

Hoccleve's Hengwrt, Hoccleve's Holographs

Thomas Hoccleve: clerk of the Privy Seal, poet, and scribe. For a workaday figure in an era not celebrated for its great literature, that is a respectable list of identities. But it hardly makes him central to English literary history. He often complained about ill treatment in the office. The poems in which he did so prompt such characterizations as the “naïve outpourings of his own hopes and fears ... presented to us in all their crude immediacy” and conclusions as that “the Chaucerian music, which he tried to imitate, eluded him completely.”¹ Even the idiosyncratic script in which he recorded that poetry set him apart from the attractive Anglicana hands of Ellesmere, Harley 3943, Harley 7334, and the rest. Through ca. 1977 this was the framework for any comparison of Hoccleve with the cosmopolitan London poets of the previous generation and the scribes of his own day. The following year, though, his fortunes suddenly shifted. A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, in what has been called “The Essay That Started a Field,” identified Hoccleve as Scribe E on the Trinity R.3.2 copy of the *Confessio Amantis*.² Hoccleve, it was now apparent, copied not just Hoccleve but also Gower, and did so alongside the most prominent scribes of his day and age, Scribes B, who produced Hengwrt and Ellesmere, and D, who had recorded the works of Chaucer, Langland, Trevisa, and especially Gower.

In the following year Doyle and Parkes revealed an even closer link between Thomas Hoccleve and Chaucer himself, identifying him as the most likely candidate as Hand F of the Hengwrt *Canterbury Tales*, who filled in some blank lines and half-lines on folios 83v, 138v, and 150r.³ An index to the implications of this “far-reaching” discovery is David Lawton’s suggestion, in 1985, that Hoccleve, not Chaucer, might have composed the links surrounding the *Merchant’s* and *Squire’s Tales*.⁴ Within a decade Derek Pearsall was advocating “the view that Hoccleve had something to do with preparing the *Canterbury Tales* for publication,” drawing connections between the similarities of annotation and layout in Ellesmere and certain manuscripts of Hoccleve’s *Regiment of Princes*.⁵ And Hoccleve’s importance

to our sense of literary production ca. 1400–20, as poet, scribe, and supervisor, has only gathered momentum. “Thomas Hoccleve has undergone a lot of rehabilitation lately,” quipped Sarah Tolmie in 2007,⁶ and that was before the explosion of his scribal corpus by over 1000 items in the National Archives and a holograph of the *Regiment*; before his nomination as supervisor not just of El but also of both Tr and Hg; and before the proposal that he took dictation direct from Chaucer and worked closely with Gower.⁷

For their attributions, Doyle and Parkes simply matched the hand of the Hoccleve holographs with those of the Trinity Gower's Scribe E and Hengwrt's Hand F. By the time of Simon Horobin's intervention, however, whereby Hoccleve was also supervisor of Hg and thus “Chaucer's first editor,” the focus had shifted to the questions of whether items that Doyle and Parkes had explicitly excluded from his scribal corpus were nevertheless his, and what the implications of these new attributions were. This shift is crucial, and not just to the question of Hoccleve's role in the production and dissemination of the *Confessio Amantis* and *Canterbury Tales* in the early fifteenth century, major though those topics certainly are. For if Hoccleve's connections with the copying of Chaucer's, Gower's, and his own poetry alone constituted a challenge to the thesis that the Guildhall was the cradle of Middle English literature, his prolific and wide-ranging scribal activity balanced that challenge by giving rise to the methodology that enabled both the argument of *Scribes and the City* and the idea that he was Chaucer's first editor. Whether the topic is the production of the *Canterbury Tales* ca. 1400 or the ways in which our discipline is changing shape, Thomas Hoccleve – his hand, his work in the Privy Seal, and his poetry – now needs to take center stage.

Thomas Hoccleve, Scribe

Doyle and Parkes's might have been the essay that started a field but it was H. C. Schulz's 1938 essay “Thomas Hoccleve, Scribe” that set out the basics of Middle English scribal attribution, as presented in two tight sentences: “Four letters, **A**, **g**, **w**, and **y**, have been selected as one of the tests for determining Hoccleve's handwriting. Individually, no one of these four can be said to be unique with Hoccleve, but as a group (and with identical slope, size, shading, position of pen, and degree of curvature) they have not been found to occur in any of the numerous Middle English hands so far examined.”⁸ Doyle describes these forms efficiently in the Early English Text Society's facsimile of the Hoccleve holographs:

an expansive **A** with a sweeping deep downwards stroke turning upwards counter-clockwise across itself as it turns clockwise either to a flattened head with an angular junction on the right with a straight broken downstroke or else continuing with a simple curve, in each with a more or less strongly seriffed foot; a flat-topped **g** with variant tails, turning either tightly or in a wide sweep on the left to its head or else turning back more or less sharply to the right; a round or oval **w** made usually with only two strokes, the second like a 2 within the circle; and **y** with its tail turning right up alongside or often back through the head as a hair stroke to make a dot or tick above.⁹

To these distinctive Hocclevean forms Doyle and Parkes add a fifth, “the letter **h** in which the stem, shoulder and limb drop below the level of the other letters.”¹⁰ The six manuscripts now universally taken to include Hoccleve’s hand feature this group of forms. All have very similar slope, size, shading, position of pen, and degree of curvature, that is, aspect and duct:¹¹

Hengwrt, fols. 83v line 24 from fourth term, 138v lines 25b–26, and 150r line 30: Hand F

The Trinity Gower, fols. 82r–84r (first column): Scribe E

Durham University Library MS Cosin v.111.9: Hoccleve’s poetry

San Marino, Huntington Library MS Hm 111: Hoccleve’s poetry

San Marino, Huntington Library MS Hm 744: Hoccleve’s poetry

London, British Library Additional MS 24062: Hoccleve’s formulary (majority of folios)

His contribution to the Trinity Gower, as Doyle and Parkes remark, is “[t]he most formal and constrained example of his handwriting in English,” with “a tighter, more upright and deliberate manner,” fewer ligatures, and greater angularity of the letters.¹² The distinctive combination of letter forms is here (Figure 18): “**A**gein” (1), “**A**nd” (2, 4), “**g**oddes” (2), “**g**ret” (7), “**m**any” (3), “**m**y **w**eye” (final line).

