Thes ben Iniures & wronges

done vnto your pour seruant

An edition and study of three early sixteenth-century letters of complaint

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Abstract

This thesis is a diplomatic edition and study of three early sixteenth-century letters of complaint. All three letters are addressed to high-ranking officials from ordinary citizens. The edition is based on transcriptions following the principles of the Corpus of Middle English Local Documents (Stenroos, Thengs and Bergstrøm 2017), which will be included in the corpus.

This study takes as its starting point the assumption that late medieval letters of complaint show formal and conventional features because of the nature of their purpose, but that these are combined with more individual elements that may reflect traces of the complainant as an individual. Accordingly, the study considers these questions: To what extent do we find orality and personal voices in the letters? To what extent are the letters conventional, and how far do they represent individual compositions? And to what extent do their characteristics help us to further define the distinctions between different types of late medieval letters, in particular that between petition and complaint?

In order to address these questions, individual studies of each text are carried out. These employ the episodic structure narrative model (Fludernik 1996) as well as making use of politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987) and speech act theory (Searle 1979, Austin 1962).

This is a descriptive qualitative study based on a limited material: accordingly, it is not possible to make far-reaching generalizations from its findings. However, each of the texts presents an interesting and complex object of study in its own right, providing plentiful material for both sociolinguistic and pragmatic enquiries. Apart from studying the narrative structure and the politeness strategies used in the letters, the study problematises the categorisation of letter types, in particular with reference to the labels ‘petition’ and ‘letter of complaint.’

This thesis contributes to the field of historical pragmatics, and particularly to research on medieval local documents.

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PART II: THE EDITION

PART I: THE STUDY

1. Introduction

This thesis presents a diplomatic edition and study of three early sixteenth-century letters of complaint, written in English. It addresses the narrative styles, genre features and colloquialisms that are evident in the letters and aims to answer the following questions: To what extent do we find orality and personal voices in the letters? To what extent are the letters conventional, and how far do they represent individual compositions? And how far do their characteristics help us to further define the distinctions between different types of late medieval letters, in particular that between petition and complaint? This study examines the letters in the light of their historical context and their adherence to the letter writing conventions of the period. Further, it makes use of Fludernik's episodic narrative structure, which is based on the Labovian model of narrative analysis (Fludernik 1996, 2007) to interpret the narrative sequences. The edition is based on transcriptions following the principles of the Corpus of Middle English Local Documents (Stenroos, Thengs and Bergstrøm 2017; henceforth MELD), which will be included in the corpus.

Letters, along with autobiographical texts, memoirs, diaries, and travelogues are often defined as egodocuments, a term first coined by the historian Jacques Presser in 1955 (Dekker 2002:13). These are texts where the authors write about their own feelings, thoughts, and actions. In the past years, egodocuments have become important sources for studies in social history and pragmatics, and are no longer considered inferior in comparison to official sources. Egodocuments have been used to construct the stories of different groups of people underrepresented in official sources such as women, labourers and ethnic minorities (Dekker 2002, Wal and Rutten 2013).

Letters as records of language have been of particular interest to linguists. Private letters are hybrid in nature: they are speech-like and thus reflect vernacular variants, but they also exhibit typical written epistolary characteristics (Palander-Collin 2010, Wall and Rutten 2013, Stenroos 2014). Letters, both private and public or official, were among the earliest documentary texts that began to be written in English from the late fourteenth century onwards. Many scholars have studied private letters, while public or administrative letters have been much less studied. The best known and most studied collection of family letters

from England is the Paston letters, which have been studied since 1882 (Blume 1882 in Bergs 2005). These letters often have an interactive purpose and are embedded in a social context in which the writer and the recipient may have different roles and expectations. Letters often survive not by chance, but may have been kept for sentimental and practical reasons or for their potential legal importance.

Complaint letters have been very little studied: as far as it has been possible to ascertain at this point, there are not many studies to find about this letter type, although the related petition letters have received some attention. However, the two letter types are closely related and have overlapping characteristics. Stenroos (2014: 376) provides an example of a letter of complaint that is business-like and objective as might be expected of a medieval public letter. This example is immediately followed by petition letters that show numerous explicit references to the writers' feelings; however, she states that the petition-complaint distinction is not always clear-cut (Stenroos 2014: 359). Włodarczyk (2013) uses the term 'leaking genre' to describe petitions, claiming that, contrary to the known presumption that letters addressed to social superiors show less emotional involvement and ego referencing, some letters of petition may contain a relatively large amount of ego-involvement of private nature (Włodarczyk 2013: 220).

The hierarchical social order of late medieval England affected all areas of life. In letter writing, the system of ranking and order is well documented, cultivated and maintained. Letter writers followed a strict social decorum which is evident in the use of lengthy sentences where the sender of the letter shows his/her conscious adherence to social rules. Letter composition entails careful attention to a respectful social distance between the sender and the addressee through the use of conventional phrases and terms of address. For example, an appropriate form of address often entails the use of complex noun phrases preceded by the intensifier *right* (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995: 546, Held 2010: 200); a pattern that may be illustrated from the present material as follows:

(1) *To the Ryght, honorable and Hys syngular and effecyall good master* (D4074)

Fludernik (2004: 129) has argued that medieval letters have 'zero narrativity' suggesting that 'most early letters are brief, businesslike and unemotional.' Their main purpose is to either report, persuade, and show status deference through indirect politeness. Furthermore, she also suggests that letters from the fifteenth century are peculiarly resistant to expressive and narrative elaboration and to the influence of oral language (Fludernik 2007: 242).

