



# The Language, Hands, and Interaction of the Two Scribes of the Egerton 2726 Chaucer Manuscript (En<sup>1</sup>)<sup>1</sup>

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British Library, Egerton MS 2726 (En<sup>1</sup>), containing *The Canterbury Tales*, (defective at the end, from I1084), is classified by Manly-Rickert as ‘the most constant member of the subgroup Dd, the earlier branch of Group a, and is therefore the best representative of the Dd subgroup’ (Manly and Rickert 1940 1:131).<sup>2</sup> En<sup>1</sup> has been used by the Variorum as one of the landmark MSS for those texts and parts of texts lacking in Dd (e.g., GenPro 1-252, 505-758; PsT; and several other folios interspersed throughout the text, including substantial portions of KnT.) Thus, although En<sup>1</sup> is a much later witness than those manuscripts routinely accorded landmark status, it does serve an authoritative function as a kind of ‘textual surrogate’ for Dd and for the a (or  $\alpha$ ) text. However, it is not the text of En<sup>1</sup> that I wish to focus on here, but rather the remarkable evidence the manuscript provides of the collaboration of two scribes, writing in very similar hands in a strikingly similar and marked form of East Anglian Middle English.

The primary purposes of this essay, then, are:

1. to identify the characteristics of hand and dialect that will allow us to distinguish the two scribes (and given the similarity of the two in both categories, this will require some close scrutiny of detailed features);
2. to examine the evidence from which Manly-Rickert inferred that persons other than the scribes proof-read the MS and that the apparent cessation of corrections ‘after f.119...seems to indicate a new policy—perhaps a new master of the shop’ (1:133);
3. to provide an alternative picture of the processes by which this manuscript was produced.

## Physical description

The text is written on parchment, sewn in thirty-three quires, all gatherings of eight except for Quire [7], which is a gathering of six.<sup>3</sup> The parchment has been trimmed, as evidenced by cropped flourishes on initials at the top of pages (e.g., 72<sup>v</sup>, 94<sup>v</sup>, 100<sup>r</sup>, 100<sup>v</sup>.) A page measures 35 x 19.5 cm; the written space is 22.5 x 13.5 cm. In the first part of the MS (through fol. 48), the work of Scribe 1, pages are ruled in reddish crayon, in single columns of 40 lines per page. There is no ruling visible in the work of Scribe 2, whose pages contain between 40-41 lines of text in single columns. The ink used for the text is generally a brownish-russet color, possibly made from an iron-base paste, though the second scribe sometimes uses a darker ink (possibly carbon-based),

especially for corrections.<sup>4</sup> As the Video Spectral Comparator at the British Library was effectively able to separate the two inks (i.e., one could be masked out under certain light), they are clearly different, though at times they may have been mixed.<sup>5</sup>

The collation of En<sup>1</sup> (excluding the modern fly leaves) is as follows :

QUIRES [1]-[6]<sup>8</sup>, fols. 1-48

QUIRE [7]<sup>6</sup>, fols. 49-54

QUIRE [8]<sup>8+8</sup> ([8]<sub>1+χ</sub><sup>8</sup>) (i.e., the original 8 parchment leaves plus the inserted Gamelyn), fols. 55-70

QUIRES [9]-[32]<sup>8</sup>, fols. 71-262

QUIRE [33]<sup>8+1</sup> (±[33]<sub>9</sub>) (i.e., the paper leaf containing the conclusion to the Parson's Tale and the 'Retraction,' replacing what must originally have been a tipped-in singleton parchment leaf), fols. 263-71

The insertion of the eighteenth-century Gamelyn manuscript has produced a somewhat confusing set of two foliations and one partial pagination. The oldest of these, which omits the folios containing Gamelyn, must be the one in blue pencil, which occurs between the other two numberings in the upper right-hand corner of each recto. A pagination in red ink is top-most and begins on fol. 7<sup>r</sup> with '13.' It is recorded on both recto and verso through p. 106 (where Gamelyn is inserted), following which only rectos are marked; after p. 123, on the recto following the Gamelyn insertion, it stops altogether. The bottom-most numbering is a black pencil foliation that includes Gamelyn. Thus the first recto following Gamelyn is foliated as '56' in blue and '64' in black pencil. My references, except where indicated, are to the most recent (pencil) foliation. Catchwords survive on the last verso of each quire starting with fol. 102.