Linne Mooney’s 2011 essay “A Holograph Copy of Thomas Hoccleve’s *Regiment of Princes*” both builds on and challenges the Schulz/Doyle-Parkes approach by adding one more manuscript to the list of Hoccleve’s holographs: BL MS Royal 17 D.xviii (Figure 19). This is a major announcement, from the perspectives of both Hoccleve studies, since the accepted holographs all contain his “minor” poetry, while the *Regiment* is undoubtedly “major,” and manuscript studies, given her substantially different methodology from that established by Schulz. The main burden of Mooney’s essay is to explain why “the hand of this manuscript differs somewhat in general aspect from that of the accepted Hoccleve holographs,”

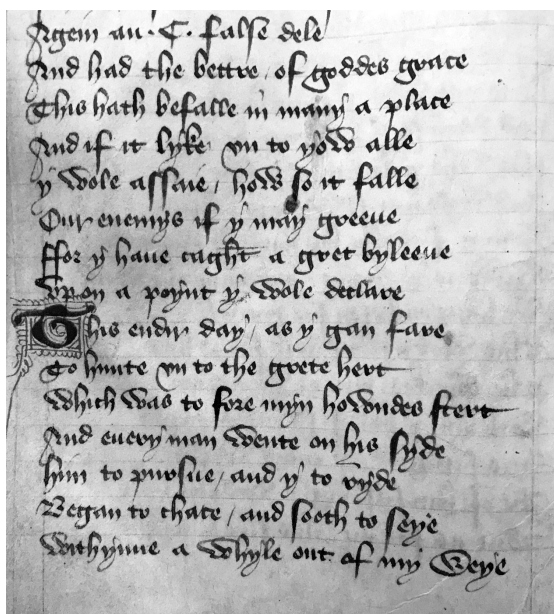


Figure 18 The Trinity Gower (Trinity R.3.2), hand of Scribe E, Thomas Hoccleve. Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.2, fol. 83v, left column bottom. By kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.

which she identifies as the most important of her reasons for its neglect by critics.¹³ Mooney explains the difference in aspect by treating it as evidence for the change of his hand over time rather than against her identification in the first place. It shows, she claims, that Hoccleve employed “a script somewhere between that of the Trinity College MS R.3.2 of Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*,” which demonstrates the neater, smaller script he used “in his younger days,” “and the later holographs.”¹⁴

One might expect, then, to find that “all letter forms of the hand of Royal MS 17 D.xviii match exactly Hoccleve’s idiosyncratic letter forms,” as Mooney asserts, but in fact “the forms of **w** and **g**” – two of the four that enabled Schulz’s attribution in the first place – are, together with final **-e** and thorn, among the “most striking differences of letter forms from the later holographs.”¹⁵ Instead of the characteristic round **w** whose second stroke looks like a 2 within the circle, the Royal MS’s 5400-plus lines feature, as Daniel Wakelin says, a “lotus-flower **w** with a pointed tapering bottom and flattened loops above” that is “unlike Hoccleve’s” (“**swiche**” Fig. 19 line 1, “**war**” line 9),¹⁶ and the same goes for the flat-topped **g** found

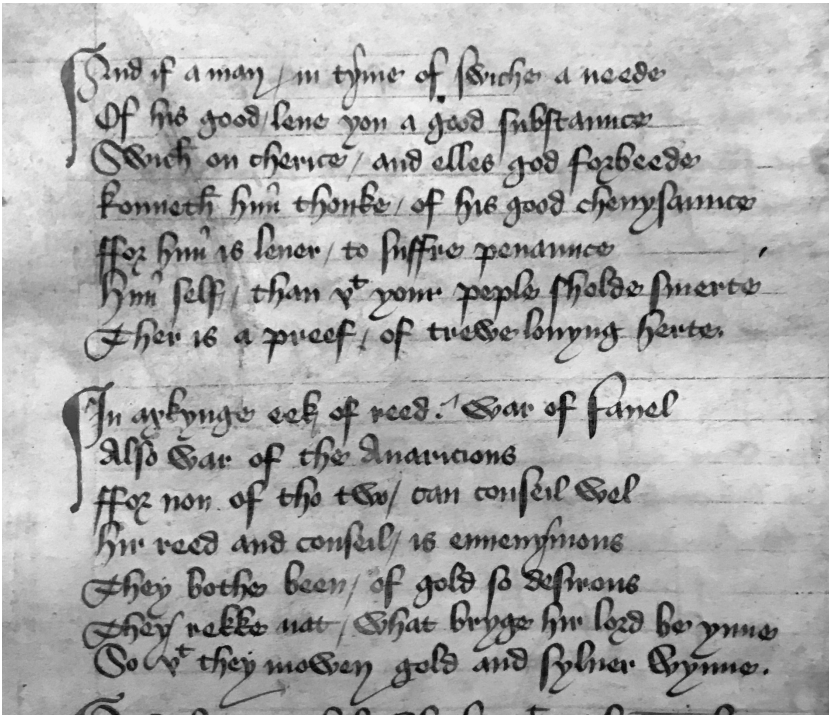


Figure 19 *Regiment of Princes* (Royal 17 D.xviii), identified by Linne Mooney as Hoccleve holograph.

