant, which is why my findings disagree with some transcriptions provided in the Digital Facsimile of Hengwrt. In those instances in which Scribe B left some space between the two constituents of a word, as in *ther fore* in Figure 9 below, it is obvious that this is a two-word variant. However, when there is little or

no space between the two components, as in *forther mo* in Figure 4 above, the presence of the right arm in the ‘long r’, is the only criterion adopted to decide that this is a two-word spelling, since in the one-word variant the ‘long r’ does not have this extra stroke. I would like to argue that the somewhat ambiguous representation of words like *forthermo* and *wherfore* indicates that these words probably occurred in their divided form in the exemplar, whereas the scribe was accustomed to writing them undivided. In the process of copying, the scribe would read these adverbs, repeat them in his head and then write them down, as it normally was the case with the copying of manuscripts (see Greetham 1994:279–280). However, between repeating these adverbs and writing them down on the page, the scribe probably intended to preserve their original two-word shape, but at the same time he was also influenced by his own spelling habits. As a result, he allowed enough space for writing the long final *r* with a wide right arm, left a slight gap after *forther* and *wher*, as if he were writing two separate words, and then wrote the ensuing words, *mo* and *fore*, so close to the preceding one that they actually seem to be attached. This would not happen all the time, however, because, as I said above, Scribe B also wrote other words of the same kind in an unambiguous two-word shape, as shown by the instance of *ther fore* in Figure 9.

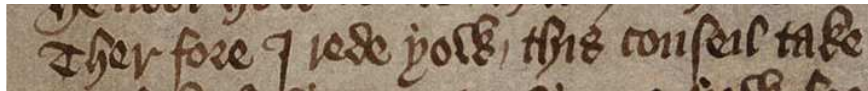


Figure 9. *Ther fore* in fol. 195r of Hengwrt (PH l. 285)

The same problem characterises the representation of the words *somtyme* and *somwhat*, both of which are only spelled as two words in Hg, while one-word instances are used alongside them in El. This time, the letter that suggests a break in the flow of the pen is the final *-m* of *som-*, the first constituent of the adverbs. The letter does not show any connecting stroke, not even a hairline, after the third minim, as would usually be the case when another letter followed and the scribe carried on writing without lifting the quill from the parchment. This can be seen in the example provided in Figure 10, where the word *som* occurs both in the adverb *som what* in folio 215v, and in the adjective *som* that precedes the words *myrthe* and *doctrine* in the following line. In both cases the word is spelled exactly in the same way, thus showing that the instance of *som what* in L28 l. 16 must be treated as a two-word spelling.

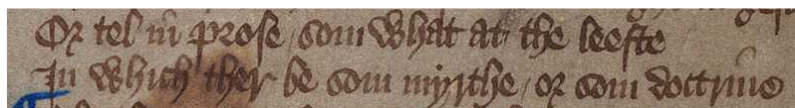


Figure 10. *Som what* in fol. 215v of Hengwrt (L28 l. 16)

Further down the same page another occurrence of *som what* precedes the word *moore*. As illustrated in Figure 11, there is no stroke joining the letter *m* to the following *w* in *som what*, while a stroke is clearly visible between the last minim of the initial *m* and the following *o* in *moore*, thus indicating that, unlike *som what*, there was no interruption between the writing of *m* and the next letter.

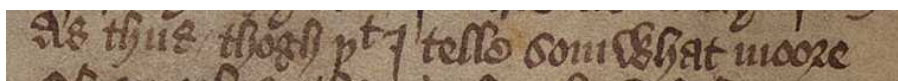


Figure 11. *Som what* in fol. 215v of Hengwrt (L28 l. 37)

Comparison of two instances of *som what* in L30, in folio 99r of Hg with the equivalent lines in folio 178v of El shows that in both instances in El the third minim of the letter *m* finishes with a stroke that joins this letter with the following *w*, and therefore the spelling here is *somwhat*.



Figure 12. Two instances of *som what* in fol. 99r of Hengwrt

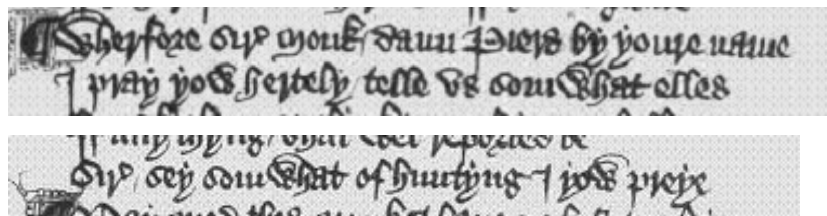


Figure 13. Two instances of *somwhat* in fol. 178v of Ellesmere  
(from Thomas 2006)

Most of the adverbs beginning with *ther*, such as *ther in* and *ther of*, are regularly attested with the two-word spelling in Hg as well as in El, and only three of them, *ther by*, *ther to* and *ther with*, are exceptional, because they also display the one-word variant in El. There is no clear explanation for this, as there is nothing in the distribution of the two forms that may suggest differences in the exemplar or changes in the process of copying. Some observations should be made, however, the first one being that in most of the adverbs starting with *ther-* that are always spelled with two words in Hg and El, the second component begins with a vowel, as in *ther aboute*, *ther after* and *ther out*. In just three exceptional items, *ther by*, *ther to* and *ther with*, the first component *ther* is followed by prepositions starting with a

consonant. Secondly, the adverb THERETO is always spelled *therto* in the Fairfax manuscript, suggesting that this is the Gowerian variant, while in Tr it is consistently split into two words. Two debatable occurrences, in which there is virtually no gap between *ther* and *to*, are shown in Figures 14 and 15:

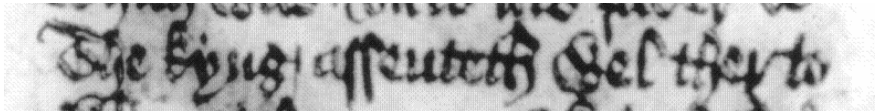


Figure 14. *Ther to* in fol. 16r in Trinity (l. 3.1976)

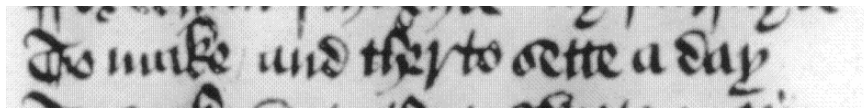


Figure 15. *Ther to* in fol. 21r in Trinity (l. 4.29)

Yet, on the basis of what I argued above about the shape of ‘long *r*’ in word-final and word-medial position, I consider these occurrences as consisting of two words, like all the other ones in Scribe B’s stint of the *Confessio Amantis*. Finally, the variant *therwith* is attested only in El, where nine of the 44 occurrences of this word display the one-word spelling. This variant occurs less frequently than *ther with* also in all the other fifteenth-century witnesses of *The Canterbury Tales*. The collation of all occurrences of this adverb in NP and MI shows that a few authoritative manuscripts, Ad<sup>1</sup>, En<sup>3</sup> and Gg, contain one-word variants, whereas most of the early texts display the two-word spelling that is always used in Hg.

The last example concerns the adverb and preposition UPON, which is always spelled *vp on* in Hg, while about one in four occurrences in El are written *vpon*. The one-word spelling is also preferred in Tr, and since *vpon* is the only form attested in the Fairfax manuscript, this may indicate that the scribe was influenced by the spelling of the exemplar of Tr, which very likely contained the Gowerian one-word variant, and thus prevented him from using *vp on* as freely as he did in the Chaucerian manuscripts.

To conclude, the items discussed in this section show that in El Scribe B did not achieve any regularity with respect to the spelling of adverbials, conjunctions and prepositions that exhibit multiple variants as a result of word division. One reason for this is that although one-word spellings were becoming more popular at the time, two-word variants must have still been extremely common, as shown by the presence of two-word variants in the bureaucratic language, as well as in numerous fifteenth-century witnesses of *The Canterbury Tales*. However, even in the variety used by the Chancery scribes, the incipient standard language, there is evidence of a certain degree of variation between one-word and two-word forms of the same lexical items. In addition, even though it is very likely that Chaucer employed both variants, but had a preference for two-word spelling forms, it is possible that scribes

did not after all consider word division as a significant indicator of authorial spelling. Scribe B could thus opt for the variant of a word that he preferred, often adopting the one with which he was more familiar.

## 5. Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have argued that the distribution of spelling variants often differs between Hg and El either because one default variant is used in each manuscript along with one or more minor variants, or because two or more spelling variants occur in free variation in both manuscripts, or because lexical items may or may not be affected by word division. The words that have been analysed for this purpose show that in all these cases old-fashioned forms found in Hg, such as *clepyd*, are usually relicts that occur among other variants which are used more frequently, such as *cleped*. Relicts are found occasionally in El as well, and they may sometimes even be variants that are not attested in Hg, as *seigh* in GP l. 193. However, old-fashioned forms in El, such as *noght*, seem to have been chosen deliberately to represent Chaucer's language, even if they were probably the recessive variants in the poet's own orthographic practice. The pattern of word division is an additional feature that shows the adoption of the undivided spelling of words in El, as in *forthermore*, instead of the two-word spelling in Hg, as in *forther more*, which, however, is likely to be authorial.

On the whole, it seems that the scribe tolerated spelling variation in El less than he did in Hg, and that he often selected for this manuscript variants that were rather old-fashioned at the beginning of the fifteenth century. All this supports the suggestion already made in the previous chapters that the scribe generally tried to normalise the spelling in El; he did so either by reducing the number of variants employed for a word, or by using one variant of a lexical item more frequently and the alternative variants sporadically. In addition, my findings also confirm that authorial spellings, such as *saw(e)* in Hg, were often preserved from the exemplar, while variants such as *saugh* were often introduced in El deliberately, in order to use in this manuscript a spelling system that was as close as possible to Chaucer's orthographic practice.





## Other aspects of spelling variation in Hengwrt and Ellesmere

The present study aims to establish to what extent this copyist preserved Chaucer's language in Hg and El by means of an extensive analysis of Scribe B's orthographic practice in the two manuscripts. This approach rests on the assumption that the exemplar, or exemplars, which he used for copying either Hg or El or, possibly, both of them, contained authorial language. Spelling variants which agree in the two manuscripts are usually irrelevant to the purpose of this research, as most of the time they represent authorial forms. This is also suggested by Robinson, who argues that

We should treat El Hg as representing two distinct lines of descent from O. This, together with their early date and their closeness to O, mandates any readings which are present in both El Hg as virtually certain to have been present in O. Where El and Hg agree, whatever other manuscripts have is likely to be of historic interest only.

(Robinson 2000a:§3.4.1)

Robinson makes here a strong claim about the importance of the agreement of readings in Hg and El, although this does not necessarily mean that the readings in the other witnesses are irrelevant. As I explained in Chapter 1, the comparison of all witnesses to *The Canterbury Tales* is crucial in determining which readings are archetypal. In addition, this is a general statement that does not exclude the possibility of exceptions. My findings have revealed, for instance, that occasionally Hg and El agree in displaying variants, such as *bifoore* and *much(el)* (see Chapter 5), which are not attested in any other witnesses, or which are preserved in just a few manuscripts. In these cases, Hg and El contain readings that are not authorial, but that were introduced by someone else, possibly Scribe B, at an early stage of the textual tradition of *The Canterbury Tales*. Yet, the importance of similar readings in Hg and El ought to be emphasized here, because the opposite situation, the presence of considerable variation between the spelling of these two manuscripts, is a clear sign of scribal interference, and therefore indicates that changes must have occurred between the copying of Hg and El. This makes it more difficult to establish which variants were authorial and which were scribal. With respect to this problem Robinson suggests the following:

The key to decision about what readings may have been present in O is the pair of manuscripts written by ‘hand b’, Hg and El. ... Where they do disagree, and neither reading is an obvious error or is arguably more difficult, one can use the recension ... to indicate which reading is present in a larger number of lines of descent and so is more likely to have been present in O. Where the reading in either Hg or El seems more difficult, one could use the principles of *difficilior lectio* and diffraction to justify this as likely to have been present in O.

(Robinson 2000b:§1.2)

In this context, ‘recension’ is the result of a comparison of the readings in Hg and El with all other witnesses of the *General Prologue* in order to establish which readings are archetypal, and, in view of this, to group the manuscripts in different lines of descent from O. ‘Diffraction’ refers to the scribal practice of substituting a difficult or unusual word (*difficilior lectio*) with an easier or a known one. Yet, in addition to the spelling differences between Hg and El, there is evidence of spelling variation in Hg alone, which strongly suggests that the exemplar of this manuscript, and possibly the archetype, was far from being characterised by a regular orthographic system. Even though the previous chapters were mainly devoted to the analysis of various spelling differences between Hg and El in particular, I occasionally also raised a number of general issues that are relevant to understanding more about Scribe B’s influence on these manuscripts; these issues will be discussed more extensively in what follows.