Stenroos (2014), on the other hand, finds evidence of explicit expression of the writers' feelings merged into their defence narratives. The meagreness of subjectivity and orality in many medieval documents studied may be an accepted notion; however as scholars discover counter-evidence, further studies will be of interest as there is still a considerable number of medieval and early local documents and letters waiting to be explored: 'Individual voices may turn up virtually anywhere, reflecting the close relationships between legal documents and real-life actions and events to which they relate' (Stenroos and Thengs, 2020). It is the intention of this thesis to examine three examples of highly complex letters of complaints and shed more light into their conventionalities and idiosyncrasies, and in particular their use of expressive and narrative elements.

The study makes use of the episodic narrative structure model to examine the letters in detail. It is the same model which both Stenroos (2014) and Fludernik (2007) employ to analyse letter narratives. Although the manuscripts of this study are letters of complaint, it will build on Stenroos' (2014) study on emotionality and personal voices expressed in two late medieval petition letters. In her article 'Fugitive voices: Personal involvement in Middle English letters of defence', Stenroos challenged Fludernik's claim that these early letters 'do not give much room to the expression of the letter writer's emotions, or to an extensive account of personal experience' Fludernik (2007).

As noted above, the social nature of letter-writing compels the writer to make careful attention to the status differences between him and the recipient; what to write and to whom the letter is for are two equally important considerations. In letter writing, one bears in mind the intended recipient whose inclinations and biases are not unknown. One must therefore not oppose them, but rather please them through a cautious choice of words and by adherence to the proper decorum (Bergs 2004). In discussing the contents of the letters, this study considers the relations between the addressee, the sender and the person or persons accused.

The three texts studied here were all written in English during the period 1504-1529. They are listed as follows:

- Letter to Sir Richard Empson from Robert Blundell (1504-1509), Preston, Lancashire Archive: DDIN/55/2 (MELD code: D2578)
- Letter to Sir Thomas Lowell from Thomas Hall (1513-1524), Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: 1300/155 (MELD code: D4074)

- Letter to Cardinal Thomas Wolsey from Phelypp and Johane Skydamore (1515-1529), Hereford, Herefordshire Archive: AL40/1031 (MELD code: D0699)

The texts will be referred to with the identifying codes used in the MELD archive: D2578, D4074, and D0699.

These three letters, written in varying lengths, express grievances towards specific people and are addressed to prominent individuals in the society. D2578 is a complaint regarding the obstacles that the writer has experienced in his struggle to maintain a property right that he and his descendants have had for generations. D4074 is a list of incidences detailing a long list of cruelties that the letter-sender and his wife had endured from a landlord intent on banishing them from their leased property. Finally, D0699 is a complaint concerning what is described as a plot to disinherit the daughter of a newly deceased landholder through the manipulation of her sister.

The texts were transcribed from digital images in the MELD archive, photographed by members of the team when visiting archives in England. All three letters are contained on single sheets and are in relatively good condition; two were written on parchment and one on paper. The images have also been used to produce physical descriptions of the documents, presented in Chapter 4; for this purpose, brief archive notes from the MELD team were also consulted, providing measurements and notes on the material. The transcriptions were then used to produce a diplomatic edition, which is provided in Part II of this thesis. As the edition expands manuscript abbreviation in italics (using the diplomatic principles adopted in MELD), a complete collection of visual images of the abbreviations is provided in Appendix 1. In addition, translations of the texts into present-day English are included as Appendix 2.

This thesis contains two main parts. The first part consists of introductory chapters which provide historical and physical context as well as detailed studies of the three texts. Chapter 2 focuses on the linguistic, historical, and social context of late medieval England. Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical framework used in the study, with particular reference to politeness theory, speech act theory, Fludernik's episodic narrative structure, and letter categorisations. Chapter 4 presents the study of the individual letters, while Chapter 5 discusses the overall findings in relation to the research questions. The second part contains the diplomatic edition of the texts. The Appendices contain translations of the letters into present-day English and visual images of the abbreviations found in the letters.

2. Background and Historical Context

2.1 The linguistic situation in late medieval England

The Norman Conquest of 1066, when William the Conqueror of Normandy gained the English throne, led to an array of changes in language, culture, politics, and daily social interactions in English society. The small portion of the Anglo-Saxon population that had been engaged in written language, was replaced by Norman French speakers. As French speakers became the ruling elite, the common populace in England had to carry out tasks for the non-English speaking aristocracy. This caused an impact on the people's linguistic interactions which shows how power and language are interconnected. Latin, which has been the general literary language and church language for over a thousand years, continued to be used by the Normans in formal writing and replaced English in all official documents (Schipor 2018: 51, Kretzschmar 2018: 61, 85-88). Somewhat later, French also came to be used in administrative writing, while English remained largely a spoken language.

Over the following centuries, English gradually regained its status. An important political event was the loss of Normandy by the English crown in 1204, after which aristocratic families could no longer hold lands and positions in both France and England. This, among other factors, led to the gradual use of the English language instead of French in everyday interactions, also among noble families (Kretzschmar 2018: 93). The kings remained French-speaking for a long time. The first king to understand English, almost a hundred years after the Conquest, was Henry II (1154 -1189). Edward I, who ruled from 1272 to 1307, was the first king to actually speak English (Kretzschmar 2018: 89), while Henry IV (1399-1413) was the first to have English as his native language.