© The British Library Board, Royal MS 17 D.xviii, fol. 90r, top half.

everywhere else, instead of which Royal features only a form with angular top (“good” 2 [x 2], 4). These differences alone call into question the proposal that Royal 17 D.xviii is a holograph. To account for them Mooney says that “such forms [of **w**] with rounded bases” as here “can be found in his copying in the Trinity Gower” and that “this ‘g’ form with a pointed head” appears as well “in Hoccleve’s stint in Trinity R.3.2.”¹⁷ Yet his main **w** in the Trinity Gower, as seen in line 4 of Figure 18, is not the lotus one but rather the “more complex three-stroke bipartite **w** with angular feet ... employed chiefly in initial positions and for greater formality,”¹⁸ and she exemplifies the **g** in question with forms whose lower lobes, unlike Royal’s, do not meet the stalk. Other features distinctive to this manuscript include “the curling tail on the last mimim of word-final **m** or **n**” (“man” 1; “mowen” 14) and “the broken strokes in the crossbar and tongue of **e**” (“swiche” 1), as noted by Wakelin.¹⁹ I am not convinced that the

similarities between the Royal manuscript and the authenticated Hoccleve texts are close enough to compensate for these substantial differences in aspect and letter forms.

Mooney's discussion of Trinity B.15.17 and Hg, too, had acknowledged a "difference ... in the aspect of the hands."²⁰ But that essay, unlike "A Holograph Copy," did not confront head-on the different letter forms of the respective manuscripts, instead presenting them as accepted variants by the same scribe on the assumption that the essay had established the attribution on other grounds. The methodology of the Hoccleve piece, whereby the identification can rest on agreement of the new item's dominant forms and the accepted corpus's minority forms, is that employed by Mooney and Stubbs in the Marchaunt, Pynkhurst, and Carpenter attributions a few years later. If this later approach strikes a rather different chord from that of "Chaucer's Scribe," though, the claim that the evidence behind her discovery of the holograph of the *Regiment* is "too weighty for any other conclusion" fits in well with the confident manner with which Mooney tends to present her new identifications,²¹ culminating in the conceit that "the lowly Royal 17 D.XVIII is somewhat similar to the Hengwrt manuscript of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, misdated and ignored until Tatlock pointed out that it was written by the same scribe as the grander Ellesmere manuscript, and, predating it, might offer as good a text or better of Chaucer's greatest work."²²

"As good a text or better": at the heart of the quest for Middle English scribal identities is the study of imaginative and historical literature, which comes to us not only in particular handwriting, the province of paleographic analysis, but also in a variety of dialects and orthographies. The attribution of Trinity B.15.17 to the Hg-El scribe offered readers of Chapter 3 an occasion for important thinking about dialect, orthography, and grammar; the attempt to broaden the corpus of Hoccleve holographs again shines a light on such issues, as well as on the topic of textual affiliations, which are essential to determining the character of manuscript copies of poetry. Here, more than in claims of scribal supervision or explanations of why his signature **g** and **w** forms are absent from a supposed holograph, is where close attention to the case of Thomas Hoccleve matters most for the study of scribes and the City. Precisely because it concerns *poetry*, the proposal that Royal 17 D.XVIII is a holograph exposes the deeper, structural modes of history in which such paleographical attributions are inextricably enmeshed. The next few sections point to conclusions regarding the non-paleographical modes of evidence manifested in Royal 17 D.XVIII alternative to the conclusion Mooney identifies as the inevitable one.

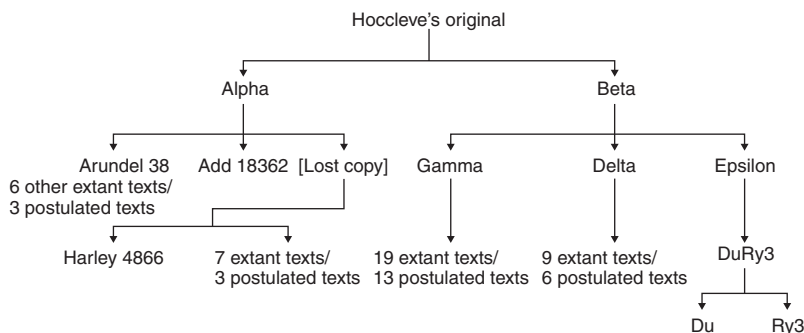


Figure 20 Précis of stemma of *Regiment of Princes* manuscripts, established by Marcia Smith Marzec.

The Textual Affiliations of Royal 17 D.XVIII (Ry3)

In Mooney's account Royal 17 D.XVIII is neither the putative authorial original of the *Regiment of Princes* nor merely an unexceptional copy far down the stemma that Hoccleve happened to copy. It is instead highlighted as the presentation copy for John of Lancaster, later duke of Bedford, a text that "represents a revised version of the poem written in 1412–13, in which the author had made alterations reflecting the changed circumstances of himself, of his dedicatee, Henry of Derby, and of the country a year or two after the completion and first dissemination of the poem."²³ Marcia Smith Marzec had characterized Ry3, the customary sigil for this manuscript's text, as representing "a distinct and quite early stage in the transmission of the *Regiment* texts";²⁴ Mooney pushes this characterization still further by rejecting Marzec's own conclusion that Ry3 is genetic partner with Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Dugdale 45 (Du), seeing it instead as the latter's ancestor. She thus positions Ry3 as Hoccleve's revision of the original, it and Du in its wake attesting "a separate branch of the stemma."²⁵ Figure 20 is a précis of Marzec's stemma, with Du and Ry3 on the far right, making up the epsilon family.²⁶

On the premise that she has established this manuscript's hand as Hoccleve's, and its text as set apart from all others (save Du), Mooney cites "significant changes to the text that are distinct from all other extant copies of the *Regiment*." Where they have it that Hoccleve worked at the Privy Seal "twenti yeer / And foure" and "three and twenti yeer and more," in the revision as represented by Ry3 he puts the figures at twenty-five years (804–805) and twenty-four years and more (1023). Likewise, the Old Man's

suggestion that “Syn **thow maist nat** be payed in th'eschequer” Hoccleve should request that the Prince “make instance / That thy patente into the hanaper / May chaunged be” (1877–80), “has been changed” in Ry3 to “Syn **it is hard** be payed in th'eschequer,” which reflects “the better times,” since he had been paid in the meantime.²⁷ But this is mistaken. For one, Ry3 and Du's other shared readings do not look much like revisions, and some are obviously erroneous, such as line 1307's claim that the rich man's stinginess “Suffrith his negheburgh by **him die**” [*recte* “him *sterve and die*”]. But that point is moot here anyway, as Ry3 and Du, which together constitute the epsilon family, in fact do not here record anything distinct from all other extant copies for lines 805 and 1023. Six of the eight extant copies of the delta group plus one conflated text agree with epsilon for both readings, as do a few other manuscripts for one or the other reading, and at line 1877 the number is still higher, with nearly all witnesses to the beta family, almost thirty of which are extant, sharing the reading.²⁸