A common issue in Hg and El is the absence of any regular pattern for the spelling of lexical items that are reflexes of OE words containing the vowel *y*. OE *y*, as in *myrgeb*, could be represented in ME by *i/y* (*mirthe*) in the East Midland dialect, by *u* (*murthe*) in West Midland and South Western, and by *e* (*merthe*) in East Anglian and South Eastern (see map in Chapter 5, Figure 1). A survey of some items containing a vowel that derives from OE *y*, that is BIRTH, BURY, BUSY, CHURCH, MIRTH, MERRY, MERRILY and MUCH, shows that all three reflexes of OE *y* are attested in Hg and El as well as in Tr. However, in the two Chaucerian manuscripts some variants exhibit dissimilar patterns of distribution, as exemplified in Table 1. Most of these words show a preference for variants spelled with *i/y* in both Hg and El, as in *bisy*, *bisynesse*, *chirche*, *myrily* and *myrthe*. These spellings are likely to be authorial, as they are East Midland forms, which were fairly common in the London Type III dialect and therefore in Chaucer’s language. Forms spelled with *-u-* or *-e-*, by contrast, may be either rhyme words or relicts, as I argued in Chapter 5 for two non-rhyming occurrences of *murthe* in GP, and otherwise they are simply scribal spellings, in spite of the fact that Chaucer and Scribe B were probably speakers of similar dialects. Examples of this are the variant *bisy* for BUSY and its derivative *bisynesse*, which are consistently used in Hg and El, thus indicating a clear preference for *-i-*. In Hg, however, there are the following two exceptions:

- |                                                    |                   |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| (1) a. As glad as humble as <b>busy</b> in seruyse | Hengwrt CL l. 603 |
| b. In <b>busynesse</b> of myrthe and in solas      | Hengwrt MI l. 468 |

	Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
birthe/byrthe	2	3	–
burthe	3	2	–
biry	2	–	–
bury	10	12	–
bery	2	2	–
bisy	18	19+1	7
busy	1	–	13
bisynesse	28	29+3	–
busynesse	1	–	–
chirche	37	42+30	3
cherche	6	1	1
myrie/myry(e)	14	31+4	–
murye/murie	32	17	1
mery(e)/merie	5	5	–
myrily	8	6	–
murily	2	4	–
myrthe	14	15+2	–
murthe	4	3+1	–
mychel	4	–	12
muche/muchel	106	120+32	–
muchil	12	–	–

**Table 1. Words showing the reflexes of OE *y* in Hg, El and Tr**

The reading *busynesse* in MI is shared only by Cp, Ha<sup>4</sup> and Py, while all other witnesses show readings with either *-e-* or *-i/y-*; in addition, according to the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* (2006), the variant *busy* in CL is also attested in Ha<sup>4</sup>. Both Cp and Ha<sup>4</sup> are written by a scribe from the South West Midlands, while Py contains some Western dialect features that Horobin (2003:158) argues are not scribal. Even though in the stemmatic commentary of MI (Robinson 2004), Ha<sup>4</sup> and Py are classified among the fourteen manuscripts of this tale that belong to the O group, this evidence is not enough to conclude that *busynesse* and *busy* in MI and CL are relicts. Moreover, Scribe B consistently wrote *bisy* and *bisynesse* in Tr, even though these were not the Gowerian forms, as only *besi* for the adjective and *besynesse* for the noun are attested in the Fairfax manuscript. It is therefore possible that *bisy* was the variant shared by Chaucer and by Scribe B, and that for this reason the scribe used it systematically in *The Canterbury Tales*, and introduced it in his copy of the *Confessio Amantis* as well. The instances of *busy(nesse)* should instead be considered scribal variants.

The language of Hg and El also displays words which likewise derive from an OE ancestor that contained *-y-*, and which are preferentially spelled with *-u-* only in Hg, as shown by *burthe* and *murye*, or in both Hg and El, as shown by *bury* and *muchel(l)*. These variants need further explanation, as they do not seem characteristic of Chaucer's repertoire, and are often the result of scribal intervention. In Chapter 5

I showed that *murye* and *myrie* occur in free variation in Hg and El, while *merye* is mostly attested in rhyming position. However, the distribution of these variants differs in the two manuscripts, as *murye* is preferred in Hg, while *myrie* is preferred in El, even though *murye* in El is also found in a number of lines that in Hg contain *myrie* or that are missing altogether. In addition, the forms *murye* and *myrie* are not common in the vast majority of the fifteenth-century witnesses of *The Canterbury Tales*, in which *merye* is attested more frequently. I therefore suggested that *murie* is a scribal variant, possibly representing Chaucer's usage only when the word occurs in rhyming position, probably because *murie* was a conventional spelling for this word. Evidence for archetypal forms is provided by the use of variants of MERRY and BURY in the following rhyming pairs:

(2)	Hengwrt	Ellesmere
GP ll. 207:208	<i>berye</i> ('berry'): <i>merye</i>	<i>berye: merye</i>
KT ll. 2203:2204	<i>serye</i> ('argument'): <i>merye</i>	<i>serye: merye</i>
CL ll. 615:616	<i>merye: herye</i> ('listen')	<i>merye: herye</i>
PD ll. 77:78	<i>beryed</i> ('buried'): <i>blakeberyed</i>	<i>beryed: blakeberyed</i>

The choice of *merye* in GP l. 208, KT l. 2204 and CL l. 615, and of *beryed* in PD l. 77, is clearly dictated by the rhyme constraint, since *murye* or *myrie* and *buried* or *byryed* in each of those lines would be less effective rhyme words.

By contrast, the lines in (3) show that different variants are involved in three rhyming pairs (3a–c), although not all of them are authorial, and that *mery(e)* occurs once also within the line (3d). In ME l. 974 and in PD l. 555 there is no particular reason for using *murye* and *merye*, as the rhyming pairs *myrie: pyrie* and *murye: burye* would have been perfectly acceptable, and also less exceptional, since *pyrie* and *bury(e)* are the variants for these words that are used more commonly in *The Canterbury Tales*. An explanation for this is that the pair *purye: murye* in ME ll. 973–974 is an example of scribal hypercorrection, as I suggested in Chapter 5. Apart from this single occurrence of *purye*, the word PEAR is usually spelled in Hg either *pirye*, both in rhyming position and within the line, or *perys*, the plural form occurring within the line. By contrast, the spelling *merie* is necessary in PD l. 555 for rhyming with *berye*, which is thus an authorial variant; this explains why both *merie* and *berye* are preserved in El. The only instance of *mery(e)* in the middle of line 146 of NP is, therefore, an authorial variant as well, since it occurs in an environment that is not subjected to the rhyme constraint, and yet it displays the same spelling in Hg and in El. Unlike the rhyming pair *purye: murye* described above, the rhyme *pyrie: myrie* in ME ll. 1081–1082 must be authorial, *myrie* probably being a relict in Hg, because it is the sole instance of this variant against the six occurrences of *murye*, one of *murthe* and one of *murier* that are attested in ME. In addition, *myrie* is the variant that is used more frequently in El, the manuscript for which I believe the scribe selected the variants that more closely reflected Chaucer's practice.

- |        |                                                                                                                 |                               |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (3) a. | And thus I lete hym sitte vp on the <b>purye</b><br>And lanuarie and May romynge <b>murye</b>                   | Hengwrt<br>ME II. 973–974     |
|        | And thus I lete hym sitte vp on the <b>pyrie</b><br>And lanuarie and May romynge <b>myrie</b>                   | Ellesmere<br>ME II. 973–974   |
| b.     | Now lat vs sitte and drynke and make vs <b>merye</b><br>And afterward we wol his body <b>berye</b>              | Hengwrt<br>PD II. 555–556     |
|        | Now lat vs sitte and drynke and make vs <b>merie</b><br>And afterward <sup>r</sup> we wol his body <b>berie</b> | Ellesmere<br>PD II. 555–556   |
| c.     | Til he was come agayns thilke <b>pirye</b><br>Wher as this Damyas sitteth ful <b>myrye</b>                      | Hengwrt<br>ME II. 1081–1082   |
|        | Til he was come agayns thilke <b>pyrie</b><br>Whe <sup>r</sup> as this Damyas sitteth ful <b>myrie</b>          | Ellesmere<br>ME II. 1081–1082 |
| d.     | Of herbeyue growyng in oure yerd ther <b>merye</b> is                                                           | Hengwrt NP I. 146             |
|        | Of hbe yue growyng <sup>r</sup> in oure yeerd <sup>r</sup> ther <b>mery</b> is                                  | Ellesmere NP I. 146           |

Finally, two variants of the verb BURY, which render respectively the past participle and the present tense, are spelled *ybiryed* and *biryeth* only in Hg:

- |     |                                                                                                                                                                   |                              |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (4) | <b>p<sup>t</sup></b> men seye nat <b>p<sup>t</sup></b> youre richesces been <b>ybiryed</b> wherto<br>and why <b>biryeth</b> a man his goodes by his grete Auarice | Hengwrt<br>TM pars 639–642   |
|     | that men seye nat <b>p<sup>t</sup></b> youre richesces been <b>yburied</b><br>¶ Wherto 7 why <b>hurieth</b> a man hise goodes by his grete<br>Auarice             | Ellesmere<br>TM pars 639–642 |

These are the only two instances of this verb which are characterised by an East Midland spelling in Hg. This is rather exceptional, because they occur in a prose text, where their spelling cannot be justified by the rhyme constraint, thus suggesting that they must be archetypal variants. In addition, these are the only two occurrences of BURY in TM, which, as I suggested in the previous chapter, is probably among the texts that were composed earlier than the rest of *The Canterbury Tales*, and therefore often displays old-fashioned variants. Comparison of paragraphs 639 and 642 of this tale in Hg with other authoritative manuscripts reveals that variants beginning with *bur-* are used in both paragraphs in Ch, Dd, Gg, Cp and Ha<sup>4</sup>, while *biryed* occurs alongside *hurieth* in Ad<sup>3</sup>, *beryed* and *berith* are attested in Ad<sup>1</sup> and En<sup>3</sup>, and *ybered* and *berip* are the variants used in La. It is possible that the presence of variants spelled with *-i/e-* in the above-mentioned manuscripts, instead of the more common forms spelled with *-u-*, is due to the scribal preservation of one or more authorial forms.

The same problem is posed by the spelling of MUCH, since the variants attested in Hg and El are *mucho* and *muchel*, with only twelve occurrences of *muchil* and four of *mychel* in Hg, all of them clustered in TM. However, the spelling *mucho(l)* is

shared neither by the early manuscripts nor by other late and authoritative texts, in which the variants *moche(l)*, and to a lesser extent *mechel(l)*, are preferred instead. I argued in Chapter 5 that *muchel* was not Chaucer's preferred spelling, even though both Hg and El display this form, but that the variant employed more often in the original draft of *The Canterbury Tales* was in all probability *moche(l)*. Forms spelled with *-u-* must also have been in Chaucer's repertoire, and thus in his own manuscript of the *Tales* as well, since there is evidence of the presence of Western variants in the London dialect of Chaucer's time. These spellings were introduced by scribes who were immigrants from the West Midlands, an area in which there were two important centres of scribal activity, Worcester and Gloucester (Samuels 1991:3–5). Some of the variants attested, such as *muchel(l)*, were also adopted in the Chancery Standard. As a result of this, Western forms occurred in the London dialect alongside *moche(l)*, *meche(l)* and *myche(l)* (see *LALME* 1986, vol. II: 80, item map 16-[6]), and all these variants were well attested in both literary and bureaucratic texts. However, while *muchel* and *meche* were probably just two of the variants used by Chaucer, they were certainly the forms preferred by Scribe B, who therefore systematically wrote them in *The Canterbury Tales* whenever he found either *moche(l)*, *moch(il)* or *muchil*. It was only in Hg that the scribe did not replace the instances of *mychel* and *muchil*, thus preserving forms that most likely were in the exemplar. Scribe B's preference for *muchel(l)* above *moche(l)* can also be seen in his stint of the *Confessio Amantis*, in which he changed all instances of Gower's *moche(l)* into *muchel(l)*, thus showing that he introduced in his literary manuscripts the variants with which he was familiar from his work as a bureaucratic copyist. The variants used for MUCH as well as for the lexical items discussed above, therefore, show that words containing reflexes of OE *y* in the Hg and El manuscripts do not always display the vowel *-i/y-* that would be typical of Chaucer's London dialect. Some of the spelling variants found in the manuscripts copied by Scribe B are thus archetypal, but most of them are due to the scribal adoption of forms that were conventionally used in the bureaucratic language, and subsequently imposed on the language of literary texts. Even though variants spelled with *-u-* might have been present in Chaucer's repertoire, the more or less systematic use of such forms in Hg or El, or in both of them, should therefore be attributed to the scribe and not to the author.

The second issue that has emerged from the analysis of variants that differ between Hg and El is that spelling discrepancies in Hg are due not only to a mixture of scribal and authorial forms, but also to variation in Chaucer's own orthographic practice. Examples of this are on the one hand the texts that were the last ones to be copied in Hg, as shown by part of Structural Section III, and on the other hand the tales that derive from more than one exemplar, as exemplified by TM. In these cases the evidence provided by the language is substantiated by codicological data, as spelling changes correspond to changes in the physical make up of the manuscript. Section III consists of three quires, quires thirteen to fifteen, and can be divided into two parts according to the different colours of the two inks used for copying them. The first part, containing L29 and MO, is written with the brown ink used for most

of the texts in Hg, while the second part, containing L30 and NP, as well as L36 and MA, displays the same yellow ink that was also used for writing the heading *Here bygynneþ the Book of the tales of Cauntbury* in folio 2r, and for copying Links 17 and 20. These links are later additions to Hg, which according to Blake (1985:88–89) and against the opinion of most scholars, are spurious texts. NP and MA are thus among the last parts of Hg to have been copied, most likely because their exemplars were made available to the scribe some time after he was given the copytexts of the other tales. In addition, the folios containing these two tales, together with those containing PA, are the only leaves in Hg in which the running titles were written by Scribe B himself and not by another scribe, as in the rest of the manuscript. Finally, Stubbs notices that some folios in quire thirteen are ruled in grey lead and that

the majority of the manuscript is ruled blind with dry-point so the incidence of the lead ruling might indicate batches of folios prepared and tales copied at much the same time. The only other extensive ruling of folios with lead is in the Tale of Melibeus, fols. 226-233, which may suggest that the preparation of the Monk's Tale and part of the Tale of Melibeus were undertaken consecutively.

(Stubbs 2000: Observations)

These codicological details contribute to the idea that in Hg NP and MA are somewhat anomalous texts with respect to the preceding MO. Further evidence for this is provided by the language, as the spelling of some words varies between the first and the second parts of Section III, and several old-fashioned variants are attested in the second part. In Chapter 3, for instance, I pointed out that of the two variants used for the word YARD in NP, *yeerd* is probably scribal, whereas *yerd* is almost certainly authorial because it occurs more frequently in Hg, is preserved in five of the ten instances in E1, and is also the variant occurring twice in rhyming context. In addition, I have also shown in the course of this study that *ben*, *myrie*, *nat*, *naught* and *though*, all of which are authorial variants, are more commonly or exclusively used in NP and MA, while *been* and *thogh* are predominant variants in MO, and *nought* occurs alongside *nat* more frequently in MO than in the other two tales.

