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Abstract

The thesis presents an edition and study of ten late medieval letters from the late 15th century and early 16th century. The texts are dated to the period 1458–1504. All the letters may be classified as command letters, as they involve a command or request from a social superior. The phrasing of the command or request is based on the social context, distance, status and the relationship between the addresser and the addressee. This study shows a varied picture of the command letter as a genre and the phrasing of directives from superiors to their subordinates and members of the nobility.

The thesis is divided into two parts: the study and the edition. The first part gives the historical background of the study, the theoretical background, a description of the physical makeup of the manuscripts and the analysis of the texts based on their form and content. Directness is analysed on the basis of two major theories within historical pragmatics: Politeness theory and Speech act theory.

The second part presents a diplomatic edition of the ten late medieval texts. The edition includes a transcription and a translation of the texts.

The study shows that the letters follow the formulae and structure based on the *ars dictaminis* or *ars dictandi*, but that there is much variation. Letters from superiors to subordinates involving a large social distance tend to be blunt and direct, while correspondences between approximate equals are more polite and avoids offensive utterances to get their requests granted. Situational context and the kind of request are other variables affecting the use of politeness. Command letters mainly perform the function of an appellative which is to provoke the addressee to perform an action in the future.

The study contributes to our understanding of how letter writing conventions have developed over the period of time as well as making available a group of interesting historical documents.

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PART I: THE STUDY

1. Introduction

This thesis is an edition and study of a group of ten late Middle English letters, each written by a social superior and involving a command or request. The texts are studied from the point of view of politeness and directness. In particular, the study will enquire how the phrasing of commands/requests varies according to social contexts, the speakers' status and their relationship to one another. The study will make use of politeness theory and speech act theory. The documents consist of letters from kings to their subjects as well as from members of the nobility, and include letters from four kings (Henry VI, Edward IV, Richard III and Henry VII) as well as several noblemen including John de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk and Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset, as well as the Bishop of Winchester. All the letters are written in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, from 1458 to 1504.

The edition includes both a transcription and a translation of the letters. It is preceded by a study of the letters focusing on their physical and visual characteristics, structure and pragmatic content. Most of these letters show conventional patterns with repeated fixed phrases. A common example is the introductory phrase, 'Trusty and well beloved, we greet you well'. On the other hand, the letters differ greatly in the way in which the actual directives are formulated. The study will focus specifically on this aspect, relating the directives to the use of politeness strategies at the time and to the relationship and relative status of the correspondents.

The following letters are included in the study:

Gloucester, Gloucestershire Archives: GBR/B2/1, fol. 21r

Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: 1300/149

Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/11 (vol. I, pt. 2, fol. 79Br)

Dorchester, Dorset History Centre: D/RGB/LL/727

Sheffield, Sheffield Archives: WWM/D/98

Southampton, Southampton Archives: SC 2/9/2/6

Canterbury, Canterbury Cathedral Archives: CCA-DCc-ChAnt/K/3

Warwick, Warwickshire RO: CR1886/Cupboard 4/Top Shelf/EMC/2

London, British Library: Add. 43490, fol. 49r

London, British Library: Add. 27446, fol. 114r

The edition of the texts is diplomatic, with the purpose of reproducing the text as it is in the manuscript. The transcription is based on the conventions of the MELD project (A Corpus of Middle English Local Documents, www.uis.no/meld), and the texts will eventually be included in the corpus.

Apart from the edition itself, the thesis includes a study of (im)politeness strategies in directives written by superiors, related to the social and historical background. The texts will be studied from the point of view of their structure and the use of directives. As the study is limited to relatively few texts, the selection has been strictly defined to be comparable: all represent commands and request letters from superiors. The study will be purely qualitative in terms of method, focussing on the individual manuscript texts and their contexts rather than analysing large amounts of data. It will also include a brief description of the physical documents and their content including their historical background.

This study will use politeness and speech act theory for its theoretical background.

Politeness theory was first developed by Brown and Levinson, and their approach remains the most influential of all the politeness theories. They classified politeness into two aspects: positive and negative politeness, directly linked to the notions of positive and negative face. Positive face is a person's public self-image and the wish to impress another. This is generally to get praise rather than be criticised. Negative face, on the other hand, has to do with 'a person's wish to be unimpeded in their actions' (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 115). Positive politeness mainly focuses on what interactants have in common and reduces the distance between them, whereas negative politeness avoids the invasion of one's personal space and hence increasing the distance between them (Nevala 2010: 423). Power and distance are variables traditionally associated with politeness and highly relevant to the present material.

Politeness is always subject to change and so the present-day politeness cannot be compared to that of the Middle ages. For example, the social positions of the writer and receiver of the correspondence and their power characteristics largely dictate the use of address forms. Hence, the social perspective is the main reason for different uses of address forms. On the other hand, the actual directives are much less formulaic and may reflect a wide range of politeness strategies. This study will use politeness theory to address the ways in which the writers of these correspondences phrase directives to get the addressee to perform an action, and to

enquire to what extent they are writing in a socially acceptable manner and making polite requests and commands.

Speech act theory is another subfield of pragmatics and was developed by J.L. Austin. He emphasizes that in uttering a word, actions are performed. He affirms that there are three kinds of utterances: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary is the act of saying something, illocutionary, the act performed in saying something and perlocutionary is the intended or unintended meaning of an utterance. For the purpose of this study, it is the illocutionary act that is most relevant. John Searle further classifies illocutionary acts into five types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 92-93).

Directives, the main focus in the present study, are a kind of speech act that uses the speaker's intention to get someone to do something in the future. They are mostly in the form of commands, requests, simple suggestions and recipes. There are many ways in which directives are formulated and that depends on the relationship between the speaker and the addressee (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 102). This study will explore language use in correspondences in order to study the formulation of directives in the late medieval period and their relationship to social conditions.

Letter writing is known to be one of the oldest forms of non-spoken communication which also shaped social institutions. Correspondence, both private and official served as a medium for resolving long distance interaction. This encouraged interpersonal bonds which also fostered and maintained social organization (Okulska 2010: 173).

Even though the study of historical letters and letter writing has grown enormously over the past fifteen years, most studies of directives have focussed on large corpora rather than close studies of individual letters (Palander-Collin 2010: 651). The pragmatic study of such letters is crucial for understanding the development of letter writing processes and conventions. In particular, the idea that medieval letters were formulaic does not necessarily make much sense considering the variation of phrasing and choice of expression within a single, narrowly defined letter category. The present study will therefore contribute to our understanding of the development of letter writing conventions as well as making available a group of interesting historical documents.

2. Theoretical orientation

2.1 Politeness theory

2.1.1 The concept of politeness

Politeness is an important aspect of verbal interaction and forms one of the central concepts within pragmatics. It is not only realized on the basis of the speakers' approach but also the hearer's assessment of what the speaker says and the effect it has on the rest of the conversation (Nevala 2010: 419). Lakoff (1990: 34) defines politeness as 'a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange'. With this, one can think of a conflict-free communication where both interactants' interests and needs are satisfied. In cases of communication where one party benefits and the other loses, the situation leads to insults and gradually to the breakdown of communication. Lakoff mentions that there is the need for politeness strategies to be preserved for 'harmony' and 'cohesion' (Lakoff 1990: 34).

The most influential theory of politeness remains that proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978). The central aspects of this politeness theory are the concepts of positive and negative face, power and distance (see further 2.1.3). Interactional status or role is also an important aspect of politeness. The social status of interactants is generally stable, while their interactional role is subject to change and depends on the relationship the interactants have between them depending on 'intentionality and power' (Nevala 2010: 419). As politeness has to do with interaction, in historical pragmatics it is normally studied in materials such as 'personal or business letters, courtroom discourse, drama, literature and didactic dialogues' (Nevala 2010: 419).

2.1.2 Grice's cooperative principle

Grice's cooperative principle is one of the fundamental concepts in the study of pragmatics; however, it can also be the most confusing. Paul H. Grice (1975: 45) introduced a principle which states that:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk of exchange in which you are engaged.

The cooperative principle is divided into four maxims, namely: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Firstly, the maxim of quantity determines the boundaries that are suitable for a speaker; extending beyond that will lead the speaker into providing unnecessary information. Secondly, the maxim of quality has to do with the truth in a speaker's submission. Here, the speaker has limited time to guess or lie about an issue but instead may be expected to speak the truth that first comes to mind. Thirdly, the maxim of relevance focuses on what is accurate. The speaker is expected to stick to the content of the conversation and not deviate. Fourthly, the maxim of manner structures a speaker's words in a precise and concise way (Grice 1975: 47). It has no room for equivocal and lengthy conversations. Grice (1989) as cited in (Ephratt 2014: 816) states that all of these are determined by two primary assumptions: conversation as 'maximal exchange of information' and 'conversation as a logical action'.

2.1.3 Brown and Levinson's politeness theory

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, first proposed in 1987, has been criticized by numerous scholars but still remains the most influential theory of politeness. Watts (1992: 65-67) is of the view that forms of address should not be regarded as politeness unless a speaker makes use of it in 'excess' or very consciously. Thomas (1995: 178-179) states that the word 'politeness' is not appropriate because it represents a 'moral' or 'psychological' element. Although there are a number of such criticisms against Brown and Levinson's theory, it still

remains the most discussed theory and the main source on which scholars develop their ideas; it therefore makes sense to make use of it here.

Meier (1995) as cited in (Nevala 2010: 421), argues that, although Brown and Levinson proposed the politeness theory in their influential 1987 book, they do not give an actual definition of politeness in general but rather define politeness based on negative and positive politeness.

Brown and Gilman (1989: 161) define politeness simply as a ‘means of putting things in such a way as to take account of the feelings of the hearer’. Thus, it is a mechanism that considers the wants of the other in communication. The most important concept in Brown and Levinson’s theory is that of *face*, giving rise to the idea of face-threatening acts and positive and negative politeness.

Face and Face Threatening Acts (FTAs)

Face and face threatening acts are central aspects of politeness theory. Brown and Levinson acquired the term ‘face’ from Ervin Goffman (1967) and from an English folk term which relates face to emotions such as humiliation and embarrassment or ‘losing face’ (1987: 61). Face as defined by Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) is ‘the public self-image that every member of the society wants to claim for himself’. Face may be either sustained or lost in a social interaction. Face needs, they assume, may differ from culture to culture, but the general feature is the ability of the individuals to have in mind the public self-image of each other and to adapt that in an interaction (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61-62).

Brown and Levinson recognize two aspects of face: positive and negative face. Positive face refers to the desire to please others in order to be approved while negative face is the desire for one’s privacy and unrestricted freedom. The two are said to be inverse since positive face encourages friendliness and contact with people, and negative face is contented with avoiding contact (Chapman and Routledge 2005: 158). The relationship between these two can therefore be termed as inverse. Positive face is when the speaker reduces his public self-image to a want such that in an interaction, there is the want to be understood, liked, approved of and to make the hearer admire such desire (Brown and Levinson 1987: 62).

Brown and Levinson describe these two classifications as follows:

negative face: the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others. Positive face: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others (Brown and Levinson 1987: 62).

When a speaker says something, which becomes a threat to the hearer's self-image or face wants, it is called a face-threatening act (FTA). For instance, in using a direct speech act to order something ('Give me that paper!'), the speaker acts as having more social power than the hearer. If the speaker does not have that power, it becomes a face threatening act. There are cases where people avoid the use of social power by questioning through an indirect speech as in the example 'could you pass me that paper, please?' This makes it a request rather than an order. Reducing possible threats to another face is called a face-saving act (Yule 1996: 134).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 2), speech acts innately form face threatening acts which require politeness in order to amend these. As a result, three main approaches to performing speech acts were identified, namely, positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record politeness.

Positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record politeness

First, positive politeness mainly focuses on what interactants have in common by reducing the distance between them, whereas negative politeness avoids the invasion of one's personal space and hence increases the distance between them. In other words, Positive politeness gives attention to the similarities people share as a result of their closeness whereas negative politeness avoids imposition on the hearer (Nevala 2010: 423). Lastly, off-record politeness defies one of the maxims of Grice (1975) which presumes that the addressee can deduce the expected meaning in a discourse. The Maxim of Relevance is breached if a speaker utters something that is not overtly relevant (Bouchara 2009: 12). For instance, the statement 'this soup is a bit bland' means 'pass the salt' and it breaches the Relevance Maxim (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987: 215). Looking at how negative and positive politeness have been explained by Brown and Levinson helps in the breakdown of address choice and gives a simple and useful framework for describing the use of different politeness strategies or the

lack of them; thus, it can be used for both the historical and modern societal settings, always bearing in mind that conventions change over time.

Power and distance

Power and distance have a strong effect on interaction. Brown and Levinson (1987), in their attempt to explain the principles of polite speech, stipulated that context is the overarching factor which determines whether the strategy to be deployed by both the speaker and hearer would be polite or impolite. In assessing distance, they note that social distance can be realised through stable social attributes (Brown and Levinson 1987: 77), and further describe power based on the hearer's imposition of his own plans on the speaker irrespective of the speaker's own plans.

Brown and Gilman (1960, 1989) have looked at the correlation between address forms, power and solidarity between speakers. The use of 'you' in Shakespeare's plays was seen amongst equals while 'thou' was from the superiors to their subjects. However, Brown and Gilman (1989) believe that these two concepts are not easy to define from the historical perspective. It was noted by Thomas (1995: 129) that there is a misconception about power and distance since subordinates or subjects are socially distant from their superiors. Power can be seen to be either voluntary or involuntary or even both in some instances to achieve a desired objective due to the case of one having power over the other. Evidence shows that distance has a correlation with negative politeness (Dillard et al, as cited in Nevala 2010: 423) while closeness between the interactants produces direct and explicit speech due to the informality of the interactants.

2.2. Speech Act theory

2.2.1 Basic classifications

Speech act theory is a subfield of pragmatics developed by J. L Austin in his famous work, *How to Do Things With Words* (1962) and further developed by the American philosopher J.

R. Searle (1979). They both believed that language is not just about describing and informing but also emphasized that, in uttering a word, actions are performed.

Austin suggests that there are three kinds of utterances: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. Leech (1983: 199) defines these types as follows:

Locutionary: performing an act of saying something

Illocutionary: performing an act in saying something

Perlocutionary: performing an act by saying something

In other words, locutionary refers to the act of producing a meaningful utterance, illocutionary to the act performed in saying something, which could be in the form of a greeting, asking a question, promising or ordering the listener to do something, and perlocutionary, the intended or unintended meaning of an utterance. Hence, the effects of both the locutionary and the illocutionary acts on the hearer and this can be enlightening, persuading, insulting (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 92-93).

Austin (1962) further classifies illocutionary force into five different classes: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives. Verdictives, just as the name implies represent either a formal or informal act of giving a verdict by a judge, arbitrator, or umpire. Austin clarifies that they do not necessarily need to be final but can be an estimate, appraisal, or reckoning. Exercitives are illocutionary acts that are mostly emphasized by exercising power, rights, or influence. Some examples are voting, appointing, ordering, advising, warning etc. Commisives are illocutionary acts that commits the hearer to do something and this could be either a promise or undertaking. He emphasizes that it includes intentions and declarations. Teaming up with someone is typified as a commissive. Behabitives are illocutionary acts having to do with attitudes and the social behaviour of people. For example, apologizing, congratulating, commending, condoling, cursing etc are words expressing attitudes. Lastly, Expositives are how words are used in a way to fit in a conversation and includes phrases such as 'I argue', 'I concede', 'I illustrate', 'I assume', etc.