Mooney has also misunderstood the evidence for the necessity of the epsilon exemplar, her rejection of which leaves open, so she believes, “the possibility that Royal 17 D.XVIII itself is the holograph presentation copy and that Dugdale was copied from it.”²⁹ She has Marzec arguing “for the existence of a common exemplar, rather than the manuscripts being copied one from the other, because of a substantial passage” comprising five stanzas on Chaucer “that appears in Royal and not in Dugdale,” which Marzec believed to have been removed from that exemplar between the former's and latter's respective copyings of it.³⁰ This is not an accurate reflection of the situation. Marzec considers it “doubtful that one is copied from the other” and “rather, [that] the two are copies of a common exemplar” not because Du lacks these stanzas, but because “numerous unique readings in each manuscript” reveal their descent from a common source.³¹ The most notable of Ry3's many unique errors, which could have landed Hoccleve in the Tower had he written it, is “The **kyng** is euere of wrecchid couetise / To coueite ay and have and nat souffise” (1175–76; *recte* “kynde”). This scribe sometimes nods for lines at a time, as when the Old Man tells Hoccleve, uniquely in Ry3, that his former prosperity blinded him so that

what God was I nothyng **vndestood**
 But ay whil þat I in my **helth** stood
 Aftir my fleshly lust my lyf I ledde
 And of his wreche nothyng **me** dredde.

[*recte* “vnderstood”]

[*recte* “welthe”]

[*recte* “I me”]

(1320–23)

the second and third of which errors ruin the meter. Other omissions that do so, and often reverse the meaning of the line, include those of **ne** (859), **am** (1034), **nat** (1219), **thow** (1567), and **of** (1751). Another term omitting *r* is **Affican** (1150), while the list of Ry3's careless mistakes and nonsensical readings includes **shlode** (1737; *recte* "sholde"); **felee** (1160; *recte* "feble"); "he halt **is** gretter vice" (4609; *recte* "it"); and **grete grete** for *greet*, where the spelling, too, matters, here adding three extra syllables to the line (835; see below on Hoccleve's use of *-e*). The scribe got especially, and inexplicably, confused by this discussion of the way lords' wealth blinds them to the pain of the poor:

Welthe in the lordes **soil** blowith ful merie
 But the needy berith his **soule** so lowe
 Pat no wynd of confort may in it blowe.
 (4716–18; *recte* "sail" both)

It is difficult to imagine, on one side of the equation, any poet making so many blatant mistakes in the copying of his own words, or, on the other, the Du scribe knowing to correct all of his exemplar's – that is, the poet's – unique errors, especially those whose errancy is not so obvious.³² Marzec's judgment that Du and Ry3 are siblings stands up very well. There are no grounds for the belief that Royal 17 D.xviii was the Dugdale copy's ancestor and thus a presentation copy.

Spelling, Meter, and Unstressed <e>

Mooney suggests that there is one other body of evidence, "the language of the *Regiment* in Royal 17 D.xviii," which "also matches Hoccleve's usage in the known holographs."³³ As we saw in Chapter 3, such a circumstance, if it existed, would constitute not evidence in favor of the argument but the absence of evidence against it. In any case, she immediately acknowledges that 94 of the 101 appearances of the term YOU in Royal 17 D.xviii are spelled *you*, with only seven spelled *yow*, even though, as Charles Blyth observes, in his holographs Hoccleve uniformly spelled this term "with a **w**, never a **u**," exemplifying the fact that the "great majority of words in his lexicon have a single spelling" in the holographs.³⁴ Mooney proposes instead that this is a "spelling that Hoccleve appears to have changed over his career," just as Horobin and she had said Scribe B must have done regarding *though* and *through* between his copying of Trinity B.15.17 and the Chaucer manuscripts.³⁵

Ry3 also contains a substantial number of unmetrical, and thus unHocclevean, lines. Those lines missing a word as cited above are obvious instances, but more telling are those lines that betray the scribe's failure to understand Hoccleve's metrical scheme and treatment of unstressed <e>. Judith Jefferson shows that, "where the controversy over the possible pronunciation of final *-e* does not arise" in the holograph texts, "that is those lines which have no internal final *-e*," which make up 35 percent of the total, no fewer than 98 percent have ten (or eleven, including extra-metrical feminine endings) syllables.³⁶ Yet the "strongest argument" that Hoccleve wrote decasyllables, she says, arises from "the quite clear evidence provided by the holograph manuscripts that Hoccleve made use of a variety of stratagems, made choices from amongst the options available to him in order to maintain his decasyllabic line," such as optional elision of unstressed vowels (e.g., *therl / the Erl*), optional use of pleonastic *þat* (*as / as þat*), variation in the form of adverbs (*whenne / whens*), and varying forms of verbal inflexion (*-e / -eth; fownden / fownde*).³⁷ All of these rely on the pronunciation of <e> in unstressed positions.³⁸ As a consequence, readings lacking a necessary *-e* or adding an unnecessary one must be taken as scribal.