The event that most disrupted daily operations of the medieval society was the *Black Death* in 1348-1349. The huge casualty resulted in new linguistic habits and new patterns of mobility among the remaining populace (Kretzschmar 2018: 99-103). Latin textbooks were produced in English rather than in French in the mid-fifteenth century, which is an indication that they read English better than French, and later in the fifteenth century, some grammar books were written entirely in English (Orme 2006a: 15, Orme 2006b: 218). Even as early as 1349, it was noted that French already had been replaced by English as a teaching language in schools and was unfamiliar to schoolchildren (Orme 2006a: 75).

The onset of urbanisation, and especially the growth of cities such as London and York, was also a by-product of the post-plague societal transition (Horobin and Smith 2002: 29). London's population was more literate than that of the rural areas (Cressy 1980: 121); however, there were vast differences in literacy levels between the different social classes as well as between the genders. Forms of education had been present since Roman Britain, but it was not until after 1066 that schools transitioned to become distinct institutions as opposed to being integrated with monasteries, minsters, cathedrals and even private homes of the nobility (although all these arrangements continued throughout the medieval period). In the course of the twelfth century, schools gradually gained their own buildings and the need for full-time teachers increased. Sons of the gentry and, increasingly, merchants went to grammar schools to learn Latin and literature (the terms being interchangeable according to Leach 1969: 7), while the children of the nobility were generally instructed by home teachers.

At least some education, including basic Latin skills, was essential to be able to read legal and financial papers, as was increasingly expected of men of high and middle ranks. Different sets of writing skills were expected of men exercising specific occupations; for example, merchants and traders would need accounting skills, clerks would need to be able to draw up legal documents and scriveners would need copying proficiency. At the more advanced levels, teaching moved increasingly to the medium of Latin, and a few of the students would then proceed to study at universities where lectures and books were wholly in Latin (Orme 2006b, Leach 1969, Palander-Collin 2010: 661).

The fourteenth century was a linguistic transition period in several aspects. As well as English being adopted for instruction at schools, it began to appear in various official contexts, to begin with mainly as a spoken language. Edward III was the first king who addressed the Parliament in English in 1362. However, although French ceased to be the spoken language in England, it remained as the language of the court, even though its steady decline eventually led to its demise.

Written English begins to appear in official contexts in the late fourteenth century, although it only becomes commonly used in administrative writing from the later part of the fifteenth century. Around 1420-21 English began to be used in the records of the London Goldsmiths company (Dodd 2012: 258), and the London brewers decided to only use English in their records from 1422. In the course of the fifteenth century, English and French

coexisted but eventually English gained more ground. For instance, English petitions outnumbered French ones in 1445 (Dodd 2012: 259).

The next century and a half witnessed the slow decline of Latin as a written language. An act in November 1650 was intended to end the use of Latin in all domestic documents. As such it was declared that from 1 January 1651 *all* documents 'were to be in English and not in Latin, French, or any other language and were to be written an ordinary, usual and legible hand' (Hector 1966: 22-23, Dodd 2012: 259). However, this act was abandoned, and people went back to old practices. In 1731 another 'plain English' act was passed, and the use of French and Latin was finally discontinued. (Gillies 2011: 186).

In sum, late medieval England was multilingual. English documents emerged from Latin and French traditions and gradually developed their own set of formulae and linguistic conventions. English took over from French in the first instance, and only later on from Latin (Stenroos and Schipor 2020: 249, Dodd 2011). Document types that were typically written by or for ordinary people, and not originating from internal administration penned by professionals, are often in English. These include especially letters, but also wills, abjurations, attestations, churchwardens accounts and leases (Stenroos et al. 2020: 11, 58).

2.2 The social context of letter-writing in late medieval England

2.2.1 Conventions of letter-writing

The recording of language through writing, to convey messages, thoughts and feelings, has been one of the essential and purposeful ways of communication in many cultures even when literacy has been restricted to very few. Until the advent of modern technology, personal letters, have been, to a lesser or greater degree, satisfactory alternatives to personal encounters when deemed not possible nor wise. Although it was mainly people belonging to the higher echelons of the society who were literate in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, ordinary people were still generally able to make use of the written medium when the need arose. Access to the literate activity of letter writing was available also for illiterate people, since it was not difficult to come in contact with clerks and priests or someone who could read and write. Due to the nature of letter writing, investigating letters points us towards the understanding of day-to-day interactions and issues between individuals and of the wider society.

In late medieval and early modern society, there were clear rules of social decorum, and letter-writing was no exception. The structure of a letter was ruled by conventions which needed to be learnt. The composition of English letters, both private and public, draws on the tradition of *ars dictaminis* or the medieval art of letter writing. Model letters were copied, collected, compiled, and taught. Langham (1992, in Häcker 2011) claimed that letters were used to teach Latin in the eighth century. The *Bevarium de dictamine,* written by Alberic (1030-1094/1099) in Rome, is the first known compilation on *ars dictaminis*. In England, the first compiled treatise dates from 1207 (Davis 1965: 241, Robertson 1942, in Häcker 2011). These manuals described the general structure of the letter and its specific parts. Furthermore, they also rendered explicit advice regarding address terms suited to the different classes in society and usually included model letters (Häcker 2011: 155, Nevalainen 2007). The structure usually followed in late medieval English letters has been described in detail by Davis (1965: 236).