The similarity of the two scribes' hands—especially in proximity—led Eleanor Hammond to note despairingly that '[t]he latter part of the MS is apparently in a different hand, but I cannot say where it changes' (1908 [1933], p. 174.) Scribe 1 copies folios 1-49<sup>r</sup>, GenPro through MilT (which ends on the eighth line of 49<sup>r</sup>), and also copies the first page (fol. 111<sup>r</sup>) of Quire [14],<sup>6</sup> with the exception of the first two lines (Figure 5.)<sup>7</sup> Scribe 2 takes over on fol. 49<sup>r</sup>, copying from RvPro through the end of the MS, with the exception of that portion of fol. 111<sup>r</sup> copied by Scribe 1. Conceivably, the scribes might have set out to divide up the exemplar for simultaneous copying, with the first 'chunk' originally consisting of GenPro through RvT, ending in the MS on 54<sup>v</sup>, the end of Quire [7], the anomalous gathering. When Scribe 1 finished MilT (at the beginning of Quire [7]), he simply handed over the job of filling out the quire to Scribe 2, who had probably already copied the section of text beginning with CkPro at the top of 55<sup>r</sup>. The calculations made to do this (similar to a printer's technique of 'casting off') were close enough that they were left with only one extra bifolium in Quire [7] (i.e., they ended up needing only six instead of eight folios for that gathering.) Conceivably, Scribe 2 copied the first two lines of fol. 111<sup>r</sup>, at the beginning of Quire [14], as a place marker, a cue to remind the first scribe where to take up copying again. Why the first

scribe copied only the remainder of the recto of this folio and then disappeared from the project is unclear.<sup>8</sup>

Both scribes employ a hybrid anglicana script that includes in its repertoire both secretary and anglicana forms for several graphs. Figure 1 reproduces the top portion of fol. 49<sup>r</sup>, where Scribe 1 finishes *MILT* and where Scribe 2 begins copying *RvPro*. A very slight difference in the size of the two hands can be detected here, with Scribe 2's hand being slightly the larger of the two. As there are many similarities between the two hands, especially in proximity, a more detailed description is required to distinguish their work more clearly.

The two scribes differ in the execution of minim strokes, for example in the letters *m* and *n*. Scribe 1's minims (e.g., Figure 3, l. 3: 'vn to' *du to*; 'Thomas' *thomas*) are a closer approximation of the *textura*, or 'display script,' style than Scribe 2's (thus a Bastard Anglicana); that is to say that the strokes are more meticulously formed than those of Scribe 2, though it will be necessary to examine another portion of Scribe 2's work for this to be apparent, as it would appear that Scribe 2 is imitating the hand of Scribe 1 at this point in his work. In *MkPro* (Figure 2, l. 3: 'now'; 'comth count'; 'remembrance' *remembraunce*), for example, the minims have virtually no 'feet' at all as compared to those of both scribes on fol. 49<sup>r</sup>, and of Scribe 1 elsewhere.

Another clear and consistent difference can be detected in the execution of the anglicana *a* graph. Scribe 1 forms two compartments, of about equal size, with the top lobe angling out on the left side and forming an 'overhang' above the bottom compartment (Figure 3, l. 1: 'gadred' *gadrud*), similar to the example Petti provides of the anglicana formata letter forms (Petti 1977 p. 14, fig. 12.) Scribe 2, in contrast, forms a single compartment, which is then divided in two with a cross-stroke, creating a top compartment that is smaller and narrower than the bottom one (Figure 2, l. 4: 'Have' *have*), after the fashion of the hybrid anglicana letter form (Petti, p. 15, fig. 14.) Both scribes also employ secretary single-compartment forms of *a*: Scribe 1 has two versions of the secretary *a*, one formed with three strokes, creating a very 'horned,' angular letter-form (Figure 1, l. 2: 'man' *man*), and a second, consisting of two strokes, which results in a much rounder duct (Figure 4, l. 1, 'art' *art*.) Scribe 2 also has two forms of anglicana *a*: a three-stroke, angular form (Figure 1, l. 2 of *RvPro*, 'and' *and*), and a more rounded, two-stroke form (Figure 1, l. 4 of *RvPro*, 'and' *and*.)