What this means is that "But ay whil þat I in my **helth** stood," quoted above, attests not only the wrong word but also the wrong syllable count (1321; *recte* "welthe").³⁹ In "Write to him a **goodely** tale or two / On which he may **desport** him by nyght" (1902–1903), the first line is eleven syllables thanks to an extraneous medial *-e*, absent from Ry3's genetic partner Du, while the second is nine, on account of the scribe's adherence to Hoccleve's practices. "Following the verb *may*," Jefferson discovered, "there are 44 instances of infinitives followed by a vowel, 36 of which end in *-e* and 8 in *-en*, in every case in accordance with the demands of the syllable count."⁴⁰ Line 1903 must read *may desporten*, and there is little support for the notion that Hoccleve would have made the type of mistake found in Ry3. The two best texts, Arundel 38 and Harley 4866, get many of these lines right, such as "Wryte to hym a **goodly** tale or two / On whyche he may **desporten** hym by nyght."⁴¹ The frequency with which such forms occur means that Ry3 has a large handful of twelve-syllable lines as well as the more common nine- or eleven-syllable ones.⁴² Over its Prologue of 2016 lines, the Royal copy has 244 non-decasyllabic lines, just over 12 percent, six times as many as we would expect in a holograph. It would seem difficult to attribute to the Harley and Arundel scribes a more fine-tuned approach to the syllabic character of Hoccleve's line than his own at this early date. Nor would the suggestion that the poet introduced these alterations to a text that was already correct, and that they survived only in Ry3, be very convincing.

Scribal attribution is part of a broad network of modes of knowledge. Mooney's hope "that future editors of the *Regiment* will take account of the authorial readings from this manuscript written by the poet himself" will sound familiar to her readers: the attribution of Trinity B.15.17 to Scribe B "has further implications for ... its adoption by editors as the base text"; the identification of the Hm 114 scribe as Osborn leads Mooney and Stubbs to "wonder whether *Troilus* scholars, including Windeatt, need to revisit" an important editorial issue.⁴³ Yet the direction of influence might as easily be reversed: if my analysis here is accurate, a sympathetic reading of editors' discussions of Hoccleve's meter and of the textual affiliations of the *Regiment's* manuscripts is absolutely relevant to any paleographer who, having noticed its occasional y's with tails heading back up with a tick, might wonder if Royal 17 D.xviii is a holograph. Historical linguistics, whether it takes the form of dialectal or metrical study, is just as important to the questions at issue in scribal attribution as is paleography.

Hoccleve and Chaucer

To the degree that Mooney cites similarities of language, she recognizes the validity of my argument that paleography cannot stand alone as a discipline. The two recent arguments that Hoccleve was acquainted with Gower and Chaucer and thus that he was probable supervisor of the Trinity Gower and perhaps even Hengwrt and Ellesmere rely substantially, and in some cases entirely, on non-paleographical evidence. Mooney and Stubbs say that their identifications of B as Pynkhurst and D as Marchaunt "help to pinpoint" the production of Trinity R.3.2 "in London, near or within the Guildhall close."⁴⁴ If the arguments presented here are convincing, their assertion no longer holds, and represents another stumbling block to acceptance of *Scribes and the City's* argument that the Guildhall was an incubator of Middle English literature. Hoccleve, after all, had a hand in both the Trinity Gower and Hengwrt and was himself responsible for the outpouring of more copying of Middle English poetry in London, in the form of the manuscripts of the *Regiment* alone, than all the scribes discussed by Mooney and Stubbs together. Forty-three copies and a fragment are extant, many with strong signs of London-based production.⁴⁵

Mooney and Stubbs in effect acknowledge the need to bring him into the Guildhall fold in their approaches to the question, "How did Hoccleve become involved in the copying of Trinity College MS R.3.2 at all?"⁴⁶ Even when they fine-tune that question to return the focus to the City – "Was it through the connection with Chaucer that he was acquainted

with Pinkhurst and thus with the textwriter-clerks in and around the Guildhall?" – the effect is to underscore the fact that neither Hoccleve nor the putative go-betweens were Guildhall clerks. We are instead in the world of the Privy Seal, which provides, so say Mooney and Stubbs, archival evidence that connects Hoccleve to the Guildhall at one remove:

Linne Mooney has shown that Hoccleve was in fact acquainted with Chaucer by demonstrating that he wrote the 9 November 1399 Privy Seal document acknowledging Henry IV's renewal of Chaucer's annuity and commanding the exchequer to pay him the £10 he was owed in arrears [Kew, *The National Archives*, E 404/15/62]. Her discovery of Privy Seal documents written by Hoccleve's hand as early as 1383, probably during his apprenticeship under Guy de Rouclif, shows that he could have known John Gower too, since he may have already been working at the Office of the Privy Seal by 1382, when de Rouclif sold Gower two properties.⁴⁷

The 1382 document suggests a way in which Hoccleve and Gower might have encountered each other, but the possibility of any such encounter does not rely on this discovery. The presence of Hoccleve's hand in the Trinity *Confessio*, probably produced during Gower's lifetime, is a stronger indication of that possibility, though the fact remains that we do not know, whatever the archives tell us about the dates of Hoccleve's Privy Seal work.

As for the Privy Seal document concerning Chaucer's annuity, Mooney claims that it "may be taken as confirmation that Hoccleve knew Chaucer personally"; Nicholas Perkins, that it "strengthens evidence for the personal connection between" Chaucer and Hoccleve; and Horobin, as part of his argument that Hoccleve was Pynkhurst's supervisor, that it "has added further weight to the likelihood that Hoccleve knew Chaucer personally."⁴⁸ "Given Hoccleve's claims to have been a disciple of Chaucer," Mooney continues,

this document may be interpreted as the Exchequer Clerk taking care that his mentor continues to receive his annuity from the crown after the change of dynasty; so Chaucer's speedy acknowledgment from Henry IV comes not just in response to Chaucer's "Complaint to his Purse," but also comes swiftly, a month after the coronation, because his disciple Thomas Hoccleve was on hand to write out the issue warrant.⁴⁹

But such an approach *relies* on the idea that Chaucer and Hoccleve were friends, on the notion, that is, that Hoccleve's praise of "maistir deere and fadir reverent, / My maistir Chaucer, flour of eloquence" refers to a material friendship rather than expressing a trope akin to Lydgate's "Off oure language he was the lodesterre."⁵⁰ This 1399 document is among the "slips of

parchment commanding the Clerks of the Exchequer to pay out certain sums of money to various individuals in the E 404 series” that are “the simplest and most mundane of documents prepared by the Privy Seal,” and is one of some 1070 documents, mainly warrants and bills for the Chancery, in Hoccleve’s hand that she and Helen Killick have discovered in The National Archives, including another, from February 1400, concerning Chaucer.⁵¹ Unless we are to take the remaining 1068 instances, too, as signaling the clerk’s special relationship with their subjects, this item provides no evidence for these poets’ friendship.