Searle (1979) further develops illocutionary acts in a different and influential way. He suggests that certain conditions be met for an utterance to be considered a promise, greeting or questions and names this felicity conditions of Speech Act. He classifies illocutionary acts into five types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations (Searle 1979: 12-17).

In Searle's classification, assertives commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition. Commissives commit the speaker to some future course of action. Expressives are illocutionary acts that express the speaker's emotions and attitudes. Examples of expressive verbs are 'thank', 'congratulate', 'apologize' etc. Declarations are illocutionary acts that bring about changes in the status of condition of the hearer. Finally, directives are utterances by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. Some verbs used in this category are 'request', 'beg', 'plead', 'entreat' etc. Basically, directive speech acts normally give instructions as to what people should or should not do.

2.2.2 Directives

Directives, the main focus in the present study, are a kind of speech act that reflects the speaker's intention to provoke an action from the addressee to do something in the future. They are mostly in the form of commands, requests, simple suggestions and recipes. There are many ways in which directives may be formulated and the choice generally depends on the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Some utterances may be 'direct' and 'unmitigated' while others are 'elusive' and 'vague'; this does not make it easy to identify the possible directives at any point in time and the changes made in the past centuries in the English language history (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 102).

Nevertheless, Kohnen (2008: 296) provides basic steps in analysing the directives in the history of the English Language. He suggests that the most important step to establishing a directive is the text genre. He explains this by citing an example of sermons and directive speech acts. The main function of a sermon, he assumes, is to give religious instruction as to what to do, which implies the use of a directive. He suggests that such instances persist and may be found 'throughout the history of English'. He states that once the genre is selected, 'the limited corpus of the genre' is easily compiled and all such records are established.

Based on his methodology, Kohnen (2008: 298) defines and delimits a directive speech act as follows based on Searle (1976) as:

an attempt by a speaker or writer to get the addressee to carry out an act. Requests which are not directed to the addressee (that is, the audience of a sermon, the addressee of a

letter and a prayer) were not included in this investigation, nor were directives which were introduced as citations (especially from the Bible). It was assumed that a directive was generally expressed by a (spoken or written) language unit corresponding to a sentence or clause and not by larger stretches of discourse or whole texts.

He further suggests that a directive may be categorized into four manifestations in a corpus: performatives, imperatives, modal expressions and indirect manifestations (Kohnen 2008: 298-300).

Performatives are typified with a directive speech act verb in the 'first person singular or plural indicative active, an object referring to the addressee and the requested act' as in the example below which consist of the performative verbs, 'pray' and 'besech' (Kohnen 2008: 298):

Wherefore **we pray and besech thy maiestye**, that at no tyme thou suffer vs to be vnthankfull vnto these exceding great benefites, nor yet vnworthy of thy greate merytes...

(Cuthbert Tunstall, Certaine godly and deuout prayers)

Imperatives, the second type, is subdivided into the first person, second person and the third person imperatives. The first-person imperatives usually consist of 'let's' or 'let us.' Another variant of this type involves the subjunctive in an inverted form in the example 'be we war'. The second person imperative uses the strict form of imperatives which may or may not include the second-person pronoun. Some words cited from his examples are 'go forwarde', 'punisse', 'distroy'. The third person imperative also makes use of the third-person subjunctive and the third person statements together with 'let'. A cited example is the phrase 'Let no man think' (Kohnen 2008: 298-299).

The third type of directives, the modal expressions, are typically constructions with modal verbs and lexical items which depicts 'obligation', 'permission' or 'possibility'. An instance of an obligation is 'we must' in his example:

We **must** take heed how we scoff at Religion.

Indirect directive is the last group which is further divided into speaker-based declaratives, hearer-based interrogatives, hearer-based conditionals and the rather varied group of ‘other manifestations’ (Kohnen 2008: 299-300).

Speaker-based declaratives are demonstrated with a first-person pronoun and a verb which reveals the speaker’s desires or attitude. An illustration is ‘I’d like’ and ‘I hope’ in the examples:

I’d like us to think for a little while this morning just what it means to be Christian.
(BNC, KN6)

I hope we may meet when you are in the UK next month. (BNC, HD4)

Hearer-based interrogatives are expressed through the questioning of the hearer’s ‘ability’ and ‘willingness’ to perform an act in the future. Kohnen illustrates with this example:

Please **could** you thank George most sincerely for his endeavours. (BNC, HD4)

Hearer-based conditionals consist of a conditional clause with ‘positive statement’ as in the example below:

Gentyll Cosyn, **yif hit plese you to sende** hem up with such as hit lykith you to send for me, I wolde hertly pray you. (Stonor Letters)

The final type is what Kohnen terms ‘other manifestation’ which generally refers to ways of expressing a directive indirectly. This is mainly done by implicitly saying that an action is beneficial or necessary:

...it’s time we sat down for a while and laid aside our burden of care. (LLC, S.12.1b)¹

¹ London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English, cited from Kohnen (2008).

According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984: 196-197), requests and apologies are realized based on three different variables: 'Intra-cultural, situational variability', 'Cross-cultural variability' and 'Individual variability'.

Language use may differ from 'culture' to 'culture' and 'language' to 'language'. Some social constraints in some social situations may affect the differences in the speech act pattern. They give an example of how requests directed to superiors in some culture may require 'less direct terms' than that to an inferior. Again, based on social constraints, some members of a particular culture may be more direct with their requests than members belonging to a different culture. Also, some 'personal variables' including 'sex', 'age' or 'level of education' may also affect speech act realization in the same society (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984: 197).

According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, requests may be likened to considered potential face-threatening acts against someone's negative face, as the hearer's 'freedom of action' and 'freedom from imposition' is infringed upon by the speaker.

2.3. Genre theory

As noted by Kohnen (2008: 296), the use of directives is to a large extent determined by genre. As the present study focusses on a highly specific genre – that of command letters – it is worth briefly considering the concept of genre. Genre has been defined as 'a distinctive type or category of literary composition' (Webster cited in Swales 1990: 33). Basically, genre features are typical of a particular discourse which may be either written or spoken with or without any literary intentions (Swales 1990: 33), and they may be seen as a result of culture and social forms of communication in a given time and setting. Genre studies help to recognise the various ranges of genres and their characteristics in the history of English. It also aims to account for the changes in genre features that have occurred overtime (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 148).

Genres may be grouped into types based on formal or functional criteria. Different texts of a particular genre may vary in terms of genre features, but they share some underlying similarity of form and purpose (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 149).

Genre features may be realised differently in different periods, but the main features remain unchangeable: for example, a letter is always a text written by a sender to a receiver, normally written in first person and with an addressee. At the less fundamental level, genre features are dynamic as new features replace old ones: for example, the greeting formulae of letters have changed greatly over time. Some changes may be as a result of ‘changes in the audience, cultural conditions, and changing patterns of thoughts’ (Taavitsainen 1997: 54).

Genres provide guidelines both for authors and readers, as models for composition and help for interpretation (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 148). In this way, genre characteristics have an important function in meaning making as they help readers interpret and understand utterances, be they serious or ironic (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 146).

The terms genre and text types are sometimes used interchangeably. However, some scholars, such as Biber (1988) differentiates between them: Biber uses ‘genre’ to refer to groupings of texts according to external factors; in contrast, ‘text types’ are defined by internal features (Biber 1988: 170).

The letter as a genre is ancient and has gone through many transformations over time and in different cultures. Nevalainen (2004: 181) defines a letter as consisting of ‘written communication typically addressed to one or more named recipients (that) identifies the sender and conveys a message’. The letter genre is diverse: it can be both ‘conventional and unconventional, formal or informal, public or private’ and it can be mixed as well. Though the language of letters is considered oral, letters reveal certain linguistic variation such as the background of the writer, the relationship between the writer and the addressee and the statement of purpose. Also, there have been changes in letter genre conventions in the course of time (Palander-Collin 2010: 652).

2.4. Historical correspondence

In the late medieval period, the social and intellectual conditions did not favour the writing of letters that considered ‘vehicles of philosophical reflection’ or ‘literary thought’, and ‘friendship letters’. During those times, there was little acknowledgement for literary form which could help promote the cult of letter writing. Rather, the literates in the society tended

to produce letters with a focus on business communication. However, this form of communication had an immense historical value, as the main purpose was to channel a message (Taylor 1980: 57).

In this period, letters tended to follow a tradition known as *ars dictaminis*. Letters were divided into five parts: the salutation followed by the exordium, the narration, a petition and finally a conclusion. The *ars dictaminis* gave instructions as to how letters were written from the salutation to the conclusion which also became a medium of respect to the status and social roles of the receiver (Taylor 1980: 57).

The members of the church produced the majority of the letters in the fourteenth century. By the 15th Century, some social groups such as the crown and the royal family, nobility and merchants also wrote letters or had their letters written for them. Letters had served as an important form of government since the time of the Roman empire. The king sent personal letters with regard to diplomacy and foreign negotiations under the privy seal (Taylor 1980: 61).

Letter writing was mostly the duty of scribes and secretaries in the 14th and 15th centuries, but letters could also be handwritten by the correspondents themselves. The letters before the 15th century were mostly credentials and the message itself was carried across by the messengers who were to deliver the message on the arrival at their destination (Taylor 1980: 69).

In the 15th century, the first English private letters were written. More correspondents began to write letters of all kinds for many reasons on their own. Because illiteracy rates were high, letters were dictated and read aloud, something which did not necessarily change the original voice of the correspondent. For instance, all of Margaret Paston's letters of the 15th Century were written by others, but there is no doubt about the personal voice which comes through in them (Palander-Collin 2010: 656-657). Correspondence began to be used in everyday life by members of basically from all social strata.

As letter writing was a social process which involved literacy, the majority of letters were produced by the elite classes although they were also written by lower class members including farmers, soldiers etc.

Factors such as age, social distance and relative power would affect the writer's choices just as they do today. Letters were notably connected to social organization. For instance, there are designated titles and forms of address depending on the people involved in the letter (Palander-Collin 2010: 655). The medieval tradition of *ars dictaminis* strongly involved social hierarchy and in order to follow this standard, the first question of the letter writer is "What is the rank of the person to whom I am writing this letter?" Palander-Collin (2010: 655) notes that:

Social hierarchy could differ from letter to letter based on the recipient of the letter and the relationship between them. The latter is evident through the internal structure: address forms used in the letters.

With reference to English private and public letters, there were some specific conventions which were based on the medieval tradition of *ars dictaminis* (Palander-Collin 2010: 652). In order to follow the conventions of such letters, phraseology and sentence structure had to be learned. For instance, *ars dictaminis* involved the salutation, giving respect to the status of the recipient and the sender placing both within an 'institutionalised social relations' (Palander-Collin 2010: 657).

Letters could be in the form of requests, reports or orders depending on the social status and the relationship between the correspondents. Reports are descriptive letters to describe fact from a neutral point of view. They can be written from a superior to an inferior position or vice versa. Requests were usually made from an inferior to a superior position and orders from the superior to the inferior (Bergs 2004: 213). Command letters may be defined as letters of instructions by one in authority to get the recipient to do something. Request letters, on the other hand, are letters of appeal for something to be done in one's favour. The subject of such letters would often have to do with administrative, official and government matters, but could also be more personal.

Even though all types of letters would include formulaic content, there is much variation in their wording. The particular kind of letters chosen for the present study, command letters containing orders from a superior to an inferior, was chosen because of the particularly wide range of variation in functionally similar letters, making this a very interesting category from the point of view of historical politeness studies (Bergs 2004: 213).

3. Description of the material

The following is an overview of the material, with a full list of the letters with their archive references, MELD codes, dates, and senders/addressees. The letters are listed in the following order: kings to inferiors (1-5), noblemen to inferiors (6-8), and finally, between people close in rank (9-10).

1. Gloucester, Gloucestershire Archives: GBR/B2/1, fol. 21r (D2727#15)

Letter from King Henry VII to the Mayor, Aldermen and sheriffs of Gloucester. Written at Richmond on 15th July between 1500 and 1504.

2. Chippenham, Wiltshire, and Swindon History Centre: 1300/149 (D4071)

Letter from King Edward IV to John Seymour, written at the castle of Leicester on 12th July 1476.

3. Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/11 (vol. I, pt. 2, fol. 79Br) (D4111#1)

Letter from King Edward IV to Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury. This text was written at Westminster on 9th August 1464.

4. London, British Library: Add. 27446, fol. 114r (D0939#)

Letter from King Henry VI to John Nedham and Thomas Liltilton Justices of the County Palatine of Duchy of Lancaster. Written in London on the 25th of July 1460.

5. Canterbury, Canterbury Cathedral Archives: CCA-DCc-ChAnt/K/3 (D2985)

Letter from King Richard III to William Sellyng, Prior of Canterbury Cathedral Priory, written in the city London on 9th December, in the period 1483-1485.

6. Sheffield, Sheffield Archives: WWM/D/98 (D4433)

Letter from Richard, Duke of Gloucester, Constable and Admiral of England (who later became king Richard III) to William Fitzwilliam of Sprotbrough. This text is signed by 'Kendale' and written in the castle of Middleham on 19th October, written in the period 1471 to 1483.

7. Warwick, Warwickshire RO: CR1886/Cupboard 4/Top Shelf/EMC/2 (D2139)

Letter written by John de la Pole, the 2nd Duke of Suffolk, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, and Ralph Boteler, Baron Sudeley, to Thomas Hugford and William Berkyswell. Written at London 21st October in the period 1463-71.

8. London, British Library: Add. 43490, fol. 49r (D0940)

Letter from John de la Pole, the Duke of Suffolk and Constable of Wallingford Castle to Thomas Jeffrey, farmer of Moundevilles in Sternfield. It was written on 1st of May 1484 at Wingfield.

9. Southampton, Southampton Archives: SC 2/9/2/6 (D4258)

Letter from William Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester, to Hugh Pakenham, Lord of the Manors of East Court, Finchamsted, Berkshire. Written at Esher on 7th September 1458.

10. Dorchester, Dorset History Centre: D/RGB/LL/727 (D4284)

Letter from Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset to a person whose name is illegible, in London on 27th August 1492.

These letters have been chosen for the study as they provide a very good overview of the ways of writing a specific kind of letter, the command letter, in the 15th century, at a period when letter writing became common. They may be expected to show a range of variation in the kind of words and phrasing used for inferiors by their superiors in such letters.

The people represented in these particular texts are chosen to show a varied picture of the use of language with regards to social class/status, distance and rank through politeness and speech act theory. In the letters, the structure of words and sentences are different considering the addressees' status and social distance in the society. Five out of the ten texts are letters from four kings: King Henry VII, King Edward IV, King Richard III and King Henry VI. The other five are produced by people in other, somewhat lesser, positions of power. Two out of the five are from the Duke of Suffolk, John de la Pole, one from the future Richard III before his ascension to the throne, one from William Waynflete, Bishop of Salisbury and one from Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset.

Even though the texts are mostly from superiors to their subjects or (at least in some respect) inferiors, they generally involve members of the aristocracy. One letter stands being written to a commoner (Thomas Jeffrey) who seem to hold no official position in the society; another letter is addressed to a recipient whose name is eligible but who seems to have no title. These texts are included in order to provide a range of different social relationships.