Both also have two basic forms of the letter *w*, again providing a poor basis for distinguishing one scribe from the other (Scribe 1, Figure 3, l. 2: 'we' *we*, and l. 3: 'wat' *wat*; Scribe 2, Figure 2, l. 3 of *MkT*: 'was' *was* and l. 1 of *MkT*: 'bewaile' *bewail*.) The second form consists of three strokes: a rounded loop on the left, which sometimes fails to connect to the base of the other part of the graph (for example, five lines up in Figure 2, 'Beware' *Beware*), followed by a v-shaped stroke that begins with a billowing flourish at the top, and completed by a stroke that forms the top lobe of the B-shaped element on the right. This latter stroke sometimes fails to connect with the body of the graph on the left. This description essentially accounts for Scribe 1's form as well, except that the proportions of the various elements are not identical to those in Scribe 2's graph.<sup>9</sup>

If thou tellest man good or false  
 For this vengeance so shalt thou be  
 That if so ever me so shalt be  
 Mayest thou for thy lord's sake  
 No thought of any man's life to gabble  
 Sey what so will of shall ye need tell  
 To this me say by hym for hallowed he  
 Next to the world of all that is  
 I have founden in myn Astrologye  
 As I have lokid in the more bright  
 That noon on Monday neyt at quarter night  
 Shall full awake and that wyse and wode  
 That half so greet was new noon's tide  
 That world he seide in his pan in house  
 Shall be drewe so hidous is the shouwe

Figure 4. En<sup>1</sup>, folio 44<sup>v</sup>

That child may don to fader's reverence  
 Up on Wyndesore this poynt gentyll  
 First of orelles this was set his pe  
 As he on hurtyng rode p'vention  
 And when it fell that he might hir uspe  
 He nought of Watton lokyng of solwe  
 His frend wiste on hir but in end wyse  
 Up on hir chere he hold hym of wyse  
 Comendyng in his hert his woman hede  
 And eke his due passyng out of sight  
 Of so yong age as well in chere as dede  
 For though the peple hade now greet uspyght  
 In due he considered full vyght

Figure 5. En<sup>1</sup>, folio 111<sup>r</sup>

Both scribes prefer the looped-ascender anglicana form of **d** (notable in both hands for the uprightness of the ascender), and both alternate between the anglicana 'double-diamond' **g** and the 'tailed' secretary form, though Scribe 1 prefers the anglicana form and Scribe 2 prefers the secretary form. In Figure 3, l. 1, Scribe 1's characteristic form of the two-compartment **g** can be seen in 'gadreð' **gadreð** and 'togidei' **to gidei**. Scribe 2's two-compartment **g** can be seen in Figure 1, the ninth line of RvPro: 'gruccè' **gruccè**. The economy of Scribe 2's duct creates a very rounded appearance, as contrasted with the more angular duct of Scribe 1's graph. There are no examples of Scribe 1's secretary 'tailed' **g** in the material reproduced here; it is used infrequently, and is very similar in appearance to the graph executed by Scribe 2 in Figure 1, l. 9 of RvPro: 'light' **light**. Another variation (also Scribe 2) occurs in the second-to-last line of fol. 49<sup>r</sup> (not included in the material reproduced in Figure 1), in 'gledes' **gledes**.<sup>10</sup>

Sigma-shaped **s** appears in both initial and final position in both scribes' work, and long **s** appears in initial and medial positions: Scribe 1, Figure 3, l. 3, 'seint' **seint**; l. 4, 'hons' **hons**; Scribe 2, Figure 1, l. 1 of RvPro, 'cas' **cas**; l. 3 of RvPro, 'seð' **seð**. Long **s** can be seen in Figure 3, l. 1, 'læt' **læt** (Scribe 1), and Figure 1, l. 2 of the RvPro, 'Absolon' **absolon** (Scribe 2.) The head stroke on this graph and on **f** provides a useful diagnostic for distinguishing the work of the two scribes. For example, in Figure 5, note the 'droopy' headstroke in l. 1, in 'faders' **faders** and l. 2, 'Græð' **Græð** (Scribe 2) as contrasted with the more horizontal headstroke (formed by a broken stroke at the join with the vertical stroke) in l. 3, 'oft' **oft**, l. 5, 'fe' **fe**, and 'aspye' **aspye** (Scribe 1.) Scribe 1's emphatic form (two long **f** graphs in combination) consists of one graph with a horizontal head stroke, ligatured with a second graph that has a more curved, droopy stroke: for example, the first word in Figure 1 **ff** and the first word of line 3 in Figure 5 **ffitt**. In contrast, Scribe 2's emphatic form consists of a pair of 'droopy-headed' graphs: **ffom** (last line of Figure 2.) Both also employ a B-shaped ('kidney') **s** in final position: Figure 3, l. 3, 'Thomas' **Thomas** (Scribe 1); Figure 2, l. 3 of Mkt, 'was' **was** (Scribe 2.) Note that Scribe 2's B-shaped **s** is made with one continuous stroke with a very rounded duct. In the 'was' of Figure 2, the first stroke begins as a ligature continuing from the cross-stroke of the two-compartment **a**.