Horobin cites, in addition to Mooney’s discovery of the 1399 document, a recent study that has shown, contrary to received wisdom, “how Hoccleve’s writing reveals a sustained and detailed engagement with the work of his predecessor.”⁵² He is referring to Perkins’s examination of what he presents as the *Regiment’s* echoes of the *Troilus*, an essay whose argument itself in part relies on Mooney’s discovery. Perkins delineates a number of parallels that would provide reasonable support for an already established case that Hoccleve engaged with Chaucer’s poetry, but in my judgment cannot be said to constitute that case. His argument focuses on the ways in which the Old Man of the *Regiment* is similar to Pandarus, but as Perkins acknowledges all of these are generic. He cites structural parallels, such as that both men enjoin their interlocutors to “Awake!” and say they want to cure them, but the obvious model here is Lady Philosophy: “‘But tyme is now,’ quod sche, ‘of medycyne ... Knowestow me nat? Why artow stille? ... Here nys no peril,’ quod sche; ‘he is fallen into a litargye.’”⁵³ Likewise the similarities of content, such as “The blynde man of colours al wrong deemeth” (*Regiment* 994) / “A blynde man kan nat juggen wel in hewis” (*Troilus* II.21), are generic. Pandarus is fond of his aphorisms, and indeed Perkins cites Whiting’s collection of proverbs alongside eleven of these parallels.⁵⁴

It seems to me to go too far, then, to say that Hoccleve’s poetry shows sustained and detailed engagement with Chaucer’s. If Hoccleve did know Chaucer’s work well, and is thus the most likely of that poet’s editors, why is all the supporting evidence so generic and easily explicable in other ways? An intimate knowledge of the *Troilus* might be expected to have issued in close verbal parallels of the sort that do appear in Usk’s *Testament of Love*. The manuscripts of Chaucer’s poetry and the *Regiment of Princes*, too, occupy separate silos. The Dugdale 45 scribe also copied a *Canterbury Tales* manuscript (Oxford, New College MS 314), and two fifteenth-century collections feature both the *Regiment* and Chaucer’s poetry, but that is about it. “Given the extent of Hoccleve’s suspected involvement in the early fifteenth-century

organization of Chaucer's poetry," writes John Thompson, "the apparent absence of Chaucer's verse from the parallel promotional programmes organized early for the *Regiment* and Hoccleve's autograph copies of his other short verse certainly seems worthy of note."⁵⁵ This absence is the more striking if we owe Hengwrt and Ellesmere primarily to his efforts.

The Hands of Hengwrt

Most of Horobin's 2015 argument that Hoccleve was Chaucer's first editor rests on findings made by others regarding the Trinity Gower, the Hengwrt and Ellesmere manuscripts, and Hoccleve's work in the Privy Seal, and leads to the quite reasonable conclusion that Hoccleve is the best candidate as supervisor of these manuscripts. His main addition to the evidence, though, is crucial to his case: his assertion that Hoccleve was not only Hand F of Hengwrt, filling in a few gaps, as Doyle and Parkes cautiously suggested, but also Hands C, D, and E, who respectively added the missing stanza about Adam to the *Monk's Tale* (fol. 89v), the second halves of the lines at *Friar's Tale* 1311–20 (fol. 74r; see Chapter 2 Fig. 4), and the phrase "at messe" at *Summoner's Tale* 1788 (fol. 80v). "If my suggestion that all of the additions attributed by Doyle and Parkes to Hands C–F should be attributed to Hoccleve is accepted," he points out, "it gives rise to a number of important questions. What was Hoccleve's role in the production of this manuscript? Was he directly supervising Pinkhurst, or was his involvement later, after Pinkhurst had left the project?"⁵⁶ Horobin deems the "much more obvious explanation" than the latter option to be that Hoccleve "was the supervisor responsible for overseeing, correcting, and completing the work of Pinkhurst. In short, Hoccleve was Chaucer's first editor."⁵⁷

This strong declaration is based on the conviction that Doyle and Parkes, in categorizing the various hands that contributed to Hengwrt, erred dramatically. If so, the oversight is understandable. For one, Hand F's (that is, Hoccleve's) material itself seems to have a different source: "Unlike hands C, D, and E, hand F was trying to deal with lacunae for which sufficient manuscript authority was not readily available."⁵⁸ In addition, the entries do not present themselves as obvious instances of Hoccleve's hands. (A reminder that Hg is available online in complete facsimile: see Chapter 2, note 27.) The identification of Hand C as Hoccleve strikes me as possible but unlikely, despite the unqualified attribution of it to Hoccleve on the *medievalscribes.com* database entry for Hengwrt. The **A** of his "Adam" does look very similar to those Hoccleve used in Tr, and Horobin might be right

that this stanza features “the **y** with the tail tracing back to form the dot.”⁵⁹ Such possible support is countered, though, by the absence of Hocclevean flat top or distinctive sweeping tail from all six **g** forms on this addition to 89v (e.g., *godes, fynger* 2). Horobin says that we find the Hocclevean form with tail curling to the right “in the Hengwrt additions,” but the single instance he cites is Hand F’s – that is, Hoccleve’s – *good* on fol. 138v, which is irrelevant to his argument.⁶⁰ All in all, Doyle and Parkes’s observation that Hand C’s “style of script is very like that of BL MS. Arundel 38, the presentation copy to Prince Henry of Thomas Hoccleve’s *Regiment of Princes*, which must have been completed in 1412–13, and is the work of an equally practiced scribe” seems to me to respond better to the idiosyncrasies of Hand C’s addition of the Adam stanza to the Hengwrt *Monk’s Tale*.⁶¹