English letters from the fifteenth century often contain long sequences of conventional and formulaic phrases. A long letter may contain seven conventional elements, as well as subdivisions. The letter usually begins with a (1) salutation or a greeting (Wood 2007, Held 2010). When directed to a superior, it often contains the word 'right' coupled with an adjective expressing reverence, like 'worshipful' or 'honourable', and a relevant noun for the relation (father, sir, master) as the cases are in the manuscripts in this study:

> *To they Ryght worshypfull sir Ryc Empson Knyght chanceler of the Kynges duchie of Lanc* (D2578)
> *To the right honorable and hys singular and offecyall good master Sir Thomas Lowell Knyght* (D4074)
> *To the most Reverend Father in God Thomas Archebysshoppe of yorke lord Cardynall legate of the See appostolyke and Chaunceler of Englond* (D2578)

The second part usually consists of a (2) formula where the writer expresses humility by commending oneself to the recipient or asking for his/her blessings. The latter is especially the case in letters to parents. The following five parts make up what Davis (1965) refers to as *health formulas* as they can be briefly summarized as (3) the writer's wish to hear of the recipient's welfare and may be followed by (4) a prayer expressing the sender's desire for a continued increase of the recipient's good fortunes. Consequently, (5) the writer will also

offer a report of his/her own well-being as well as (6) details of his/her own condition upon the writing of the letter, and (7) a phrase of thankfulness usually commending God for the affluence. Lastly, there is usually a conclusion which is often a 'brief formulaic expression' of valediction (Held 2010: 197). Letters naturally also contain parts that are not formulaic, such as personal narratives or news, as their main function is to convey messages.

More simply, a medieval or early modern letter may also be divided into three main parts: recommendation formula, welfare formula, and closing formula which Häcker (2011) in her study claimed to be patterned after the French letter-writing conventions. Nevalainen (2001) also mentions a tripartite division in correspondences, also propagated by French manuals, which was adapted in the medieval period as well as the early modern period. The tripartite subdivisions are: *exordium*, *discourse*, and *conclusion.* In the letter manuals, the idea of 'finding the appropriate title for the addressee, whether a social superior, equal, or inferior, is discussed in great lengths.' In addition, manuals also provided detailed instructions for a wide range of rhetorical schemes and techniques (Nevalainen 2001: 213-214).

2.2.2 People and letter-writing

Late medieval England was a highly hierarchal society. To attempt to describe its social structure briefly is not a simple task nor can it do justice to the complexity of the pre-modern social system. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003: 32-33) recognise this complexity and instead of using the concept of class in preindustrial society, they opt to use the contemporary concepts of rank and estate (Wrightson 1991; Cannadine 1998 in Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg, 2003). Instead of categorising into social classes, such as the clergy, the aristocracy and the commoners, they take as a starting point the medieval society as consisting of three estates: clergy, i.e. those who prayed, nobility, i.e. those who fought, and labourers, i.e. those who worked. However, they also note that people who write about medieval England admit to more estates than these three; indeed this tripartite structure developed into a multifaceted and complex one.

The ranking system used by Nevalainen and Brunberg (2003: 36) is provided in Table 1. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) note that the top and bottom layers of the structure were relatively straightforward to define. Comprising only around 2% of the

population are the upper gentry and the nobility who formed the absolute elite. On the grounds of their influential power, the higher clergy, (i.e. archbishops and bishops) belong to the nobility and were addressed as *Lord*. The placement of labourers, paupers and cottagers at the lowest end of the social scale is also rather straightforward (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg, 2003: 33).

The middle parts of medieval society, however, were extremely heterogeneous and difficult to define. Gentility implies land ownership, a certain lifestyle and a labourless flow of income for livelihood. However, the gentry vs non-gentry division was far from definite, as a gentry-like position had become reachable for various groups of people in the middle section, such as merchants and craftsmen of means and success, business households, and men in legal and medical professions.

Estate		**Grade**	**Title***
GENTRY		Royalty	
	Nobility	Duke	Lord, Lady
		Archbishop	
		Marquess	
		Earl	
		Viscount	
		Baron	
		Bishop	
	Gentry	Baronet 1611—	Sir, Dame
	Proper	Knight	
		Esquire	Mr, Mrs
		Gentleman	
	Professions	Army Officer (Captain, etc.), Government Official (Secretary of State, etc.), Lawyer, Medical Doctor (Doctor), Merchant, Clergyman, Teacher, etc.	
NON-GENTRY		Yeoman	Goodman, Goodwife
		Merchant	
		Husbandman	
		Craftsman	(Name of Craft:
		Tradesman	Carpenter, etc.)
		Artificer	
		Labourer	
		Cottager	
		Pauper	

Table 1: Rank and status in Tudor and Stuart England.
From: Nevalainen, Terttu and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg. 2003: 36
(*occupational titles given in brackets) After Laslett (1983)

Some families that belonged to the middle ranks had capacities and connections to gain leverage through land ownership and compliance to the expected lifestyle of a gentleman, or through a strategic marriage. Upward social mobility may be difficult but not impossible and became more common from the late medieval era. The Paston family is a well-known example of such social upward mobility in medieval England (see Bergs, 2005: 60-82). Downward social mobility was also a reality. As primogeniture was the practice, making the eldest son the inheritor of the family estate, younger siblings were often necessitated to make their own living elsewhere or engage themselves in income generating trades and professions (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg, 2003: 33, Kielkiewicz-Janowiak 2012).