The letters are fairly short and most of them are original texts, generally taken down by scribes. Two of the texts (D2727#15 and D4258) are register copies. All of them represent the command type of texts which is the main focus of this study. In the following, these ten late middle English letters will be studied individually. First, their material/visual characteristics and historical context is described. The text is then subjected to a pragmatic analysis, making use of the theoretical concepts (positive and negative politeness and speech act theory) described in Chapter 2.

4 Politeness and directness in the letters

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a description of each letter in terms of physical and historical context and content, as well as a pragmatic analysis focussing on politeness and directness. The aim is to first study each text independently and then to consider the similarities and variations among these letters.

4.2. Individual studies of the letters

4.2.1 Letter from King Henry VII to the City of Gloucester

Archive reference: Gloucester, Gloucestershire Archives: GBR/B2/1, fol. 21r

Code: D2727#15

Description

This text is a letter from King Henry VII to the Mayor, Aldermen and Sheriffs of the town of Gloucester. This is a register copy written on paper. The format is a codex containing the minutes of the cooperation in Gloucester between 1486 to 1600. The text of the letter is organized in a single column with fourteen lines written by one scribe with a light brown ink.

The script of the text is an anglicana with partially joined up letters; it is relatively calligraphic which also makes it look rather messy. The anglicana double-compartment **a** is used throughout the text. There is the round **e** together with a few examples of the secretary horned **e**. The ascenders and descenders are commonly looped. At the end of the words is the

anglicana 6-shaped final **s**. The long **r** and the 2 shaped **r**, the **x** written with 2 strokes and **w** in the llb form are all typical of anglicana.

The text contains some abbreviations; contraction to be precise, where one or more letters are omitted and are indicated with a sign. There are some abbreviations used in Hector sign no. 9 (eg. *ordinances*, lines 2 and 7, also lines 3, 13), Hector sign no. 3 (eg. *lyueres*, line 4 also *euer*, line 8), *ser* (line 3), Hector no. 4 (eg. *fauour*, line 7 and *ouur* line 12), *per* (8 and 13), *pre* (line 9 and 12) and *pro* (line 11). The punctus is used throughout the text. Some letters of the text are decorated, with calligraphic strokes.

The paper has worn edges, a few brown stains, small holes and a rough surface. The right side of the page close to the edges has some water damage making the writings faint. On the top of the paper is 'XXI', which is the page number of the letter in the codex. Also, there are some few writings in the margins as well which are not clear enough to read with the different shade of brown ink.

Content and analysis

King Henry compliments the city authorities for implementing local regulations concerning clipped money, prostitution and other 'enormities' and their appropriate punishment. He urges them to execute the law without bias and should anyone resist, record their names, their details and the manner of their conduct to him so he, the king, shall punish them to prevent others from going contrary to the said laws.

This text is a letter from a superior, King Henry VII to his subordinates, the Mayor, Aldermen and Sheriffs who are the officials of the town of Gloucester. It is an official letter written to the recipients concerning a public matter.

The letter begins, as is conventional, with the formula 'trusty & welbelouyd we grette you well' ('Trusty and well-beloved, we greet you well'). First, the king notes the changes they have made and attends to the positive face of the addressees because he commends them for having made such good rules:

...the ye of your circumspect myndes haue accordyng to ~~you~~^{our} lawe3 made certayne good ordynances' & lawe-dabyllle constitucoons to be obseruyd & kept amonges you

for the publike & comen weale of our Townne ther' as welle for setting appart of lyueres retoundres nyght walkyng and other enormyteez (lines 1-4)

'...that you of your circumspect minds have according to our laws made certain good ordinances and laudable constitutions to be observed and kept amongst you for the public and common good of our town and as well as for the setting apart of clipped money, night walking and other enormities'

He endorses this by requesting them to send to him the names and details of people who go contrary to the said laws for punishment. In this case, the king is ready to help execute the law. Similarly, this text conveys that the King and the town officials are cooperators because they share a common goal and that is to enforce the law. This is a demonstration of the king's goodwill in fulfilling addressees' positive face wants.

However, while the letter begins with an expression of the King's pleasure, it then turns into a directive. The request in this text is for the recipients to enforce the new rules they have implemented:

we be right wele content and pleasid . and therefore straytely charge you to putt the said lieffulle ordynances in plenar' execucon' withoute indut Fauour or *parcialite* (lines 6-7)

'we are right well content and pleased and therefore strictly charge you to put the said just ordinances in full execution without any special licence, favour or partiality'

There is a threatening tone of the King's choice of words. The king's change of tone demonstrates his power by commanding them to execute the laws without any bias. There is a mild threat implied to the recipients as they are told not displease the king because they will be accountable for any carelessness. The conclusion is an imposition to the addressees to make these implemented laws a mandate to be executed. Failure to comply will be at their own risk:

Fayle ye not truely to execute the *premissis* as ye tender ouur pleasur' and wille aunswere therefore vnto vs at your *perilles*. (lines 12-13)

'Do not fail to execute the premises faithfully as you value our pleasure and will answer to us at your peril'.

Formally, the king marks his authority by the use of plural pronouns in the text:

we grette you well (line 1)

‘we greet you well’

we be right wele content (line 6)

‘we are right well content’

Another feature evident in this text is the modal directives ‘wold’ and ‘shall’ which are phrased in the statement as:

...than’ we **wold** you *certyfye* vs of their name^z with the specialitie & manier of theyr demaynyng’ . and we **shalle** theruppon’ so *prouyd* for their further punycon’ as **shal** be to the ferefulle example of other lyk mysdoers (lines 9-12)

‘then we wish you to certify us of their names with the details and manner of their conduct, and we shall after that provide for their further punishment so that it shall be a fearful example for other similar offenders’

The modal expression, ‘wold’ is the past tense form of ‘will’ which expresses the king’s wishes that will take place in the future. ‘Shall’ is also used for future actions and decisions which are obligatory. In this present case, the King makes the decision to punish whoever disobeys the newly made laws which are inescapable. This is a descriptive and appellative text because it states the current circumstance and urges the recipient to execute the laws.

4.2.2 Letter from King Edward IV to John Seymour

Archive reference: Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: 1300/149

Code: D4071

Description

This text is a letter from King Edward IV to John Seymour, Warden of the Forest of Savernake, written in 1476. The text is written on parchment with the overall dimension of 25.5 X 15 mm, the text taking the space of 19 X 9 mm.

The format is a bill, as the paper is cut to the desired size with the text filling up the space. It is organized in a single column with fifteen lines. It is written by one scribe in brown ink. The format is appropriate for the function of the letter, and it is also accompanied with a seal and carries the address on the dorse; this means that it is most likely the original letter.

The text is written in gothic cursive, with letters partly joined up. The letter shapes are nicely written which makes it easy to read. The script has cursive secretary media features throughout the text with a few anglicana features. Secretary single-compartment **a** and secretary **g** is used throughout the text. Secretary horned **e** is used. The ascenders and descenders of the letters are straight, also a feature of secretary. The secretary v-shaped **r** variant is used alongside the anglicana 2-shaped one. Also, **w** is written in the 'llb' form, typical of anglicana. The letter **x** written in a single stroke and the secretary kidney-shaped final **s** is seen in the text.

There are some abbreviations used in the text: *eueri* 'every' (line 3), *displeaser* (line 4, 13), *persones* (line 5, 9), *euer* 'ever' (line 7), *yo^r* 'your' (lines 10, 13), *o^r* 'our' (lines 12, 14, 15), *perilles* (line 13). The only two punctuation marks used in the texts are the punctus and the virgule. The capital letter beginning the text, as well as the initials, are decorated.

There are a few stains on the parchment and the residue of the seal is visible. The dorse has some notes about the letter written at a later date presumably by an archivist or researcher in a dark brown ink.

Content and analysis

King Edward IV writes to John Seymour about the information he has received concerning illegal hunting in the forest of Savernake. Hence, the King charges and orders John Seymour to report any perpetrators to him for grievous and sharp punishment. This letter is an official letter directed to the addressee, John Seymour, in his capacity of an official, or to another official in his absence:

Edward by the grace of god kyng of England and of Fraunce and lord of Jrland To
oure trusty and welbeloued squier John Saymour Warden of the Forest of Savernake
belonging to oure derrest wyf the Quene . and in his absence to alle the kepers of the
same . and to eueri of them greting (Lines 1-3)

‘Edward, by the grace of God, king of England and of France and lord of Ireland, to
our trusty and well-beloved squire John Seymour, Warden of the forest of Savernake,
belonging to our dearest wife the Queen; and in his absence to all the keepers of the
same and to every one of them, greeting’.

The relationship between the sender and the addressee is that of a superior and subordinate. King Edward, as a ruler and having the highest-ranking position in the county is the superior who commands John Seymour, his subordinate, in the text. He is direct with his order to the recipient and goes straight to the point.

...we straitly charge and *command* you . that from hensforthe ye suffr’ noo maner of
persone of what estate condiconn or degre so euer he be ; withinne the said Forest . or
eny grownde therto belonging to haue shot sute ne cours... (lines 6–8).

‘we strictly charge and command you, that from henceforth you suffer no manner of
person of whatsoever estate, condition or degree he may be; to have shot a suit or
course within the said forest, or any ground belonging to it’

The command in this text is about the banning of game hunting in the forest of Savernake by the king. This command is phrased as a performative directive in the text as ‘*we* straitly *charge* and *command* you’ (Line 6). The role of the directive speech act verbs used in the line contains the performatives ‘charge’ and ‘command’ and by using these verbs in this context, the king, performs the act of charging and commanding. This formulation is one of

the most direct in the present study and has very little politeness or consideration for the face of the addressee. The directive is an imposition on the addressee to perform an action which the addressee would not do on his own. It also reflects the positions of the addresser and addressee in the social context, from a superior to an inferior. It is obvious that the addresser is socially superior to the addressee by ending the letter with a threat should the recipient fail to comply.

...and therefore that ye faile not t obey this o^r comandment in eueri behalue . as ye woll eschewe oure grettest displeaser . and ansuere vnto vs at yo^r vttermast perilles...” (line 6).

‘And therefore, do not fail to obey this our commandment in all respects, as you will not eschew our greatest displeasure, and answer to us at your uttermost perils’

King Edward IV in the text demonstrates his power by expecting that his wishes and commands will be carried out by his subordinate.

Formally, he marks his authority by the use of plural pronouns in the text:

...as moche as **we** to oure right great displeaser haue vnderstanden (line 3)

‘As we to our very great displeasure have understood’

we straitly charge ... (Line 5)

‘we strictly charge...’

vnto the tyme that **we** or o^r said wyf shal cumme thider (line 8)

‘until the time that we or our said wife shall come there’

The king in this text, as in the other royal letters included, uses the plural pronoun ‘we’ to emphasize his status. The threat to the negative face of the addressee is considerable; this is also added to by the fact that the King does not avoid the use of ‘you’ in the text. He repeatedly and directly addresses John Seymour as ‘you’ making him the direct reference.

The text makes use of the modals *shall* and *will*:

o^r said wyf **shal** cumme thider (line 8)

‘our said wife shall come there’

and if eny *persone* whatsoever he be **woll** hunte therinne or with bowe or other thing sture the said game ayenst yo^r willes . that ye thanne in alle possible hast certifye vs of his name and demeanyng . and we **shall** procede vnto his grevoux and sharp puniconn as accordeth with o^r lawes . and therfore that ye faile not t obey this o^r comandment in eueri behalue . as ye **woll** eschewe oure grettest displeaser . and ansuere vnto vs at yo^r vttermast *perilles* (lines 8-13).

‘And if any person, whatever he may be, will hunt there, or disturb the said game with a bow or other things, against your will, that you then in all possible haste let us know his name and xx, and we shall proceed to his grievous and sharp punishment as according to our laws. And therefore, do not fail to obey this our commandment in all respects, as you will not eschew our greatest displeasure, and answer to us at your uttermost perils’.

These modals further emphasize the fact that the speaker, the king, is in an authoritative position. The modal verbs used in the texts is that of obligation which includes the use of ‘shall’ and ‘will’. Through these verbs, he expresses his wishes which must take place and be carried out by his inferior. He warns that anyone who fails to obey this, shall go through a grievous punishment which is inescapable: ‘and we **shall** procede vnto his grevoux and sharp puniconn’.

This text performs three different functions: description because it describes the situation in the forest, expressive since the King expresses his wishes to the recipient and lastly, appellative because it is intended to get the recipient to react in the future.

4.2.3 Letter from King Edward IV to Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury.

Archive reference: Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/11

Code: D4111#1

Description

This text is a letter from King Edward IV to Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury, written in 1464. The text is original and written on parchment with a dimension of 27 X 12 mm with the text taking up the space of 24 X 7 mm. The format is a codex with a dimension of 26 X 36 mm which is a register of Bishop Beauchamp of Salisbury. It is organized in a single column with twelve lines. The ink used for the writing is brown.

The text is written in gothic cursive with the letters partly joined up; Specifically, the script is secretary with anglicana features. Single-compartment **a** and secretary **g** is used throughout the text. Secretary horned **e** is used alongside anglicana round **e**. The ascenders and descenders of the letters are straight, a typical feature of secretary. The secretary v shaped **r** variant is used alongside the anglicana 2-shaped one. Also, **w** is written in the w shaped form, the letter **x** written in a single stroke and the kidney shaped final **s**, all three typical of secretary.

The text contains a few abbreviations such as *Caunterbury* (line 2), *charges* (line 7), *premises* (line 8). The punctus is used throughout the text. There is extremely little decoration in the text: the initial before the text and capital letter of the first word.

The parchment has some markings and brown stains. As this is a register copy, there is no tag or seal and no address clause.

Content and Analysis

This is a letter from King Edward to Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury, written in 1464. In this letter, the king reminds Richard Beauchamp about a meeting at the convocation

of the province of Canterbury held at St. Paul where a king was granted a 'dime' or money collection for 'certain considerations'. In the letter, the king expresses his dissatisfaction with previous collections, at which so many people had been exempted from payment that the overall sum had ended up insufficient. He therefore urges the bishop to collect the dime with no exclusion except for those who cannot genuinely pay.

The power relation expressed in the text is between a superior, King Edward, and his subordinate Richard Beauchamp. The opening is very brief; however, the Bishop's status requires at least a simple formal address, here 'Reuerende fader in god' ('Reverend father in God').

The choice of words used is on the whole polite. The king orders Richard Beauchamp to assign and appoint collectors throughout the diocese with the phrase:

we forsomoche **wol desire** and also **pray** you hertily' (line 7)

'We therefore desire and also pray you heartily'

Here, the king minimizes the imposition, and the threat to the Bishop's negative face, through his choice of words by using words such as 'pray' and 'hertily'. There is little doubt that the command is to be taken seriously; however, the phrasing is altogether polite. Rather than adding a direct threat, the King adds a formulation that implies trust, and thus positive politeness:

And that ye faile not herin as oure spiall trust is *onn* you . and as ye desire to do vs singuler pleasire and comfort (lines 11–12)

'and that you do not fail in this, as our special trust is in you, and in as far as you desire to greatly please and comfort us'

It might be noted that this letter performs the function of both a request and an order. This is because, as a request, it is dependent on the King's subjects being able to pay and an order because it is from a socially powerful person, the Duke to his subject, Richard Beauchamp, the Bishop.

The reference to ‘singuler pleasire and comfort’ also conveys an optimism. King Edward is confident that in offering Bishop Richard Beauchamp the opportunity to appoint people to collect the money the latter would not fail him.

