

STUDIES IN ENGLISH MEDIEVAL LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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Preface

The present volume contains selected papers from the 9th International Conference on Middle English held at Wyższa Szkoła Filologiczna (Philological School of Higher Education) in Wrocław, Poland from April 30 to May 3, 2015.

Sixty scholars from sixteen countries participated in the conference, i.e., from Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA, and Poland. Forty one papers were presented and fifteen have been selected for publication in the volume. One paper, by Professor J. Wełna was not presented at the conference but has been included here. The author could not attend the conference.

The papers cover a wide spectrum of issues both in the area of language and literature. The linguistic papers constitute the majority of contributions as in earlier conferences. They cover a wide area of problems from phonology to grammar, semantics and pragmatics. Two literary papers discuss various aspects of Middle English texts and one is devoted to an early Modern English author.

It is our pleasure and duty to express our gratitude and acknowledge the efficiency and dedication of our colleagues from Wyższa Szkoła Filologiczna of Wrocław who have helped to solve administrative problems contributing to the success of the conference, in particular Ms. Anna Zasłona.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the Rector of the Philological School of Higher Education Professor Norbert Morciniec for offering the venue and to the Chancellor of the School, Mr. Ryszard Opala for his generous financial and other support.

Jacek Fisiak
Magdalena Bator
Marta Sylwanowicz

Poznań, 30 June 2016

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Donka Minkova & Emily Runde

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Genre, audience, and scribal adaptation to language change: The case of infinitival marking

Abstract: This paper examines the correlation of scribal adaptation to ongoing language change. Our particular focus is the loss or preservation of the infinitival marker *-en* in the orthography and in the scansion of verse. After explaining the philological rationale for targeting infinitival forms and the historical and codicological rationale for selecting the textual sources, we present our findings. The findings for four texts in the Auchinleck manuscript (c. 1331–1340): *The King of Tars*, *þe desputisoun bitven þe bodi & þe soule*, attributed to Scribe 1, and *Floris and Blancheflour* and *On the Seven Deadly Sins*, attributed to Scribe 3, are quantified and tabulated. All four texts show statistically significant loss of the infinitival marker, with both orthographic and syllabic preservation of the marker in non-elision environment ranging from 4% for *The King of Tars*, to 20.3% in *Floris and Blancheflour*. This is in stark contrast with the independently established orthographic and syllabic consistency of *-e(n)* in the "bureaucratic" hand of Thomas Hoccleve (c. 1369–c. 1426). His results are compared to some statistics for Chaucer. Hoccleve's anachronistic insistence on a moribund linguistic feature almost a century after the Auchinleck scribes is discussed in the context of intended audience, silent reading, and possible links to genre.

Keywords: scribal practice, orthography, inflectional loss, infinitives, Auchinleck manuscript, Thomas Hoccleve

1. The roadmap

Recent scholarship on medieval English scribes has probed the extent to which we can see evidence of literary criticism and even authorial intervention in scribes' bodies of work (Wakelin 2014, Fisher 2012). This study takes up the related question of whether and how scribes adapted their practices in accordance with textual genre or intended audience. In this paper, we examine the correlation of such adaptation to ongoing language change. We begin by discussing the philological issues at the heart of our study and justifying its particular focus on infinitival inflection. In section three, we will address the study's parameters, specifically our choice of the particular texts we have examined, all of which are found in the early fourteenth-century Auchinleck manuscript. We will then present our findings in section four. Finally, in section five, we will consider these alongside findings pertaining to the later scribal practices of Thomas Hoccleve and discuss the implications of this comparison.

2. Why focus on infinitives?

The loss of final unstressed vowels is one of the defining phonological characteristics of ME – it is ubiquitous, relentless, and by c. 1450 the pronunciation of final schwa is pretty well confined to about a dozen loanwords such as *alpha*, *cholera*, *saliva*, and some personal names: *Martha*, *Regina*, *Medusa*. The attrition of the infinitive marker is thus part of a much wider process of inflectional simplification – the reasons for that have been studied extensively (Minkova 1991, 2014). The rationale for selecting only the small subset of infinitives from all words going through coda *-n*-loss and subsequent schwa loss is that they are a well-defined, readily identifiable morphological set, and their ME forms have attracted a lot of attention lately, so the light seems better. Barney (1993: 94–102) selects infinitives as the optimal test case for matching inflectional *-e* to meter; he finds that “Probably the most consistent feature of Chaucer’s inflectional use of *-e* is the rule that infinitives end in *-e(n)*” (Barney 1993: 94), though see also our discussion of Chaucer’s use of infinitives in Section 5.2. Infinitives were singled out as forms whose syllabic suffix can be used as a test for the structure of alliterative verse, e.g. Jefferson – Putter (2005), Putter – Jefferson – Stokes (2007). Fulk (2012: 49) refers to infinitives as retaining final *-e* in speech in the southern dialects of ME until quite late – his comment refers to Chaucer’s metrical use of infinitives, where they are paired only with one other case of final schwa survival: the plural of attributive adjectives. As for our own choice of comparanda: in one particular set of early fifteenth-century texts, Hoccleve’s, “... all infinitives in the holographs are written with the inflection *<-e>* or *<-en>*. There are no zero infinitives” (Burrow 2013: 46).

2.1 The philological background

Reduced forms of the infinitive inflection *-an* appear already in some Northern OE dialects.¹ In the “focused” variety of OE, late West Saxon, final *-n* was preserved until the end of OE.

In ME the loss of the infinitival marker proceeds in two stages: loss of coda *<-n>/[-n]*, and loss of *<-e>/[-ə]*.² Both changes are shared with other parts of speech. The dropping of coda *<-n>* in unstressed final syllables was an ongoing process even in the Southern dialects after about 1050. Word-final *-n* is frequently

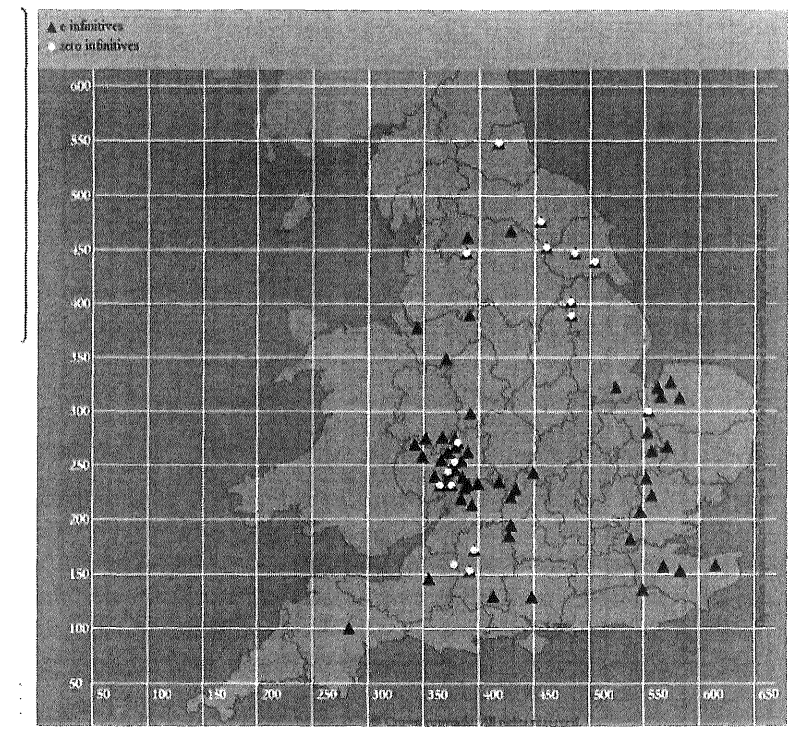
1 In Northumbrian and frequently in *RuI* (Mercian, Lichfield) the spelling of the plain/uninflected infinitive can appear as *<-a, -e, -æ, -o>*, see Kitson (1992) and Hogg – Fulk (2011: 224).