Apart from showing that an interval occurred between the copying of the first and the second parts of Section III, the above-mentioned spelling differences may also indicate that the exemplars used for MO, on the one hand, and for NP and MA, on the other, might have been composed at different points in time. In particular, the exclusive use of *been* in MO and *ben* in NP and MA would suggest an earlier date of composition for NP and MA. This seems to be in contrast with the evidence provided by the contents of these tales, which, on the contrary, suggest a late date for NP and MA and an earlier one for MO (see Cooper 1989, Baker 1984 for MA and Pearsall 1984 for NP). The following lines from NP, in particular, contain a reference to Jack Straw, a leader of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in which many Flemish merchants were killed, suggesting thus a *terminus post quem* for NP:

- (5) Certes he lakke Straw and his meynee  
 Ne made neuere showtes half so shrille  
 Whan þ<sup>t</sup> they wolden any flemyng kille Hengwrt NP ll. 574–576

In addition, L30 and NP also contain several references to TM and MO, the two tales that precede NP in E1, in the following lines:

- (6) L30 ll. 15–16 refer to TM par. 81  
 NP l. 436 refers to TM par. 128  
 NP l. 344 refers to TM par. 138  
 NP l. 318 refers to MO ll. 641–674  
 NP l. 550 refers to MO ll. 377–464

Given that E1 is likely to display Chaucer's intended tale order (Cooper 1989:351), it follows that TM and MO were written before NP. However, if it is true that MO is an earlier tale, and since, as I explained in Chapter 5, TM was translated around 1373 (see Matthews 1985), it is still possible that NP was composed after this time but before Chaucer began work on *The Canterbury Tales* in ca. 1387, and that the text of the tale was revised later. Such a chronology would allow the author to insert the reference to the Peasants' Revolt, and would also explain why the scribe could not copy NP immediately after MO, but had to wait for the exemplar of this tale. If this were the case, both variants for BEN in the first and the second half of Section III could be authorial. As I suggested in Chapter 3, it is likely that Chaucer used both a single and a double graph for indicating a long vowel, and that the spelling with a single graph represents an older stage of the language. Otherwise, in the absence of more convincing evidence for this, it could also be argued that *ben* was the only form used in the original texts of all three tales, but that the scribe copied the exemplars that he received later, those of NP and MA, more faithfully than he had done with MO, preserving in this way several archetypal forms attested in these two tales.

As for the use of different exemplars for TM, Stubbs (2000: Observations) notices that, on the basis of codicological evidence, there are 'several observable inconsistencies in the make up of the one leaf and two quires which comprise Chaucer's Tale of Melibeus' in Hg. This observation is substantiated by a number of spelling variants used in this tale, which indicate that the scribe probably changed the exemplar from which he was copying between the last leaf of quire 28, folio 224, and the last leaf of quire 29, folio 234, where the tale ends. I pointed out in Chapter 5 that the last lines of folio 224v are slightly longer and are written in a darker ink than the one used for the rest of the page, thus giving the impression that the scribe needed to fit in more text than allowed by the page layout. It is possible that the change of exemplar took place at this point of the manuscript, perhaps coinciding with the cross that is drawn before the seventh line of folio 224v (see Figure 2 in Chapter 5). As far as the language is concerned, TM is generally



characterised by the presence of several old-fashioned spelling features, but some lexical items show considerable spelling variation from folio 224v onwards, and a number of linguistic oddities are found throughout quire 29. The most significant examples of changing preferences between quires 28 and 29 are listed in Table 2:

Quire 28 (folios 217–224)	Quire 29 (folios 225–234)
ben 48, been 18	ben 2, been 62
muche(l) 6	muche(l) 12, muchil 12, mychel 4
neghebore(s) 2, neighebore(s) 1	neighebore(s) 3
reson 16, resoū 1	reson 20, resoū 3
thow 49, thou 7	thow 38
whan 27, whanne 1	whan 29, whanne 9

**Table 2. Spelling changes between quires 28 and 29 of Hengwrt**

The figures show that the variant *ben* is preferred to *been* in quire 28, but it is almost totally replaced by *been* from 224r onwards, with the exception of two instances of *ben* at the end of the tale, in folio 233. Likewise, both *thou* and *thow* occur in quire 28, although *thou* is no longer employed in quire 29. Two variants are likewise attested for WHEN: *whan*, which is regularly used throughout TM, and *whanne*, one occurrence of which is found in quire 28, while nine are in quire 29. Similarly, *reson* is the default spelling in the entire tale, while the less common variant of this word, *resoun*, occurs just once in quire 28, but three times in quire 29. As for the spelling of MUCH, *muche* and *mychel* are the default variants in TM, with *muche* being preferred in the first part of the tale and *mychel* in the second, whereas the variants *muchil* and *mychel* are only attested in quire 29; this is also the only section in which they occur in the entire manuscript. A clear shift is displayed by the item NEIGHBOUR, as the use of the variant *neghebore(s)* is limited to quire 28, whereas *neighebore(s)* occurs from the last lines of folio 224v, which are also the last lines of quire 28, onwards. Besides the above-mentioned forms, a number of clearly singular spelling variants that occur in TM are attested in quire 29 only, i.e. *biryeth* and *ybired*, *bitwene*, *clepith*, *cruwel*, *honur* and *naght*. All of them differ from the forms that are used more commonly in the rest of the tale or in Hg itself, i.e. *buryed*, *bitwix(en)*, *clepeth*, *cruel*, *honour* and *nat/noght*, thus showing that quire 29 in Hg must derive from a different exemplar than the rest of the tale.

The possibility that the scribe used a different exemplar for copying quire 29 in Hg is also supported by the fact that two O manuscripts, Ad<sup>1</sup> and En<sup>3</sup>, as well as Hk, which has O as its direct ancestor in MI and WBP, lack the same substantial portion of text in TM. This concerns the lines that in Hg occur between paragraphs 389 and 476, beginning in the middle of folio 225r, the first of quire 29, and finishing in the third line of folio 227r, as in Ad<sup>1</sup>, En<sup>3</sup> and Hk these lines are omitted altogether. Since the section of text that is missing from these three manuscripts stops and starts again in the middle of two sentences, and since it occupies slightly less than two

leaves in Hg, it seems very likely that this part of TM must have been written on the inner bifolium of a quire which, however, was lost in the archetype (see Seymour 1997:114). In quire 29 of Hg two extra folios were added to the regular quire of eight leaves, probably to make space for this text, which was apparently copied from another exemplar than the one used for the rest of the tale. This new exemplar for quire 29 must have contained signs of correction and revision, as shown by a gap of almost a line left in another folio of Hg, folio 233r (see Figure 1), which suggests that Scribe B was not sure at this point about whether or not to copy a number of words in paragraph 807.

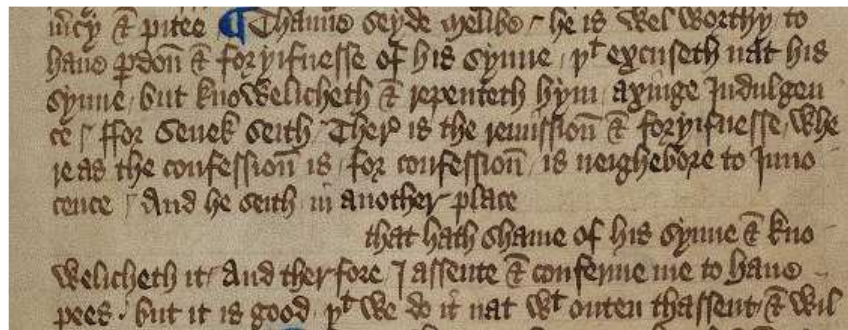


Figure 1. Missing words in the *Tale of Melibee*, fol. 233r of Hengwrt

In E1 the scribe did not fill the gap but omitted the text of paragraph 807, which in Hg begins with *And he seith* and ends with *knowelicheth it*, as shown in (6).

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                |                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (6) for confessiō is neighebore to Innocence ¶ <b>And he seith in another place [ ] that hath shame of his synne &amp; knowelicheth it</b> ¶ And therfore I assente & conferme me to haue pees | Hengwrt TM<br>pars 806–808   |
| For Confessiō is neighebore to Innocēce And therfore I assente and corforme me to haue pees                                                                                                    | Ellesmere TM<br>pars 806–808 |

The missing words were most likely the English translation of those in bold characters in the equivalent passage from the *Histoire de Mellibée* by Renaud de Louens in (7), the text from which Chaucer translated TM:

- |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (7) car confession est prouchaine à innocence: et dit autre part: <b>celui est presque innocent</b> qui a honte de son péchié et le recongoist. | <i>Histoire de Mellibée</i><br><i>et Prudence</i><br>(Picton 1846:231) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The collation of Hg with other authoritative manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* shows that some of them, such as Ad<sup>1</sup>, Ad<sup>3</sup>, Ch, Dd and En<sup>3</sup>, agree with E1 by omitting the incomplete sentence of Hg. Other manuscripts, such as Cp and Ha<sup>4</sup>, agree with Hg, even though the sentence *And he seith in another place [ ] that hath*

*shame of his synne and knowelicheth it*, which is attested in Hg, and not in E1, is copied without leaving a space for the missing words between *place* and *that*, as shown by the example from Cp in (8):

- (8) for confessiō̄ is neighebor to Innocence ⁊ **And he saith in anoþer place he pat haþ shame of his synne and knowelicheþ it ⁊ And þ̄ fore**

Corpus Christi Oxford MS 198 (Cp) TM pars 806–808

These readings produce a sentence that is syntactically correct, but that has lost the meaning it had in the original text, since two instances of the pronoun *he* were necessary for a good English translation. The first pronoun *he*, in Hg *he saith*, refers to Seneca, who is mentioned in the preceding paragraph, but the second instance of the same pronoun, which translates *celui* in the French text, and should precede *that hath* in Hg, refers to ‘man’ in a general sense.

A third group of manuscripts, among which Fi, La and Tc<sup>1</sup>, dating from the third, first and fourth quarters of the fifteenth century, respectively, agree with Hg, but they also include paraphrases, rather than translations, of the missing words, which are, therefore, never the same. The text found in Fi is particularly interesting, as it reads:

- (9) For confessyō̄ ys neyghtbou<sup>p</sup> to Innocence. And he seith in a nother plase. **he ys worthy to haue remyssyon<sup>r</sup> and forzyfnesse** that hath schame of his synne and knowlecheth it And therefore y afferme and cause me to haue pees

Fitzwilliam Museum MS Mc Lean (Fi)181 TM pars 806–808

The additional words in this manuscript (here in bold) could easily fill the gap left in Hg (see Figure 1), which suggests that they might have been in the exemplar of Hg as well, but that Scribe B could not read it or doubted its correctness and preferred to leave a space, hoping to fill it in later. This possibility seems to be confirmed by the reading of the same passage in La, here in (10), which displays a shorter paraphrase, *is worþi haue mercy*, of the extra text found in Fi and possibly preserved from the archetype, even though the extra words in La (in bold) do not occur after *place*, but at the end of the paragraph:

- (10) For confession is neyhbo<sup>r</sup> to Innocence ⁊ And þe wiseman seiþe in anoþ<sup>r</sup> place he þat hath schame of his sinne ⁊ knowleche it **is worþi haue mercy**. And þ̄e fore I assent ⁊ conferme to haue pees

BL MS Lansdowne 851 (La) TM pars 806–808

Likewise, the scribe of Tc<sup>1</sup> provided a text for the missing words, and placed it at the end of the paragraph, although this is a different version of the text missing from Hg:

- (11) For confession is neigbour to Innocence ⁊ And<sup>ð</sup> he saith in an othir place he that<sup>ȝ</sup> hath shame for his sinnes ⁊ knoulageth it **is reson to be for youen be penaunce ⁊ grace**. And<sup>ð</sup> therfor I assent ⁊ conferme to haue pees.

Trinity College Cambridge MS R.3.3 (Tc<sup>1</sup>) TM pars 806–808

A problematical reading in the archetype must therefore be the cause of the two different versions of paragraphs 806–808 in Hg and EI, as well as of the several readings deriving from each of them, and offering various solutions to the problem of the gap left in paragraph 807 of TM in Hg. It is possible that the exemplar used for Hg had been corrected at this point, and was thus unclear, or that the paragraphs in question were marked for expunction in the main text, and were written again with corrections in the margins; this could have induced different scribes to take different decisions when they copied this passage. It is however strange that the entire paragraph 807 is omitted in EI, despite the fact that it must have been in the archetype, since part of the original version is attested in Hg. The reading in EI could simply be a scribal mistake, but a shift of exemplar for quire 29 of Hg is probably a better explanation for this, as it would mean that Scribe B had access to two different exemplars when he copied these paragraphs in Hg and EI. It is unfortunate that even though my analysis of spelling variation in TM strongly suggests the possibility of a shift of exemplar for this tale in Hg, it does not provide me with any clues about the manuscript that represented the second exemplar. It will be possible to cast more light on this subject only when the digital collation of all fifteenth-century witnesses of TM is available, as this will make it possible to carry out a systematic analysis of all variants occurring in all texts of this tale.