Again, the king’s authority is realized through the use of plural pronouns:

ye haue wel in mynde, **we** doubte not . how late agoo by you and othir prelates...
(line 1)

‘you remember well, we do not doubt, how recently by you and other prelates...’

.**we** sende you herwith to assigne and depute Collectours of the same (line 3)

‘we send you herewith, to assign and appoint collectors of the same’

we for somoch wol desire and also pray you hertily... (line 7)

‘we therefore desire and also pray you heartily...’

The most common modal verb in the letter is *should*, suggesting the past events which have been disappointing:

...in like caas of graunte that wher’ it was trowed the graunte of a disme **shuld** haue extended to a greet somme (line 5)

‘...in a similar case of grant, that where it was believed that the grant of a dime should have extended to a great sum’

...or litel ease to the charges that **shold** haue be born therwithe . we forsomoche **wol** desire and also pray you hertily (line 7)

‘...or little help for the charges that should have been covered therewith. We therefore desire and also pray you heartily’

Altogether, the phrasing denotes a considerable amount of politeness making it not an obligation but a request. This is an appellative text giving the Bishop a directive to perform and fulfil.

4.2.4 Letter from King Henry VI to John Nedham and Thomas Lyttelton.

Archive reference: London, British Library: Add. 27446, fol. 114r

Code: D0939

Description

This text is a letter from King Henry VI to John Nedham and Thomas Lyttelton, Justices of County Palatine of Lancaster, dated 26th July 1460. The text is written on paper with the dimension of 455 X 355 mm. It is the original letter pasted and bound in a manuscript with other letters collected by the Paston family.² The format is a bill. The text is organized in a single column with eight lines and written by one scribe. The ink used for the writing is dark brown and the margin of the paper is left blank with no notes or writings.

The text is written in gothic cursive with letters partly joined up. The script has cursive secretary media features throughout the text. The single-compartment **a** and the horned **e** is used clearly in the text. Also, the ascenders and descenders of the letters are straight, and **x** is cursively written in a single stroke. The easily recognisable w shaped **w** which also resembles a double **v** is used with the kidney-shaped final **s**. The **g** is a secretary one with a pointed head and a small tail and the **r** usually resembling a **v** shape.

There is extremely little abbreviation in the text, the only example being *is favo^r* ‘favour’ (line 6). There is no punctuation used in the text and little decoration; only the capital letters at the beginning of each paragraph are decorated. The text has a simple, smooth, and neat appearance with nicely shaped letter forms which makes it easy to read. The handwriting is tidy and not copied in haste, with little abbreviation.

² http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_27446

Content and analysis

King Henry VI appeals to the addressees about Thomas Bury's robbery lawsuit against John Berney, the younger of Redham in the county of Norfolk, esquire, John Paston of Norwich, esquire, John Hevingham of Norwich, esquire, and Christopher Norwich of Brundehale in the county of Norfolk, yeoman. The suit, the king says, is an evil intention and all those who know both parties know about this. For this reason, he requests that the Justices show mercy in their judgements against the accused, and also that they do not trust any communications in the name of the Sheriff of Norfolk about this matter, except by the Sheriff himself or his under-sheriff.

The power relationship in the text depicts a communication between a superior, the King and his subjects, John Nedham and Thomas Liltilton who are also in charge of the legal system in Lancaster. The letter begins with the conventional 'right trusti and welbeloued we grete you wele' and then goes directly to the point. The tone of the letter is informative: rather than commanding the Justices through his authority, the King gives reasons for this request, stating that the appeal is of evil intentions and anyone who knows both parties can testify to that. He then requests that these Justices show mercy to the defendants.

...wherfor we desire you that in the seide appele ye schewe onto the defendauntis all the fauo^r that ye may and that ye receyve no writte rturned in the name of the scheriff of norffolk touchyng the seide matre but be the handes of the scheriff (lines 5-7)

'...because of that, we desire that you, when dealing with the said appeal, show all the favour that you to the defendants, and that you receive no writ returned in the name of the sheriff of Norfolk concerning the said matter, but only from the hands of the sheriff himself or of John Bernard, his under-sheriff'

The directive is here expressly phrased as a request, which is appropriate as the County Palatine of Lancaster would to some extent have an independent jurisdiction. At the same time, the request is clearly a threat to the negative face of the Justices because they are being told what to do. Their freedom of actions is being impeded by the king who requests a favour from them.

The choice of words used in the text minimizes this imposition, another strategy of negative politeness.

This formulation is one that is direct and polite because the king would want his wish granted. This presumably reflects the fact that even though the King is superior to them, the addressees, in this situation have control and power over the said judgement.

The only instance of a modal verb in this letter is:

ye schewe onto the defendauntis all the fauo^r that ye *may* (Line 6)

‘you show all the favour that you can to the defendants’

‘May’ is used in this context as a potential ability for the justices to show mercy to accused just like the King requests. This phrase proves that it is a request which is not obligatory but a matter of choice if only they deem it right. The modal verb ‘may’ particularly show the idea of a future possible action taken by these justices on the said case. Finally, this text may be said to perform three functions: descriptive, expressive, and appellative.

4.2.5 Letter from King Richard III to the Prior of Canterbury Cathedral Priory

Archive reference: Canterbury, Canterbury Cathedral Archives: CCA-DCc-ChAnt/K/3

Code: D2985

Description

This text is a letter from King Richard III to William Sellyng, prior of Canterbury Cathedral Priory.³ Neither the sender or the addressee are actually named, and the letter is not dated, but has to be from the reign of Richard III, 1483-85. The text is written on paper. The format is a bill that is organized in a single column with eight lines. It is written with brown ink by one scribe.

³ <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/4255335e-6a29-4b58-9bb5-cc4c29459da3>

The text is written in Gothic cursive with the letters partly joined up; the script has a fairly even mixture of anglicana and secretary features. The single-compartment **a**, the horned **e** and the straight ascenders and descenders are features of secretary in the text. On the other hand, the 6 shaped final **s** and the **w** written in the 'llb' form are typical of anglicana. The **g** is a secretary one with a pointed head and a small tail. The secretary **x** is cursively written with a single stroke. The secretary **v** shaped **r** variant is used alongside the anglicana 2-shaped one.

The text contains some abbreviations, including 'sir' (line 1), 'ser' (*servantes* line 3) Hector sign no. 9 'es' (amonges line 2 and euydences 3), Hector sign no. 3 'er' (whansoever line 4) and the superscript abbreviation o^r 'our' in the text. The text also begins with the initial R.R. 'Ricardus Rex' which stands for King Richard. The text has very little decoration except for the initials and the capital letters at the beginning.

The material is a thin, rough surfaced piece of paper with worn edges. It is dirty with a few punctures and tears. Below the text is an archive stamp and on top is the figure '100' presumably written at a later date in pencil.

From the many abbreviations and the partly joined letter forms, it may be assumed that the speed and urgency of the letter is more important than the formality.

Content and analysis

This text is a letter from King Richard III to William Sellyng, the Prior of Canterbury Cathedral Priory, who has in his possession certain land documents belonging to the wife of sir Ralph Ashton, an officer of state and at this point Vice-Constable of England.⁴ The king, through the evidence provided by the latter, charges the Prior to hand over the documents upon request without any hesitation, otherwise he will be duly punished.

The letter begins with the conventional 'trusty and welbeloued in god *we grete* you wele' and goes on to explain the reason for the correspondence, that is, the land documents housed with the Prior. He then phrases the directive as follows:

⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_de_Ashton

...wherefore we **wol** and **desire** you that whansoeuer our said seruaunt [i.e. Ashton] shal come or sende vnto you for the said euydences . ye wille deliure them (lines 4–5).

‘...because of which we wish and desire you that whenever our said servant shall come to you or send for the evidences, you will deliver them’

The use of the performative verbs **wol** and **desire** make the directive seem formally a request; however, the force of the command becomes clear in the following specification:

...hoolly without any delaye ior contradiccon’ in that behalf As ye aught to doo of right not failling hereof in any wise...

‘... wholly without any delay or contradiction concerning them, just as you ought to do by right...’

This addition reinforces the threat against the negative face of the prior because he instructs that the latter deliver the documents without any delay. The king does not consider the feelings or the opinion of the recipient, or leave any opening for discussion.

Finally, the king threatens the prior both with his own displeasure and with legal action:

As ye entend to please vs . And wol avoyde the daungier of o^r lawes if ye doo the contrarie (line 6).

‘as you would like to please us and avoid the harshness of our laws if you do the contrary’

This text does more than requesting, it orders and cautions that the recipient will not fail to obey him as he will face serious consequences.

Its strongly coercive force is reflected in the use of the modals **wol** and **ought**:

wherefore we **wol** and desire you that whansoeuer our said seruaunt *shal* come or sende vnto you for the said euydences . ye **wille** deliure them hoolly without any delaye or contradiccon’ in that behalf As ye **ought** to doo of right not failling hereof in any wise . As ye entend to please vs . And **wol** avoyde the daungier of o^r lawes (lines 4-6)

‘Because of which we wish and desire you that whenever our said servant shall come to you or send for the evidences, you will deliver them wholly without any delay or contradiction concerning them, just as you ought to do by right. Do not fail in this in any way, as you would like to please us and avoid the harshness of our laws if you do the contrary’

On the whole, this letter from a superior to his subject is very blunt and straightforward with very little politeness and no familiarity. This presumably does not reflect the status of the recipient, who was himself of a high social position; rather it seems to indicate the seriousness of the command.

4.2.6 Letter from the Duke of Gloucester to William Fitzwilliam

Archive reference: Sheffield, Sheffield Archives: WWM/D/98

Code: D4433

Description

This text is a letter from Richard, Duke of Gloucester, Constable and Admiral of England (the future Richard III) to William Fitzwilliam of Sprotbrough. Given Richard’s title, the letter must have been written between 1471 and 1483. The text is the original, written on paper with a dimension of 30 X 18 mm with the text covering 20 X 5 mm. The format is a bill and the text is organized in a single column with six lines. It is written with brown ink on brown paper by one scribe.

The text is written in gothic cursive with the letters partly joined up. The script shows a mixture of both anglicana and secretary forms. The secretary single-compartment **a**, horned **e** and secretary **g** are used throughout the text. The letters have looped anglicana ascenders alongside secretary straight descenders. The 2 shaped **r** and the 6 shaped final **s** variant are

typical of anglicana. The **w** is written in the ‘llb’ form, an anglicana feature, and the letter **x** written with one stroke, a feature of secretary.

The text contains some abbreviations such as *kinges* ‘kings’ (line 1) *yerfore* ‘therefore’ (line 3), *w^t* ‘with’(line 3, 4) and *y^t* ‘that’(line 3, 4, 5). There is just one punctuation mark used in the text, a virgule on line 3. Only the capital initial of the first word is decorated. Right in the left margin is the signature ‘Gloucestre’ with the first letter decorated and in a bigger script than the text itself; this is presumably in Richard’s own hand.

The paper has some markings, brown stains and holes, with worn edges. There is a residue of closing seal on dorse which also has the address of the recipient. Unusually, there is what looks like another signature, ‘Kendale’, in the scribe’s hand.

Content and analysis

This text is a letter from Richard, the Duke of Gloucester to William Fitzwilliam of Sprotbrough. Richard informs William Fitzwilliam of Sprotbrough that, by the order of the king, they both have to go to London in haste. Richard asks William Fitzwilliam to put all excuses aside and prepare eight horses to accompany them for the trip to London. As both are stationed in the North, they have to meet at Doncaster to go to London together.

The letter may be classified as an official letter from Richard, Duke of Gloucester and brother of King Edward IV, to William Fitzwilliam of Sprotbrough. The power relations in the texts reflects communication between a superior and his subordinate, although both are aristocrats. The letter begins with a polite and conventional ‘Trusty and welbeloued we grete you’ and goes directly to the point for writing the letter:

...And forsomoche as þe kinges grace by his moste honorable lres vnder his prive seale hath comanded vs in alle goodly hast to come vp to his highnes to londonn we þerfore disire and pray you alle excusacions / laide *apart* þ^t ye arredey you w^t viij horses or vnder... and þ^t ye mete w^t vs at doncastre (Lines 1-4)

‘...And for as much as the king’s grace by his most honourable letters, under his privy seal, has commanded us in all goodly haste to come up to his highness to London, we

therefore desire and pray you to put aside all excuses and make yourself ready with about eight horses... And that you meet with us at Doncaster'

Even though the order comes from the Duke, the ultimate command is from the king, making it quite clear that William Fitzwilliam does not have the freedom to decline. The performatives used are perhaps therefore fairly mild:

we þerfore disire and pray you alle excusacions (line 3)

'we therefore desire and pray you to put aside all excuses'

By using 'desire' and 'pray' in this context, the addresser performs the act of desiring and praying. These speech act verbs are a direct and polite way of requesting for something from an addressee. The imposition in this text is minimized making this a request even though the Duke commands the addressee.

The plural pronouns 'we' in the texts is used to represent the Duke's status:

we þerfore disire and pray you alle excusacions / laide apart þt ye arredy you (line 3)

'we therefore desire and pray you to put aside all excuses and make yourself ready'

to accompany vs thider and þt ye mete wt vs at doncastre (line 4)

'to accompany us there, and that you meet with us at Doncaster'

The Duke's power is manifested when he expects that his wishes and commands are granted by the addressee. He demonstrates this when he ends the letter with a threat in a mild tone:

And þt ye faille not heof as our' feithfulle trust is in you (line 5)

'And that you do not fail in this, as our faithful trust is in you.'

This is a text describing an event and also a directive to get the recipient to do something in the future: thus, a descriptive and appellative text.

4.2.7 Letter from John de la Pole and others to Thomas Hugford and William Berkyswell

Archive reference: Warwick, Warwickshire RO: CR1886/Cupboard 4/Top Shelf/EMC/2

Code: D2139

Description

This text is a letter from three noblemen: John de la Pole, the 2nd Duke of Suffolk, Richard Neville, the Earl of Salisbury and Warwick, and Ralph Boteler, Baron Sudeley, addressed to Thomas Hugford and William Berkyswell. The document is written on paper. The format is a bill, with the paper cut to the desired size with the text filling up the space. It is organized in a single column with 6 lines followed by the signatures. It is written with a dark brown ink by one scribe with the signatures added in different hands. This suggests that the text was dictated by the senders to the scribe and signed by them in their own hands. The letter is not dated, but the chronological overlap between the three senders suggests that it was written in the period 1463–71.

The text is written in gothic cursive script with letters partly joined up; specifically, the script is secretary and contains some anglicana features. Single-compartment **a** is used throughout the text alongside double-compartment **a**. The **e** is realized both as round **e** and horned **e**, forms typical of anglicana and secretary respectively. The ascenders and descenders of the letters are commonly looped, a feature of anglicana, but show straight descenders as well. The 2 shaped **r** variant, **w** written in the 'llb' form and the looped **g** are typical of anglicana. The secretary **x** is written with one stroke and the secretary kidney-shaped final **s** is used in the text.

The text contains only one abbreviation, the contraction *er* in 'diuers' (line 1). As regards punctuation, the *punctus* is used throughout the text and there is one instance of virgule '/'. The initial letter of the text and the signatures are decorated.

The paper has a few markings and holes as well as worn edges. Some parts of the white paper are discoloured to brown. At the dorse there is an address clause, and the letter shows the

remnants of a seal; together with the signatures this indicates that the document is the original. The writing is tidy and there are few abbreviations.