2 Angled brackets enclose graphemes, and square brackets enclose broad phonetic transcriptions.

lost before unaccented vowels, except in strong past participles, nouns in *<-en>* (OE *berðen*, ME *byrðen* ‘burden’; OE, ME *īren* ‘iron’), and past indicative plurals. Reed (1950: 263) records the orthographic loss of *<-n>* in six different grammatical forms and concludes that for the infinitive “it reached completion in the Southern dialects between 1325 and 1375.”³

The map in Figure 1 shows the distribution of uninflected infinitives without *<-n>* in LAEME.⁴

Figure 1: Infinitives without *<-e>* in LAEME⁴



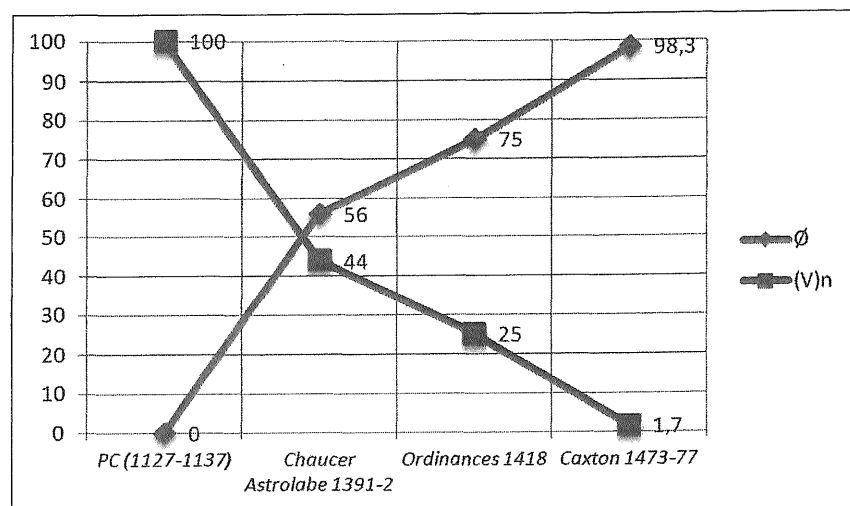
3 The full text is: “it reached completion in the Southern dialects between 1325 and 1375, in the NE Midlands before 1400 and in the NW Midlands and SE Midlands by about 1500.” However, the paucity of coverage for the SE Midlands for early ME raises doubts on the reliability of his inferences.

4 The map combines uninflected infinitives spelled with *<-e>* and *<∅>*. We are grateful to Margaret Laing for helping us with the mapping of the data.

Since the data-base covers the period ca. 1150–1325, it is pretty clear that by the beginning of the fourteenth century infinitives were quite vulnerable to final <-n> loss. The loss of the coda consonant is least common before vowels; this has been known since Luick's time, confirmed in Reed (1950). This is not surprising in view of the undesirability of hiatus; phonologically it is the inverse of elision in hiatus, the environment in which final schwa loss was most advanced even in early ME. We leave this aspect of the change out of the discussion for now, because we are interested in the next stage of the process.

The *complete* loss of the infinitival suffix, i.e., the loss of the entire *syllable*, is more interesting and much harder to pinpoint. Orthographic zero infinitives in prose texts do give us some idea of how the change progressed diachronically. In Figure 2 we plot some interesting data from CHEL II (Lass 1992: 97–8); each text sample is roughly 5,000 words:

Figure 2: *Infinitive spelling in %: The Peterborough Chronicle to Caxton*



That's the bird's eye view based on spelling, bundling together bare and *for to* infinitives in all environments. If we take <V(n)> spellings as (very roughly) representing a syllabic realization of the suffix, and <Ø> spellings representing loss of the final syllable, we see a dramatic reversal of the distribution of the two patterns from early to late ME. That kind of sweeping overview based on spelling in prose documents is good for a macro-perspective; for the details we have to go to the

distribution of the spelling variants in verse, arguably the single most reliable piece of evidence on the syllabicity of the final <-e>.

To test the ways in which scribes reacted to ongoing sound change, we analyzed four poems in the early fourteenth-century Auchinleck manuscript – *The King of Tars*, *The Disputation between the Body and the Soul*, *Floris and Blancheflour*, and *On the Seven Deadly Sins* – and compared our findings to the findings for Hoccleve, whose usage is extensively covered in the existing scholarship.

3. Why focus on Auchinleck and these poems?

The Auchinleck manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS 19.2.1) stands out as “a milestone in both English medieval manuscript production and Middle English literature” (Fisher 2016: 1). A thick volume containing some forty-four texts, its production can be dated between 1331 and 1340.⁵ The manuscript was probably produced in London, judging from affinities to other contemporary London manuscripts – specifically, large legal books copied by Andrew Horn (see Hanna 2005) – and the dialects of the two most prolific scribal contributors, Scribes 1 and 3, both of which have been localized to the London/Middlesex area by *LALME* (see LP 6510 and LP 6500).

Practically speaking, Auchinleck offers a substantial corpus for the examination of trends in inflectional loss at a relatively early date, and its digitized edition renders its texts fairly accessible. For all of scholars' efforts to situate this manuscript within a broader context of early fourteenth-century book production and consumption (see Hanna 2005), it still stands out as a remarkable repository of Middle English: nearly all of its contents are monolingual English poems, a phenomenon virtually unheard of in large manuscript compilations produced in England at this time.⁶ Many of the works it contains are unique to the manuscript or represent the earliest known copies of Middle English texts that enjoyed wide circulation in later manuscripts. Moreover, as Derek Pearsall has remarked, Auchinleck remains “our principal witness for the existence of a vigorous and prolific London literary culture

5 This dating reflects Helen Cooper's relatively recent refinement of the date; based on textual evidence, she found that Auchinleck was most likely not copied before 1331 (2005: 95).

6 As summed up in Fisher (2016: 1–2): “... it [Auchinleck] recalls earlier large multilingual manuscripts such as Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Laud Misc 108 and Digby 86, and London, British Library, Harley MS 2253. ... More broadly, its textual presentation recalls Anglo-Norman literary volumes of the later thirteenth century: it is a unique book, but not one without precedent or context.”

before Chaucer” (2006: 31). It was also an expensive production; its program of illumination, now diminished by the depredations of later miniature collectors, indicates that it was almost certainly a bespoke manuscript, made at the behest of a particular client.⁷

We know just enough about Auchinleck – that it was almost certainly compiled with a particular owner in mind and that it is a largely coherent production in terms of its textual contents and its visual presentation – that the manuscript prompts irresistible speculation as to its potential early ownership, but yields no firm conclusions. Eager to understand the tastes and background of the clientele who had the means to commission such a manuscript and the desire to consume literature in English in the early fourteenth century, scholars have advanced a number of theories as to the manuscript’s intended audience. They have variously proposed that Auchinleck was made as a kind of aspirational object for a member of London’s growing middle class, perhaps a wealthy merchant (Pearsall – Cunningham 1977),⁸ as a noblewoman’s book (see Hardman 2010: 19),⁹ as a volume meeting the various needs of a wealthy aristocratic household invested in crusading (Turville-Petre 1996),¹⁰ and, most recently as the collective possession of a confraternal or civic group in London (Bahr 2013). This range of hypotheses carries with it a range of suppositions, some explicit and some implicit, regarding the educational background and social class, to say nothing of the reading practices and literary sophistication, of Auchinleck’s intended audience.