Thorn ( ) and **th** are used interchangeably. Scribe 2 tends to add more flourish, especially to the tails of **y**'s and **h**'s. The overall impression created by Scribe 1's hand is of an upright orientation, while Scribe 2's often has a rightward slant, and thus appears more cursive, an impression that is reinforced by the formation of the minim strokes, after the fashion discussed earlier. Further, in part because of a tendency to execute the more modeled, textura-style graphs, Scribe 1's duct appears heavier, more angular and 'chunky,' in comparison to Scribe 2's more slender, round, and cursive appearance.

## Language

The two scribes of En<sup>1</sup> exhibit remarkably similar linguistic features. In the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (hereafter 'LALME,' McIntosh, Samuels et al. 1986), LP (= 'Linguistic Profile') 6150 was derived from En<sup>1</sup>. However, the 'tranche' used to construct the profile covered only the PdT extract transcribed by the Chaucer Society in their parallel-text specimens (Zupitza 1890.) The data-base is thus limited to the language of Scribe 2 and covers only a fraction of his work. In the LALME, the MS has been localized to what appears to be Colchester, in Essex.<sup>11</sup> My own analysis of both scribes' work throughout the MS reinforces the LALME findings. The LPs for the scribes can be found online at <http://ebbs.english.vt.edu/exper/mosser/catalogue/en1lps.html>.

Both scribes' main form for <SUCH>—'soch—is recorded in the LALME as occurring in the south, in the counties of Sussex, Hampshire, Dorchester, and Somerset. It also occurs as a minor form in Hertfordshire, in the East Midlands (in a text whose main form is 'swich) and, of course, is represented as occurring in Essex in the work of En<sup>1</sup> Scribe 2. This form, then, might suggest a southern provenance.

The two scribes display different primary spellings for <YET>. Scribe 1's preferred form, 'yit has a widespread distribution throughout the Midlands. Indeed, many of the dialect forms in En<sup>1</sup> enjoy such a wide distribution. However, Scribe 2's form, 'yitt,é is attested only in Middlesex, Northamptonshire, Surrey, and Essex (where Egerton Scribe 2 is the only witness for this form.) Neither of the two forms overlaps in its distribution with the scribes' forms for <SUCH>, except perhaps in Hampshire, where only the more common of the two forms, 'yit co-occurs.

Thus, on the basis of forms for <SUCH> and <YET>, there is no compelling evidence to localize the manuscript in Essex, or even in the East Midlands. But persuasive evidence for an Essex localization is provided by other forms in the scribes' repertoire.

Two spellings for <SINCE> compete for primary status in each scribe's work: the main form, 'seth' and a minor variant, 'sen' 'sen' occurs mainly as a northern form, dipping down into Norfolk and Suffolk. It also occurs in the Central Midlands and is represented as the main form in two LPs from Surrey. 'seth has a more restricted distribution, occurring mainly in the West Midlands and the southwest, and in Essex and south Suffolk. The distribution of 'yitté rules out the West Midlands as a possibility and both the forms for <YET>, as well as the distribution of other forms, serve to rule out the southwest. It should also be noted that there are no instances of **u** or **uy** as a reflex of Old English **y**, a common test for western dialects.<sup>12</sup> The evidence of these forms thus suggests the East Midlands, perhaps more specifically East Anglia.

The form that occurs in both scribes' work as a main form, with by far the severest restriction in distribution, is 'ecch' (for <EACH>.) The LALME records two occurrences as the main form for texts in northern Essex (in addition to En<sup>1</sup>), one occurrence in south Norfolk, and one occurrence in Devonshire. The only place where the majority of the forms discussed above co-occur, as well as

the numerous other very common forms in En<sup>1</sup>, is in northwest Essex, in the vicinity of Colchester (see MAP; Plate II in the front pages.)

Several other forms should also be mentioned. The form *'werlǫ* occurs in both scribes' work, as a rare variant in the work of Scribe 2, and as a main form for Scribe 1, occurring 10 times as compared to 11 occurrences of *'world(1)ʝ*. The strongholds for *'werlǫ* are southern Essex, in the south, and an area in the north, running from Norfolk up the east coast through Lincolnshire, and northward. Colchester is about midway between the borders of these two areas.