Content and Analysis

The three noblemen order Thomas Hugford and William Berkyswell to get hold of two registers at the Audit in Warwick, one of parchment and the other of paper. He requests that these books be put in a bag of canvas, sealed, and sent to them safely.

In terms of power relations, the letter is from three persons of a very high social standing, who are all superior to the addressees, Thomas Hugford and William Berkyswell. The choice of words used is, however, polite, perhaps both because of the nature of the request and the relationship of the men, both of whom seem to be connected to the Earl of Warwick. Thomas Hugford was an MP and a surveyor of lands of Richard Neville, the Earl of Warwick, while the manor of Berkswell belonged to the Earls of Warwick. The conventional greeting introducing the letter suggests a friendly tone:

Right welbelouyd frendys we grete yow well (line 1)

‘Right well-beloved friends, we greet you well’

The letter suggests positive politeness because there is familiarity and the solidarity in-group identity markers between the addresser and the addressees in ‘Right welbelouyd frendys’ (line 1). The writers’ address the recipients as ‘frendys’ to convey in-group membership between them and to minimise the imposition hence, changing the command to a request.

The letter also uses positive politeness by signalling trust, indicating that the addressees will desire to please the Duke of Suffolk by honouring his requests: ‘as we trust to you’. There is no threat implied to the recipients as seen in the other letters when the addressees are likely to be told not to displease the addresser.

The only directive expressed in this text is the performative directive which contains the performative ‘pray’, phrased as:

we prey yow that ye goo in to the Audite atte warrewyk and there take oute ij
Registres (lines 1–2)

‘we ask you that you go into the audit at Warwick and, there, take out two registers’

This phrase is one that is polite and makes a command seem like a request. In this situation, as mentioned earlier, there seems to be an in-group solidarity between the interactants making it more polite as compared to D0940 (cf 4.2.8), which gives us a wide gap in status from a Duke to a farmer.

Concisely, this is an appellative text because after reading the letter, the recipients will act in accordance to its content.

4.2.8 Letter from John de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, to Thomas Jeffrey.

Archive reference: London, British Library: Add. 43490, fol. 49r

Code: D0940

Description

This text is a letter from John de la Pole, the 2nd Duke of Suffolk and Constable of Wallingford Castle, to Thomas Jeffrey, a farmer of Moundevilles in Sternfield, written in 1484.⁵ The Duke had a poor economy partly due to political circumstances; at his accession in 1463 he was considered one of the poorest Dukes.⁶

The text is written on paper with a dimension of 28 X 140 mm. The format is a bill, with the paper cut to the desired size with the text filling up the space. It is organized in a single column with seven lines with a large number of marginal additions and notes. The ink is in different shades of the colour brown because parts of the document were written by four different scribes. The text itself seems to be dictated by the Duke to the scribe, while the

⁵ http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_43490

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_de_la_Pole,_2nd_Duke_of_Suffolk

signature and an additional note are written by the Duke himself. There are also what seem like archival notes at the top right and bottom left of the document. The signature with its accompanied words by the Duke is written in a bigger script than the text itself.

The text is written in gothic cursive with letters partly joined up. Specifically, the script is anglicana with secretary features, with much variation. Single-compartment **a** is used throughout the text although double-compartment **a** occurs too. The **e** is round, which is typical of anglicana. The ascenders and descenders of the letters are commonly looped, a feature of anglicana. The secretary v shaped **r** variant is used alongside the anglicana 2-shaped one. Also, **w** is written in the 'llb' form, the letter **x** written with 2 strokes and the final 6 shaped **s**, all three typical of anglicana.

The text contains some abbreviations such as & 'and' which can be seen in almost every line, o^r 'our' (lines 2, 3 and 5), y^e 'the' (lines 4, 7), w^t 'with' and yo^r 'your' (line 6). There are no punctuation marks used in the text, and little decoration. The capital letters at the beginning of the salutation and the first letter of the text and that of the Duke's signature are decorated.

The paper has some markings with worn edges. The writing on the top right of the paper 'Mundeville maunour is in Sternfield Suffolk' seems to have been written by a medieval archivist as it does not look substantially newer than the main text. The inscription at the bottom left is a much later note about the text by a modern archivist or researcher.

The handwriting is fairly messy and not easily readable, with much abbreviation; it can be said that the speed of the writing was here more important than the formality.

Content and analysis

In this letter to Thomas Jeffrey, the Duke charges him to pay a debt of his own, the sum of 73 shillings and 4 pence incurred by the Duke's household. He assures Thomas Jeffrey that the money will be refunded the next month and adds the threat that failure to comply will cost him to lose his farm.

This letter may be regarded as a private letter written to Thomas Jeffrey. In this particular case, it is clearly from a superior to a commoner, the farmer. There is no polite greeting formula, a practice that would have been acceptable when writing to an inferior:

The duc of suff^r to Thomas Jeffrey o^r Fermo^r of moundvilles greting (line 1)

‘The Duke of Suffolk To Thomas Jeffrey, our farmer of Moundville, greeting’

The power relation is evident with the choice of words used in the letter addressed to the farmer and he states his intentions explicitly. The directive follows directly after the greeting, with no explanation or narrative preceding:

we wole and streitly charge you that ye content & paie vnto the bringer herof for money inployed on o^r household (lines 1–2)

‘We wish and strictly charge you that you make good and pay to the bringer of this [letter] for a debt incurred by our own household’

Here the writer clearly acts as having considerably more social power than the addressee by ordering him to pay off the debts. The Duke imposes this order without considering the feelings of the recipient because of the power relations. He is socially more powerful than the recipient who is a mere commoner.

There are in fact two commands in this text: first the Duke of Suffolk imposing on Thomas Jeffrey to pay the Dukes debt and then instructing his auditors to pay Jeffrey back on production of the letter. In both cases, he employs the same performative directive phrases:

‘*we* wole and streitly *charge* you’ (line 1)

‘we wish and strictly charge you’

‘*we* wole and also streitly *charge* o^r Audito^rs for the tyme being’ (Line 5)

‘we strictly charge our auditors at the time being’

The directive in these two sentences contains the performative ‘charge’ and with this, the addresser performs the act of ‘charging’ (commanding). This formulation is one of the most direct and common phrases usually used in texts to command people. It is only used by superiors to their inferior when requesting and ordering them to do something in the future and makes no use of politeness strategies to soften the offensive words. Additionally, there is a use of the modal *wole* indicating the Duke’s wish.

The Duke charges the farmer to pay for the debts he himself has incurred on his household in order to protect his own honour and reputation. Due to the fact that he has promised to pay the debts within a time frame, he imposes this on the farmer, Thomas Jeffrey. This creates a face threatening act inherently on the farmer because he does not have a choice to make his own decision.

With reference to face, this text threatens the negative face of the farmer because the Duke forcefully charges the farmer to pay off the debts which he, the farmer, would reluctantly pay under any other circumstance because he may not have the resource to pay. The Duke refuses to create familiarity between them even though he needs a favor from the farmer because he is more powerful than the recipient.

Moreover, the Duke adds a threat at the end of the letter, written in his own hand: 'Fayle not on peyn losyng off yo^r Ferme' ('Fail not, on pain of losing your farm'). The choice of words used in the letter depicts harshness and offensive language from the speaker to the hearer. The Duke refuses to minimize the imposition on the farmer and even includes a threat if he fails to comply, threatening both the positive and the negative face of the farmer. As in D4071 (cf 4.2.2), there is a constant use of 'you' in the text indicating insolence and impoliteness directed towards the farmer.

In brief, this text is classified as a descriptive and appellative text because it describes the current situation and invokes in the recipient to perform an action.

4.2.9 Letter from the Bishop of Winchester to Hugh Pakenham.

Archive reference: Southampton, Southampton Archives: SC 2/9/2/6

Code: D4258

Description

This text is a letter from the Bishop of Winchester, William Waynflete, to Hugh Pakenham, lord of the Manor Hartley Wespall in Hampshire and Constable of Odiham Castle. Waynflete (c.1398–1486) was elected the Bishop of Winchester in April 1447, and the letter was written in 1458, making this the earliest letter here considered.

The letter is written on paper. The format may be categorized as a bill, because the paper is cut to the desired size with the text filling up the space (Stenroos, Bergstrøm and Thengs, forthcoming: 65). It is organized in a single column with twenty-one lines and written by one scribe. The ink used for the writing is light brown. The stage of the document is presumably an instrument, because the format is appropriate for the function of the letter; however, there is no visible trace of a seal and the letter could be a single-sheet copy.

The text is written in a gothic cursive, with the letters partly joined up. Specifically, the script is *anglicana* with secretary features, showing some variation. The secretary single-compartment **a** is used throughout the text although the *anglicana* double-compartment **a** occurs too. The **e** is generally the ‘round e’ shape, which is typical of *anglicana*. The ascenders and descenders of the letters are commonly looped, a feature typical of *anglicana* but there are straight descenders as well. The *anglicana* 2-shaped **r** and the long **r** variant are used in the text. Also, **w** is written in the ‘llb’ form, alongside the final 6-shaped final **s**, both typical of *anglicana*.

The text contains the following abbreviations: Hector sign no. 9 (eg. *lordes*, line 8 and also *kinges* line 16), Hector sign no. 3 (eg. *concerning*, line 12), Hector sign no. 4 (eg. *honour*, line 9), the superscript forms *y*^l (lines 1, 5, 10, 12, 14, 19), *y*^e (line 13) and *pro* in *promised* (line 17).

As regards punctuation, the punctus and the virgule are used throughout the text. The first letter beginning the text is capitalized and enlarged. Apart from this initial letter and the signature at the end of the text, there is no decoration.

The paper bill has rough edges with some minor tears. In the margin and on the bottom left is the name of the recipient ‘Hugh Pakenham’.

The hand has a simple, smooth and neat appearance with nicely shaped letter forms which makes it easy to read. The handwriting is tidy and not copied in haste, with little abbreviation. Judging from these features, it is either the instrument or a formal copy.

Content and analysis

In this letter, the bishop warns Hugh Pakenham that there is news out of Normandy that the French men are ready to invade both the land and the sea, just like they did previously at Sandwich, to execute their malice. He mentions that some important issues such as the quarrel between the city of London and men of Court, among many others, have caused the king to decide to stay in London, abandoning his plan to ride north, and has commanded his council, including the bishop, to do the same so that they will be available should there be any emergency. This situation, the Bishop says, means that he himself has to change his plan of coming to Hampshire. However, he promises to send military supplies for the defence of the area, and in case of any emergency, he will send any men he has.

The bishop then moves over to his command/request. As he knows that there are three or four traitors in Hampton, who have promised it to the Frenchmen, he asks Hugh Pakenham to communicate with the gentlemen of the country, telling the mayor and other reliable people of the town to be vigilant and cautious. Finally, the Bishop informs Hugh Pakenham that commissions of arrays have been sent to all coastal areas for their defence, and trusts that this will be effective.

This letter can be classified as a private letter written only to the recipient, Hugh Pakenham, due to the content it carries. Hugh Pakenham was Lord of the Manor of Hartley Wespall in Hampshire, in addition to his Manor of East Court in Finchamstead, Berkshire, and had newly been made Constable of Odiham Castle in Hampshire at the time of this letter.⁷ The power relations in the text reflect a communication between approximate equals, although the bishop presumably holds a higher status due to his office. The greeting used in the letter is the polite formula normally used by superiors:

Right trusty and right welbeloued *we grete* you wele (line 1)

‘Right trusty and well-beloved, we greet you well’

⁷ Source: <http://www.thepeerage.com/p46185.htm>

This formulation ‘we grete you wele’ is a typical conventional formulaic opening in Middle English texts written by persons of some authority. The bishop’s superior status is throughout emphasized through his use of the first-person plural pronoun ‘we’ in the text:

hathe comaunded **vs** and many other’ lordes of his Counselle for to do also (line 7)

‘has commanded us and many other lords of his counsel to do the same’

and this causeth **vs** þ^t **we** may not kepe **our** purpose (lines 9–10)

‘and this causes us to change our purpose’

sethe **we** may not come in **our** owne persone **we** shal sende in to þ^e Cuntre (line 12)

‘since we cannot come in our own person, we shall send to the country’

Most of the letter consists of a description and narration of the current state of affairs. It has a reassuring tone, as the Bishop is optimistic and attends to the needs of the people in the region. Although he is not physically present with the people at Hampton, he relays the bad news and prepares for them military supplies and forces who will be ready to make resistance to fight for and protect them:

...but sethe we may not come in our owne persone we shal sende in to þ^e Cuntre suche ordinance as we haue purveied for . þe defence of þe same / and yf any grete liklihode of jeopardy be thought suche feliship as we haue aboute vs shal . be there without delaye . redie to make resistence (lines 12–14).

‘But since we may not come in our own person, we shall send into the country such military supplies as we have arranged for the defence of the same. And if there is thought to be any great likelihood of jeopardy, such (military) companies that we have around us shall be there without delay, ready to make resistance’

This is a descriptive text due to the fact that it narrates an event yet to happen but an appellative as well to get the recipient to act. The request in this text is for the recipient and nobles to be vigilant because there are traitors present. The identifiable directive in this text is phrased as:

and therefore **we praye** you to comune w^t gentilmen' of the Cuntre and also with the maire and summe other trusty and sadde men' of þe same towne in þ^t matier' and to praye thaym for to see wysely aboute thaym / (lines 16–18)

‘and therefore we ask you to communicate with gentlemen of the country and also with the Mayor and some other trusty and reliable men of the same town concerning that matter and to ask them to look around carefully’

The performative phrase, ‘we praye you’ in the sentence is doing the act of asking, hence this is a polite request to the addressee to communicate with gentlemen in the country and the mayor coupled with other reliable men in the country to look carefully into the matter. This is because there are about four traitors in Hampton with them who will assist the Frenchmen with their invasion. This use of the performative is direct but at the same time personal, making it a polite choice in the context. The wording reflects the fact that the addressee and the addresser are approximately equals, because the language used is polite and shows courtesy irrespective of the situation at hand.

In this context, it should be noted that the addresser and the addressee are cooperators. They are both involved in this to achieve a common goal which is to protect their land. The Bishop who has knowledge of this important message informs the addressee who shares the same concern to safeguard the land and hence involving the addressee in this matter. Moreover, the addresser chooses his word carefully to not sound offensive but is straightforward and polite.

Along with the performative directives, the text makes use of a large number of modal verbs reflecting the complex decisions involved in the situation:

and **wol** abide here nyghe (line 6)

‘and will now abide here’

that ye lordes **shal** mowe hastily be assembled (line 8)

‘that the lords shall have to be assembled in haste’

we **may** not kepe our purpose of comyng in to hampshire at þis tyme (lines 9–10)

‘we cannot keep our purpose of coming to Hampshire at this point’

sethe we *may* not come in our owne persone we *shal* sende in to þ^e Cuntre (lines 11–12)

‘since we may not come in our own person, we shall send into the country’

The above examples include modal expressions that denote obligation (*shal*), desire (*wol*) and possibility (*may*). In the first example (Line 6), the king’s purpose is to go northwards but due to the quarrel between the city of London and men of Courts and other matters, He has no choice than to abide close to London. Again, due to the current situation, the king has commanded the lords to stay close to London so should there be any sudden situation, the lords shall be gathered in haste for the protection and security of the King: ‘that ye lordes *shal* mowe hastily be assembled and take suche direcon’ of redresse therinne as *shal* be’ (line 8). The modal directive ‘shall’ in this statement suggests the obligations of the lords to protect their king in case of any attack and underlines here the gravity of the situation.