We have chosen to look at a selection of works copied by the manuscript’s two most prolific scribes, Scribes 1 and 3, the two scribes most likely to have taken

7 Auchinleck’s illuminations also distinguish it from most other fourteenth-century English literary manuscripts. They suggest a desire on the part of the book’s makers or intended owner to model the book on French romance manuscripts of the thirteenth century. Furthermore, as Hanna notes (2005: 79), “it is striking that the book has any illumination at all,” given that, as he goes on to remark, “Chaucer and Langland manuscripts don’t, as a rule.”

8 Pearsall here goes on to suggest that “[t]he decoration, the careful penmanship (so regular, in the hand of scribe 1 particularly, that one soon reads it like a printed book), the thoughtful rubrication and spacious layout in double columns (except the first and last items), all demonstrate that this was a book to be looked at and read by the private reader” (viii). He takes references to oral address within the book to be “merely conventional” and argues that “the reading format has had a discernible effect on metre.”

9 Hardman here cites a conference presentation given by Felicity Riddy in 1992.

10 Hardman herself follows Turville-Petre in hypothesizing an entire household as the book’s intended audience, but points to a different family, one about whom significantly less is known.

an active role in shaping Auchinleck for its intended audience. As in the case of Hoccleve, working many decades later, there is ample reason to believe these two scribes were working in London. Indeed, Bliss (1951) and Parkes (1969; see also Hanna 2000: 95n) have both suggested on paleographical grounds that Scribe 3 – like so many of the late fourteenth-/early fifteenth-century scribes whose work scholars have lately been tracking and, in fact, like Hoccleve himself – also worked as a copyist of formal legal documents, possibly as a chancery clerk. Scribe 1, who copied nearly three-quarters of Auchinleck, most likely contributed to Auchinleck in several other capacities, notably as the putative supervisor of the manuscript’s production and assemblage (Shonk 1985) and, as Matthew Fisher has recently argued, as the scribal author of some of the texts he penned within the manuscript (2012).¹¹ Examining Scribe 3’s corpus, Runde (2016) argues that he likely also played a curatorial – if not even authorial – role in fashioning the booklet he copied. In other words, there is good reason to believe that neither of these scribes worked as a rote copyist; rather, it is probable that both scribes shaped the texts they copied for this particular manuscript. Here we consider their orthographic practice in light of this probability and its possible implications for our understanding of Auchinleck’s early consumption or reception.

4. Spelling and syllabic value of infinitival <-e(n)>

4.1. *The King of Tars*

The date of the text is c. 1310–1330, predating the compilation of the Auchinleck. Its provenance is most likely London or the South Midlands (Purdie 2008: 208).¹² It is 1238 lines long. The poem is written in “close adherence to classical tail-rhyme

11 Noting patterns of phrases repeated among different Auchinleck texts, including one whose authorship he definitively attributes to Scribe 1, Fisher asserts (2012: 167): “The shared phrases amongst different texts of the Auchinleck manuscript ... suggest that an individual was responsible for customizing the texts of the book, and for writing and situating new texts in the book.”

12 The Auchinleck copy of *The King of Tars* is in the dialect of Scribe 1 and not the original dialect of *Tars* (see further Perryman 1980). Infinitives are not part of the Linguistic Profile (LP 6510 in LALME III, 305–6). Although traditionally characterized as a romance, the centrality of the religious theme in *Tars* has prompted classification in the sub-category of “homiletic romances”, or “popular didactic romance” (see Mehl 1969). Pious edification notwithstanding, it seems to fit other characteristics of romances; Pearsall (1988), Reichl (1990), and Purdie (2008) point out the formal affiliations of the text with a large group of romances exhibiting “an unmistakable stylistic uniformity, which reveals their roots in popular story-telling” (Reichl 1990: 172).

techniques” (Pearsall 1988: 29).¹³ The tail-rhyme stanzas follow a very demanding $aa_4b_3 aa_4b_3 cc_4b_3 dd_4b_3$ rhyming formula:

(1) The meter of <i>The King of Tars</i> : $aa_4b_3 aa_4b_3 cc_4b_3 dd_4b_3$		
Lines 1–12	Rhyme	Beats
Herkneþ to me boþe eld & zing,	a	4
For Maries loue þat swete þing,	a	4
Al hou a wer bigan	b	3
Bitvene a trewe Cristen king	a	4
& an heþen heye lording,	a	4
Of Dames þe soudan.	b	3
þe king of Tars hadde a wiue,	c	4
Feirer miȝt non ben oliue	c	4
Pat ani wiȝt telle can.	b	3
A douhter þai hadde hem bitven,	d	4
Non feirer woman miȝt ben,	d	4
As white as feþer of swan.	b	3

The syllabic count ranges between seven to nine syllables per line for the four-beat lines and between five to seven for the three-beat lines.¹⁴ The rhymes are mostly masculine, as in *zing* : *þing* : *king* : *lording* in (1). Since the only potentially feminine rhymes have to rely on <-e>, pairs of rhyming infinitives such as *ride* : *abide* (205–6) are uninformative and are therefore excluded from the counts.¹⁵

13 “Tail rhyme, also called *tailed rhyme*, is a verse form in which rhymed lines such as couplets or triplets are followed by a tail—a line of different (usually shorter) length that does not rhyme with the couplet or triplet. In a tail-rhyme stanza (also called a tail-rhymed stanza), the tails rhyme with each other” (*Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. *tail rhyme*, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/art/tail-rhyme>).

14 The rhythm is predominantly iambic. 9 syllables for the 4-beat lines and 7 syllables for the 3-beat lines involve counting the line-final <-e>’s as extrametrical unstressed syllables. 7 syllables for the 4-beat lines and 5 syllables for the 3-beat lines are headless. For the 4-beat lines examples are: l. 32: *Hé wald hír win ín batáyl* (7, headless); l. 4: *Bitvéne a tréwe Crísten kíng* (8); l. 26: *and bád hem wíȝtly wénden álle* (possibly 9). For the 3-beat lines examples are: l. 117: *Bóþe lést & mást* (5, headless); l. 3: *Al hóu a wér bigán* (6); l. 87: *þai cóm into þe hálle* (possibly 7).

15 Only infinitives rhyming with another part of speech *spille* : *tille* ‘till, prep’ < OE Nhb. & ON *til* (94–5, 232–3, 304–5); *vnder-stond* inf. : *fond* inf. ‘to experience’ : *bond* ‘bondsmán’, *wond* inf. ‘to delay’ (Stanza 73) are good evidence, similarly *cold* : *hold* inf. : *bold* : *sold*, p.t. (Stanza 76) – the boldfaced items are the only infinitives counted in rhyme position. The environment is considered “non-elision”. Orthographic <-e> in rhymes can be inconsistent, e.g. *swere* : *preier*∅ (16:17), *wode* : *blood*∅ (171:174); this undermines further the assumption that line-final <-e>’s are necessarily syllabic.