As for Hand D’s addition, visible in Figure 4 as well as online, to my eye its aspect resembles those of neither Hoccleve nor Hand C. Neither does it feature any of the five distinctive letter forms, there being no hint that the tails of its **y** forms head back up (*pleyne* 3, *peyne* 4, *hys* 7), while the **g** form is the standard Anglicana form used by the Trinity B.15.17 scribe (for me, Adam Pynkhurst), the Hengwrt-Ellesmere scribe, and countless others in this era (*offryng* 5, *syng* 6, *caght* 7). If one already knew this was Hoccleve, then perhaps these differences could be accounted for by recourse to the notion that he was mimicking the main scribe’s hand.⁶² But that would be to beg the question, for such an explanation could apply to any scribe. That problem aside, such a hypothesis would not explain why Hoccleve (if it is he) did not try to do so for the Adam stanza in the *Monk’s Tale*, not to mention why he did not simply bring Scribe B back to fill in these gaps, given their putatively close relationship.⁶³ In sum, I do not find the evidence to support any conclusion “that all of the additions attributed by Doyle and Parkes to Hands C–F should be attributed to Hoccleve.”⁶⁴

What is at stake in the attribution of these few lines and words of Doyle and Parkes’s Hands C, D and E instead to Hand F? It was already clear enough that Hoccleve played a role in the manuscript’s production. Horobin does not say so explicitly, but the import of his claim, it seems to me, lies not in the presence of slightly more Hocclevean matter in Hengwrt, which would hardly matter, but rather in the *absence* of these three other hands. So long as Hoccleve is simply Hand F, one of four scribes brought in for quick fixes, his role appears tangential. But if he is C, D, and E as well, then Hoccleve’s is the only post-“Pynkhurst” hand to play a role in the production of Hengwrt (Hand B’s headers being coterminous with Hand A’s writing). This would substantially enhance the plausibility of the proposal that he was its supervisor. It does not so much constitute

that evidence on its own as eliminate what would otherwise make for serious counter-evidence. If either C or D is not Hoccleve, as Doyle and Parkes thought, the reasons for accepting that argument diminish, and Hoccleve joins these other unidentified hands in making additions under differing circumstances.

The Trinity Gower, Again

Horobin's case that Hoccleve also supervised the Trinity Gower (Tr) relies on three propositions: that Scribe E's stint is so short that it cannot easily be explained as the work of a normal scribe ("how much could he be expected to be paid for just two folios?"),⁶⁵ that someone must have supervised it, and that Scribe E, that is, Hoccleve, was well placed to do so. He also cites a "small but telling piece of evidence": Hoccleve's provision of the first four words following Scribe C's text on the verso of the singleton that is fol. 33 – in effect a catchword, though not where catchwords usually appear. Doyle and Parkes remark that "E's activity as supervisor must have been brief since he did not supply the omission on fol. 84 at the end of his own stint, nor is his hand visible elsewhere in the book."⁶⁶ Rather, their impression is "that the scribes worked as an *ad hoc* team, and each played a subordinate if complementary role in the preparation of this copy."⁶⁷ Horobin objects that this assumption "ignores the fact that somebody must have had overall responsibility for the production process," but Doyle and Parkes do not ignore this fact at all. They simply see no evidence as to that person's identity: "Each scribe seems to have dropped out of the operation after playing his limited part in the production of this copy, leaving the final coordination to somebody else. It is possible that the ultimate responsibility for the completion of the book was as unclear to them as it is to us."⁶⁸

Whoever that "somebody else" was, his work was poor: the scribes' ignorance of what would happen to the volume "would help to explain the failure to make good the various deficiencies," Doyle and Parkes remark: catchwords go missing; a scribe abandons his stint mid-line; "haste and inattention on the part of the decorators" remains uncorrected.⁶⁹ Scribe E (Hoccleve) copied the first two leaves and the first column of the recto of the third leaf of quire II (i.e., fols. 82r–84r), leaving the rest of that column and the next blank with corresponding absence of the forty-six lines that belong there. Scribe A wrote the verso of folio 84. However this is to be explained, say Doyle and Parkes, "there can be no doubt about the lack of coordination between the stints of A and E: the gap in the text represented

by the blank column on fol. 84 remained unfilled,” a lack that “indicates the absence of the kind of intimate association between the scribes which we would expect if they had worked together under constant supervision in one place where adjacent portions of the exemplar were kept together.”⁷⁰ It would be very difficult to square the case that Hoccleve was supervisor, or was working with Scribe D (Mooney and Stubbs’s Marchaunt), Scribe B (Mooney’s Pynkhurst), and Scribes A and C in the Guildhall on this volume (Mooney and Stubbs’s argument, not Horobin’s; see note 44), with his role in this exemplification of the manuscript’s lack of a competent supervisor. Nor does it follow from the brevity of his stint that he oversaw Trinity R.3.2’s production; on the contrary, the gap suggests that the supervisor did not provide him with those forty-six lines or perhaps that he became incapacitated.