Who wrote letters in late medieval England? As mentioned earlier, letter writing was becoming a familiar activity at all levels of society. Many members of the nobility and gentry, who themselves did not write, entered into the habit of sending and receiving private letters. The actual writing of the letters was often carried out by scribes, whether or not the sender was literate; this was in particular the case with official letters. Additionally, it has also been evidenced that a large number of petitions were drafted by local scribes supporting the idea that petition letters, to a large degree, represent regional language (Smith and Killick 2018: 6-7).

With regard to private letters, such as the widely studied Paston letters, the learned men of the family largely autographed their letters themselves, while all Paston women dictated their letters (Bergs 2005). Even if women might be able to read, they did not receive training either in Latin nor in the physical writing skills (Stenroos and Thengs 2020:13). Literacy was mostly available to men of a high social standing. Women's literacy level was equal to the men at the bottom of the hierarchy, while those on top of the hierarchy had the highest literacy. These were professional lawyers, clergymen, noblemen, and gentlemen. It was however, getting more common also for lower-ranking men, such as rich merchants and yeomen, to gain literacy. By the fourteenth century, an estimate of 40% of the previously mentioned class could read. Servants, labourers, craftsmen, and the like attained lower levels of literacy (Palander-Collin 2010: 654).

The social hierarchy is also reflected in the language of the letters. Bergs (2004: 211) notes the relevance of 'accommodation theory' which states that 'we tend to accommodate our speech to the speech of the people we are talking to, in the hope that they will like us more for doing so' (Hudson 1996: 164), especially if the sender is in need of a social or

emotional resource that the recipient can provide. Power and status are therefore very much at play in correspondences.

The hierarchal relationships are linguistically coded and displayed especially in the greeting formulae. One of the earliest English manuals advised its readers to bear in mind, when writing a letter, 'the estate and the reputation of the partie, as to whether he be our better, our equal or inferiour' (Pallander-Collin 2010). The *Ars dictaminis* accentuated and reflected the hierarchal social order through the use of formulaic phrases and address terms (Wood 2007: 54). In this study, the examined letters are letters of complaint from an inferior to a superior, and the courteous social distance may therefore be expected to be evident especially in the salutation part.

2.2.3 Letters of petition in late medieval England: their writers and languages

One of the most important functions of letter writing in late medieval England was that of asking for something: whether in terms of requests for favours or serious complaints or calls for help in need. The writing of petitions to authorities, in particular to the king and the parliament, came to be a highly formalized process, but requests or complaints could be directed to anyone who might be in a position to act.

Petitioning may be defined as the act of making a request or supplication regarding a particular cause. The noun *petition* is synonymous with *prayer* and *entreaty*, as OED defines it. In other words, to petition is to plead for a cause. It necessarily involves two parties – one disadvantaged and another that is thought to be in a position to remedy the problem. People petitioned for different reasons, including a range of economic and legal matters (see Dodd 2011: 135).

Many letters of petition have survived, and as this letter type is the most quintessential document in the English language presented to 'the Crown.' It has played an important role in the study of the standardisation of written English. As mentioned above, late medieval England was trilingual. The late medieval period was witness to a dramatic language shift in the writing of letters of petition. In a matter of 25 years the language medium totally changed. Dodd (2012: 258) in his study states that, in 1425, most petition letters were written in French but in 1450, perhaps even before, almost all were in English (Dodd 2012). According to Dodd (2018: 16-17), the use of English in petitions allowed the common petitioner to

influence the formulation of the letter content to a greater degree, and it also affected the petitioner's desire to pursue the case anticipating that, through the language, one is able to connect more directly to the authorities.

With regard to the Crown and its medium of response to petitions, its use of English in this context lagged for about two decades. It was not until the mid-1430s that the Crown began using English to answer private petitions, while data shows that already in the 1410s, the first English petitions emerged. In 1449, English responses outnumbered the French and Latin responses (Dodd 2012: 258-259).

French was, however, resilient in governmental use, and it was deeply embedded in the legal culture, especially in supplications and pleadings. In addition to the fact that French was associated with esteem and prominence, it was the familiar legal language, and many legal terms could only be expressed in French. It was therefore preferred by many writers. During the fourteenth century, a French writing style described as 'curial prose' had developed (Dodd 2018: 19). This was a distinct French court language with an elaborate courteous style that affirmed and highlighted people's social positions. When English was gaining ground in petitions, it did not deviate from the French linguistic styles and patterns, but rather modelled the French structure quite straightforwardly, as for example the formulaic salutations, valedictions as well as many expressions and vocabulary (Dodd 2011: 127; see also Häcker 2011: 152 and Bevan 2013: 197, 215).