Vowel-final verbs such as *sa*), rhyming with monosyllabic words, e.g. *day* (II.987–990) are also excluded.

In collecting our data we followed the normal practice of controlling for pre-vocalic elision, where “pre-vocalic” includes pronominal initial <h->. The retention of orthographic <-n> in infinitives is not recorded separately when it does not affect the syllable count, thus both *To saue cristen kende* (I.261) and *To sauen cristen kende* (I.330) count as preserving the infinitival marker in non-elision environment. The use of <-n> in vowel-final monosyllabic infinitives: *be(n)* ‘to be’, *do(n)* ‘to do’ etc. is generally, but not consistently, conditioned by environment: the <-n> is kept to avoid hiatus before vowels and <h->, e.g. *þou seyð þou most don oþer dedes* (I.235). For such infinitives <-n> does not affect the syllabic count; its use is of no concern for us here. Our counts of syllabic and non-syllabic realizations of infinitives in *The King of Tars* are shown in (2):

(2) Infinitives in *The King of Tars*:

Total: 75 infinitives

36 in elision environment:

34 <-e(n)> / [∅] (45.3%):

2 <en> [-ən] (2.6%):

39 in non-elision environment:

18 <-e> / [∅] (24%):

18 <∅> / [∅] (24%):

3 <-e(n)> / [ə(n)] (4%):

Examples

To **take** his lond bi euerich cost 986

& bad hem wíȝtly **wenden** alle 26

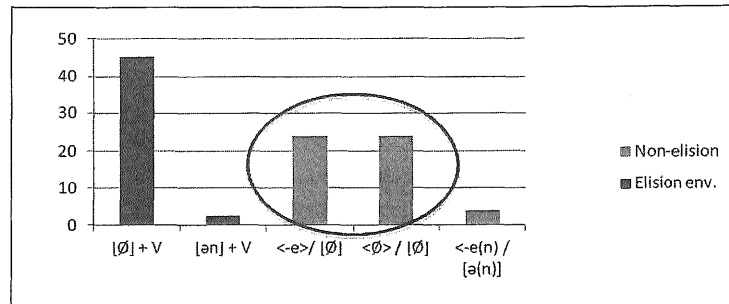
Her tale to **telle**, wíþ outen les 89

& bid him **bring** wíþ him his ost 961

& seþþen **serue** þe at wille, 487

Figure 3 summarizes the results:

Figure 3: Infinitival *-e(n)* in *The King of Tars*¹⁶



Only three (4%) of the entire set of infinitives (75), have their infinitival marker preserved in the scansion pre-consonantly, and about half of the infinitives in non-elision environment are written as bare stems, with no inflectional orthographic markers. The omission of <-e> seems unrelated to the weight of the stem – it occurs both after -VCC, and after -VC syllables, thus we find *bring* (I.985), *com* ‘to come’ (II.401, 983), *zif* ‘to give’ (I.318), *help* (II.453, 668, 894, 1008), *hold* (II.748, 906), *kis* (I.494), *let* (I.983), *tel* (I.765), *spring* (I.19), *turn* (I.462), *win* (I.1205).¹⁷

4.2. *Be desputisoun bitven þe bodi & þe soule (Body and Soul)*

This is the second Auchinleck Scribe 1 text we looked at. It exists in six copies, the earliest of which, found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108, is dated c. 1290.¹⁸ The Auchinleck copy is 550 lines long. The meter is octosyllabic,

16 L. 271 (also l. 331) *For (þi) y wil suffre no lenger þrawe* is problematic: *þi* is an insertion in Auchinleck, and the two later manuscript witnesses, the Vernon (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. poet. a. 1) and Simeon (London, British Library, Additional MS 22283) manuscripts have a different line altogether (Perryman 1980 notes). L. 296 is not in the Vernon and Simeon. L. 340: *Be messangers answeere gan*: is problematic (*messangers* must count as 4-syllables in line 349). L. 469: *& forsake þi fals lay* is ambiguous because the weak adjective *fals* would normally be inflected. L. 482: *Hou y schal make mi preiere* allows monosyllabic *make* if *preier*, thus spelled in l. 17, is disyllabic.

17 In *Sir Orfeo*, another romance attributed to Auchinleck Scribe 1, Bliss (1966: xxiii) observes that the infinitives of verbs in -VCC like *help*, *hold*, *hunt*, *lizt* “generally have no ending”, but this is clearly not the case in *The King of Tars*.

18 The *MED* information (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/hyp-idx?type=byte&byte=270439>) on the manuscripts is as follows: Laud Misc. 108, c. 1290 (c. 1300);

with eight-line stanzas rhyming ab ab ab4, a stanza form common in religious poems of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Kaluza 1911: 217). The meter and the syllabic counts are shown in (3) and (4):

(3) The meter of the *Disputation between the body and soul*:

Stanza 7	Rhyme	Beats
Whare be þine cokes snelle,	a	4
þat schuld go to grayþe þi mete	b	4
Wiþ swot spices for to smelle,	a	4
þat þou were neuer ful to frete,	b	4
To make þi foule flesche to swelle,	a	4
þat wilde wormes schal now ete?	b	4
& ich haue þe peyne of helle	a	4
Purth þi glotonie ygete.	b	4

As in the case of *The King of Tars*, the syllabic count in the predominantly iambic four-beat line ranges from seven syllables for headless lines, e.g. *Þát o nízt wald lý bi þé* (l. 258), eight for ‘normal’ lines, e.g. *Þar nis no léuedi brízt of blé* (l. 256), and nine in lines with a possible extrametrical weak final [-ə], e.g. *& þóu schalt cóm wiþ flésche & félle* (l. 454). We followed the same principles of scansion as in 4.1.¹⁹

The results, remarkably similar to the findings for *The King of Tars*, are shown in (4) and in Figure 4. Once again, the proportion of syllabic infinitival markers

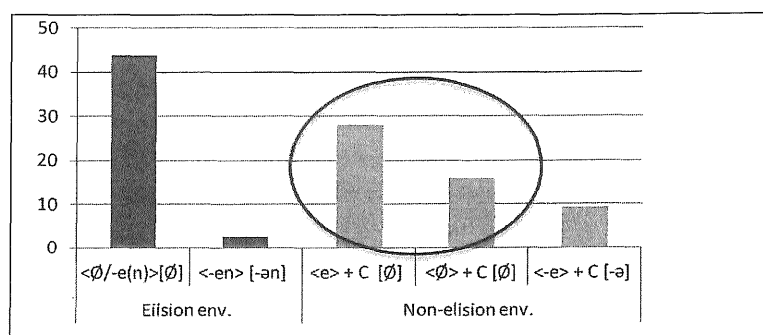
LALME does not include the *Body and Soul* portion of the manuscript, but the editors comment that in Laud Misc. 108 “the language is mixed, and suggests a western (probably Gloucs) original, with an East Anglian overlay” (Vol. 1: 198); London, British Library, Additional MS 37787, a. 1425; Auchinleck, c. 1330; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102, a. 1450; London, British Library, Royal MS 18.A.x, a. 1450; and the Vernon, c. 1390 (LP 7630. Worcs). The *Stammbaum* in Linow (1889: 10) posits a lost original (O) with two intermediate lost copies: (α), shared by the Auchinleck and the Laud Misc. 108 versions, and (γ) the immediate source of the Vernon version.