The letter ends with a conventional conclusion, wishing the addressee well and providing the place and date:

And our . lord haue you alweye in his kepinge writen’ at Esshere þe vijth day of Septembr’ (line 20)

‘And may our lord have you always in his keeping. Written at Esher the 7th day of September.’

The ending is simple and businesslike, reflecting the style of the entire letter: it is maximally informative, explaining the situation and requesting a reasonable action, rather than persuading or threatening the receiver.

4.2.10 Letter from Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset

Archive reference: Dorchester, Dorset History Centre: D/RGB/LL/727

Code: D4284

Description

This text is a letter from Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset in 1492. Its address clause on the dorse is partly illegible, reading 'Right trusty and welbelouued T...en'. The text is written on paper with a dimension of 30 X 18 mm with the text taking up the space of 23 X 6 mm. The format is a bill and it is organized in a single column with nine lines. The ink used for writing is grey ink.

The text is written in gothic cursive with the letters partly joined up. More specifically, the script is secretary with anglicana features. Single-compartment **a** and secretary **g** is used throughout the text. Secretary horned **e** is used alongside anglicana round **e**. The ascenders and descenders of the letters are straight, typically a feature of secretary. The secretary **v** shaped **r** variant is used alongside the anglicana 2-shaped one. Also, **w** is written in the **w** shaped form, the letter **x** written in a single stroke and the kidney shaped final **s**, all three typical of secretary.

The text contains no abbreviations except *serue* 'serve' (line 3). There are two types of punctuation marks used in the text: the punctus and the virgule. The capital letter at the beginning of the text and the first letter of the signature are decorated.

The paper has some few markings with worn edges and a few stains. The paper has been repaired on a white card paper. The dorse contains an address which is not clear to read. However, the handwriting is neat and readable and because the letter is accompanied with a signature and an address on the dorse, it may be assumed to be the original.

Content and Analysis

In this letter, Thomas Grey informs the recipient about the king's impending voyage to France the following month (September) and states that he has been appointed to go with the King. He asks that the recipient provide him with at least four good archers to accompany them during the voyage on the king's wages. These archers, he says, are to be ready on 8th September. He promises that, when granted this favour, he will be greatly pleased and owe these men and the recipient good will and favour in return.

The letter begins with the standard greeting used by writers of some authority: 'Trusty and right welbeloued we grete you well' ('Trusty and right well-beloved, we greet you'). It then goes straight to the point, explaining about the king's travel plans. This letter may be considered a private letter to be received by the recipient only because he is in the position to provide archers to the addresser. The power relations expressed appear to be between people of reasonably similar status. Due to this, the choice of words used is not face threatening and avoids offensive language even though it is an intrusion into the territory of the addressee.

There is positive politeness portrayed here because Thomas Grey tries to minimize threatening the hearer's positive face. He does this by making the recipient feel good about himself due to what he possesses. The recipient has good archers capable of accompanying them for their voyage. His language is very polite and careful in his request to the recipient through the use of words such as 'hertly' and 'pray' in:

J hertely pray you to do so moche for me as pouruey me of iij or fore goode archers or mo suche as ye thynke be goode and sufficient men to a-bide withe me duryng this viage at the kynges wages" (Lines 4-5)

'I sincerely ask you to do this much for me: to get hold of three or four good archers or more for me, such as you think will be good and capable men to accompany me during this voyage, on the king's wages'

Moreover, Thomas Grey offers the addressee an offer or promise if he assists them. He promises the addressee and the archers who accompany them on the voyage favor or anything they may request thereafter should his request be granted:

And euer to owe you my goode wille and fauor and be glad to do for you and them
any thing ye shall desire of me her-after (lines 7-8)

‘and always to owe to you my good will and favour and be happy to do, for you and
them, anything that you might desire of me hereafter’

Again, Thomas Grey is highly optimistic that the addressee will not let them down. This positive politeness strategy indicates that ‘speaker assumes that the hearer wants the speaker’s wants for the speaker and will help him obtain it’ (Brown and Levinson 1987:126). This basically implies that the addresser expects that his wish will be granted because he knows the addressee wants that for him as well; that he gets good archers to accompany him to the king. However, the tone throughout is that of a request:

J hertely **pray** you to do so moche for me (Line 4)

‘I sincerely ask you to do this much for me’

I pray you not to faile her-in and to yeue credens to this berer (Line 8)

‘And I pray you, do not fail in this, and trust the bearer of this letter’

The performative used here is ‘pray’. Unlike the choice of words used in D4071 which is direct and commanding, this text indicates that the letter is to a coequal. In this text, the addresser is clear with his request but attempts to make it as little offending as possible although he intrudes in the territory of the addressee. It is important to note that this letter is direct and straight to the point exhibiting Grice’s maxims of conversations of manner, quantity, quality and relevance.

The following modals are used in the text:

and in this doying ye **shalle** do to me Right grete and syngler pleisir (line 6)

‘and doing this, you will please me very greatly’

And euer to owe you my goode wille and fauor and be glad to do for you and them
any thing ye **shall** desire of me her-after (lines 7-8)

‘those who will go with me and always to owe to you my good will and favour and be
happy to do, for you and them, anything that you might desire of me hereafter’

In addition to his requests, he offers to return the favour when his request is granted. The use of his choice of modal verb ‘shall’ serves as an appreciation for the favor to be granted: ‘and in this doynge ye *shalle* do to me Right grete and syngler pleisir’ and an obligation and promise that he will definitely deliver. This letter has mainly a descriptive and appellative function.

4.3. Discussion: the command letter as a genre

The ten letters studied present a very varied picture even though they share some common features. This section will discuss the similarities and differences in the texts, drawing some tentative general conclusions about the command letter as a genre.

As with most types of late medieval correspondence, these letters tend to follow the medieval convention with a fixed structure known as the *ars dictaminis*. All the letters follow the logical sequence of the *ars dictaminis* which is subdivided into the salutation, exordium, narration, a petition deduced from the narration and phrases of conclusion; however, they do not normally include an exordium, and the directive takes the place of the petition.

In particular, the opening and closing formulae usually show the writer-addressee relations in a typical way. Eight of the ten letters here considered open with the same formula, including some variant of the phrase ‘trusty and well beloved, we greet you well’:

Right trusti and welbeloued we grete you wele (D0939#2)

Right welbelouyd frendys we grete yow well (D2139)

Trusty & welbelouyd we grette you well (D2727#15)

Trusty and welbeloued in god we grete you wele (D2985)

Right trusty and right welbeloued we grete you wele (D4258)

Trusty and Right welbelouued we grete you welle (D4284)

Trusty and welbeloued we grete you (D4433)

A very slightly different variant appears in D4071, a letter from the king to the warden of the Forest of Savernake:

To oure trusty and welbeloued squier... greting (D4071)

This polite formula is typically used by persons of some authority. When writing to inferiors, however, a salutation does not seem to have been strictly necessary, although it would clearly have been considered polite. Two letters in the present study lack the formula, stating only the name or title of the recipient at the start:

To Thomas jeffrey o^f Fermo^f of moundvilles greting (D0940)

Reuerende fader in god . (D4111#1)

The first example presumably reflects the great difference in social status between the Duke and his farmer, while the second, being addressed to a person of considerable status (a prior) probably reflects the stern character of the letter.

Unlike salutations, elaborate phrases of conclusion are entirely absent from these letters. Only one of the ten letters, that by Bishop Waynflete, includes a proper concluding phrase:

And our . lord haue you alweye in his kepinge (D4258)

‘And may our lord have you always in his keeping’

All the other letters conclude simply with the place and date:

wreten at london the xxv day of jule (D0939)

‘written at London the 25th day of July’

writen’ at Esshere þe vijth day of Septembr’ (D4258)

‘written at Esher the 7th day of September’

yeuen vnder oure signet at o\|r castell of leycestr the xij\|t\|h day of juyll the xvj\|e yere of o\|r regne (D4071)

‘Given under our signet at our castle of Leicester the 12th day of July, the 16th year of our reign’

Yeuen vndre’ our signet at our~ *citie~ of London~ the ix day of Decembre (D2985)

‘Given under our signet at our city of London the 9th day of December’

After the salutation came the exordium, ‘consisting of some common place generality, a proverb or a scriptural quotation designed to put the reader in the proper frame of mind for granting the request to follow’ (Taylor 1980: 57). Such commonplaces are not found in any of the command letters here studied; clearly these would be considered superfluous in a letter from an authority to an inferior. Rather, the authors all move directly to the narrative, or in some cases even to the directive.

Most letters provide some narrative to explain the command or request. This may be a long narrative detailing the political situation, as in Bishop Waynflete’s letter (D4258), or a very brief one, as in the king’s letter concerning the forest of Savernake:

For as moche as we to oure right great displeaser haue vnderstanden that the Game in the said Forest by many Riottows and eville disposed *persones* of late huntyng therinne is greatly diminussed (D4071)

‘As we to our very great displeasure have understood that the game in the said forest, because of many scoundrels and ill-disposed persons who have been hunting there of late, has been greatly diminished’

However, not all letters include a narration at all. For instance, in D0940, the Duke of Suffolk promptly after the salutation commands Thomas Jeffrey to pay the debt he has incurred on his household without giving further explanation about what caused him to owe or why he chose the farmer to pay that amount of money. He only states the intent for the letter:

we wole and streitly charge you that ye content & paie vnto the bringer herof for money inployed on o^r houshold ‘ thre pound threttenne shillinges & foure pens for such stuff as we o^r owne *personn* haue *promysed* and not to be failed upon o^r worship

‘we wish and strictly charge you that you make good and pay to the bringer of this (letter) for a debt incurred by our own household, three pounds thirteen shillings and four pence for such stuff as we personally have promised and are not to fail on our honor’

Another illustration is the letter from the Duke of Suffolk, Earl of Warwick and Baron Sudeley to Thomas Hugford and William Berkyswell (D2139), requesting that they go into the audit and take out the two registers which should be sent to him. The writers simply

mention that it is ‘for certain reasons’ and do not unravel the reason why these two registers are to be sent. The purpose for writing the text is to direct the recipients to get him the registers; hence giving ‘unnecessary’ explanation is irrelevant:

and for diuers causis that mevithe vs we prey yow that ye goo in to the Audite atte warrewyk and there take oute ij Registres on of parchement and a-nother of paper the whiche Register of paper . is a blak boke conteynyng fees and aduowesons . and the feodary Rolle of the knyghtes fees /

‘for various reasons that move us we ask you that you go in to the audit at Warwick and there, take out two registers, one of parchment and the other of paper of which the paper register is a black book containing fees and advowsons, and the feodary roll of the knights’ fees’

Basically, all the letters are straight forward and are very direct in their request. The letters perform the function of an appellative; thus, the language is used to provoke the recipient to pursue a goal, usually the addresser’s goal. These letters adopt the Gricean cooperative principle which follows the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. This means that the texts give the information that is required, at the appropriate time and purpose without including anything irrelevant.

The directive itself may be considered the core of the letter. In requesting or commanding for an action to be performed by the recipients, the writers tend to use similar phrases, which have been called ‘request markers.’ Request markers are words used to make requests, which are ‘fixed’ and ‘fairly short’ and usually ‘a three-word cluster’ (Palander-Collin 2009: 276) e.g. ‘we desire you’ or ‘we command you’. Such direct request and command markers use different speech act verbs to vary the strength and directness of the request/command. Five of the ten letters here phrase the directive as a request, using the verb ‘pray’:

we prey yow (D2139: line 1) we praye you (D4258)

‘we ask you’

we... wol desire and also pray you hertily (D4111#1)

‘we...desire and also pray you heartily’

J hertely pray you (D4284)

‘I sincerely ask you’

we... disire and pray you (D4433)

‘we...desire and pray you’

The use of ‘pray’ caters to the negative face of the recipient by suggesting a request for a favour. Two further letters use only verbs indicating desire, making the force something midway between a request and a command:

we desire you (D0939#2)

‘we desire you’

we wol and desire you (D2985)

‘we wish and desire you’

Finally, three letters directly order the recipient to do something, using the verbs ‘charge’ and ‘command’:

we straitly charge and *command* you’ (D4071)

‘we strictly charge and command you’

we... straytely charge you (D2727#15)

‘we...strictly charge you’

we wole and streitly charge you (D0940)

‘we wish and strictly charge you’

The directive is in most letters followed by some kind of formulation relating to the outcome – whether the recipient will carry out the command or not. This may take the form of a polite assurance of trust:

And þ^t ye faille not *herof* as our’ feithfulle trust is in you (D4433)

‘And that you do not fail in this, as our faithful trust is in you’

However, direct threats are not uncommon in the material, and appear especially in the letters from the king, who of course had the greatest authority to threaten:

Fayle ye not truely to execute the *premissis* as ye tender *ouur* pleasur’ and wille aunswere therefore vnto vs at your *perilles* . (D2727#15)

‘Do not fail to execute the premises faithfully as you value our pleasure and will answer to us at your perill’

As ye entend to please vs . And wol avoyde the daungier of o^r lawes (D2985)

‘as you would like to please us and avoid the harshness of our laws’

The most blunt threat is that scribbled by the Duke of Suffolk in his own hand after his brief order to his farmer to pay the Duke’s debt:

& Fayle not on peyn losyng off yo^r Ferme (D0940)

‘Fail not, on pain of losing your farm’

Only one letter promises something in return, making this perhaps more similar to a petition; this is the letter from the Marquis of Dorset, requesting archers to go with him to France:

in this doyng ye shalle do to me Right grete and syngler pleisir / and bynde me to be goode lorde to them whiche shalle go with me / And euer to owe you my goode wille and fauor and be glad to do for you and them any thing ye shall desire of me her-after (D4284)

‘and doing this, you will please me very greatly and bind me to be a good Lord to those who will go with me and always to owe to you my good will and favour and be happy to do, for you and them, anything that you might desire of me hereafter’

The Marquis is also the only one of the writers who refers to himself as ‘I’ rather than ‘we’ suggesting a lower status and less authority.

Command and request letters are on the whole written from superiors to their subjects, servants or generally social inferiors to get them to do something, and not the other way around. This is why most writers of command letters were blunt and direct without considering being polite.

It is clear from the texts that requests from superiors to people far below them in status are more direct and less polite than requests to a coequal. This is because the superiors have power over the recipient making it easy for them to communicate in any way without thinking about familiarity or the threat to the recipients’ negative face. It may then be concluded that social distance and social status are variables affecting the use of politeness in texts. With regards to the level of politeness, there is a positive correlation between directness

and social status and distance. Specifically, the more power the addresser has over the recipient, the more direct the request, as is well seen in the letter from the Duke of Suffolk to his farmer:

...we wole and streitly charge you that ye content & paie vnto the bringer herof for money inplyed on o^r houshold ' thre pound threttenne shillinges & foure pens for such stuff as we o^r owne *personn* haue *promysed* and not to be failed upon o^r worship

& Fayle not on peyn losyng off yo^r Ferme (D0940)

'We wish and strictly charge you that you make good and pay to the bringer of this (letter) for a debt incurred by our own household, three pounds thirteen shillings and four pence for such stuff as we personally have promised and are not to fail on our honor... Fail not, on pain of losing your farm'

Some features of the command letter differ considerably from the usual conventions of letter writing. The letters considered here are not only straightforward and have less politeness but include threats as well; these threats usually conclude the letter rather than the customary 'may God keep you' formula, only included in a single letter, that by Bishop Waynfilet. This depicts the fact that request letters with a wide gap in social status do not always follow the formal features of the *ars dictaminis*.