A third issue that has repeatedly emerged in this study is the relevance of the rhyme constraint for the spelling of words. In rhyming contexts Chaucer seemed very keen on using variants that showed a correspondence between both sound and spelling, in order to achieve an auditory as well as a visual effect with his rhymes. Accordingly, he often resorted to different variants of the same words, and it is for this reason that in *The Canterbury Tales* words may exhibit different spellings within the line and in rhyming context, even though both forms are authorial. Examples of this are the variants *alway*, *certayn*, *champioun* and *wirche*, which are typically used as rhyme words, whereas the variants *alwey*, *awey*, *certeyn*, *champion* and *werche* usually occur within the line, as illustrated by the examples in (12):

- |         |                                                           |                   |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| (12) a. | Hys table dormaunt <sup>ȝ</sup> in his halle <b>alway</b> | Hengwrt GP        |
|         | Stood redy couered al the longe <b>day</b>                | ll. 355–356       |
| b.      | At wrastlyng he wolde haue <b>alwey</b> the Ram           | Hengwrt GP l. 550 |

When lexical items such as the above-mentioned fairly consistently display one variant in rhyming position and another in the middle of the line, it can be safely concluded that both forms are authorial, and that the scribe preserved the spellings of the exemplar. However, neither in Hg nor in EI did Scribe B always behave as a

faithful copyist, often introducing his own spelling variants alongside the authorial ones. He generally made more orthographic changes within the line, tending to retain authorial variants at the end of the line in order to preserve the full rhyme. Yet, since it is known that Chaucer did not hesitate to use old-fashioned or dialectal variants in rhyming position, words at the end of the lines of verse must have posed a problem to the scribe, especially when he copied El and tried to regularise the spelling of this manuscript. Scribe B must thus have been facing two contrasting problems when copying rhyme words: the preservation of authorial forms on the one hand and of orthographic consistency on the other. Evidence from Hg and El shows that he was aware of the importance of the visual matching of line ends, and tried to achieve this as often as he could, either by retaining all authorial variants, as in the lines from Hg in (13), or by systematically replacing authorial variants for the rhyme words with scribal ones, as in the lines from El in (13):

- |      |                                                                |                |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (13) | His norice hym expowned euery <b>del</b>                       |                |
|      | His sweuene and bad hym for to kepe hym <b>wel</b>             |                |
|      | For traysoū but he nas but .vij. yeer <b>old</b>              | Hengwrt        |
|      | And therefore litel tale hath he <b>told</b>                   | NP II. 295–299 |
|      | His Norice hym expowned eūy <b>deel</b>                        |                |
|      | His sweuene and bad hym for to kepe hym <b>weel</b>            |                |
|      | For traisoū but he nas but .vij. yeer <b>oold<sup>o</sup></b> | Ellesmere      |
|      | And therefore litel tale hath he <b>toold<sup>o</sup></b>      | NP II. 295–299 |

There is also evidence that Scribe B first changed the spelling of rhyming pairs in Hg by using his own variants alongside authorial ones, and then made the rhyme words match again in El by using two scribal forms, as shown in (14). There, scribal *estaat* occurs with authorial *p̄lat* (*prelat*) in Hg, while two scribal variants constitute the rhyming pair in El:

- |      |                                                    |                |
|------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (14) | Hise bootes souple his hors in greet <b>estaat</b> | Hengwrt        |
|      | Now certeynly he was a fair <b>p̄lat</b>           | GP II. 203–204 |
|      | His bootes souple his hors in greet <b>estaat</b>  | Ellesmere      |
|      | Now c̄teynly he was a fair <b>prelaat</b>          | GP II. 203–204 |

The variant *p̄lat*, with a single graph for the long vowel, must be authorial, because the collation of all witnesses of GP at line 204 shows that El is the only manuscript that exhibits the variant *prelaat*; moreover, the only other occurrence of this word is in Link 21 l. 22, where it is spelled with single *-a-* in Hg and El. As for the variants *esta(a)t*, the form with one graph, *estat*, is the preferred one in Hg (38 *estat* vs. 17 *estaat*), while *estaat* is regularly used in El (50+16 *estaat* vs. 7 *estat*). Five instances of this variant are attested in GP, and in Hg they are spelled *estaat* in rhyming position (ll. 203, 524), *thestaat* line initially (l. 716) and *estatlich* or *estaatly* as an adverb within the line (ll. 104, 283). The collation of these lines in all witnesses of GP shows that Hg is the only manuscript that displays four occurrences of the

spelling with a double graph for this item. E1 shares these readings in lines 203 and 716, and Ch does so in line 716, while all other witnesses exhibit variants with medial *-a-*, as Hg and E1 do in line 104. I therefore consider *estat* to be the authorial spelling, which means that the rhyming couple *estat: prelat* must derive from the archetype of GP.

Occasionally, Scribe B also achieved matching spellings of rhyming pairs by introducing variants that were in actual fact due to hypercorrection. An example of this is provided by the pronoun HE, which is spelled *hee* six times in Hg and twelve times in E1, all of them at the end of the verse line. As already mentioned in Chapter 3, where I discussed the shift from one graph to two graphs for the spelling of long vowels, four of the six instances of *hee* in Hg are clustered in GP, and the other two are in ML, but none of them is preserved in E1. In GP the same reading is attested in only six other fifteenth-century manuscripts: D1 in line 215; D1 and To<sup>1</sup> in line 341; Ch, D1, N1 and To<sup>1</sup> in line 437 and Ad<sup>3</sup>, D1 and Ha<sup>3</sup> in line 566. The rhyme words for these occurrences in Hg are *contree* (twice), *superfluytee* and *pardee*, which suggests that *he* was the authorial variant, and that the use of *hee* in these lines had merely an aesthetic function. D1 is the only witness that agrees with Hg in displaying these readings for the rhyme words, with the exception of *parde* in line 565. It must be noted, however, that the scribe of this manuscript seems generally to be very fond of *ee*, as he consistently uses this digraph for both the personal pronoun *hee* and the definite article *thee*, as shown by the lines in (15):

- (15) Thus twyes in his slepyng dremede **hee** Tokyo, Takamiya MS 32  
 Yit atte **thee** thridde tyme com his felawe Delamere (D1) NP 1. 192–193

Scribal *hee* is also found twice in ML in Hg, but not in E1, despite the fact that both rhyme words end with a double graph in both manuscripts, as shown below:

- (16) a. Til he was spowted vp at **Nynyuee** Hengwrt  
 Wel may men knowe it was no wight but **hee** ML 1. 389–390  
 Til he was spouted vp at **Nynyuee** Ellesmere  
 Wel may men knowe it was no wight but **he** ML 1. 389–390  
 b. Anoyeth neither see ne land ne **tree** Hengwrt  
 Soothly the comaundour of that was **hee** ML 1. 396–397  
 Anoyeth neither See ne land ne **tree** Ellesmere  
 Soothly the Comandour of that was **he** ML 1. 396–397

Likewise, the twelve occurrences of *hee* in E1 are rhyme words, but do not exhibit the same spelling in Hg, showing once again that *hee* does not derive from the archetype. Further evidence for this is provided by the collation of the following lines in all fifteenth-century witnesses of NP:

- |                                                          |               |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| (17) Hym thoughte his dreem nas but a <b>vanytee</b>     | Hengwrt       |
| Thus twies in his slepyng dremed <b>he</b>               | NP 1. 191–192 |
| Hym thoughte his dreem nas but a <b>vanitee</b>          | Ellesmere     |
| Thus twies in his slepyng <sup>r</sup> dremed <b>hee</b> | NP 1. 191–192 |

which shows that *hee* is attested only in D1, E1 and To<sup>1</sup>, and that the rhyme word is spelled *vanitee* in E1 and *vanytee* in Dd, D1, En<sup>1</sup>, Hg and Ps. It is thus likely that the authorial rhyming couple in these lines was *he: vanyte*, and that Scribe B first spoiled the orthographic rhyme in Hg by writing *vanytee*, and then created a new rhyming pair in E1 by using scribal variants for both words, and thus writing *hee: vanytee*.

Yet, as I argued above, and as the examples in (16) and (17) show for both Hg and E1, the scribe did not always succeed in preserving the full rhyme in these two manuscripts. This issue is also discussed by Burnley (1989), who analyses a number of selected passages from a number of early manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* (Hg, E1, Cp, Dd, Gg and Ha<sup>4</sup>) and Caxton's second printed edition (Cx<sup>2</sup>), and concludes that

E1 can be seen to represent a distinct advance on Hg in terms of the matching of spellings in rhyme. Not only is there a tendency to match rhymes even more carefully, but the proportion of failures to do so which arise from observance of traditional spellings is higher still than in Hg. It is as though the scribe is attracted by two competing kinds of consistency, that of the spelling tradition and that of the aesthetics of rhyme.

(Burnley 1989:29)

Evidence for the scribal solution to the conflicting problems of matching rhyme words and preserving authorial spellings (Burnley's 'traditional spellings') is provided by words containing long vowels, as both variants spelled with one graph and variants spelled with two graphs may be employed in rhyming context. I argued in Chapter 3 that even though it is probable that Chaucer had a preference for variants with a single graph, he may have spelled long vowels in either way, especially at the end of lines, where he resorted to both variants for rhyming purposes, and where a double graph would indicate the stressed syllable of the iambic foot that characterises most of the lines in *The Canterbury Tales*. Moreover, since the difference between forms like *old* and *oold* or *be* and *bee* was purely graphical, with the pronunciation being the same, it cannot be excluded that in certain cases forms with one graph occurred alongside those with two graphs in rhyming pairs, and that Chaucer's original draft contained lines like the following, which the scribe rightly preserved in both Hg and E1:

- |                                            |                |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (18) As for a souereyn <b>notabilitee</b>  | Hengwrt        |
| Now euery wys man lat hym herkne <b>me</b> | NP ll. 389–390 |
| As for a souereyn <b>notabilitee</b>       | Ellesmere      |
| Now euery wys man lat hym herkne <b>me</b> | NP ll. 389–390 |

However, most of the spellings that do not match at the end of lines are probably scribal, and since they are more common in Hg than in El this is further evidence that the scribe was more concerned with the appearance of the manuscript when he copied El than when he copied Hg. Words in rhyming position certainly played an important role in this, and when the scribe made changes which spoiled the rhyme in El he often did so to preserve authorial variants that he had not retained in Hg, such as *grene* in (19). *Greene* is a scribal form (see Chapter 3, §2) that is only attested in Hg, and lines 115:116 of GP in El contain one of the four instances of the rhyming pair *sheene: grene* in this manuscript:

- |                                                      |                |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (19) A xp̄ofre on his brest̄ of siluer <b>sheene</b> | Hengwrt        |
| An horn he bar the bawdryk was of <b>greene</b>      | GP ll. 115–116 |
| A Cristophere on his brest̄ of siluer <b>sheene</b>  | Ellesmere      |
| An horn he bar the bawdryk was of <b>grene</b>       | GP ll. 115–116 |

Alternatively, the scribe emended an authorial spelling such as *thre* in line 396 of NP in Hg, in order to obtain a matching rhyme between an authorial and a scribal variant in El, as in (20):

- |                                                  |                |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (20) A Colfox ful of sley <b>Iniquitee</b>       | Hengwrt        |
| That in the groue hadde woned yeres <b>thre</b>  | NP ll. 395–396 |
| A Colfox ful of sly <b>Iniquitee</b>             | Ellesmere      |
| That in the groue hadde woned yeres <b>three</b> | NP ll. 395–396 |

Hence, rhyme words in Hg and El are very helpful in identifying both authorial and scribal forms, because the rhyme constraint limited the scribe's freedom to change the spelling of words and often made him preserve archetypal variants.

In this study I have occasionally raised the issue of the relationship between form and function of some spelling variants employed in Hg and El. In the previous chapters I suggested that spelling differences in Hg and El may be authorial or due to scribal intervention, and that they may either represent alternative spellings of the same word, or be functional to the rhyme and metre of the verse lines. However, there is also evidence that different variants may be employed in Hg and El to indicate different grammatical functions of words. Accordingly, I showed in Chapter 3 that the fairly consistent use of *heere* in El, for both the verb HEAR and the adverb HERE, is most likely scribal. In Chaucer's language a distinction must have been made between *he(e)r* for the adverb and *he(e)re* for the verb, but this distinction, which is partly preserved in Hg, is totally lost in El. Moreover, in Chapter 4 I argued



that in E1 the variant *soun* is employed for the noun and the adjective, while in both Hg and E1 the verb is systematically spelled *sown-*, suggesting that this form, and not *soun-*, was supposed to represent the verb in the archetype. In Chapter 5 I also pointed out that Hg displays the old-fashioned distinction between *saw* and *sawe*, which respectively stand for the past tense singular and plural of the verb SEE. These are very likely to be authorial variants which were not preserved in E1.

Further evidence of the difference between the form and function of some lexical items in Hg and E1 is provided by the following examples, in which the spelling indicates whether the same words are used as adjectives or as adverbs. In Chaucer's language, adverbs of manner may derive from adjectives by means of the suffix *-e* (Davis 1987:xxx1), as shown by the adverbs *faire* and *faste* in (21), which derive from the adjectives *fair* and *fast*:

- (21) And spak so **faire** and profred hym so **faste**                      Hengwrt MI l. 103

However, in Hg and E1, as well as in Tr, the adverb *best* and *first* are never spelled with final *-e*, with the exception of one instance of *firste* in the line from E1 in (22), which must be scribal. In this line the *-e* in *firste* is not pronounced, or it would add an extra syllable to this line, while the following *that* ruins the metre:

- (22) That **first** he wroghte and afterward he taughte                      Hengwrt GP l. 499  
       That **firste** he wroghte and afterward that he taughte                      Ellesmere GP l. 499

The variants *beste* and *firste* are, by contrast, employed very consistently when the two words are adjectives, thus showing one of the typical features of Chaucer's language, i.e. the use of final *-e* as a marker to distinguish monosyllabic adjectives of the weak declension, such as *beste*, *firste* in (23), from those of the strong declension, which had no suffix (*best*, *first*):

- (23) a. He was the **beste** beggere of his hous                      Hengwrt GP l. 252  
       He was the **beste** beggeþ in his hous                      Ellesmere GP l. 252  
       b. Lat se now who shal telle the **firste** tale                      Hengwrt GP l. 831  
       Lat se now who shal telle the **firste** tale                      Ellesmere GP l. 831

In addition, *beste* occurs in fixed expressions such as *atte/at the beste* and *for the beste*, as shown in (24):

- (24) a. He serued vs with vitaille **at the beste**                      Hengwrt GP ll. 749  
       b. Lordynges quod he now herkneth **for the beste**                      Hengwrt GP ll. 788

and *firste* is used in a similar context, in the adverbial ‘at first’, as shown by the line from Tr in (25):

(25) Thanne atte **firste** wolde he bynde      Trinity l. 4.895

In these expressions both *beste* and *firste* behave like weak adjectives, and the use of the variant with final *-e* must therefore depend on the preceding definite article.