19 In this text <-i/-y> is used as an alternative infinitive marker in 10 instances: l. 66: *& maky of þe rime & raf*; l. 172: *& euer wende to liui so*; l. 178: *& wende to liui zeres fele*; l. 196: *To wissi after þine owthen wille*; l. 203: *& for to serui þe to queme*; l. 250: *& woni vnder linde & lef*; l. 380: *& weri riche robes wide*; l. 475: *& birly about al o brod*; l. 520: *þai bede he schuld hunti & blowe*; and l. 535: *þat schal suffri þat tende del*. In all of these instances there is a possible scansion allowing the suffix to be syllabic, though headless scansions are also possible alternatives in all cases, with the <-i/-y> not counting as a separate syllable. It is likely that the scribe opted for this spelling variant to indicate retention of the suffix for the sake of the meter: such spellings can therefore be taken as further evidence of the scribe’s unease about the unreliability of <-e> in infinitives.

in non-elision environment is small, compared to the lack of marking, which is the case in over 80% of the non-elided infinitives, the bars circled in Figure 4.

(4) Infinitives in *The Disputation between the body and soul*
 Total: 75 infinitives
 35 in elision environment:
 33 <Ø/-e(n)>/[Ø] (44%): To **bring** ous into rest & ro 110
 2 <en> [-ən] (2.6%) & **nimen** of þi soule kepe 370
 40 in non-elision environment:
 21 <-e>/[Ø] (28%): Ich may **wepe** þat þou bi louz 103
 12 <Ø>/[Ø] (16%): & þou schalt **com** wiþ flesche & felle 454
 7 <-e>/[-ə] (9.3%) To **lese** þe y was fordred 302

Figure 4: Infinitival *-e* in *Þe desputisoun bitven þe bodi & þe soule*



Two other versions of *Body and Soul* – the earlier Laud Misc. 108 version (c. 1290 (c. 1300)), and the later Vernon manuscript version (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. poet. a. 1, c. 1390) – allow an additional insight into Scribe 1's practice with respect to marking the syllabic structure of infinitives.²⁰ As might be expected, the infinitival suffix is preserved more regularly in the spelling, as well as in the scansion, of the earlier Laud version. A surprise, which further highlights the freedom with which Auchinleck's Scribe 1 treated these forms, is the comparison with the later Vernon version. Some examples are shown in Table 1:

20 The three versions compared are the ones presumed to be closest to the posited original, see note (18). The search was from http://digital.wustl.edu/r/revision/Debate_Transmission/VersioningMachine/vm_05-09-2005/samples/versioningmss.xml. The stanza numbers in the citations refer to all three texts. We have cited only stanzas that appear in all three versions; the reconstructed original is supposed to have had 76 stanzas (Linow 1889).

Table 1: *Infinitives in three versions of Body and Soul*

Stanza	Laud Misc. 108	Auchinleck	Vernon
28	geot schaltou3 come wiþ lime and lyþ	zete þou schalt com , lim & liþ	zit schalt þou come · with lime & liþ
45	And hauen al my wille on wold	& lete þe haue þi wil at wold	And hauen al my wille · in wold
56	For to preize and to preche	For to pray or for to preche	For to preye · or for to preche;
59	Ne stonde for to speke with þe	To stond for to speke wiþ þe	Ne stonden heer · to speken mid þe
59	And þou3 schalt comen with fleys and felle	& þou schalt com wiþ flesche & felle	And þow schalt comen , · in flesch and felle

The independently posited shared source for the Laud and Auchinleck versions (Linow 1889: 10) makes it very likely that both the original and the two copyists used the syllabic form of the infinitival suffix very sparingly. However, the earlier Laud scribe was much more careful to preserve orthographic <-e(n)>, while Auchinleck Scribe 1's orthography is closer to what must have been the dominant pronunciation in the spoken language, so he feels at liberty to change *come* to *com*, *preze* to *pray*, and *stonde* to *stond*.²¹

4.3. *Floris and Blancheflour*

Floris and Blancheflour is the first of two texts we examined that were copied by Auchinleck Scribe 3. Thought to have been composed c. 1250 in the Southeast Midlands, this verse romance survives in three other manuscripts, two of which – Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg.4.27.2 and London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius MS D.iii (tagged in LAEME as #271) – predate Auchinleck, both having been dated c. 1300, and one of which – London, British Library, Egerton MS 2862 – is dated to the late fourteenth century. The poem is incomplete in all four manuscripts; with 861 lines the Auchinleck version is the second longest surviving copy. It is written for the most part in octosyllabic couplets – predominantly in four-stress lines, but with some three- or five-stress lines as well. We show the meter in (5).

21 The later Vernon copy of the text also appears more conservative than the Auchinleck copy. The examples in Table 1 are only an illustration of how different Scribe 1's practice was in this respect. We have not done a full statistical comparison of the three versions for this feature – that would be a different project.

(5) The meter of *Floris and Blancheflour*:

Lines 75–78	Rhyme	Beats
To þe londe þar he wold lende,	a	4
For þai founden him so hende.	a	4
Sone so Florice com to londe –	b	4
Wel ʒerne he þankede Godes sonde	b	4

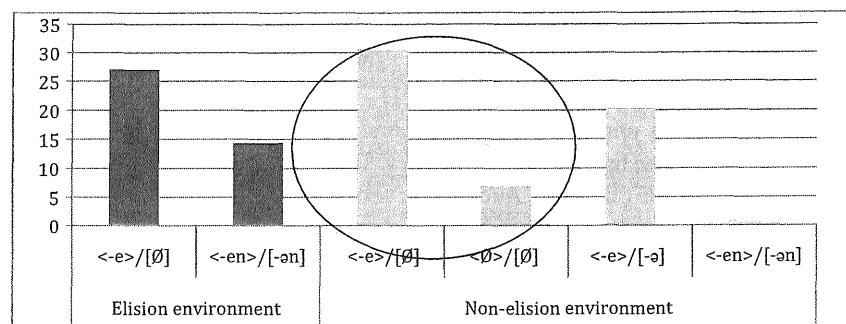
We follow the same principles of counting as in the previous texts. We exclude lines that are metrically problematic, e.g. l. 782: *He ne miʒte hit h[e]lde in þat stounde*. Rhyming infinitives are not counted; the only rhyming infinitives included in non-elision environment are l 51–2 *bring* (rhyming with *king*), and l 824–5 *kis* : *bliss*, also l 514–15.²²

For the infinitive counts see (6) and Figure 5.

(6) Infinitives in *Floris and Blancheflour*

Total 118 infinitives	
49 in elision environment:	
32 <-e>/[Ø] (27%)	þan gan him glade in alle þing (l. 88)
17 <-en>/[-ən] (14.4%)	þat miʒte wonen in þat an (l. 258)
69 in non-elision environment:	
36 <-e>/[Ø] (30.5%):	For to come þi tour wiʒin (l. 792)
8 <Ø>/[Ø] (6.8%):	Wel sone he wil com þe ner (l. 351) ²³
24 <-e>/[-ə] (20.3%)	To helpe þe me were ful lef (l. 204)
1 <-en>/[-ən] (0.8)	Men miʒte libben þer among (l. 286)

Figure 5: Infinitives in *Floris and Blancheflour*



22 Elsewhere in the text (l 216–217, 218) *king* rhymes with *thing* (acc.). Elsewhere *bliss* rhymes with *ful iwis* (l 259–60), *al þis* (l 506–7).