Letters written to people of a more similar status tend to consider the negative face of the recipient and try to not to use offensive utterances. Also, it is necessary that the addresser will be polite when requesting a favour from an addressee in the same position in order for the request to be granted. The addresser in this particular case may try to make the recipient feel good about themselves and to create a positive face. The clearest example of this is the letter from the Marquis of Dorset, requesting good archers to accompany him and the King on their voyage. His choice of words is polite and friendly:

...wherfore J hertely pray you to do so moche for me as pouruey me of iij or fore goode archers or mo suche as ye thynke be goode... and in this doyng ye shalle do to me Right grete and syngler pleisir / and bynde me to be goode lorde to them whiche shalle go withe me / And euer to owe you my goode wille and fauor and be glad to do for you and them any thing ye shall desire of me her-after (D4284)

‘for which purpose I sincerely ask you to do this much for me: to get hold of three or four good archers or more for me, such as you think will be good... and doing this, you will please me very greatly and bind me to be a good Lord to those who will go with me and always to owe to you my good will and favour and be happy to do, for you and them, anything that you might desire of me hereafter’

Similarly, the Duke of Gloucester writing to a fellow nobleman uses polite phrases such as ‘we *perfore* disire and pray you’

...we *perfore* disire and pray you alle excusacions / laide *apart* þ^t ye arredy you w^t viij horses or vnder to accompany vs thider and þ^t ye mete w^t vs at doncastre (D4433)

‘...we therefore desire and pray you to put aside all excuses and make yourself ready with about eight horses to accompany us there. And that you meet with us at Doncaster’

Finally, command letters could be discussed in terms of their official nature. Letters can be categorised into private letters/personal letters and non-private/official letters. As most of these letters come from persons of authority, they may be considered official; however, some can clearly be seen as more personal than others. Some letters are written to specific recipients but may be considered official because they contain an official message. Usually, they consist of information with regards to rules, regulations, events, and the likes. A vivid example is the letter written to Hugh Pakenham, Lord of the Manors of East Court, pertaining to the invasion of the Frenchmen in the county. Though this is a private letter to the recipient, it is an official letter containing an information which when taken into consideration, protects all the people in the county:

jt is seide that ther be in hampton’ iij or . iiij traitoures that haue *promised* it vnto þe frenshe men’ / and therefore we praye you to comune w^t gentilmen’ of the Cuntre and also with the maire and summe other trusty and sadde men’ of þe same towne in þ^t matier’ and to praye thaym for to see wysely aboute thaym (D4258)

‘It is said that there are three or four traitors in Hampton that have promised it to the Frenchmen, and therefore we ask you to communicate with gentlemen of the country

and also with the Mayor and some other trusty and reliable men of the same town concerning that matter and to ask them to look around carefully'

At the same time, there is clearly a difference between letters written to a single, known individual and letters written to people who only represent their office, such as the Justices of Lancashire or the town officials of Gloucester. Formally, however, there seem to be no clear differences between these.

It has been pointed out by scholars that letters in the late medieval period consisted largely of fixed formulae and structure based on the *ars dictaminis* or *ars dictandi*. Such letters had very little inclusion for personal choices compared to modern English letters, which have no fixed greeting formulae and sometimes lack salutations and complimentary closes (Bergs 2004: 209). However, this does not mean that they leave no room for choice.

In late Middle English command letters, as in Middle English letters in general, it was generally necessary to stick to fixed formulae for both the introduction and the conclusion, even though these might only consist of a blunt term of address and a dating clause. The middle part of the letter contained the content of the letter and could include unpredictable formulations. Some of the elements here too, especially the request markers, are fairly formulaic, and the overall structure of the letter does not vary much. At the same time, the variation in politeness strategies and directness is considerable, as the present material shows, and the choices reflect both social status and the context and kind of request, perhaps also the writer's personality.

PART II: THE EDITION

The editorial conventions

The main purpose of this edition is to make ten late Middle English command letters available to scholarly and historical readers and linguists. As the study investigates the pragmatics of commands and requests in the late medieval letters, taking into account the physical context, it makes sense to reproduce the texts as far as possible as they appear in the manuscript itself. Only a few very small adjustments have been made to ensure better readability; instead of regularizing the text, a translation has been provided. The conventions used in the transcription are described in detail below.

The edition is a diplomatic one. It was transcribed using the conventions of *A Corpus of Middle English Local Documents* (MELD), first producing a ‘base’ version which was then turned into a readable version. What follows gives a breakdown of the main conventions.

The editorial conventions retain the capitalization, punctuation, and line division of the manuscript. The virgule, punctus elevatus and the punctus are the three punctuation marks the text makes use of. The punctus is indicated as a full stop [.] , the punctus elevatus as a colon or semi-colon [: ;] and the virgule as a slash [/].

Word division is to some extent adjusted to make the text better comprehensible, but the manuscript reality is always signalled, even though there is no precise measurement of the gap between the words. Separate words in present day English that seem to be written together as one word in the manuscript are split in the text, but the manuscript reading is given in footnotes.

forto transcribed as *for to* (D4258)

thentent transcribed as *th entent* (D4258)

forasmoche transcribed as *for asmoche* (D0939)

shalbe transcribed as *shal be* (D2727)

Inversely, some words considered to be a single word by a modern reader appear separated in the manuscript. In such cases, a hyphen sign is added to the transcription to connect the words. These changes made in the manuscripts are recorded in footnotes.

a poynted transcribed as *a-poynted* (D4258)

a bide transcribed as *a-bide* (D4258)

her after transcribed as *her-after* (D4258)

All the words that are crossed out in the manuscripts also appear crossed out in the transcription, and additions above the line appear as superscript:

~~eostes~~ *coostes* (D4258)

~~your~~^{our} (D2727)

~~september~~ August (D4284)

moneth ~~next coming~~ (D4433)

Underlining is also reproduced, as in nyght walkyng in D2727.

The spelling and letters of the original texts are retained. In Middle English, the letters ‘v’ and ‘u’ are used interchangeably with ‘v’ usually in the initial position and ‘u’ in the middle of the word: *vppon*, *vnto*, *vnderstande*, *vndre*, *welbelouyd*, *canuas*, *obseruyd*, *haue*. The distinction between the two letters is reproduced in the edition. Similarly, the spellings ‘th’ and ‘þ’ are interchangeable in the material and are reproduced as they appear. Also, ‘y’ is used as an alternative to ‘i’ in words such as *receyve*, *myndes*, *tyme*, *kyng*.

The letter ‘j’ as a majuscule represents the first-person pronoun ‘I’ in present day English while the minuscule j is used for the last minim in numbers, for example ‘xxvj’.

Occasionally, ‘j’ is also employed to indicate the letter ‘I’ in the example Jn ‘in’ (D0940), Jrland ‘Ireland’ (D4071).

The abbreviations in the manuscripts are expanded in italics in the edition. They are expanded based on the Conventions of the Middle English Grammar Corpus (MEG-C), also used for MELD, as explained further in the Corpus Manual (Stenroos and Mäkinen, 2011). The horizontal stroke through ‘h’ and ‘l’ is marked as final *e*. There are also final strokes that may represent final -e but may also have no significant meaning, called ‘squiggles’ in the MEG-C manual. These are indicated with an apostrophe in the transcription.

Text

1. Letter from King Henry VII to the City of Gloucester

D2727#15

Gloucester, Gloucestershire Archives: GBR/B2/1, fol. 21r

Trusti & Welbelouyd the Mayre Aldermanneꝝ & Shiriffys
of our Towne of Gloucestr'

By the Kyng

Trusty & welbelouyd we grette you well and be enformed the ye of your circumspect myndes
haue accordyng to ~~your~~^{our} laweꝝ made certayne good ordynances' & lawe-dabyll⁸
constitucons to be

obseruyd & kept amonges you for the publike & comen weale of our Townne ther' as welle
for setting appart of lyueres retoundres nyght walkyng and other enormytyeꝝ . And for
the condyng punicon' of the trespassours in thieꝝ behalf . with the whiche your politique
demeanyng we be right wele content and pleasid . and therefore straytely charge you
to putt the said lieffulle ordynances' in plenar' execucon' withoute indut Fauour or parcialite
accordyng to our said lawys . and yf any indysposed *personeꝝ* of what so euer degr' or
persones

condicon' thay be presume or take vppon' them' to \wedge ^{re}siste youe therein than' we wold you
certyfye vs of their nameꝝ with the specialitie & manier of theyr demaynyng' . and we
shalle theruppon' so *prouyd* for their further punycon' as shal be⁹ to the ferefulle example of
other lyk mysdoers . Fayle ye not truely to execute the premissis as ye tender ouur
pleasur' and wille aunswere therefore vnto vs at your *perilles* . Youyn' vnder our
signet of Richmounte the xvth day of July .:

⁸ MS: lawe dabyll

⁹ MS: shalbe

2. Letter from King Edward IV to John Seymour

D4071

Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: 1300/149

Edward by the grace of god kyng of England and of Fraunce and lord of Jrland To oure trusty and

welbeloued squier John Saymour Warden of the Forest of Savernake belonging to oure derrest

wyf the Quene . and in his absence to alle the keepers of the same . and to eueri of them greting . For

as moche¹⁰ as we to oure right great displeaser haue vnderstanden that the Game in the said Forest

by many Riottows and eville disposed *persones* of late huntyng therinne is greatly diminusshed

we straitly charge and command you . that from hensforthe ye suffr' noo maner of persone of what estate condicomm or degre so euer¹¹ he be ; withinne the said Forest . or eny grownde therto

belonging to haue shot sute ne cours vnto the tyme that we or o^r said wyf shal cumme thider and if eny *persone* whatsoever he be woll hunte therinne or with bowe or other thing sture the said game ayenst yo^r willes . that ye thanne in alle possible hast certifye vs of his name and demeanyng . and we shall procede vnto his grevoux and sharp puniconn as accordeth with o^r lawes . and therefore that ye faile not t obey¹² this o^r comandment in eueri behalve . as ye woll eschewe oure grettest displeaser . and ansuere vnto vs at yo^r vttermast *perilles*/ Yeuen vnder oure signet at o^r Castell of Leycestr' the xijth day of Juylle . The xvj^e yere of o^r Regne . /

¹⁰ MS: asmoche

¹¹ MS: soeuer

¹² MS: tobey

3. Letter from King Edward IV to John Seymour

D4111#1

Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/11 (vol. I, pt.2, fol.79Br)

R E By the king

Reuerende fader in god . Ye haue wel in mynde we doubte not . how late agoo by you and othir prelates and Clergie in the conuocacon'

of the province of Caunterbury holdem at Poules ther was graunted vnto vs a dyme for certaine consideracons' expressed in the said

graunt . as by the tenure therof conteigned in a writte which we sende you herwith to assigne and depute Collectours of the same

disme in your' diocise all at large is deducte and specified . and for asmoche . as afore this tyme such and so many excepcions' haue

ben certified from you in like caas of graunte that wher' it was trowed the graunte of a disme shuld haue extended to a greet¹³

somme and be a greet relief to the necessitees it was graunted for . it came not as who seith to half a dyme . soo as it was

noonn or litel ease to the charges that shold haue be born therwith . we forsomoche wol desire and also pray you hertily . that

considered the premisses . and the greet burthens and charges that resten vpon vs and daily must for the commune wele

and defence of our' lande ; ye do your' effectuell deuour' and diligence at this tyme that the disme in your diocise may be¹⁴

vnto vs as greet as of oold tyme it was woned to be and that ye certifie noonn excepcions' sauf oonly suche as of verray

necessite and pite must and owethe to be certified . And that ye faile not herin as oure speciall trust is onn you . and as ye desire

to do vs singuler pleasire and comfort . yeuen vndre oure priue seel at westm' the ix day of August

¹³ MS: agreeet

¹⁴ MS: maybe

4. Letter from King Henry VI to John Nedham and Thomas Lyttelton

D0939#2

London, British Library: Add. 27446, fol. 114r

To John Nedham and Thomas Litolton Justices of the Counte palentyne of the Duchy of Lancastre

Right trusti and welbeloued we grete you wele and for as moche¹⁵ as we vnderstande that on thomas bury hath sued an appele of robbery be-for¹⁶ you a-yenst¹⁷ John Berney of redham in the Counte of Norffolk the yonger esquier John Paston of Norwich esquier John Berney of Redham in the Counte of Norffolk the eldre esquier John hevenyngham of Norwiche esquier Cristoffre Norwiche of Brundehale in the Counte of Norffolk yoman wheche sute we vndrestande is take of very malice and for noon other cause & it apperith ^{so} to all them that hath knowlege of bothe *parties* wherfor we desire you that in the seide appele ye schewe onto the defendauntis all the fauo^r that ye may And that ye receyve no writte rto^rned in the name of the Scheriff of Norffolk touchyng the seide matre but be the handes of the sheriff hym silfe or of John Bernarde his vndre Schiriff - wreten at london the xxvjth day of Jule

¹⁵ MS: forasmoche

¹⁶ MS: be for

¹⁷ MS: a yenst

5. Letter from King Richard III to the Prior of Canterbury Cathedral Priory

D2985

Canterbury, Canterbury Cathedral Archives: CCA-DCc-ChAnt/K/3

By the king

RR

Trusty and welbeloued in god we grete you wele . Acertaynyng you that oure trusty and welbeloued knight

for oure body *sir* Rauf Asshetton hath shewed vnto vs howe that *sir* John Fogge amonges many writinges and

euydences deliured into your keping certaine euydences concernyng the landes belonging vnto our' said *seruantes*

wif and with^e you yet Remayne . wherefore we wol and desire you that whansoeuer our said seruaunt

shal come or sende vnto you for the said euydences . ye wille deliure them hoolly without any delaye or

contradiccon' in that behalf As ye aught to doo of right Not failling hereof in any wise . As ye entend to please vs . And wol avoyde the daungier of o^f lawes if ye doo the contrarie Yeuen vndre'

our signet at our' Citie' of London' the ix day of Decembre

6. Letter from the Duke of Gloucester to William Fitzwilliam

D4433

Sheffield, Sheffield Archives: WWM/D/98

The Duc of Gloucestre Constable
and Admiralle of England

Trusty and welbeloued we grete you And for so moche¹⁸ as þe kinges grace by his moste
honorable
letres vnder his prive seale hath comanded vs in alle goodly hast to come vp to his highnes
to
londonn we þerfore disire and pray you alle excusacions / laide *apart* þ^t ye arredey you w^t viij
horses or
vnder to accompany vs thider and þ^t ye mete w^t vs at Doncastre thider' ward the xxv day of
þis present moneth ~~next comyng~~ And þ^t ye faille not herof as our' feithfulle trust is in you
Youen
vnder our' signet at oure Castelle of Middelham the xix day of Octobre

kendale

¹⁸ MS: forsomoche

7. Letter from John de la Pole and others to Thomas Hugford and William Berkyswell

D2139

Warwick, Warwickshire RO: CR1886/Cupboard 4/Top Shelf/EMC/2

To oure right trusty
and welbelouyd Frendeꝝ
Thomas hugford and
william Berkyswelle