Similarly, the presence or absence of medial *-e-* distinguishes the adverb *hertely* from the adjective *hertly* in Hg. In this manuscript *hertely* is used for the adverb four times, in GP l. 762, SU l. 93, L30 l. 7 and TM par. 86, while *hertly* is an adjective, occurring three times in L17 l. 27 and CL ll. 176, 502. The three instances of the adjective are found in the phrases *with hertly obeisance* and *with hertly wyl*, a fixed expression meaning ‘wholeheartedly’. This distinction between adjectives and adverbs is not preserved in El, as in this manuscript *hertely* is employed nine times, three of which are found in lines that are missing from Hg, while *hertly* is only attested in L17 l. 27, the sole instance of this word that exhibits the same spelling in Hg and El.

By contrast, Hg and El agree in showing different functions for the variants *hy(e)* and *heig(e)* for HIGH, as *hye* is mostly used for the adverb, while *high(e)* is preferred for the adjective, as shown in Table 3:

		Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
HIGH (adverb)	hye	24	23	–
	heigh(e)	9	10	–
HIGH (adjective)	heigh(e)	80	94+6	2
	high(e)	–	–	5
	heye	2	–	–
	hy(e)	30	34+1	–

**Table 3. Variants for HIGH**

Adverbs are therefore usually spelled *hye*, and the few instances of *heigh(e)* are found in the following contexts. Adverbial *heigh(e)* occurs as a component of the variant *anheigh* (KT l. 207, MI l. 385, FK l. 141), as in the line in (26):

(26) Was risen and romed in a chambre **anheigh**      Hengwrt KT l. 207  
 Was risen and romed in a chambre **an heigh**      Ellesmere KT l. 207

In addition, *heigh(e)* is found in the fixed expressions *heigh and logh* (GP l. 817, ML l. 895) and *lowe or heighe* (FK l. 327 rhyming with *eighe* ‘eye’), although *heye or lowe* is attested in MA l. 257 as well, and *heighe* also occurs in the phrase *heighe in magestee* (RE l. 402, MO l. 682). All of these instances of Hg *heigh(e)* preserve their spelling in El, with one exception, Hg *heighe* in MO l. 682, which is spelled

*hye* in El. In this manuscript there are two more occurrences of *heighe* (SQ l. 52, NP l. 597), which are spelled *hye* in Hg. Conversely, in both Hg and El the adjectives are more frequently spelled *heigh(e)*, less frequently *hye* and occasionally *hy* and *heye* (only twice in Hg, in MA and NP). In Tr HIGH is used only as an adjective, and is spelled *heigh(e)* and *high(e)*, though none of these variants is Gowerian, since the spelling attested in the Fairfax manuscript for this word is *hyh(e)*. On the whole, the distinction made in Hg and El between *hye* for the adverb and *high(e)* for the adjective seems to be authorial, and the scribe preserved this system in both manuscripts, with the exception of a few lines in which Hg *hye* corresponds to El *high(e)* and vice versa. These are likely to be scribal changes, as I have argued for the variants attested in Tr.

Finally, a clear difference between form and function of lexical items is shown by the use of the variants *mooste* for the adjective superlative, *moost* for the adverb, and *most(e)* for the verb. The only exception to this obvious avoidance of homographs is in El, in TM par. 887, where one instance of *moost* used for the verb. This is probably a scribal mistake made under the influence of the adverb *moost* that occurs in the same line:

- |                                                                                               |             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| (27) For it is writen that he þ <sup>t</sup> <b>moost</b> curteisly cōmandeth to hym          | Hengwrt     |
| men <b>moste</b> obeyen                                                                       | TM par. 887 |
| For it is writen þ <sup>t</sup> he þ <sup>t</sup> <b>moost</b> curteisly comandeth to hym men | Ellesmere   |
| <b>moost</b> obeyen                                                                           | TM par. 887 |

The examples provided above are by no means an exhaustive inventory of all lexical items in which the spelling is characteristic of a certain grammatical function. However, they suggest that when Hg and El agree in using different variants for words that have distinct grammatical functions, such as *hye* for the adverb but *heigh(e)* for the adjective, or *sownd* as the only spelling for the verb though not for the noun, it is very likely that the distinction between the form and function of those words derives from the archetype, and is therefore authorial. At the same time, when Hg and El disagree, as shown by Hg *sound* and *sownd*, but El *sound*, for the noun SOUND, it is very likely that the loss of distinction between form and function of a word is the result of scribal interference, and this makes it more difficult to establish which variants were the authorial ones.

A final point to consider here, as it has come up frequently in the discussion of spelling differences between Hg and El, is the use of special characters. Special characters can be found in variants that represent abbreviations of words, such as þ<sup>t</sup> for *that*. They are also found in variants that display letters written with different kinds of flourishes, described by Parkes (1969:xxix) as ‘additional strokes which in a Latin text would indicate an abbreviation, but which may or may not do so in English’, as in *eu<sup>7</sup>e* for *euere* and *Tabar<sup>o</sup>* for *Tabard*. These characters occur in both Hg and El, but in El the number of abbreviations for *and* (⁊) and *that* (þ<sup>t</sup>) decreases, while the number of other abbreviated forms and letters with flourishes increases, sometimes substantially. Hence, while the use of more flourishes and fewer

abbreviations for *and* and *that* in El supports the theory that in El the scribe was more accurate and had more time at his disposal to produce a good manuscript, the increased number of flourishes functioning as abbreviations marks contradicts this theory. The items that may display abbreviated forms as well as the letters with additional strokes that are most frequently employed in Hg and El are listed in Table 4.

	Hengwrt	Ellesmere	Trinity
and	6345	7197 +1007	1078
7	900	206 +100	32
that	2502	3616 +715	520
b <sup>t</sup>	2178	1061 +173	240
bat	–	–	78
with	970	932 +65	159
w <sup>t</sup>	244	308 +28	49
abbreviated <i>am/an</i> [ā]	1	11+7	8
abbreviated <i>em/en</i> [ē]	10	35+12	14
abbreviated <i>im/in</i> [ī]	1	23+1	35
abbreviated <i>om/on</i> [ō]	158	276+81	32
abbreviated <i>oun</i> [ou]	425	613+181	3
abbreviated <i>-er-/re-</i> [ʔ]	948	1196+249	200
tailed d [d <sup>t</sup> ]	49	605+83	49
crossed h [h <sup>x</sup> ]	196	2446+241	416
p with macron [p̄]	164	234+19	24
tail [ʔ]	4001	4792+914	902

**Table 4. Abbreviations and letters with flourishes in Hg, El and Tr**

As the data in the table show, the scribe regularly employed the character 7, i.e. the ‘Tironian nota’, for *and* as well as the abbreviation *b<sup>t</sup>* for *that* in Hg, and even though these two forms are still attested in El, their frequency is much lower than in Hg. This could be considered a sign of scribal accuracy in El, in that it shows the tendency to avoid abbreviated forms. It must be noted that the use of the Tironian nota in Hg is almost entirely limited to the prose texts, as they display 91.8 % of the occurrences of this character. Conversely, the abbreviations *b<sup>t</sup>* and *w<sup>t</sup>* are used more regularly throughout Hg, even though also in this case 42 % of the occurrences of *b<sup>t</sup>* and about 50 % of the instances of *w<sup>t</sup>* are clustered in TM and PA. This suggests that the widespread use of 7 in these tales does not represent what was in the exemplar, but is a scribal expedient to speed up the copying of the long texts and probably also to fit as much text possible on a leaf. The use of *b<sup>t</sup>* and *w<sup>t</sup>* in the prose sections may be motivated by the same reason, but unlike the Tironian nota, these abbreviations are also widely used in the rest of the manuscript, *b<sup>t</sup>* in particular. It is thus likely that the variants *b<sup>t</sup>* and *w<sup>t</sup>* were in the scribe’s repertoire but also in the exemplar of Hg, as a result of which the scribe used them freely in Hg. However, in El he

reduced the occurrence of *þ'* considerably, writing *that* in its extended form more often, but he used *w'* even more frequently than in Hg. While the use of *þ* in the abbreviation *þ'* generally decreases from Hg to El, it remains fairly constant (36 instances in Hg, 38+11 in El) in a small number of lexical items other than *þ'*, such as verbs in the third person singular of the present tense indicative, and words such as *þer* and *forþ*. As I explained in Chapter 4, §4.2, there is evidence that Scribe B spelled these words with *þ* to save space on the page, as most of them are found at the end of lines in TM and PA. In these prose tales the scribe completely filled the lines, and in order to obtain a regular layout he tried to write as far as possible within the margins set by the ruling of the page, sometimes also resorting to abbreviated forms. In Tr the use of *þ* in words other than *þ'* is much higher than in Hg and El (252 occurrences), because *þ* is a Gowerian feature that Scribe B preserved in his stint of the *Confessio Amantis* (see Chapter 4, §4.2).

The other abbreviations listed in Table 4 likewise increase in El: most of them consist of a macron, a horizontal stroke set above a vowel to signal the omission of a nasal consonant, i.e. a *m* or *n* as in *mānes*, *hī*, *hē*, *wōman* and *opiniōū*, while the other one is a superscript 'hook stroke' [ʰ], which stands for *-er-/re-*, as in *eūē* and *þ<sup>ʰ</sup>che*. It is puzzling to see that these abbreviations increase in El, since this is the high-quality manuscript in which the scribe should have avoided them altogether. The only explanation for this seems to be that such abbreviations were used in a similar way by Chaucer and Scribe B, as a result of which they were introduced or simply copied in El as authorial features.

The occurrence of characters that are not abbreviation marks can be accounted for in the same way. In both Hg and El the scribe wrote several letters with flourishes, i.e. additional strokes drawn on or across the ascenders (as in *aferð*, *yet* and *March*), or just added to the letters without ascenders (as in *wyfr*, *wrongr*, *coleryk*, *colour*, *sheep* and *keep*), but they are far more common in El than in Hg. The abundance of such embellishing strokes in El is very likely to be for aesthetic reasons, which once again supports the idea that the scribe took particular care of the appearance of this manuscript. It is however possible that letters with flourishes were attested in the exemplar. In their study of the spelling of Ch and Ha<sup>4</sup>, Blake and Thaisen (2004) analyse the distribution of a number of spelling features in Ch, among which tailed *d* (*ð*) and crossed *h* (*h̄*), and they conclude that the letters with extra strokes were copied from the exemplar, whereas the plain letters were scribal. Since Ch belongs to the O group of manuscripts, this could be further proof that the archetype of *The Canterbury Tales* contained letters with flourishes; however, while these characters were preserved from the exemplar in Hg, they were often deliberately added by the scribe in El.

To conclude, the issues discussed in this chapter cast more light on possible reasons for the spelling differences that exist between Hg and El. They support the impression already emerging from the previous chapters that both Hg and El display authorial features alongside scribal ones, because of different criteria that were applied to the copying of either manuscript. It is very likely that in Hg the scribe preserved the spelling of the exemplar – or exemplars in the case of TM – more

often than he did in E1, while in E1 he seemingly adhered to a scheme that had to be imposed onto this manuscript in order to normalise the spelling. In either case Scribe B must have been very concerned with the final result, since he tried to give authority to his text both by preserving Chaucerian variants and by imposing spelling forms that he considered representative of Chaucer's language. There is also evidence that he employed variants which were familiar to him through his work as a bureaucratic scribe, such as *muchel*, which may have not been Chaucer's first choice, even though such variants very likely belonged to Chaucer's repertoire. This confirms that the scribe did not translate the language of the exemplar systematically, but rather that he often made conscious choices about which spelling to use, which ultimately leads to the conclusion that even when Hg and E1 disagree on the spelling of words, they still remain very good witnesses to the language that must have been in the archetype.

## Conclusion

This dissertation consists of an analysis of the language of the Hengwrt and Ellesmere manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*, and folios 9-32v of the Trinity *Confessio Amantis*, with references to two other manuscripts, the Hatfield House fragment of *Troilus and Criseyde* and the Cambridge University Library, Kk 1.3/20 fragment of the *Prioress's Prologue and Prioress's Tale*; all of these texts were copied by Scribe B. My aim has been to try to shed light on the scribe's spelling practice in order to explain on the one hand why he often used different spelling variants in Hg and El, and on the other hand to what extent these differences were due to the preservation of Chaucer's language in each of these two manuscripts. In this chapter I will summarise my findings, and try to relate them to previous research on the same subject, in order to show that the spelling differences between Hg and El were chiefly due to Scribe B's attempt to normalise the spelling in El rather than to linguistic changes.