23 All bare-stem infinitives occur in the Auchinleck and the Egerton copies (de Vries: 1966: 29).

Though not as dramatically as Scribe 1, Scribe 3 is a schwa-dropper in over 60% of the verbs in non-elision environment; the third bar is the tallest one.

4.4. *On the Seven Deadly Sins*

Also copied by Scribe 3, *On the Seven Deadly Sins* appears to be one of a kind; though its contents consist of fairly common Christian instructional materials, their framing and arrangement is unique to Auchinleck. Nearly all of the 308-line poem has been written in octosyllabic couplets, illustrated in (7).²⁴

(7) The meter of *On the Seven Deadly Sins*:

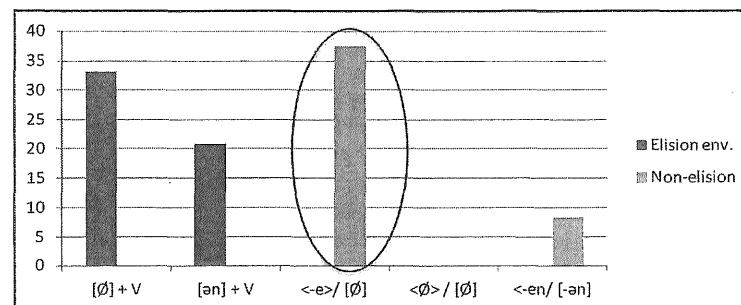
Lines 19–22	Rhyme	Beats
On Englischsch to segge what hit were,	a	4
Als holi cherche ʒou wolde lere;	a	4
For hit is to þe soules biheue,	b	4
Ech man to knowen his bileue.	b	4

For the infinitive counts, see (8) and Figure 6.

(8) Infinitives in *On the Seven Deadly Sins*

Total 24 infinitives	
13 in elision environment:	
8 <-e>/[Ø] (33.3%):	We sschulle bileue on Ihesu Crist (l. 101)
5 <-en>/[-ən] (20.8%):	God wille quiten al here mede (l. 8)
11 in non-elision environment:	
9 <-e>/[Ø] (37.5%):	But to lerne þai bez to slowe (l. 16)
Ø <Ø>/[Ø] (Ø%):	---
2 <-en>/[-ən] (8.3%)	And ich wille tellen ʒou ʒour Crede (l. 100)

Figure 6: Infinitives in *On the Seven Deadly Sins*



24 Three interpolated texts within the poem – the Paternoster, Creed, and 'Ave Maria' prayer – diverge in many lines from this meter and have thus been excluded from our study.

Though based on a more limited set of data, the results show a decisive (over 80%) preference for zero marking in non-elision environment. By way of an interim summary we emphasize again the consistently high rate of suffix-less infinitives in non-elision environment: 92% in *The King of Tars*, 82.5% in *Body and Soul*, 65.5% in *Floris*, and 80% in the *Seven Deadly Sins*. We leave open the question of the potential significance of these data for the characterization of the practices of the two scribes. For the purpose of our comparison to Hoccleve the results in 4.1–4.4 are sufficiently compatible to be bundled together.

5. Thomas Hoccleve²⁵

Hoccleve (c. 1369, c. 1426) entered the Privy Seal Office in Westminster at the age of 19 and continued living in London and working in the same office until 1423. Hundreds of documents are known to have been copied in his hand in this professional capacity. Additionally, several manuscripts preserve copies of his own poetry, copied in his own hand.²⁶ We know that his compositions had a specific destination; he made a point of addressing them to important aristocrats, including the future Henry V.²⁷ According to Bowers (2002), Hoccleve wrote for a “two-fold audience of learned clergy and powerful aristocrats,” though, as Bowers goes on to note, “by appealing jointly to these two audiences, Hoccleve tried doubling his chances for literary posterity, only to prove a two-time loser by not retaining the loyalty of either readership within a generation of his death.”²⁸

5.1 Hoccleve as a “professional bureaucrat”

“Wher dwellist thou?” “Fadir, withouten dreede,
In the office of the Privee Seel I wone
And wryte - there is my custume and wone

25 Biographical information based on Burrow (1977: 265–6).

26 “Three autograph anthologies of his shorter poems have long been known, and Linne Mooney has argued that a copy of his longer poem *The Regiment of Princes* is in his handwriting” (Wakelin 2014: 283).

27 His best-known work, *The Regiment of Princes* (1412), was addressed to the future Henry V. The set of poems known as *Series* (1421–22) were addressed to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. As observed by Bowers, “Hoccleve made strategic efforts to address his own poems directly to grandees such as Edward, Duke of York, John, Duke of Bedford, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, Joan FitzAlan, Countess of Hereford, and of course King Henry V” (2002: 356).

28 See further Richardson (1986), Knapp (1999).

Unto the Seel, and have twenti yeer
And foure come Estren, and that is neer.”

(*Regiment of Princes*, II. 800–5)

Hoccleve’s identity as a clerk, his career as a “professional bureaucrat” (Richardson 1986: 321), often comes up in connection with his own literary creations. Writing of the practices of what he terms “bureaucratic scribes” – fourteenth- and fifteenth-century London clerks who demonstrably copied literary manuscripts on the side – Daniel Wakelin (2014: 89) observes that the careful transmission and imitation of old documents would have played a central role in these scribes’ professional lives: “Accuracy mattered. The scribes of London, when they joined the guild, swore an oath not to issue documents unless they had been ‘well examined word by word’ and had to master proper grammar lest ‘thei erre’ in drafting.” In his long poem, *The Regiment of Princes*, Hoccleve espouses this painstaking approach to text in a passage on the professional responsibilities of a clerk or “wryter”. Writing of the necessity of enlisting mind, eye, and hand in the work, he insists that “the mynde al hool, withouten variance, / On ye and hand awayte moot alway, / And they two eek on him, it is no nay” (II. 999–1001).²⁹ Studies of Hoccleve’s own copies of his verse suggest that this careful attention to detail carried over into his literary endeavors.

5.2. Hoccleve’s priorities in orthography and versification

In a series of important studies Burrow (1999, 2013) and Jefferson (1987, 2000, 2013) have given us superbly detailed accounts of Hoccleve’s holograph verse material. One of the properties of the entire holograph corpus is the remarkable syllabic consistency of the verse line, more so than Chaucer’s. An illustration of Hoccleve’s typical decasyllabic line is shown in (9):

- (9) Hoccleve’s decasyllabic line:
And many a day and nyght that wikkid hyne
Hadde befor vexed my poore goost
So grevously that of angwissh and pyne
No rycher man was nowhere in no coost.

29 The full passage, also cited in Wakelin (2014: 89–90) reads:

A wrytter moot three thynges to him knytte
And in tho / may be no disseuerance
Mynde / ye / and hand / non may from other flitte
But in hem moot be ioynt contynuanche.
The mynd al hool / withowten varyance
On ye and hand / awayte moot alway
And they two eek on him / it is no nay.

This dar I seyn, may no wight make his boost
 That he with thought was bet than I aqweynted,
 For to the deeth he wel ny hath me feynted.