Scribe 2 also has the unusual spellings for <NOWHERE> and <ANYWHERE> of *'nougher*, *'noughere*, and *'ougher*. Also in the work of Scribe 2 a shift can be detected, beginning with the B<sup>2</sup> Fragment (fol. 171<sup>v</sup>) in the scribe's preferred spellings for <AGAIN(ST)>. Prior to that section, the form *'ageyn* is used predominantly for both <AGAIN> and <AGAINST>. Subsequently, the forms *'ayein* (<AGAIN>) and *'ayeinst* (<AGAINST>) predominate, especially in PsT. The LALME records the form *'ayeinston* in the profiles of this scribe and in LPs from Hertfordshire (LP 6540) and Rutland (LP 554.) *'Ayein* is recorded in the profile for another Essex scribe (LP 6120), and in LPs from Hertfordshire, Kent, London, Shropshire, Suffolk, and Worcestershire. (The scribe of Cambridge Dd.4.24—the MS above En<sup>1</sup> in the A or a family—prefers the form *'a-geyn* for both words.) A possible explanation for the shift is that the scribe copied a similar form fairly faithfully from his exemplar through PdT, and then began to activate his own favored forms. In general, however, these two scribes appear routinely to 'translate' texts into their own dialect in the course of copying. A better explanation is that the set of exemplars used to produce En<sup>1</sup> derived from different sources, reflecting different spelling systems. Manly-Rickert's collations determined that En<sup>1</sup> and Lincoln Cathedral Library MS 110 (Ln) are affiliated in the texts for the B<sup>2</sup> Fragment and PsT (Manly-Rickert 1:132.) It may be that Ln shares only these texts with En<sup>1</sup> because they consisted of booklets, or at least gatherings, that were combined with other exemplars to produce the a exemplar and then, sometime subsequently, were dispersed. If this was the case, and if those exemplars shared with Ln contained the *'ayein*(st) spellings, then the shift in preferences by Scribe 2 might be more readily explained.

There is, unfortunately, nothing in the surviving evidence of provenance to corroborate the localization suggested by the dialect evidence. Manly-Rickert's account of this evidence (1:134-5), and the narrative they construct to explain it, goes about as far as seems likely to be plausible (perhaps too far in suggesting the MS might actually have been owned by the Cobhams.) The earliest marks of ownership are from the fifteenth century: an owner or reader practicing a salutation to 'my lord Cobham' (fol. 158<sup>v</sup>) suggests an association with the powerful Cobham family of East Chalk, Cowling (or Cooling) Castle, and other locations in northwestern Kent. All of the subsequent marks of ownership also suggest a Kentish provenance.

## Evidence of supervision and scribal interaction

Manly-Rickert observe that

there are numerous corrections by several persons and in different inks, some by the scribe over erasures, others by a contemporary, also over erasures. There are some insertions above the line by a slightly later hand, and a few underdottings of words. (1:131)

They also assert that after fol. 119 ‘the corrections almost cease’ (1:133.) There are, however, a number of corrections after this point, e.g. fols. 136<sup>v</sup>, 4 up, 140<sup>v</sup>, l. 5, 145<sup>v</sup>, 9 up, 168<sup>v</sup>, 18 up, and 172<sup>v</sup>, 16 up. Those corrections that occur in the portion of the MS copied by Scribe 1, when they are not made by him, are made by Scribe 2 in the role of proof-reader. If we look at two places where whole lines have been inserted in the margins to correct earlier omissions—at folios 111<sup>r</sup> (Figure 3), the very end of GenPro, and 44<sup>v</sup> (Figure 4), in MilT—we find the proof of this. In the first example, we can see the spelling of <IF> as ‘yƿ ’, the spelling preferred by both scribes, and well-attested in northern Essex. Both scribes place a dot over their y’s, though Scribe 2 is far more consistent in this regard.<sup>13</sup> An example of ‘yƿ in Scribe 1’s hand can be seen in the line directly above the inserted line. In Figure 1 numerous examples of Scribe 2’s y can be seen; it is formed in just the same way as the y in the correction (e.g., the twelfth line of RvPro, the first word, ‘yƿ ’.) As detailed previously, in the f as executed by Scribe 1’s hand, the headstroke rarely curls downward, certainly not in the exaggerated fashion of Scribe 2’s form, but is more typically horizontal. Scribe 2’s f always has a downward-curling headstroke (e.g. Figure 1, l. 1 of RvPro, ‘’.) The remaining characteristics of the corrector’s hand also match those of Scribe 2; the flourished v is commonly found on the top line of a page or in an incipit or explicit; the w is unusual for Scribe 2, but similar forms can be found, especially line-initially (e.g., fol. 97<sup>v</sup>, 6 up, ‘whan’ [not pictured].) Paleographically then, the corrector can be identified tentatively as Scribe 2.