Right welbelouyd frendys we grete yow well and for diuers causis that mevithe vs we prey
yow that ye goo in to the Audite atte
warrewyk and there take oute ij Registres on of parchement and a-nother¹⁹ of paper the
whiche Register of paper . is a blak
boke conteynyng fees and aduowesons . and the feodary Rolle of the knyghtes fees / and that
thes bokeꝝ and the Rolle be put
yn a bagge of Canuas and sealed vnder the seal of the colage of warrewyk and the yelde seal
of the Tovne . and that ye
brynge . or sende vs suerly . the seide bagge with the seide bokes . And also that ye see that
the dore be sealed a-yen²⁰ as we
trust to you . Wreton' atte london' the xxj day of Octobr'

Suffolk * Salisbury *
* Seudeley

¹⁹ MS: a nother

²⁰ MS: a yen

8. Letter from John de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, to Thomas Jeffrey

D0940

London, British Library: Add. 43490, fol. 49r

The duc of *Suffolk*

To Thomas Jeffrey o^r Fermo^r of Moundevilles greting we wole and streitly charge you that ye content & paie vnto the bringer herof for money inployed on o^r houshold thre pound threttenne shillinges & foure pens for such stuff as we o^r owne *personn* haue *promysed* and not

to be failed upon o^r worship Of p^e which *somme* of lxxij s iiij d so by you Contented & paied we wole and also streitly charge o^r Audito^rs for the tyme being by *vertu* of this o^r writing signed w^t o^r hand to make you dew & pleyn' allowaunce at yo^r next accompt At wyngfeld the furst day of May Jn the furst yer of kyng Richard p^e iij^{de}

Suffolk

& Fayle not on peyn losyng off yo^r Ferme

9. Letter from the Bishop of Winchester to Hugh Pakenham

D4258

Southampton, Southampton Archives: SC 2/9/2/6

Right trusty and right welbeloued we grete you wele / Puttyng you in knoliche þ^t we haue tithinges out of

Normandie howe the frenshe men' been' redye w^t a grete powre and purpose to execute thaie (sic) malice ayens this land

bothe vpon' þe see and also like as they didde þe last yere at sandwyche . at this tyme for to²¹ lande in summe other' place .

for to²² Robbe and dispole . / wiche tithinges and the matier . concernyng the jaundyes the takyng of þe Shippes of lubyke

A variance þ^t is betwixe the Cite of london' and men' of Courte and dyuers other grete matiers that now been in

hande causen' the kinge to leve his purpose of ridynge northwarde and wol abide here nyghe aboute london' and soo

hathe comaunded vs and many other' lordes of his Counselle for to do also to th entent²³ that yf any grete and sodayn'

case falle that þe lordes shal mowe hastily be assembled and take suche direcon' of redresse therinne as shal be

for . the seurtee wele and honour of þe kinge and his Reaume / and this causeth vs þ^t we may not kepe our

purpose of commyng in to hampshire at þis tyme . / wiche bothe for to²⁴ haue seen' a goode and sadde rule sette there

for . the sauf garde of þ^t Cuntre and other grete matiers concernyng our . Cure and charge and also for our . disporte

we wold right gladly haue doon' / but sethe we may not come in our owne persone we shal sende in to þ^e Cuntre

²¹ MS: forto

²² MS: forto

²³ MS: thentent

²⁴ MS: forto

suche ordinance as we haue purveied for . þe defence of þe same / and yf any grete liklihode
of jeopardy be thought
suche feliship as we haue aboute vs shal . be there without delaye . redie to make resistance . /
we haue writen' this
same daye to þ^e maistre of þe kinges ordinance . for stuffes to be hadde in to the Castelle of
hampton' for . keping therof
It is seide that ther be in hampton' iij or . iiij traitoures that haue *promised* it vnto þe frenshe
men' / and therefore we
praye you to comune w^t gentilmen' of the Cuntre and also with the Maire and summe other
trusty and sadde
men' of þe same towne in þ^t matier' and to praye thaym for to²⁵ see wysely aboute thaym /
Ther . be *commissiones*
of arraye sende oute in to alle the shires aboute þe see ~~eostes~~ coostes from Cornewale vnto
yorkshire for kepinge of
þe same whiche j trust w^t goddys help shal . do grete goode / And our . lord haue you alweye
in his kepinge writen'
at Esshere þe vijth day of Septembr'

W B of
winchestr'

²⁵ MS: forto

10. Letter from Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset

D4284

Dorchester, Dorset History Centre: D/RGB/LL/727

Right trusty and welbe-louued²⁶

T...en²⁷

Trusty and Right welbelouued I grete you welle and where it is so the kyng oure souuerene lorde is vtterly determynd by the grace of oure lorde godde to take his viage in to the partes of Fraunce the next monthe insuyng and his grace hath a-poyented²⁸ me to go withe hym to *serue* hym withe suche nombre of goode men as J can gete in this said viage . wherfore J hertely pray you to do so moche for me as pouruey me of iij or fore goode archers or mo suche as ye thynke be goode and sufficient men to a-bide²⁹ withe me duryng this viage at the kynges wages / and to be Redy here the viij day of September next *coming* and in this doying ye shalle do to me Right grete and syngler pleisir / and bynde me to be goode lorde to them whiche shalle go withe me / And euer to owe you my goode wille and fauor and be glad to do for you and them any thing ye shall desire of me her-after³⁰ / and I pray you not to faile her-in³¹ and to yeue credens ~~to~~ to this berer yeuen vndre my signet at London' the xxvij day of ~~september~~ August

Thomas Dorsett

²⁶ MS: welbe louued

²⁷ MS: the addressee's name is illegible

²⁸ MS: a poyented

²⁹ MS: a bide

³⁰ MS: her after

³¹ MS: her in

Translation

1. Letter from King Henry VII to the City of Gloucester

D2727#15

Gloucester, Gloucestershire Archives: GBR/B2/1, fol. 21r

Trusty and well-beloved, the mayor, aldermen and sheriffs of our town of Gloucester.

By the king

Trusty and well-beloved, we greet you well and are informed that you of your circumspect minds have according to our laws made certain good ordinances and laudable constitutions to be observed and kept amongst you for the public and common good of our town, as well for the setting apart of clipped money, night walking and other enormities, as for the appropriate punishment of the trespassers in this behalf, with which your judicious action we are right well content and pleased and therefore strictly charge you to put the said just ordinances in full execution without any special licence, favour or partiality according to our said laws.

And if any evilly disposed persons, of whatever degree or condition they may be, presume or take upon themselves to resist you in this, then we wish you to certify us of their names with the details and manner of their conduct, and we shall after that provide for their further punishment so that it shall be a fearful example for other similar offenders hereafter. Do not fail to execute the premises faithfully as you value our pleasure and will answer to us at your peril.

Given under our signet of Richmond the 15th day of July.

2. Letter from King Edward IV to John Seymour

D4071

Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: 1300/149

Edward, by the grace of God, king of England and of France and lord of Ireland, to our trusty and well-beloved squire John Seymour, Warden of the forest of Savernake, belonging to our dearest wife the Queen; and in his absence to all the keepers of the same and to every one of them, greeting.

As we to our very great displeasure have understood that the game in the said forest, because of many scoundrels and ill-disposed persons who have been hunting there of late, has been greatly diminished, we strictly charge and command you, that from henceforth you suffer no manner of person of whatsoever estate, condition or degree he may be; to have shot a suit or course within the said forest, or any ground belonging to it, until the time that we or our said wife shall come there. And if any person, whatever he may be, will hunt there, or disturb the said game with a bow or other things, against your will, that you then in all possible haste let us know his name and offence, and we shall proceed to his grievous and sharp punishment according to our laws. And therefore, do not fail to obey this our commandment in all respects, as you will eschew our greatest displeasure, and answer to us at your uttermost peril. Given under our signet at our castle of Leicester the 12th day of July, the 16th year of our reign.

3. Letter from King Edward IV to John Seymour

D4111#1

Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/11 (vol. I, pt.2, fol.79Br)

Rex Eduardus. By the king

Reverend father in God, you remember well, we do not doubt, how recently by you and other prelates and clergy at the convocation of the province of Canterbury that was held at St Paul's, there was granted to us a dime for certain considerations expressed in the said grant, as is deducted and specified in the summary thereof, which is contained in a writ which we send you herewith, [commanding you] to assign and appoint collectors of the same dime throughout your diocese. And for as much as previously, such and so many exceptions have been certified by you in a similar case of grant, that where it was believed that the grant of a dime should have extended to a great sum and a great relief to the necessities for which it was granted, it did not add up, as one might say, to half a dime, so that it was of no or little help for the charges that should have been covered therewith. We therefore desire and also pray you heartily that this time, considering the premises, and the great burdens and charges that rest upon us daily and must do so, for the common well-being and defence of our land, you do your most effective effort and diligence that the dime [collected] in your diocese for us may be a great as it was wont to be of old time, and that you certify no exceptions apart from only such that owe to be certified out of necessity and pity, and that you do not fail in this, as our special trust is in you, and in as far as you desire to greatly please and comfort us. Given under our privy seal at Westminster the 9th day of August.

4. Letter from King Henry VI to John Nedham and Thomas Lyttelton

D0939#2

London, British Library: Add. 27446, fol. 114r

To John Nedham and Thomas Liltton, Justices of the County Palatine of the Duchy of Lancaster

Right trusty and well-beloved, we greet you well. And for as much as we understand that one Thomas Bury has sued an appeal of robbery before you against John Berney the younger of Redham in the county of Norfolk, esquire, John Paston of Norwich, esquire, John Berney the elder of Redham in the county of Norfolk, esquire, John Heveningham of Norwich, esquire, and Christopher Norwich of Brundehale in the county of Norfolk, a yeoman. This suit, as we understand, is with an evil intention and for no other reason, and appears so to all those who have knowledge of both parties, and because of that, we desire that you, when dealing with the said appeal, show all the favour that you can to the defendants, and that you receive no writ returned in the name of the sheriff of Norfolk concerning the said matter, but only from the hands of the sheriff himself or of John Bernard, his under-sheriff. Written at London the 26th day of July.

5. Letter from King Richard III to the Prior of Canterbury Cathedral Priory

D2985

Canterbury, Canterbury Cathedral Archives: CCA-DCc-ChAnt/K/3

By the king Ricardus Rex

Trusty and well-beloved in God we greet you well, informing you that our trusty and well-beloved knight, sir Rauf Asshetton, has shown to us how Sir John Fogge, among many writings and evidences, delivered into your keeping certain evidences concerning the lands belonging to our said servant's wife, which still remain with you. Because of which we wish and desire you that whenever our said servant shall come to you or send for the evidences, you will deliver them wholly without any delay or contradiction concerning them, just as you ought to do by right. Do not fail in this in any way, as you would like to please us and avoid the harshness of our laws if you do the contrary. Given under our signet at our city of London the 9th day of December.

6. Letter from the Duke of Gloucester to William Fitzwilliam

D4433

Sheffield, Sheffield Archives: WWM/D/98

The Duke of Gloucester, Constable and Admiral of England.

Trusty and well-beloved, we greet you. And for as much as the king's grace by his most honourable letters, under his privy seal, has commanded us in all goodly haste to come up to his highness to London, we therefore desire and pray you to put aside all excuses and make yourself ready with about eight horses to accompany us there. And that you meet with us at Doncaster, to go there, on the 25th day of this present month. And that you do not fail in this, as our faithful trust is in you.

Given under our signet at our castell of Middleham the 19th day of October.

Kendale

7. Letter from John de la Pole and others to Thomas Hugford and William Berkyswell

D2139

Warwick, Warwickshire RO: CR1886/Cupboard 4/Top Shelf/EMC/2

To our right trusty and well-beloved friends Thomas Hugford and William Berkyswell

Right well-beloved friends, we greet you well, and for various reasons that move us we ask you that you go in to the audit at Warwick and there take out two registers, one of parchment and the other of paper, of which the paper register is a black book containing fees and advowsons, and the feodary roll of the knights' fees. And that these books and the roll should be put in a bag of canvas and sealed under the seal of the college of Warwick and the guild seal of the town, and that you bring or send the bag with the said books to us safely. And also that you see the door be sealed again as we trust in you. Written at London the 21st October.

Suffolk Salisbury Sudeley

8. Letter from John de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, to Thomas Jeffrey

D0940

London, British Library: Add. 43490, fol. 49r

The Duke of Suffolk

To Thomas Jeffrey, our farmer of Moundville, greeting. We wish and strictly charge you that you make good and pay to the bringer of this [letter] for a debt incurred by our own household, three pounds thirteen shillings and four pence for such stuff as we personally have promised and are not to fail on our honor. For which sum of 73 shilling and 4 pence thus made good and paid by you, we strictly charge our auditors at the time being, by virtue of this our writing, signed with our [own] hand, to make you due and full allowance in your next account. At Wingfield, the first day of May in the first year of king Richard the 3rd.

Suffolk

Fail not, on pain of losing your farm

9. Letter from the Bishop of Winchester to Hugh Pakenham

D4258

Southampton, Southampton Archives: SC 2/9/2/6

Right trusty and well-beloved, we greet you well, making you aware that we have news out of Normandy that the Frenchmen are ready with a great power and purpose to execute their malice against this land, both on the sea and also, like they did last year at Sandwich, to land in some other place this time, to rob and despoil. Which tidings, and the matter concerning the jaundice, the taking of the ships of Lubeck, a quarrel between the city of London and men of the Court and many other great matters that are now at hand, cause the king to leave his purpose of riding northward. He will now abide here close to London and has commanded us and many other lords of his counsel to do the same, to the intent that if any great and sudden situation should arise, the lords shall have to be assembled in haste and take such direction of redress there as shall be for the security, well-being and honour of the king and his realm.

And this causes us to change our purpose of coming to Hampshire at this point, which we would very gladly have done both in order to have seen that a good and solid rule was set there for the safeguard of that country and for other great matters concerning our cure and charge, and also for our pleasure. But since we may not come in our own person, we shall send into the country such military supplies as we have arranged for the defence of the same. And if there is thought to be any great likelihood of jeopardy, such following that we have around us shall be there without delay, ready to make resistance. We have written this same day to the Master of the king's Ordnance for the stuff to be placed in the castle of Hampton for its defence.

It is said that there are three or four traitors in Hampton that have promised it to the Frenchmen, and therefore we ask you to communicate with gentlemen of the country and also with the Mayor and some other trusty and reliable men of the same town concerning that matter and to ask them to look around carefully. There are commissions of array sent out into all the counties around the seacoast from Cornwall to Yorkshire for defending the same, which I trust with God's help will do great good. And may our lord have you always in his keeping. Written at Esher the 7th day of September.

W(illiam) B(ishop) of Winchester

10. Letter from Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset

D4284

Dorchester, Dorset History Centre: D/RGB/LL/727

Right trusty and welbeloved [name illegible]

Trusty and right well-beloved, I greet you well and as it is the case that the king, our sovereign lord, is utterly determined by the grace of our lord God to travel to the parts of France the month next following, and his grace has appointed me to go with him on this said voyage to serve him with such a number of good men as I can get, for which purpose I sincerely ask you to do this much for me: to get hold of three or four good archers or more for me, such as you think will be good and capable men to accompany me during this voyage, on the king's wages, to be ready here on the 8th day of September next coming. and doing this, you will please me very greatly and bind me to be a good Lord to those who will go with me and always to owe to you my good will and favour and be happy to do, for you and them, anything that you might desire of me hereafter. And I pray you, do not fail in this, and trust the bearer of this letter. Given under my signet at London the 27th day of August.

Thomas Dorset

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