[*Regiment of Princes*, l II. 8–14³⁰]

To cite but one telling statistic Jefferson provides (1987: 96–7), 35% of all the lines in the holographs do not have an internal final *-e*; those lines eliminate the question of how to count the syllables within the line. 98% of these unproblematic lines have exactly ten syllables. Moreover, a comparison scansion, with and without final *-e*'s in the poem *The Complaint of the Virgin* (ibid. p. 98), shows 96% decasyllabic lines if unelided final *-e*'s are counted, but if one drops all the *-e*'s, the regularity disappears, rendering more than half of the lines unmetrical, i.e. not decasyllabic. Jefferson (2000: 219) also points out that "... where the demands of the five-beat line and the demands of the syllable count come into conflict, the demands of the syllable count take precedence." Thus, there is independent consensus that Hoccleve was a consummate syllable-counter, which is fully in line for someone who has been described as a "professional bureaucrat".

Specifically on the orthographic form and the syllabic value of the infinitival suffix *<-e(n)>* Jefferson (2000: 218–19) writes: "Hoccleve's use of the *-en* ending is not, in fact, particularly common. With one exception (*armen* GVIII. 135) it is never used before a consonant [emphasis DM, ER].³¹ Thus, in positions where it makes no difference to the syllable count whether an *-e* or an *-en* ending is used, Hoccleve almost invariably uses *-e*." This factual observation is crucial for the interpretation of the way in which scribal and authorial practice reflects the expectations of the target audience. The preservation of a consonant-final *<-en>* before a vowel or weak *<h->* is a way of signaling to the readers to avoid the potential hiatus they might otherwise automatically assume, as in the examples from the holograph *Dialogue* (Durham, University Library, MS Cosin V. iii. 9) in (10):³²

30 We cite the text from Blyth (1999). We are aware that it is a "student edition" which includes emendations according to hypotheses about Hoccleve's "intended" spelling, see <http://hocclevearchive.org/hocclevearchive/regiment-of-princes-collation-tables/>. Our most substantive arguments are based on the holograph studies by Burrow (1999, 2013) and Jefferson (1987, 2000, 2013), and our own searches of the *Dialogue* edition of Burrow (1999).

31 Burrow (1999: 115) also comments on the variation between verbal *<-e>* and *<-en>* and records avoidance of *<-en>* in non-eliding position in the two *Learn to Die* holograph copies.

32 Cited from Burrow's (1999) edition of Hoccleve's *Complaint and Dialogue*.

(10) And syn þat shee shal of vs make an ende	288
Wherthurgh yee oghten deeme of me amis?	471
vs.	
But he wel rule him / may in slippen eft.	394
And thow desdey nest / for to folwen it	453

The admirably thorough philological studies of Hoccleve's language and meter (Jefferson 1987, 2000, 2013; Burrow 1999, 2013) on which we rely for our data in this section have led to the inference from the systematic use of unelided *-e*'s that final *-e* "was pronounced" (Jefferson 1987: 103, 106). There is no doubt that Hoccleve resorted to the realization of a suffixal syllable in some infinitives in non-elision environments for the purpose of maintaining a regular syllable count. The debatable point, however, is whether that usage reflects accurately the state of the infinitival suffix in the ambient spoken language or whether it was driven by constraints on the line structure – and it is on that point that we part ways with the previous scholarship.

Burrow (2013: 52) goes as far as asserting: "Hoccleve's final *-e*'s, so far from representing any special poetic or archaic usage, can have no other source than his own customary [emphasis DM, ER] English". He finds support for the assumption of "a fully functioning *-e*" as late as the 1420s in Hoccleve's speech in the parallel usage of word forms with *<-e>* in the verse and the prose sections of his holographs. This would be a serious consideration, even if, as Burrow recognizes, this identifiable individual's usage was old-fashioned. Recall, however, that all comments regarding the realization of scribal *<-e>* in Hoccleve carefully exclude elision environments: no one claims that *<-e>*'s are syllabic before vowels or weak [h-], as is clear from the examples in (10).³³ This applies equally to the grammatically justifiable *<-e>*'s,

33 Moreover, Hoccleve's treatment of initial *<h->* is very suggestive; he treats native *<h->*-initial words as if they were French, which further supports the argument that his way of counting or excluding final syllables in the line is not primarily language-based, but manipulated to fit the consistently decasyllabic metrical template. Since Hoccleve's practice is often bundled together with that of the Ellesmere copy of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (San Marino, Huntington Library, EL 26 C 9), it should be noted that non-elision of *<-e>* in Chaucer is the norm before native words other than function words, as in these examples from *The Knight's Tale*:

For **thilke** peyne, and **thilke** hoote fir KT 2383:
 Ne me ne list **thilke** opinions to telle KT 2813

On the affinity between the Ellesmere and Hoccleve see Bowers (2002).

such as the plural forms and the weak inflections of monosyllabic adjectives, and adverbial <-e>.³⁴

(11) Welthe of the world / and longe & faire dayes	275
As þat it seemeth to my simple auis	510
Thow art cleene out of hire affeccioun	676
My gilt / as cleene / as keuerchiefs dooth sope	826

The treatment of etymologically and grammatically motivated final <-e>'s is clearly subject to the patterns of elision familiar in syllable-counting verse from as early as the thirteenth-century *Ormulum*. We believe that this is a very important consideration in reconstructing the spoken language: if the realization of final schwa is controlled by the presence or absence of an onset in the following word, the orthographic final <-e> cannot be an indication of how a particular form is stored in the speaker's lexicon and learned by the next generation.

Focusing on the infinitives in particular again: we cited Burrow in the opening paragraph of Section 2 that "...all infinitives in Hoccleve's holographs are written with the inflection <e> or <en>. There are no zero infinitives" (Burrow 2013: 46).³⁵ Clearly, this is quite unexpected in view of the data we cited from Auchinleck Scribes 1 and 3, whose dialects have been localized to the same region in which Hoccleve lived and worked, as noted in Section 3. How likely is it that four generations after the production of the Auchinleck a robust change-in-progress in the same dialect region would be reversed?

Expanding the comparison with reference to Chaucer's usage is instructive. In an independent computer-based statistical study of unelided final -e infinitives in *The Canterbury Tales*, Barber and Barber (1990, 1991) found that among the 382 infinitives 40% were not pronounced and 60% were variable, sometimes pronounced (Barber - Barber 1991: 77).³⁶ The infinitive of *have* is one form which never scans as disyllabic.

34 All examples are from Burrow's (1999) edition of the holograph *Dialogue* (the Durham MS).

35 Putter and Jefferson's 2005 study of the infinitival usage in the alliterative tradition finds that some poems in the alliterative corpus also treat the infinitival inflection as syllabic.