To explain the reason of spelling variation between Hg and El, I first had to establish what kind of copyist Scribe B was. I believe that his spelling in Hg and Tr in particular shows that Scribe B was neither a faithful copyist nor a translator, but that he was, in McIntosh's (1963) terminology, a Type C scribe, who mixed faithful copying with translation (see Chapter 2). I have shown that Chaucer's spelling variants occur alongside forms belonging to the scribe's own practice in Hg, and similarly, both Gowerian and scribal forms are found in Tr. To some extent the same can be said about El, although I think that the spelling in this manuscript is purposely designed to reflect Chaucer's own practice. This does not mean that the scribe was more faithful to the exemplar when he copied El; rather, it indicates that he tried to normalise the spelling in this manuscript by employing forms that he considered to be more representative of Chaucer's language. To normalise the orthography in El, Scribe B must have made choices whenever two or more variants of the same lexical item occurred in his exemplar. Even so, there is evidence that even in El this copyist rarely adopted a single form for words that exhibited several variants in Hg. However, he generally succeeded in decreasing spelling variation in El by selecting fewer variants for the same lexical items, and also by using one variant more frequently than others. In Chapter 3, where I discussed the use of single and double graphs for the spelling of long vowels, and in Chapter 4, where I dealt

with the use of *-ow-*, *-o-* and *-ou-* for long and short [u], I demonstrated that all of these features are found in Hg and El. However, in El there is a clear preference for the use of double graphs for long vowels, especially in rhyming position, where the syllables in which they occur must be marked with greater weight, and for variants spelled with *-ou-*, all of them resulting from a pattern imposed by the scribe on the spelling of this manuscript. In addition, I also argued that when scribal forms can be distinguished from authorial ones in Hg and El, there is evidence that the scribe's practice was to some extent influenced by the spelling of the bureaucratic language. As a result, forms that regularly occur in the documents issued by the Chancery, such as *aske* and *atte*, are also found in these manuscripts, along with Chaucer's preferred spellings *axe* and *at the*.

A final observation needs to be made about Scribe B's practice. When looking at the images of folios 13r and 14v of another manuscript that has been ascribed to this copyist, Trinity College, Cambridge MS B.15.17, a copy of *Piers Plowman*, one cannot fail to notice the regular use of two old-fashioned characters, i.e. yogh, as in *nozȝt*, and thorn, as in *þe*, *sooplice* and *þis* in the first four lines of the detail from folio 13r reproduced in Figure 1:

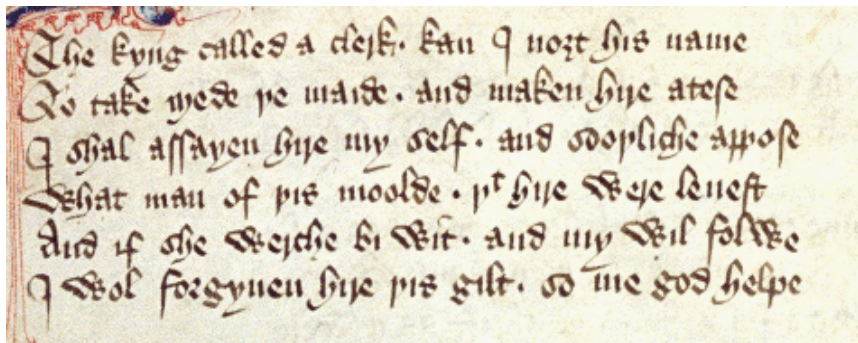


Figure 1. Detail from Trinity College, Cambridge, MS B.15.17, fol. 13r  
(Duggan 2007)

The use of these characters is rather striking, given that *ȝ* is found just once in El, in the word *thurȝ* in PA par. 505, which is in the section of PA that is missing from Hg, while *þ* is attested more frequently in both manuscripts, but only in a restricted number of words, as explained in Chapter 6. *þ* is mostly used in the abbreviation *þ'*, and only occasionally it does occur in other words, such as *troweþ* (TM par. 206 in Hg) and *deþ* (PA par. 137 in Hg), often to save space at the end of lines of prose. Horobin and Mooney (2004:87) argue that the Trinity *Piers Plowman* was copied before Hg, which could explain why it contains old-fashioned forms of the language. Yet I want to suggest that if Scribe B is the copyist of this manuscript, he faithfully preserved these two characters from the exemplar in his copy, just as he did in his stint of the Trinity Gower. In that manuscript he employed *þ* very frequently because of the influence of the Gowerian language in the copytext. The absence of *ȝ* and the



occurrence of *b* only in certain environments in the two Chaucerian manuscripts therefore prove that these characters were used very infrequently or not at all by Chaucer. All this contributes to the impression that Scribe B was a conscientious and accurate copyist, a professional who did not limit himself to producing merely a faithful copy of his exemplar, but probably dealt with the language of his copytext quite systematically. Most likely, he normalised the spelling of the exemplar, as he was used to doing in the bureaucratic documents that he copied daily as a writer of the Court Letter (see Chapter 2), but, as a literary copyist, he also tended to preserve features that were distinctive of the author's language, as they would give authority to his copy of the text.

After having established that the spelling in Hg and El is neither entirely authorial nor entirely scribal, I tried to explain why these two texts copied by the same scribe are characterised by spelling variation. For one thing, there was of course no standard spelling, as English spelling would not be fixed until the beginning of the eighteenth century (Scragg 1974:80). More importantly for this study, however, I pointed out in Chapter 2 that Samuels suggested that the differences between Hg and El are due to scribal adaptation to the ongoing linguistic changes, and that they therefore indicate a progression in Scribe B's orthographic practice. I have demonstrated in many instances throughout this study that this, however, is not the case. Spelling differences between Hg and El are the result of a different approach towards the two texts, Hg being a manuscript meant to collect all tales in one codex, and El being the more prestigious version and beyond doubt a high-quality production of the same work. When discussing the importance of Hg and El as representative examples of Chaucer's spelling, Samuels argues as follows:

which of those two, Hengwrt or Ellesmere, is to be preferred? The differences between these two MSS pose a problem, for although in general the forms used overall are the same, their distribution in the two MSS varies considerably, the earlier type of variants being more frequent in Hengwrt, the later type in Ellesmere.

(Samuels 1988b:34)

This is exactly what I argue against in my study, by proving that there is no progression in scribal practice from Hg to El. Old forms are also attested in El, but there they are used intentionally, in order to lend authority to this manuscript. Hg should thus be considered a more genuine example of Chaucer's language than El, because it is very likely that the spelling variants that I identified as authorial in this manuscript derive more or less directly from Chaucer's working papers. The language of El, by contrast, consists of a selection of forms that probably belonged to Chaucer's repertoire, and were thus chosen to represent the author's own spelling; for the most part they are old-fashioned variants, but there is also evidence of forms that we now consider to be more modern. It must, however, be specified at this point that since no Chaucerian holograph has come down to us, any statements about Chaucer's language have to remain rather speculative. Comparison of all other fifteenth-century witnesses to *The Canterbury Tales* can shed more light on the

nature of the text that was in the archetype of the tradition, thus helping scholars to identify spelling variants that were authorial. Yet, unlike Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, there is no Chaucerian manuscript that can be used as a reference text for establishing with any degree of certainty how other versions of *The Canterbury Tales* relate to the authorial copy.

During the past decade, several Chaucerian scholars have put forward the hypothesis that Chaucer supervised the production of the earliest manuscripts, Hg and El in particular (cf. Stubbs 2000, Blake and Thaisen 2004). This may imply that Chaucer gave instructions about spelling issues in El, as indeed we find illustrated in his poem to Adam Scrivener (see Chapter 2), in which Chaucer expressed his concern for the preservation of authorial spelling in other copies of his works. Stubbs (2000: Observations, The Treatment of the Cook's Tale in Hg and El) argues that very likely Chaucer oversaw part of Scribe B's work in both Hg and El and that the copying of both texts overlapped to some extent. Otherwise it would be difficult to explain why in both manuscripts the scribe left a space after the unfinished *Cook's Tale*: half a folio before the end of quire 8 in Hg, and two and a half folios before the end of quire 6 in El. It would seem that when Scribe B copied the few lines of this tale in both manuscripts, he still expected to receive the missing part, and for that reason he left some space for adding it once the exemplar was made available to him. Later on, however, probably after Chaucer's death, it became obvious that he would no longer receive any further text for this tale. He therefore wrote only in Hg, in the margin of folio 57v, the note '*Of this Cokes tale maked Chaucer na moore*' with the same ink that he used for copying the tales belonging to Section II, i.e. the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, the *Friar's Tale* and the *Summoner's Tale*. This suggests that the note was written during or just after the copying of Section II. This section was most likely produced after the tales that display the dark brown ink used for most of the manuscript, those found in Sections I, IV, V and the first part of Section III (see Appendix 3). It follows that Chaucer probably supervised about two thirds of the production of Hg, and that in the same period of time the scribe also copied at least the first tales of El, from the *General Prologue* to the *Cook's Tale*. The latter hypothesis is substantiated by evidence from the illumination in El. In her study of the Ellesmere illuminators, Scott (1995:94) identifies the work of three different limners in this manuscript (cf. Chapter 2), observing that 'the shift from Hand A and Hand B occurs at a point where the text, the *Cook's Tale*, ends midpage on folio 47v', thus marking an interruption in both the scribal and the decorative processes.

Even if Chaucer supervised the production of a great portion of Hg, it is unclear how much influence he had on the spelling used by the scribe, since significant variation is also found within Hg in the tales that were probably copied when Chaucer was still alive. I found it particularly striking that the last two tales, TM and PA, which are in prose, display numerous old-fashioned spelling variants, while the first two tales, GP and KT, exhibit a greater number of modern forms alongside the old-fashioned ones. This is further evidence that the scribe received *The Canterbury Tales* as a set of disordered fragments, but it could also prove that GP and KT were

not the first tales to be copied in Hg. In her discussion of the *Cook's Tale* (see above), Stubbs argues that PA was probably copied first and set aside, and this would indeed explain why several old-fashioned spellings are found in this tale: at that point the scribe was still getting used to the handwriting of the exemplar. In contrast, when he copied GP and KT he was already familiar with the handwriting, and he proceeded more quickly through the material. This is an attractive theory, although I do not discard the more traditional assumption that the first tales in Hg, GP, KT and MI, were also among the first to be copied. In this case, the presence of old-fashioned variants in GP, KT and MI would be explained by the fact that at this point of the manuscript the scribe followed his exemplar more faithfully, while getting used to the handwriting on it. The prose tales, TM and PA, were thus copied later, and it is possible that their exemplar, or exemplars, simply contained a large number of older spelling variants, which were often preserved by Scribe B, especially in Hg. He would do so partly because TM and PA were long texts, which he copied almost mechanically, as I suggested in Chapter 3, and partly because the old-fashioned variants may have derived from another exemplar, possibly a revised one, that was used for copying parts of TM, as I argued in Chapter 5.

The hypothesis that Scribe B was a speaker of a dialect similar to Chaucer's London dialect has also been proposed to explain the similarities between the author's and the scribe's spelling practices. This would indeed be the case if Adam Pinkhurst, alias Scribe B, was indeed originally from Surrey, as suggested by Mooney (2006). Alternatively, it is conceivable that the scribe had become so familiar with Chaucer's language that he adopted several Chaucerian spelling features in his active repertoire, and, as I argued above, that he deliberately retained authorial spellings. Some other dialectal variants are, however, regularly employed in Hg and also EI, and are rather puzzling because they apparently do not have any special purpose, such as creating rhyming pairs or characterising some speakers in the tales. The most salient ones belong either to the Northern dialect, as shown by *agayn*, or to the Western dialect, as shown by *muchel* and *murye*. The Northern features have been accounted for by the hypothesis that they entered Chaucer's language during the time he spent as a young page in the household of the Countess of Ulster in Yorkshire (Chapter 5). There is, however, no such simple explanation for the Western features, unless one postulates that they were in the exemplar of Hg, thus implying that O is not the direct ancestor of Hg, but of a manuscript containing Western variants. Yet, this is a theory that requires further investigation and that could probably be taken up further once all digital versions of the tales become available.

A final remark ought to be made with reference to Chaucer as a speaker of Middle English, a language that was not yet standardised, and that did not have a fixed spelling. A middle-class man by birth, he held several official positions in the king's service throughout his life, and successfully rose to the top of fourteenth-century society. As a result of the numerous occupations he had in the course of his life, Chaucer was in touch with different social milieus in England and also abroad. In addition, his career as a writer started with the translation of works in French (*The*

*Romaunt of the Rose*) and probably the composition of poetry in French, and carried on with compositions in the vernacular, for many of which he was indebted to French, Italian and English writers such as Froissart, Machaut, Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio, Gower and Langland. His vocabulary must therefore have been very extensive and have included words from other languages as well as from other English dialects. Likewise, his spelling practice must have included different variants, belonging to different stages of the language, since his orthography probably varied over time – he was after all not a professional scribe – and the language, the London dialect in particular, was undergoing rapid changes at the time. This would explain the presence of spelling variation in his works and especially in *The Canterbury Tales*, the object of this study. It would also help to clarify why the scribe preserved several variants in his manuscripts even when, as in El, he tried to normalise the spelling: these variants reflected Chaucer's usage. I suggested above that Scribe B was a Type C scribe. However, when he worked on the production of El, he did more than merely mix faithful copying with translation. I have argued in this study that he was basically torn between two ideals: on the one hand he tried to preserve Chaucer's spelling, because this would lend authority to his copy of *The Canterbury Tales*, and on the other hand he tried to limit the spelling variation in El, in order to impose a pattern on it which would make this manuscript better than others, at any rate better than Hg.

The last word on Chaucer's language has not yet been said, and this study has demonstrated the intricacies of attempting to analyse Middle English texts that derive from lost original versions. The application of computer technology to all fifteenth-century witnesses of *The Canterbury Tales* has opened new avenues of research in the study of these texts as well as in the study of Middle English in general and Chaucer's language in particular. In recent times, scholars have emphasized that Hg and El can provide substantial evidence of the archetypal language of *The Canterbury Tales* only if they are collated with all other fifteenth-century witnesses, since later manuscripts and incunabula are likewise valuable sources of information (cf. Horobin 1997:20, Thaisen 2005–2006:392, Partridge 2007:350). My comparison of Hg and El with other witnesses in the tradition has enabled me to compare data from these two manuscripts with data from other texts in a number of tales. Yet, I believe that Hg and El represent an important stage in the textual tradition of *The Canterbury Tales*, because of the closeness of Scribe B to Chaucer. Not only did the copyist have authorial manuscripts at his disposal but he also benefited from his personal acquaintance with the author, who, in what most likely was a humorous warning, wished him the *scalle* if he did not copy his works faithfully. Scribe B's privileged position allowed him to make well-informed choices about the variants to use in his texts, so that he passed on to us two manuscripts that are crucial for studies on Chaucer's language.