It is generally unknown who penned the petitions to the Crown and to what extent they were formulated by the scribe or by the petitioners themselves. When it comes to letters of petition to the Court of Chancery, Haskett (1993, in Bevan 2013: 53-54) suggests that they were largely written by so-called 'country lawyers' or men of law working outside London who would have more experience with the law, in comparison to mere clerks and scribes. Bevan (2013) argues against this and suggests that the petitions were produced by provincial scriveners, on the basis of their skills. What Haskett described as legal and practical skills, Bevan construes as fundamental procedural and scribal skills, and not pleading skills (Bevan 2013: 54). More recently, Killick (2018) has shown, on the basis of linguistic analysis, that the English-language petitions to the Crown commonly show regional features and were probably penned by provincial scribes (Smith and Killick 2018: 6).

This thesis is not concerned with petitions to the Crown, and does not delve into the identities of the letter-producing 'scribes' or the question of the scrivener/lawyer distinction. However, it is highly relevant to bear in mind the question of the varying levels of skills when considering how much of the letters represent individual compositions, and to what extent the formulations are those of the scribe rather than of the author. It is likely that practices varied greatly. At the one extreme, the scribe (or clerk) may have chosen to faithfully commit the words of his client as instructed or dictated, thereby operating with minimal influence. On the other extreme, he may have composed the letter on his own after the petitioner provided him with the facts.

2.3 The practicalities of letter production and circulation

Texts are the products of situations that carry meaning to the producers of the text. Letters have specific functions, whether to express feelings, ask for a favour, or simply convey a message. In medieval England, letters were specifically formed and styled to reflect an underlying socio-pragmatic situation. The letter-writer therefore has several things to consider in the process of producing a letter, including their physical makeup.

Texts that were meant to last were usually written on parchment, also called membrane. They are made of animal skins, usually sheep, and are durable. The use of paper became more common in the fourteenth century. This material is less durable and less costly than parchment, even though it would still have been of far better quality than present-day paper. Until the nineteenth century, paper was made of linen and similar fibres. Usually, the function of the text and its need to be perpetuated determined the material. Legal contracts and wills are likely to be on parchment as they are meant for long-term storage, while letters and documents that are to be kept for a short time are most commonly written on paper (Stenroos et al. 2020: 63-64).

The system of hierarchy was clearly reflected in letter writing through the introductory formulae. Palander-Collin (2010: 645) points out that, as the standard behaviour of letter composers, they asked themselves: 'What is the rank of the person to whom I am writing this letter?' In medieval letters, the names and titles of the sender and the addressee were explicitly present, and their underlying relationships were highlighted not only through the choice of words and materials, but also through the physical layout of the text which may

be expressed through the amount of space between the address form and the body of the letter and the extent of the marginal space. A large margin implies a generous use of materials, and may function both as a form of politeness and as a reminder of the sender's own status.

The latter consideration is not limited to letters. Stenroos, Bergstrøm and Thengs (2020: 65-66) note the example of a large size document at the King's College archive (JEC/1; Cambridge D6025). This document is a huge single parchment containing an agreement between Chief Justice Robert Rede and Jesus College. Its unusual size and illuminations are understood as indications of the status of the parties.

As noted above, the penning down of the words was usually done by scribes, even if literate men might write their own letters. The Paston women grew up in a home where letters were written, read and dictated, so that they learned the appropriate phrases and later on composed letters themselves (Häcker 2011). The physical writing was, however, performed by a scribe, while the 'real' author would for example be Margaret Paston who worded the letter in collaboration with the tasked scribe.

When a letter was finished and ready to be dispatched, someone had to perform the delivery process. Although organized postal services were initiated in the medieval period, they could not be relied upon for messages that needed urgent attention. Royal posts were circulated through royal messengers who journeyed to deliver the messages in person until the middle of the fifteenth century (Hemmeon 1912: 3). This inefficient system was improved after the war with Scotland in 1482 as King Edward IV saw the need for prompter messaging. Horses and riders were then placed at certain intervals in order to speed up the process, and the system could be used for sending other than royal letters as well.

This system gave rise to the position of a Postmaster-General who sorted the letters according to their destinations and was responsible for the wages of the distributing postmen on horses. There was, however, no regularity in the postal services. In addition, letters were also frequently opened by local postmasters (Hemmeon 1912: 3, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995: 554). It was not until the first half of the seventeenth century that a regular weekly transport for letters was in the system, and with the increased stability also came a higher surge of letters which resulted in increased postal secrecy and reliability (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995: 554).

Due to the discrepancies of postal services in medieval England, letters of importance needed to be delivered in person by couriers, who could be servants, friends or reliable

acquaintances. Several factors could hinder or delay a successful delivery, including bad weather and unpleasant commotions along the way. The unpredictability of circumstances made this distribution process unfit for sensitive information to be penned down, as letters could easily come into villainous hands. Therefore, delicate information was often relayed by word of mouth by the courier to the addressee (Stenroos, Bergs and Thengs 2020: 56-57).

Finally, whether the receiver of the letter in any particular case consumed the letter in private or in the presence of many is unknown. As medieval England was largely an oral culture, writing and reading letters was not typically a private process: after being dictated by the sender, at the receiving end they could be read with a broad audience. In such a case, letter reading was anything but a solitary activity (Häcker 2011, Barton and Hall 2000: 4).

2.4 Laws, and courts in late medieval and early modern England

Today's English court system is made up of three Senior Courts: the Court of Appeal, the High Court of Justice, and the Crown Court. This system is a product of the Judicature Act of 1873, a move to unclutter the messy court system which was an inheritance from the medieval court system. From a legal point of view, the England of earlier times could be described as a country of many overlapping and sometimes even competing jurisdictions, each with its own legal conventions (Goldberg 2004: 248). However, it is possible to describe the jurisdiction scheme in very broad terms, based on the three overarching legal conventions of the common law, customary law and canon law.