36 Barber - Barber (1990, 91) give some useful information on the frequency of infinitives in relation to the likelihood of loss or preservation of a syllabic suffix: appearing 50 times or more, *have* is not pronounced as disyllabic; appearing 20–49 times, *saye* is not pronounced as disyllabic; *telle* is sometimes pronounced as disyllabic; appearing at least 10 times, *come* is sometimes pronounced as disyllabic; and *make* is sometimes

Hoccleve, of course, was acquainted with Chaucer and admired his poetry. In (12) we illustrate Hoccleve's usage compared to Chaucer's:

(12) <i>Have</i> , inf. in <i>The Regiment of Princes</i> . ³⁷	
(a) Swich surquidrie in me shal <i>have</i> no place	371
Withouten whom my goost can <i>have</i> no reste.	1043
Thow shalt no cause <i>have</i> more thus to muse,	1840

Compare:

(b) And if aght leve, let me thanne <i>have</i> paart.	168
We two wole <i>have</i> but o mannes sighte.	2767
To <i>have</i> swich a cure in governance	2925

Half of the ten reliably scannable lines *definitely* disallow final -e on the infinitive of *have*, as in (12a); in the other cases (12b) the realization of <-e> is optional, therefore uninformative.³⁸ The logical inference is that if Hoccleve sticks in orthographic final -e's even in cases where they are completely gone in Chaucer, the practice is motivated not by his customary English, but by his familiarity with spelling conventions, the pronunciation of French final <-e>, the practice of decasyllabic versification involving elision, and loyalty to spelling norms that he followed in his day job, both in his verse compositions and in his prose.³⁹

pronounced as disyllabic. Their search was based on the 1898 Globe edition of the *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*.

37 The whole text in the online version of the Blyth (1999) edition of *The Regiment of Princes* (see also note 30) was searched; only infinitives in non-eliding environment are included.

38 We say "optional" because the lines illustrated in (12b) would conform to the Hoccleveian ten-syllable count even if *have* was monosyllabic. The ten-syllable line in Hoccleve does not require a feminine ending.

39 For a discussion of Hoccleve's familiarity with French see Blyth (1999: Introduction). Blyth notes that towards the end of his life Hoccleve wrote out a *Formulary* "containing model letters, petitions, and other documents in French or Latin, of the sort that a Privy Seal clerk would have to produce" (1999: 3). This, we believe, was directly relevant to his treatment of final <-e> in the verse. The situation is parallel to patterns of optional final-schwa realization in the weak preterite suffix towards the end of the fourteenth century (Minkova 2009: see 326–7, note 23). An observable model of how such optionality works in living languages is provided by Modern French, where acoustic schwa can be observed even if the orthographic form of the word does not have a word-final -e; see Adda-Decker - Lamel (1999). Moreover, they report a significant difference in the insertion of word-final schwa in current French depending on speaking style: "The word-final schwa ... is much more frequent in read speech (65%) than in spontaneous speech (20%)".

Interestingly, Hoccleve's practice was not immediately transparent even to his contemporaries. Some copies of Hoccleve's holographs are of the same vintage, e.g. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Selden Supra 53.⁴⁰ Burrow (1999: xxvii-viii) remarks specially on the addition of 'to' before infinitives in the Selden MS, adding, "Here, as elsewhere, it seems that the scribe who made such additions may have been sometimes motivated by a desire to correct the syllable count, being unaware of the syllabic value of Hoccleve's unstressed *-e*"; see further his comments (1999: xxxiii) that even Selden, considered the best copy of the holograph, fails in replicating the <-e>'s and the schwas in Hoccleve's "extremely vulnerable," "delicate creation".

6. Concluding remarks

This study started with two goals in mind: first, test the empirical data-base for the loss of infinitival inflections, and second, explore the ways in which the findings inform us about text production and consumption. We have looked at orthographic and metrical usage of the same marker in the same dialect area with almost a century intervening between the two sets of texts.

While our findings cannot offer any conclusive indications of genre or audience, they do reveal some patterns that merit further study. Returning to the matter of Auchinleck's unknown audience, while Pearsall (1977) has suggested that the book was likely used for private reading, its large dimensions might argue for its reading in public contexts instead or as well. Coleman (1996) has argued for the widespread practice of public reading among literate upper classes (she focuses on courtly literature composed for eminently literate audiences), that *aurality* typifies the recreational consumption of late medieval literary texts. Auchinleck falls outside of the temporal scope of Coleman's study, but the practices of both scribes, and Scribe 1 in particular, in regards to infinitival inflection would fit with the possibility that they wrote for an audience at ease with aural consumption and delivery of text. This theory is also consistent with our findings that both scribes copied a slightly higher percentage of bare infinitives in the two romances we examined; it would make sense that these texts in particular would be experienced aurally by their earliest audience. An expanded study of these scribes' bodies of work may shed light on whether this pattern holds steady in their practices.

On the philological/linguistic side, one of the analytical questions never answered in the literature is the dating of the reanalysis of schwa: from an "optionally deletable" segment in the earliest ME texts, going back to the *Peterborough*

40 See Burrow (1999: lxii-lxiii) on the *Complaint and Dialogue Series*.

Chronicle, it becomes "optionally insertable" at some point in the fourteenth century, possibly earlier in the North. Focusing on the treatment of infinitives in the hands of very different practitioners, we can say, safely, that in informal, colloquial usage, possibly the counterpart of what would today be considered "sloppy" pronunciation, the reanalysis was well under way in the first half of the fourteenth century.

Throughout this paper we tried to focus on infinitival marking as a window onto scribal adaptation to the audience's linguistic and orthographic expectations. Our research on this relatively narrow topic made it clear that there are still areas that require further attention. For example, Reed (1950) provides some useful comparative statistics on the loss or retention of ME infinitival final *-n*, but these statistics have never been checked; now with *LAEME* we are in a position to do so. Other topics meriting further inquiry include the different rate of bare-stem infinitival usage in the work of Scribes 1 and 3; the relevance of item frequency and the structure of the stem, perhaps involving a comparison with Barber - Barber (1990, 1991); the loss of <-e(n)> in relation to the weight and the type of coda of the stem, and the extent of Hoccleve's contribution to the survival and spread of orthographic final <-e> in the fifteenth century.

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Spatio-temporal systems in Margaret Paston's Letters¹

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to carry out a systematic analysis of the spatio-temporal systems in the register of letters along the lines of historical pragmatics and discourse analysis (Taavitsainen – Jucker (2010, 2015), etc.). The corpus consists of letters by Margaret Paston selected from the Paston Letters edited by Davis (1971[2004]).

After providing a definition of the spatio-temporal systems, the present paper first conducts a statistical analysis of how frequently these elements are employed in both spatial and temporal domains. Another examination of the discourse then shows how these elements are interrelated with each other in the integrated spatio-temporal domain, and how these relationships change in discourse.

This research shows how Margaret Paston utilises the systems of space and time, making a meaningful contribution to the pragmatic study of letters in Middle English.

Keywords: Margaret Paston, spatio-temporal system, letter, historical pragmatics

1. Introduction

Letters are of particular interest to linguistic analysis in that they are "part of a dialogue (...) and interactions between writers and readers develop and build" (Wood 2004[2007]: 230), and that they reflect how the writer sees the world around her in those interactions.² In the following context in (1), the writer Margaret Paston exploits various elements of space and time in a letter addressed to her husband, John Paston I:

- (1) Your fader and myn was dys day sevenyth at Bekelys for a matyr of the Pryor of Bromholme, and he lay at Gerlyston þat nyth and was þer tyl it was ix of þe cloke and þe toder day. And I sentte thedyr for a gounne, and my moder seyde þat I xulde non have dens tyl I had þe þer a-zen; and so þei cowde non gete. My fader Garneys sentte me worde þat he xulde ben here þe nexth weke, and myn emme also, and pleyen

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2 This paper refers to the writer/speaker in general as 'she', because its corpus consists of the letters by Margaret Paston.