## Appendix 1

### Fifteenth-century witnesses of *The Canterbury Tales*

Ad <sup>1</sup>	BL Additional 5140	Ha <sup>2</sup>	BL Harley 1758
Ad <sup>2</sup>	BL Additional 25718	Ha <sup>3</sup>	BL Harley 7333
Ad <sup>3</sup>	BL Additional 35286	Ha <sup>4</sup>	BL Harley 7334
Ad <sup>4</sup>	BL Additional 10340	Ha <sup>5</sup>	BL Harley 7335
Ar	Arundel 140	He	Helmingham (Princeton 100)
Bo <sup>1</sup>	Bodley 414	Hg	Hengwrt
Bo <sup>2</sup>	Bodley 686	Hk	Holkham 667
Bw	Barlow 20	Hl <sup>1</sup>	BL Harley 1704
Ch	Christ Church 152	Hl <sup>2</sup>	BL Harley 2551
Cn	Cardigan (Austin, HRC 143)	Hl <sup>3</sup>	BL Harley 2382
Cp	Corpus Christi Oxford 198	Hl <sup>4</sup>	BL Harley 5908
Ct	Chetham	Hn	Huntington HM 144
Dd	Cambridge Dd.4.24	Ht	Hatton donat. 1
Dl	Delamere	Ii	Cambridge Ii.3.26
Do	Douce d.4	Kk	Cambridge Kk.1.3
Ds <sup>1</sup>	Devonshire	La	BL Lansdowne 851
Ds <sup>2</sup>	Devonshire Fragment	Lc	Lichfield 29
Ee	Cambridge Ee.2.15	Ld <sup>1</sup>	Laud. Misc. 600
El	Ellesmere	Ld <sup>2</sup>	Laud. Misc. 739
En <sup>1</sup>	BL Egerton 2726	Ll <sup>1</sup>	Longleat 257
En <sup>2</sup>	BL Egerton 2863	Ll <sup>2</sup>	Longleat 29
En <sup>3</sup>	BL Egerton 2864	Ln	Lincoln 110
Fi	Fitzwilliam McClean 181	Ma	Manchester Rylands 113
Gg	Cambridge Gg.4.27	Mc	McCormick (Chicago 564)
Gl	Glasgow Hunterian 197	Me	Merthyr
Ha <sup>1</sup>	BL Harley 1239	Mg	Morgan 249

Mm	Cambridge Mm.2.5	Ry <sup>1</sup>	BL Royal 17 D.XV
Ne	Oxford, New College D.314	Ry <sup>2</sup>	BL Royal 18 C.II
Nl	Northumberland 455	Se	Arch. Selden B.14
Np	Naples XIII.B.29	Si	Sion College
Ox <sup>1</sup>	Oxford (John Rylands)	Sl <sup>1</sup>	BL Sloane 1685
Ox <sup>2</sup>	Oxford (Rosenbach)	Sl <sup>2</sup>	BL Sloane 1686
Ph <sup>1</sup>	Phillips 6570	Sl <sup>3</sup>	BL Sloane 1009
Ph <sup>2</sup>	Phillips 8136 (Bodmer 48)	St	Stonyhurst B XXIII
Ph <sup>3</sup>	Phillips 8137	Tc <sup>1</sup>	Trinity Cambridge R.3.3
Ph <sup>4</sup>	Phillips 8299	Tc <sup>2</sup>	Trinity Cambridge R.3.15
Pl	Plimpton	Tc <sup>3</sup>	Trinity Cambridge R.3.19
Pp	Pepys	To <sup>1</sup>	Trinity Oxford 49
Ps	Paris BN anglais 39	To <sup>2</sup>	Trinity Oxford 29
Pw	Petworth		
Py	London, Physicians 388		
Ra <sup>1</sup>	Rawlinson poet. 141	<b>Pre-1500 Printed editions</b>	
Ra <sup>2</sup>	Rawlinson poet. 149	Cx <sup>1</sup>	Caxton, First Edition
Ra <sup>3</sup>	Rawlinson poet. 223	Cx <sup>2</sup>	Caxton, Second Edition
Ra <sup>4</sup>	Rawlinson C.86	Pn	Pynson
		Wy	Wynkyn de Worde

(From Blake and Robinson eds 1997, *The Canterbury Tales Project Occasional Papers II*)

## Appendix 2

### Abbreviations in *The Canterbury Tales*

GP	General Prologue	
KT	The Knight's Tale	
L1	Link 1 (The Miller's Prologue)	
MI	The Miller's Tale	
L2	Link 2 (The Reeve's Prologue)	
RE	The Reeve's Tale	
L3	Link 3 (The Cook's Prologue)	
CO	The Cook's Tale	
L7	Link 7 (The Man of Law's Prologue)	
ML	The Man of Law's Tale	
WBP	The Wife of Bath's Prologue	
WBT	The Wife of Bath's Tale	
L10	Link 10 (The Friar's Prologue)	
FR	The Friar's Tale	
L11	Link 11 (The Summoner's Prologue)	
SU	The Summoner's Tale	
CL	The Clerk's Tale	
L13	Link 13 (Lenvoy de Chaucer)	
L14	Link 14 (The Host Stanza)	
L15	Link 15 (The Merchant's Prologue)	missing from Hg
ME	The Merchant's Tale	
L17	Link 17 (El: Merchant-Squire Link)	
SQ	The Squire's Tale	
L20	Link 20 (El: Squire-Franklin Link)	
FK	The Franklin's Tale	
PH	The Physician's Tale	
L21	Link 21 (The Physician-Pardoner Link)	

PD	The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale	
SH	The Shipman's Tale	
L24	Link 24 (The Shipman–Prioress Link)	
PR	The Prioress's Tale	
L25	Link 25 (Prologue to Sir Thopas)	
TT	The Tale of Thopas	
L28	Link 28 (Thopas–Melibee Link)	
TM	The Tale of Melibee	
L29	Link 29 (The Monk's Prologue)	
MO	The Monk's Tale	
L30	Link 30 (The Nun's Priest's Prologue)	
NP	The Nun's Priest's Tale	
NU	The Nun's Tale	
L33	Link 33 (The Canon's Yeoman's Prologue)	missing from Hg
CY	The Canon's Yeoman's Tale	missing from Hg
L36	Link 36 (The Manciple's Prologue)	
MA	The Manciple's Tale	
L37	Link 37 (The Parson's Prologue)	
PA	The Parson's Tale	

(Adapted from Stubbs 2000, *The Hengwrt Chaucer Digital Facsimile*)



## Appendix 3

### Structural Sections in Hengwrt

#### Structural Section 1

General Prologue  
The Knight's Tale  
Link 1 (The Miller's Prologue)  
The Miller's Tale  
Link 2 (The Reeve's Prologue)  
The Reeve's Tale  
Link 3 (The Cook's Prologue)  
The Cook's Tale

#### Structural Section 2

The Wife of Bath's Prologue  
The Wife of Bath's Tale  
Link 10 (The Friar's Prologue)  
The Friar's Tale  
Link 11 (The Summoner's Prologue)  
The Summoner's Tale

#### Structural Section 3

Link 29 (The Monk's Prologue)  
The Monk's Tale  
Link 30 (The Nun's Priest's Prologue)  
The Nun's Priest's Tale  
Link 36 (The Manciple's Prologue)  
The Manciple's Tale

**Structural Section 4**

Link 7 (The Man of Law's Prologue)  
The Man of Law's Tale  
The Squire's Tale  
Link 20 (El: Squire–Franklin Link)  
The Merchant's Tale  
Link 17 (El: Merchant–Squire Link)  
The Franklin's Tale  
The Nun's Tale  
The Clerk's Tale  
Link 13 (Lenvoy de Chaucer)  
Link 14 (The Host stanza)  
The Physician's Tale  
Link 21 (The Physician–Pardoner Link)  
The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale  
The Shipman's Tale  
Link 24 (The Shipman–Prioress Link)  
The Prioress's Tale  
Link 25 (Prologue to Sir Thopas)  
The Tale of Thopas  
Link 28 (Thopas–Melibee Link)  
The Tale of Melibee

**Structural Section 5**

Link 37 (The Parson's Prologue)  
The Parson's Tale

(Adapted from Stubbs 2000, *The Hengwrt Chaucer Digital Facsimile*)

## Appendix 4

### Tale order in Hengwrt and Ellesmere

#### Hengwrt Chaucer

General Prologue  
The Knight's Tale  
Link 1 (The Miller's Prologue)  
The Miller's Tale  
Link 2 (The Reeve's Prologue)  
The Reeve's Tale  
Link 3 (The Cook's Prologue)  
The Cook's Tale  
The Wife of Bath's Prologue  
The Wife of Bath's Tale  
Link 10 (The Friar's Prologue)  
The Friar's Tale  
Link 11 (The Summoner's Prologue)  
The Summoner's Tale  
Link 29 (The Monk's Prologue)  
The Monk's Tale  
Link 30 (The Nun's Priest's Prologue)  
The Nun's Priest's Tale  
Link 36 (The Manciple's Prologue)  
The Manciple's Tale  
Link 7 (The Man of Law's Prologue)  
The Man of Law's Tale  
The Squire's Tale  
Link 20 (El: Squire–Franklin Link)  
The Merchant's Tale  
Link 17 (El: Merchant–Squire Link)

#### Ellesmere Chaucer

General Prologue  
Knight's Tale  
Link 1 (The Miller's Prologue)  
The Miller's Tale  
Link 2 (The Reeve's Prologue)  
The Reeve's Tale  
Link 3 (The Cook's Prologue)  
The Cook's Tale  
Link 7 (The Man of Law's Prologue)  
The Man of Law's Tale  
The Wife of Bath's Prologue  
The Wife of Bath's Tale  
Link 10 (The Friar's Prologue)  
The Friar's Tale  
Link 11 (The Summoner's Prologue)  
The Summoner's Tale  
The Clerk's Tale  
Link 13 (Lenvoy de Chaucer)  
Link 14 (The Host Stanza)  
Link 15 (The Merchant's Prologue)  
The Merchant's Tale  
Link 17 (Merchant–Squire Link)  
The Squire's Tale  
Link 20 ( Squire–Franklin Link)  
The Franklin's Tale  
The Physician's Tale

The Franklin's Tale	Link 21 (The Physician–Pardoner Link)
The Nun's Tale	The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale
The Clerk's Tale	The Shipman's Tale
Link 13 (Lenvoy de Chaucer)	Link 24 (The Shipman–Prioress Link)
Link 14 (The Host stanza)	The Prioress's Tale
The Physician's Tale	Link 25 (Prologue to Sir Thopas)
Link 21 (The Physician–Pardoner Link)	The Tale of Thopas
The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale	Link 28 (Thopas–Melibee Link)
The Shipman's Tale	The Tale of Melibee
Link 24 (The Shipman–Prioress Link)	Link 29 (The Monk's Prologue)
The Prioress's Tale	The Monk's Tale
Link 25 (Prologue to Sir Thopas)	Link 30 (The Nun's Priest's Prologue)
The Tale of Thopas	The Nun's Priest's Tale
Link 28 (Thopas–Melibee Link)	The Nun's Tale
The Tale of Melibee	Link 33 (The Canon's Yeoman's Prol.)
Link 37 (The Parson's Prologue)	The Canon's Yeoman's Tale
The Parson's Tale	Link 36 (The Manciple's Prologue)
	The Manciple's Tale
	Link 37 (The Parson's Prologue)
	The Parson's Tale

(Adapted from Stubbs 2000, *The Hengwrt Chaucer Digital Facsimile*)

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## Samenvatting in het Nederlands

Van Chaucers *Canterbury Tales* zijn ongeveer 80 vijftiende-eeuwse handschriften overgebleven; geen van deze is echter van de hand van Chaucer. Doorgaans wordt aangenomen dat de taal van Chaucer in twee vroege handschriften van *The Canterbury Tales*, het 'Hengwrt' en het 'Ellesmere' handschrift, het meest getrouw wordt weergegeven. Het eerste bevindt zich in Aberystwyth, in de National Library of Wales (MS Peniarth 392D), en het tweede in San Marino in California, in de Huntington Library (MS EL 26.C.9). Volgens de *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* zijn Hengwrt and Ellesmere geschreven in het zgn. 'London Type III' dialect, hoewel de spelling in beide teksten niet identiek is. Beide handschriften zijn door dezelfde kopiist geproduceerd. Deze kopiist werd 'Scribe B' genoemd, maar enige jaren geleden is zijn identiteit vastgesteld: Adam Pinkhurst.

De tekst van Ellesmere is lange tijd hoger aangeslagen dan die van Hengwrt, en sinds het einde van de negentiende eeuw zijn de edities van *The Canterbury Tales* gebaseerd op de tekst van Ellesmere. Na de publicatie in 1940 van de editie van *The Canterbury Tales* door Manly and Rickert, die was gebaseerd op alle bekende handschriften, is de wetenschappelijke interesse vooral uitgegaan naar Hengwrt. Recente onderzoeken op het gebied van de tekstuele traditie van *The Canterbury Tales* (Blake 1985, Robinson 1999) geven aan dat van deze twee handschriften Hengwrt de taal van Chaucer zelf het dichtst benadert.

De meest innovatieve wetenschappelijke aanpak met betrekking tot de studie naar *The Canterbury Tales* komt van het 'Canterbury Tales Project'. Dit project heeft als doel de geschiedenis van de overgeleverde teksten van *The Canterbury Tales* te bestuderen door alle vijftiende-eeuwse handschriften en gedrukte edities van de *Tales* elektronisch te transcriberen, te collationeren en te analyseren (Robinson 2003). Spellingvarianten in de tekst van deze handschriften kunnen elektronisch worden geanalyseerd, met als doel de verwantschap tussen de verschillende versies te kunnen beschrijven en daarmee uiteindelijk de afstamming van Chaucers oorspronkelijke tekst te kunnen achterhalen. Op basis hiervan moet het uiteindelijk mogelijk zijn de spellingvormen in Chaucers handschrift vast te stellen.