As the name suggests, *common law* was 'common' which meant that it was applied to the whole kingdom. The treatise on the *Laws and Customs of England* in 1230 contained this body of law and was regularly revised. Laws that were based on local codes and customs that varied from borough to borough, town to town, or manor to manor, were called *customary laws*, and were managed in the county courts and/or manor courts. Persons in servitude to lords were subject to the manorial courts of the manors to which they belonged and could seek justice there, except for the case of felonies which by default was a concern of the Crown (Goldberg 2004, Wrightson 1991). Lastly, the *canon law*, the law of the church, covered the clergy, who were exempt from the civil courts even in cases of felonies.

Access to justice and the fair implementation of the common law were achieved in varying levels throughout this long historical period. In general, the legal system was ideally

committed to the Christian values of neighbourly charity and trust. Although some individuals of position such as lawyers and legal officials, had erred, people generally voiced their discontent towards the erring officials rather than demeriting the system (Stretton 2017: 205, Carpenter 1983:232).

Musson (2001: 138-150) pinpoints several characteristics of the late medieval judicial system that demonstrate an upgrading towards fairer legal processes. These include the King's Bench visiting the shires, the availability of free advice and assistance from travelling clerks of royal justices, a reasonable lawyer's fee in cash or in-kind, poor clients assigned pleaders which are free of charge, no charge for oral complaints, the Magna Carta, and the Ordinance of Justices in 1346. The latter was an expression of the Crown's persistence to provide justice to all people regardless of social status and available resources. Individuals and families with the most assets, be it financially, socially and legally, had the highest chance to gain advantage from lawsuits. However, the legal rhetoric of the time gave the less advantaged opportunities to fight for their individual rights and protect their property (Stretton 2017: 203).

Carpenter (1983: 208-209) points out the danger of viewing history through official sources as they tend to portray the prevailing system in a good light. Studies of individual letters, as opposed to legal documents preserved in the courts, are of great value as they may reveal more about the common people than the few who administer the law. The late medieval population was well aware of the failings of the justice system, such as corrupt practices and pardons that were too easily granted. Landowners especially were in a peculiar position as both authority and subjects of the law.

The system of local and regional courts in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England was extremely complex, including county courts, borough courts, manorial courts, as well as the courts of the counties palatine such as Lancaster and Durham. The court system also included travelling judges, making sure that justice was delivered to as many communities as possible, as well as the manorial courts and the courts of the ecclesiastical authorities, which dealt with matters of moral and religious trespasses, testaments and all matters concerning clergy.

In the thirteenth century, the two highest courts in England were the Court of Common Pleas and the King's Bench, the first based at Westminster and the second originally based wherever the King was; from the early fifteenth century, both were stationed

permanently at Westminster. Property disputes, which is what the letters considered in this thesis are mostly about, comprised most of the business of the Court of Common Pleas. It was usual that the offended party obtained a writ which would consequently lead to another writ, in the king's name, ordering the defendant to respond to the complaint. The actual oral pleadings were usually executed by lawyers on behalf of the litigants. The King's Bench administered appeals from the lesser courts, but mainly other crimes of more heinous nature (Goldberg 2004).

Where common law courts could not protect the interests of the individual, or their rulings were unsatisfactory, there were several opportunities for taking the case further (Stretton 2017: 200, Carpenter 1983). The legal structure was headed by the monarch, spearheading the protection and interest of his subjects; the Parliament, passing statutes, administering laws and revising them, as well as hearing appeals from the myriad of courts; the Privy Council, with its own power to hear disputes and advise the king; and the Chancery, working on the principle of equity and therefore being able to mitigate injustices resulting by the literal use of law. In the fifteenth and sixteenth century, the Court of Chancery, as a court of equity, partly took over the role of the King's Bench.

Towards the end of the medieval period, knowledge of the law and the skill to use it to one's advantage had become a resource of great importance. Military expertise became less important, while legal insight became more and more relevant, so that, by the fifteenth century, sons of the gentry busied themselves with acquiring knowledge of the law through their faithful attendance at the Inns of Court, the centre of education in the Common Law (Goldberg 2004: 116). At the same time, the number of litigation processes increased at an extreme rate, as people were increasingly deeming it necessary to legally enact agreements, properties, sales and the like, and to take matters to court rather than relying on arbitration. The number of processes soared in the sixteenth century, from around 2 000 cases annually in 1500 to around 23 000 by the seventeenth century, and continued to grow with a little disruption during the civil wars in the mid-seventeenth century (Stretton 2017: 201).

3. Theoretical Background

3.1 Historical Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a field of linguistic inquiry that began in the 1930s but has only entered the mainstream of linguistic studies in recent decades. It investigates how language is used in actual communicative settings and seeks to gain insight into how speakers and listeners cooperate in communicative acts and how they create and negotiate meanings (Horn and Ward 2004: *x*).