Additional support for this assertion appears on fol. 44<sup>v</sup> (Figure 4.) In addition to the handwriting correspondences, in this correction we have the very unusual spelling ‘’ for Chaucer’s <QUOD> (‘’ is Scribe 2’s usual form) to help us make the identification certain: ‘+  oo is sely man I am no labbe’ (Four lines below the insertion point we can see Scribe 1, the main scribe at this point, writing the more usual brevigraph for the word, ‘’.) In Figure 1, l. 10 of MilPro, the form ‘’ can also be seen, again in the hand of Scribe 2.) Based on this identification, we can say that Scribe 2 acted as a proof-reader for Scribe 1 and corrected the first 49 folios of the MS in addition to his own work as copyist in the remainder of the MS. Thus, for example, where Manly-Rickert and the Variorum (citing Manly-Rickert) refer to a correcting hand other than that of Scribe 2 (e.g., GenPro 338; Andrew and Ransom 1993, p. 73), I hold that it is the hand of Scribe 2.

While one could argue, especially considering the similarity of the two scribes’ hands in the MS, that the handwriting evidence does not compel identification of the corrector with Scribe 2, it would be a very great

coincidence indeed if both the handwriting and the language were identical, even down to the most idiosyncratic of features.

Scribe 2 was evidently a confident worker, a confidence that finds expression in the form of elaborately flourished initials (especially fols. 113-119) and display scripts; he is especially fond of tall, elaborately forked ascenders on the first line of a page. On occasion, these flourishes take the form of a grotesque, as, for example, on fol. 198<sup>v</sup>, in the catchword (Figure 2.) Note that beside the catchword, the mark of a proof-reader, or 'examinatur,' has been placed: 'ex' .<sup>15</sup> The mark appears on the last verso of all but two of Quires [12]-[32] (absent in Quires [25] and [29].)<sup>16</sup> If we compare the **x** in the mark to Scribe 2's **x** in the last line of MkPro, in the word 'excused ~~excused~~' (Figure 2, l. 4) we can see that they are formed quite differently: by one continuous stroke in the proof-reader's mark and by two separate strokes in Scribe 2's bookhand. It is possible, however, that the form for the proof-reader's **x** is that of Scribe 2's informal hand, where he might have used less effort: i.e., one stroke instead of two. The circular **e** graph of the proof-reader's mark does occur infrequently in Scribe 2's bookhand. Scribe 2 also has a graph for **x** similar to that used in the proofreader's mark, which can be seen on fol. 114<sup>v</sup>, l. 12, in 'execucon' (not pictured), and elsewhere. Thus, even though it is not his 'usual' form, it is in his repertoire, and the economy of both the circular **e** and single-stroke **x** makes those likely forms to be activated for more informal contexts.

On fol. 44<sup>v</sup> (Figure 4), we can see that Scribe 1 does form his **x** in the same fashion as in the proof-reader's mark, with a single stroke, in the word 'next' , five lines up from the bottom, but there is no evidence that Scribe 1 corrected Scribe 2's work in the way that Scribe 2 proofed the work of Scribe 1. Indeed, it may be that Scribe 2 was the senior member of the team and acted as Scribe 1's supervisor. Conceivably, the reason for the unusual way that fol. 111 is executed may be that Scribe 2, having by then proof-read Scribe 1's work at the beginning of the MS, was dissatisfied and dismissed his partner (or employee?) from the project.

## Date

Manly-Rickert assign the production of En<sup>1</sup> to c. 1430-50 (1:130.) They offer no justification for this dating, but the cursiveness of the hands certainly suggests a date later than that for Cambridge Dd.4.24. There are some similarities between the hands in En<sup>1</sup> and the hand of Thomas Froddesham (Jenkinson 1927 (1969), pl. IV [ii]), dated 1440, though one clear difference is that the En<sup>1</sup> scribes have a marked preference for short **r** (e.g., Figure 3, l. 1: 'gadre<sup>d</sup>' , 'to gide to gide<sup>r</sup>.) Another analogue, in Latin, is the hand of John Norfolk (Harley 3742, 'De moribus et actis primorum Normannie ducum,' 1445, Oxford [Parkes 1969, 61].) This hand shares a similarity of minim formation and the short **r** with the En<sup>1</sup> hands. Neither of these examples, however, is remarkably close to those of the En<sup>1</sup> scribes. A marginally closer match is the hand of Bodleian MS Rawlinson B.408 (a