Ellesmere

The most challenging consequence of Doyle and Parkes’s discoveries has been David Lawton’s suggestion that Hoccleve might have written some poetry long assigned to Chaucer. His poetic accomplishments show that he “would have been perfectly capable of improving, amending or forging links,” while his involvement in the production of Hg puts him in a position to do so.⁷¹ Lawton cites two indicators of Hoccleve’s possible additions. “His one great metrical weakness is the expansion of the pentameter to contain a vocative or a name,” as in *Regiment of Princes* line 4360, “I, Hoccleve, in swich cas am gilty; this me touchith,” which weakness “appears most conspicuously in the *Canterbury Tales* in the Franklin’s address to the Squire”: “So feelyngly thou spekest, sire, I allow the!” (*SqT* 676).⁷² But this Chaucerian line in fact scans iambic-pentametrically “with a tolerable, expedient, and comprehensible set of variations”: syn-copation of *spekest* > *spek’st*; elision of *sire I*, the fourth iambic foot of the line; and extrametrical unstressed *the*, rhyming with *thy yowthe* in 675.⁷³ Second, Lawton cites “the relentless emphasis on ‘wille’” in lines 1–8 of the *Squire’s Tale*: “It is Hoccleve, not Chaucer, who harps on will,” he writes, one objection to which would be lines 1–8 of the *Squire’s Tale* themselves, which can be removed from Chaucer only by begging the question.⁷⁴ The possibility, which Lawton is careful to present as such rather than as an argument, is reasonable, and his concern “that Chaucer criticism is not fully reflecting the implications of modern textual scholarship” is very well grounded,⁷⁵ but I do not consider Chaucer’s authorship of these passages to be in question.

Might Hoccleve, even so, still have supervised the production of the Ellesmere manuscript? In suggesting as much Pearsall, and Horobin after him, cite the “striking resemblances between the layout of the Latin in Arundel 38 [of the *Regiment*] and that in Ellesmere” and “the evidence that the portrait of Chaucer in Ellesmere is modeled on the same exemplar as the portrait of Chaucer that Hoccleve caused to be set in the margin of Harley 4866.”⁷⁶ Other options would be that these features signal either Ellesmere's influence on later productions or Hoccleve's indebtedness to the same models used by the Ellesmere supervisor. Again elaborating on a point made by Pearsall, Horobin also cites Hoccleve's “connections with the London book trade, and, more specifically, with Adam Pinkhurst, the very scribe responsible for copying the *Canterbury Tales* manuscripts that I am arguing were produced under Hoccleve's supervision.”⁷⁷ To be sure, any candidate for the identity as the Ellesmere editor certainly needs such connections as a prerequisite. But if participation in the Trinity Gower constitutes evidence of such, then Scribes A, B, C, and D are equally viable candidates. And in any case it is arbitrary to isolate Tr as the production whose scribes could have supervised Ellesmere. No evidence as to the identity of El's supervisor exists.

As we have seen, Doyle and Parkes argued that in fact no evidence of connections among the five scribes of Trinity R.3.2 presents itself. That is not to say that they could not have known each other in their day-to-day lives, just that their work on that volume seems to have been undertaken on separate, individual bases. But even if we do take that copy of the *Confessio* as the main evidence for Hoccleve's “connections with the London book trade” we should acknowledge that the connections are with one community within that trade: its scribes. These connections are not necessarily with the stationers along Paternoster Row who were in the business of securing and preparing the vellum, hiring the limners, arranging the binding, and the like. Arundel 38 and Harley 4866, if made under his auspices, testify to Hoccleve's connections with the supervisors who could perform such activities, but no compelling reason to suspect that he was that person presents itself. He had a day job in the Privy Seal, and a night hobby as a confessional poet who wrote about that day job, one in which he never mentioned any labor on behalf of the production of Chaucer's poetry.

“Another possible link between Hoccleve and Pinkhurst,” concludes Horobin, “is a personal knowledge of Chaucer – if we accept that the poem to Adam Sciveyn is addressed specifically to Pinkhurst – and it seems quite natural that it should be these two men who took on the task of producing

authoritative copies of his works following the poet's death in 1400."⁷⁸ This is the core of Horobin's case: that someone clearly oversaw the collection of Chaucer's papers that enabled Hg and El to be produced, that Hoccleve and Thomas Chaucer have to date been the only candidates mooted,⁷⁹ and that between them the former just makes better sense. (Compare Margaret Connolly's suggestion that this literary executor might actually have been Pynkhurst, that is, Chaucer's scribe [Chapter 1, note 33].) But acceptance of the argument raises its own set of questions, some of which appear above, some of which might be better addressed if the case were more firmly presented: what, for instance, does it say about the datings of Hg and El and about the status of their exemplar(s)? By the same token, acceptance of the suggestion that Hoccleve supervised Hg would seem to identify him as among the likeliest candidates, together with John Shirley himself, as author of "Adam Scryveyne," at least if Chapter 1's argument that that lyric does not fit well within the Chaucerian corpus is accepted. If he was perfectly capable of improving or amending Chaucer's links, he could certainly write a stanza in rime royal. But if this is accepted, the only pieces of evidence for a connection with Chaucer are Hoccleve's fulsome praise of his master and the fact that two of the 1000-plus Privy Seal documents in his hand concern Chaucer's finances. Conversely, any objection to that conclusion on the grounds that we cannot know the other possibilities would apply equally to the case that Hoccleve was Chaucer's first editor.

His status as one of the two viable candidates as author of "Adam Scryveyne" does not render Hoccleve's candidacy very likely, of course, any more than it suggests that he was supervisor of Tr or the most famous *Canterbury Tales* manuscripts. The desire to promote such arguments relies primarily on the wiggle room afforded by our ignorance of the circumstances of literary production in London ca. 1400–10. Whose were the hands of Hengwrt? Who were A to D of Tr? Who copied Arundel 38, Harley 4866, and Royal 17 D.xviii, not to mention the handful of Langlands, CUL Dd.4.24 of the *Canterbury Tales*, the early *Troilus* manuscripts, those Gower texts not produced by D (whoever he was), and all the other poetry that came out of London in this era, most of which, we should remember, no longer survives? Who were their commissioners, limners, binders, correctors, readers? They were people acquainted, or not, with Chaucer, Gower, Marchaunt, Osborn, Carpenter, and Pynkhurst. It is a highly productive exercise, both for its own sake and for the results it produces, to elevate these men to roles that matter so much to our sense of English literary and even political history, even if they bring us back to where we started.