Dit proefschrift beschrijft een onderzoek naar de gebruikte spelling in de Hengwrt en Ellesmere handschriften dat werd uitgevoerd met behulp van digitale media die zijn ontwikkeld en gepubliceerd door het 'Canterbury Tales Project': het Hengwrt Digitale Facsimile, de elektronische transcriptie van het Ellesmere handschrift en de CD-ROMs van de *The General Prologue*, *The Miller's Tale*, *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* en *The Nun's Priest's Tale*. Deze CD-ROMs bevatten de

collaties van alle vijftiende-eeuwse handschriften van de betreffende vertellingen. De spelling van Hengwrt en Ellesmere is vergeleken met drie andere teksten van de hand van Scribe B, namelijk drie katernen van een handschrift van Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.2) en de overgeleverde fragmenten van de *Prioress's Prologue and Prioress's Tale* (Cambridge University Library, MS Kk 1.3/20) en *Troilus and Criseyde* (Hatfield House fragment, Cecil Papers, Box S/1). Het doel van deze studie is de spellingspatronen van Scribe B nader te analyseren, zodat de oorzaak van de verschillen in spelling tussen Hengwrt and Ellesmere bepaald kan worden. Door te onderzoeken of de kopiist zijn versie getrouw kopieerde of niet, kan worden vastgesteld welke varianten in de tekst afkomstig zijn van de auteur en welke van de kopiist. Hierdoor moet het mogelijk zijn varianten te identificeren die typisch zijn voor de taal van Chaucer zelf.

Hoofdstuk 1 is de introductie tot het onderwerp van het proefschrift. Het bevat een overzicht van de studies naar de taal van Chaucer, inclusief de recente bevindingen van het 'Canterbury Tales Project'. De enigszins verschillende ideeën van Manly en Rickert (1940) en Robinson (1997) met betrekking tot het stemma van *The Canterbury Tales* worden besproken met als doel het begrip 'O manuscripts' uit te kunnen leggen. Deze O handschriften betreffen een gering aantal vijftiende-eeuwse handschriften, die waarschijnlijk directe kopieën van Chaucers originele tekst zijn. Daarop volgt een korte discussie over de vier taalvarianties die ten grondslag hebben gelegen aan het standaardengels, waaronder Chaucers 'London English', de taal waarin Hengwrt en Ellesmere beide zijn gesteld. Het hoofdstuk eindigt met de beschrijving van het doel en de methodologie van de studie.

Het eerste deel van Hoofdstuk 2 is gewijd aan Scribe B en de door hem gekopieerde handschriften. Om de spellingspatronen van Scribe B te beschrijven, wordt de classificatie van MacIntosh (1986) gehanteerd. MacIntosh onderscheidt drie types middeleeuwse kopiisten: de getrouwe kopiist, die zich strikt hield aan de originele tekst (Type A), de vertaler, die consequent de taal uit een voorbeeld omzet naar zijn eigen dialect (Type B) en de kopiist die het dialect van zijn bron mengt met zijn eigen dialect (Type C).

Het tweede deel van dit hoofdstuk bevat de beschrijvingen van de vijf handschriften die voor deze studie zijn geanalyseerd. Paleografische kenmerken (Doyle 1995:64–65) en data afkomstig van studies over de taal van deze teksten (Samuels 1988a:46) suggereren dat deze handschriften in de volgende chronologische volgorde werden gekopieerd: Hengwrt – het Hatfield fragment – Trinity – Ellesmere – het Kk fragment.

Hoofdstuk 3 en 4 behelzen een discussie over spellingvariatie die is gerelateerd aan de representatie van lange en korte klinkers in het hele corpus. De getoonde bevindingen in deze twee hoofdstukken hebben als doel te verifiëren of de spellingverschillen tussen Hengwrt en Ellesmere een afspiegeling zijn van de spellingspatronen van de kopiist die mogelijk beïnvloed waren door taalkundige veranderingen destijds, zoals eerder door Samuels (1988a) verkondigd. Samuels trok deze conclusie op basis van spellingveranderingen die optreden tussen Hengwrt en Ellesmere, zoals *thow* in *thou*; hij trok deze conclusie echter alleen op basis van een

analyse van de spelling in *The General Prologue*, *The Knight's Tale*, *The Miller's Tale*, *The Reeve's Tale* and *The Cook's Tale* in Hengwrt en Ellesmere, en niet op basis van de gehele tekst.

Hoofdstuk 3 gaat over variatie in de spelling van lange klinkers, zoals in Hengwrt *grene* vs. Ellesmere *greene*. De resultaten laten zien dat de spelling van lange klinkers niet consequent van één letter in Hengwrt in twee letters in Ellesmere verandert, uitgezonderd enkele woorden zoals Hengwrt *moder* en Ellesmere *mooder*. Het gebruik van één enkele letter voor een lange klinker past inderdaad beter in de spelling van Hengwrt, terwijl twee letters beter passen in Ellesmere, maar dit is in feite niet meer dan een afspiegeling van de tendens van de kopiist om de voorkeur te geven aan twee klinkers in Ellesmere in plaats van een radicale verandering in zijn spellingspatroon.

Woorden met een lange klinker die gespeld wordt met een dubbele letter zijn dus al wel in Hengwrt te vinden, maar hun aantal neemt in Ellesmere toe. Vaak worden deze woorden aangetroffen aan het eind van een regel, wat suggereert dat zij auteursvarianten waren, met als doel een goed rijm te creëren. Hieruit moet dan ook geconcludeerd worden dat Chaucers spelling eveneens gekenmerkt moet zijn geweest door variatie in spelling van woorden met lange klinkers. Het toegenomen gebruik van de dubbele letter in Ellesmere laat zien dat de kopiist probeerde de spelling in dit handschrift te normaliseren. Hij gaat daarin zelfs zo ver dat hij ook een dubbele letter toekende aan woorden als *shee* en *three*, wat zeer ongebruikelijk was.

Hoofdstuk 4 beschrijft woorden met een lange of korte *u*. Deze klinkers kunnen in het systeem van Chaucers spelling weergegeven worden door *-o-*, *-u-*, *-ow-*, *-ou-* en *-o(u)gh*. Volgens Samuels is de verandering van *-on* in *-oun* (zoals *reson* in *resoun*), van *-ow-* in *-ou-* (zoals *town* in *toun*) en van *-ogh* in *-ough* (zoals *thogh* in *though*) een systematisch doorgevoerde spellingverandering tussen Hengwrt *-ow-* en *-o-* in Ellesmere *-ou-*. De resultaten in dit hoofdstuk zijn ook hiermee in tegenspraak. Hoewel aan de spellingvormen met *-o-*, *-u-*, *-ow-* en *-ogh* in Hengwrt en aan die met *-ou-* en *-ough* in Ellesmere de voorkeur wordt gegeven, is er geen bewijs voor een systematische verandering. Daarnaast worden sommige van de *-ou-*varianten in Ellesmere tegenwoordig beschouwd als ouderwetse taalvormen (Hengwrt *town*, *down* vs. Ellesmere *toun*, *doun*). Het lijkt er daarom op dat de voorkeur voor *-ou-* in Ellesmere een poging is van de kopiist om de spelling in Ellesmere te normaliseren, onafhankelijk van de richting waarin de spelling zich uiteindelijk zou bewegen.

Hoofdstuk 5 bestudeert woorden waarvan de spelling tussen Hengwrt en Ellesmere kan verschillen om de volgende redenen: (1) één variant wordt meestal gebruikt in elk van beide handschriften naast één of meerdere varianten die minder vaak voorkomen (bijvoorbeeld default *chirche* vs. alternatief *cherche*), (2) twee of meer spellingvarianten komen willekeurig voor in beide handschriften (bijvoorbeeld *bifore* vs. *biform*), en (3) de woorden komen al dan niet opgesplitst voor (bijvoorbeeld *to day* vs. *today*). Over het algemeen lijkt het erop dat de kopiist minder spellingvariatie tolereerde in Ellesmere dan in Hengwrt. Daarnaast

selecteerde hij spellingvormen die in het begin van de vijftiende eeuw al tamelijk ouderwets waren. Dergelijke vormen die frequent in Ellesmere gebruikt worden, zoals *noght*, lijken met opzet gekozen te zijn om de taal van Chaucer weer te geven, zelfs als zij waarschijnlijk de minder frequente vormen waren in zijn spellingsysteem. Ook hieruit blijkt dat de kopiïst de spelling in Ellesmere probeert te normaliseren en dat het zijn bedoeling was in dit handschrift een spelling te gebruiken die zo veel mogelijk leek op het systeem dat door Chaucer zelf werd gehanteerd.

Hoofdstuk 6 behandelt de volgende onderwerpen die gerelateerd zijn aan spellingvariatie in Hengwrt en Ellesmere: (1) de Middelenegse equivalenten van de Oudengelse klinker *y*; (2) discrepanties in spelling in Hengwrt ten gevolge van variatie in Chaucers spelling; (3) de beperking die het rijm oplegt aan de spelling van woorden; (4) de relatie tussen vorm en functie van sommige spellingvarianten, en (5) het voorkomen van speciale karakters die zowel voor afkorting als ter decoratie gebruikt konden worden. Uit analyse van deze onderwerpen komt het beeld naar voren dat er verschillende criteria werden gehanteerd bij het kopiëren van de twee handschriften. In Hengwrt volgde de kopiïst de spelling van zijn voorbeeld vaker dan dat hij dat deed in Ellesmere, want zijn doel was daarbij Chaucers onafgemaakte '*Book of the Tales of Canterbury*' in één handschrift te kopiëren. Daarentegen probeerde hij in Ellesmere de spelling te normaliseren, aangezien dat handschrift tot een prestigieuze uitgave van *The Canterbury Tales* moest worden gemaakt. Dit hoofdstuk laat ook zien dat Scribe B gebruik maakte van bepaalde varianten in Hengwrt en Ellesmere die hij tegenkwam in zijn dagelijks werk als ambtelijk schijver. Het betreft hier varianten, zoals *muchel*, die waarschijnlijk niet gekozen zouden zijn door Chaucer, maar die wel tot diens repertoire behoorden. De aanwezigheid van deze varianten versterken het idee dat de kopiïst de taal van zijn voorbeeld niet systematisch vertaalde, maar dat hij vaak bewuste keuzes maakte met betrekking tot de te gebruiken spelling.

Hoofdstuk 7 bevat de conclusies van deze studie, en doet suggesties voor verder onderzoek. De eerste conclusie is dat de spelling in Hengwrt en Ellesmere noch volledig door de auteur, noch volledig door de kopiïst werd bepaald. Scribe B was een Type C kopiïst, die getrouw overschrijven met vertaling mengde. Toen hij Ellesmere kopieerde, deed hij echter iets bijzonders: hij benadrukte in dit handschrift een vorm van spelling die volgens hem Chaucers eigen praktijk weergaf. Spellingverschillen tussen Hengwrt en Ellesmere zijn dus niet het gevolg van een ontwikkeling in de schrijfgewoonte van de kopiïst tussen Hengwrt en Ellesmere, maar van een in essentie verschillende benadering van beide teksten. Hengwrt is een handschrift dat tot doel had alle afzonderlijk verhalen van *The Canterbury Tales* in één codex te verzamelen, terwijl Ellesmere een meer prestigieus project was. Hengwrt is daarom mogelijk een meer waarheidsgetrouw voorbeeld van Chaucers taalgebruik dan Ellesmere, want het is zeer waarschijnlijk dat variaties in spelling in dit handschrift min of meer direct afkomstig zijn van Chaucers oorspronkelijke versie. Ellesmere bevat ouderwetse spellingvormen, die vaak afkomstig zijn van de



auteur, maar die systematisch door de kopiist in dit handschrift zijn gebruikt om meer gezag aan deze tekst te verlenen.

Uit recent onderzoek blijkt dat mogelijk het kopieerproces van de Hengwrt, en misschien zelfs van een deel van Ellesmere, door Chaucer zelf is begeleid. Deze mogelijkheid zou inhouden dat Chaucer wellicht invloed kan hebben uitgeoefend op de door Scribe B gebruikte spelling, aangezien de Hengwrt gekenmerkt wordt door significante spellingverschillen. Nader onderzoek dient hier uitsluitsel over te geven.

De hier gepresenteerde analyse van de taal van Hengwrt en Ellesmere heeft ook aangetoond dat er varianten in voorkomen die afkomstig zijn uit een ander dialect dan dat van Chaucer of Scribe B en die geen specifieke functie in de tekst lijken te hebben, zoals bijvoorbeeld rijmwoorden. Zij zouden afkomstig kunnen zijn uit het voorbeeld van Hengwrt, wat zou inhouden dat Hengwrt geen kopie is van Chaucers originele werk, maar van een handschrift met varianten uit een westelijk dialect uit die tijd. Dit is echter een theorie die pas nader uitgewerkt kan worden als alle digitale versies van de verschillende verhalen uit *The Canterbury Tales* beschikbaar zijn.



## **Curriculum Vitae**

Luisella Caon was born in Turin, Italy, in 1963. In Italy she completed her nursing training in 1982 and, while working as a registered nurse, she attended and successfully completed a teacher training course in 1986. From 1993 to 1997 she studied English Language and Literature at the University of Leiden, and in 1997–98 she spent a year at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. After obtaining a cum laude Master's Degree from the University of Leiden in June 1999, she was a research assistant in the English Department of the same university for six months. In October 2000 she started work on the research project that has resulted in this dissertation, which she carried out as a PhD student of the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics.

From September 2005 she has been working as a junior lecturer in Philology at the English Department of the University of Leiden.