'register of charters, &c., of the Benedictine nunnery of Godstow, near Oxford'), dated by Wright as 'probably between A.D. 1450 and A.D. 1460' (Wright 1960, p. 22.) A much earlier hand, writing a Latin text at Oxford in 1429, is reproduced in Parkes (1969, [171].) Notable is the upright character of the looped **d**, the similarity of the short **r** form, final B-shaped **s**, and the cursive features throughout. There is no internal evidence to help out here, so perhaps the best we can do is date the MS as s. XV<sup>2/4</sup>.

## Conclusions

Egerton 2726 was produced by two scribes, at least one of whom—Scribe 2—acted as a proof-reader, correcting his fellow's work in the first part of the MS. The proof-reader's mark—'ex'—occurs often. At the outset of production, the two seem to have divided up the exemplar for copying, with the first block of text, copied by Scribe 1, consisting of GenPro-MiLT (six quires.) The second block, copied by Scribe 2, made up seven quires (RvPro-E230.) The plan—if such it was—seems to have fallen apart at this point, however, for Scribe 2 finishes off the MS, excepting that portion of fol. 111<sup>r</sup> copied by Scribe 1 at the beginning of Quire [14].

The language of both scribes can be localized to the vicinity of Colchester, in Essex. This does not agree with the evidence of early ownership, which places the MS in NW Kent in the mid-sixteenth century, and perhaps by the late fifteenth century. Nevertheless, the distance between Colchester and northern Kent is not very great, and there is nothing to say that the scribes actually produced the MS in Essex.

The MS is considerably later than Cambridge Dd.4.24, perhaps by as much as 20-30 years, having most probably been produced in the mid-to-late second quarter of the fifteenth century.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I have discussed the MS and its localization in Essex in an unpublished paper: 'The Language, Hands, and Interaction of the Two Scribes of the Egerton 2726 Chaucer Manuscript (En<sup>1</sup>),' presented at a meeting of the Southeastern Medieval Association on September 30, 1988. Portions of this essay have appeared previously as part of the description of En<sup>1</sup> on the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* on CD-ROM, Mosser 1996.

<sup>2</sup> The text missing from the end of the volume has been supplied on a tipped-in, eighteenth-century leaf, presumably added at the same time as the present red morocco and gilt-tooled binding. At the same time, an eighteenth-century copy of Gamelyn, with the notation 'The Cokes | Tale as it | is in MS. | Laud K50' (=Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 600), was inserted into Quire [8], between what were fols. 55-56 in CkPro. See Hammond 1908, pp. 174: 'According to Furnivall, *Athenaeum* 1868 II : 248, this Gamelyn is copied from 'Laud K 50,' i.e., from Laud 600.'

<sup>3</sup> Manly-Rickert: 'The anomalous 6 (Q 7) suggests that the original intention of Scribe 1, who stops on f.49, may have been to omit Ck P and T as fragmentary' (1:130.) An alternative analysis is given in this essay.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Manly-Rickert: 'Nearly black, except where worn and rubbed' (1:131.)

<sup>5</sup> On April 3, 1990, Tony Parker, of the Conservation Department of the British Library, and I examined En<sup>1</sup> with the Video Spectral Comparator, which employs a range of lights and filters and can be particularly helpful in deciphering palimpsests. In this instance, most of the evidence provided was in the form of negative results. In Figure 1, for example, there is a passage in the middle of the page (the bottom of the portion reproduced here) that has been erased and rewritten in darker ink; the VSC revealed nothing at all of the original text, though some parts of letter-forms are visible even to the naked eye. The scribes were very diligent in making their erasures; none of those examined could be recovered. On the VSC see Barker 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Manly-Rickert (1:131) say Quire 15, but they must count the inserted Gamelyn as constituting Quire [8] and therefore construe fols. 64-70 as Quire [9]. Instead, I would argue, fols. 56-63 are inserted into Quire [8], originally foliated as 55-62, between the original first and second folios.

<sup>7</sup> Manly-Rickert suggest that Scribe 2 also copied the third line, of fol. 111<sup>r</sup> (1:131), and Scribe 1 earlier revised that to only the first word of line 3 (Mosser 1996.) I now believe only the first two lines of fol. 111<sup>r</sup> are in the hand of Scribe 2.

<sup>8</sup> I am grateful to Ralph Hanna for suggesting some elements of this analysis (private communication.)

<sup>9</sup> One of the earliest examples of this type of **w** is found in the hand of 'Scribe A' in Trinity College, Cambridge MS R.3.2 (Doyle and Parkes 1978, pp. 168-70; pl. 44; Robinson 1988, vol. 1, p. 96; vol. 2, pl. 198b.)

<sup>10</sup> The same morphology can be seen in the **g** of '¶ge' in the incipit to RvPro (Figure 1.) The morphology and duct of the **s** in 'Thus' (see next paragraph) and other features lead me to conclude that Scribe 1 wrote 'Thus endeth the Millers tale and begynne~~th~~ in the explicit and that Scribe 2 wrote the incipit, ' e ¶ge of e Reve' but I do admit to some uncertainty about this.

<sup>11</sup> I am grateful to Jeremy J. Smith for outlining the process by which the LALME arrived at the Colchester location in a conversation we had in 1988. The method, known as the 'fit technique,' is described in the LALME (1:10-12) and in Benskin and Laing 1981, pp. 83-85; the methodology is demonstrated in Benskin 1991.

<sup>12</sup> Instead we find **e** for OE **y** in forms such as 'wers' (<WORSE>) and 'werk' (<WORK>.) The **u** for **y** test is a commonly used criterion for southern and West Midland dialects: Manly and Rickert 1:546; Bennet and Smithers 1974, p. 342, item 2; Kerby-Miller 1938 (citing Menner 1922, p. 5.)

<sup>13</sup> Manly-Rickert state that Scribe 1 does not 'dot y's' (1:134); but see, e.g. Figure 3, l. 10, 'wey.'

<sup>14</sup> In the MED (Kurath and Kuhn 1954-), under the entries for 'quethen (verb), the form 'coth(e) is listed as 'chiefly N[orth] & W[est] M[idlands]'; 'co e,' for instance, occurs in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* at l. 776. The spelling coth appears in two other MSS of *The Canterbury Tales*, Bo<sup>1</sup> and Ph<sup>2</sup>. While these

MSS are very closely related to each other (either by the same scribe or, as is the case with En<sup>1</sup>, two scribes with very similar language and hands), they have no clear textual relationship to En<sup>1</sup>. The language and of both Bo<sup>1</sup> and Ph<sup>2</sup> is East Anglian, and the provenance of Bo<sup>1</sup> is associated with the Paston family of Norfolk. Despite the unhelpful nature of this form for the purposes of localization, it would seem that this is one of those idiosyncratic usages that would help to identify En<sup>1</sup> Scribe 2 if any of his other work is extant. It is precisely the kind of item that eluded the net of the LALME researchers, because the usage of ‘quod’ or its brevigraph ‘qd’ is virtually invariant and universal, and the LALME questionnaire was predicated on items for which variant usages are common. In vol. 1, the editors observe that ‘there are limits which must for operational reasons be imposed on the number of items to be investigated. Some means of selection is therefore necessary, and it is determined by two factors: (a) the degree to which items display regional variation; and (b) the probability that these items will turn up sufficiently often and in all or most classes of text’ (1:7.)

<sup>15</sup> This same mark occurs in the Cardigan MS (HRC pre-1700 MS 143.) Manly-Rickert suggest the expansion ‘examinavi, examinatur?’ (1:73; see Mosser 1986.) See Petti 1977, p. 24, for the abbreviation and its expansion; see Jenkinson 1927 (1969), Plate XLivii for another example of this mark and his ‘Alphabet I’ (Bastard Hand, c. 1432.) Cf. Edwards and Pearsall 1989, p. 261, who caution against regarding this as evidence of ‘workshop supervisors’ (the conclusion of Manly-Rickert), and suggest instead that the proof-reading and ‘ex’ notation in both Cardigan and En<sup>1</sup> ‘may as well be the work of the stationer.’

<sup>16</sup> On 230<sup>v</sup> the mark appears very faintly in the gutter (Manly-Rickert record the mark as missing here.) I could find no mark on 238<sup>v</sup>—even using the Video Spectral Comparator—where Manly-Rickert apparently were able to do so (1:133.) Possibly they confused the older and newer foliations for these two instances (i.e., 230 in the old foliation=238 in the newer one); their references are otherwise consistently to the newer foliation.

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