As reflected in this definition, pragmatics originally dealt with and focused on spoken communication. Historical pragmatics, however, necessarily deals with the language of the past, before electronic recording. This has posed a considerable theoretical challenge as past language, in the sense of speech, cannot be directly observed (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 6); instead it has to be studied through written material. However, methods in historical linguistics have been refined: first by identifying 'speech-like' styles and later by accepting written language as relevant evidence, as views on written artifacts have changed over time (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 6-10). Written texts are now generally viewed as communicative acts in their own right that may be analysed directly (Jucker 2008: 894). This broadening scope, embracing written material such as literary texts, early newspapers, and other historical texts far removed from the spoken modes of communication, now allows for a more neutral definition of historical pragmatics as the study of 'language use in the past', examining how meaning is made (Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice 2007: 13). Jucker defines historical pragmatics as 'a field of study that wants to understand patterns of intentional human interaction (as determined by the conditions of the society) of earlier periods' (Jucker 2008: 895).

Another challenge faced by historical pragmatics, as discussed by Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice (2007: 15-16), is the application of theoretical principles developed for the study of present-day language. The 'uniformitarian principle' is largely adopted in historical linguistics, assuming that the linguistic forces that operate today are the same as in the past; however, it is not self-evident how this may be applied to historical pragmatics. Culture and thereby meanings are susceptible to change over time. For example, interpreting insults, puns and jokes require that hearers recognize the utterances for their purpose. This means that the hearer must be 'familiar with the culture and context in which insults mean insults and jokes

mean jokes, or else they might not be able to parse the insult or get the joke' (Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice 2007: 16). A study comparing Western and Chinese politeness (Zhu and Bao 2010) illustrates that, when offering an invitation, a polite 'Western' person would not reiterate his/her invitation (even if he/she wanted to) so as not to be imposing, which a Chinese would understand as insincere. In the Chinese culture, the invitation must be extended several times to show sincerity. An immediate acceptance of an invitation is also seen as impolite. Along the process of inviting and declining, the invitee tries to figure out if the invitation is sincere or is mainly a courteous act (Zhu and Bao 2010: 851). Language conventions are, accordingly, culturally and temporally bound and politeness rules and norms cannot be generalised in similar situations in other periods or locations (cf Stenroos and Mäkinen 2011: 93). Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice (2007: 26) point out that 'historical thinking' and reflective assessment of results are very important in historical pragmatics, suggesting that '[we] have to imagine ourselves into the historical worlds that produced and used the texts that are the objects of our research.'

In order to meet this challenge, a large amount of available historial material is important. Empirical studies in this field have derived their materials from computerised corpora such as the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts and the Corpus of Early English Correspondence. The study of texts from digital corpora opens up for many possibilities as well as comparisons of a large amount of data. However, the labour-intensive study of individual texts is of particular importance for historical pragmatics, as it makes possible a close examination as to how precisely language works in each individual text.

Jacobs and Jucker (1995: 8) state that 'letters, particularly private letters, are a rich source of data for historical pragmatics as they contain more intimate and colloquial language than other text types.' Despite the formulaicness of letters in medieval England, they have oral qualities and they provide us with authentic language information which make them as not only significant, but indispensable data for historical pragmatics (Wood 2007: 48, Stenroos 2014: 356, 358, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995: 591). Palander-Collin and Nevala (2011: 102-105), who studied a number of Nathaniel Bacon's letters, revealed that the use of person-referential terms in letters relate to one's personal attitudes towards the addressee as well as towards the given situation. Also, Stenroos and Mäkinen's analysis on the correspondence between Gruffuth ap David ap Gruffuth (a known Welsh thief, according to the history books) and Reginald Grey (one of the most powerful English lords of that period) sheds light on the intricacies of politics and personal agenda which is very relevant

when these correspondences are again utilised as historical evidences (Stenroos and Mäkinen 2011: 101).

Jucker (2008) suggests a four-level analytical model for historical pragmatics. This approach distinguishes four levels of pragmatic units: individual expressions, utterances, discourses and genres, and discourse domains. Studies focussing on the first level may deal with interjections, discourse markers and pragmatic articles, and address terminologies. The second level has had speech acts as its focal point since the 1960's. The third level is broader. It looks into discourse and genres describing their features and development or relating them to lesser linguistic units. Lastly, the broadest level refers to the established codes and attitudes of social territories of interaction as for example: the discourse of science, the discourse of social media, the discourse of medicine (Jucker 2008: 898-902). In its detailed study of three specific texts, this thesis will to some extent consider all four levels: while the analysis naturally focusses on the first two levels, references will be made to the complaint letter as a text category and the discourse domains to which it belongs. The study will make use of both Speech Act Theory (Austin 1962) and Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson 1987), both of which are discussed below, as well as of Fludernik's approach to narrativity (Fludernik 1996), discussed in 3.2 below.

3.1.1 Politeness Theory

The study of linguistic politeness was founded on classic studies by Goffman (1967), Lakoff (1977), Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson (1987). Since its beginning, politeness theory has grown to a vast and complex field and has been explored by scholars from several aspects (Lakoff 2005). Politeness is an inevitable part of our everyday interactions and may come in different forms, including but not limited to the expression of courtesy, civility, or good behaviour. Politeness may be said to be two-fold, in that it involves consideration for others (by following the rules in order to show respect) and compliance to norms and standards (following rules because it is expected that the rules will be followed) (Lakoff and Ide 2005: 4).

Leech's (1983: 19) politeness principles deal with how the speaker tries to lessen or avoid face-threatening acts and maintain favourable utterances. Leech's maxims, as linguistic efforts, are briefly described as follows; *tact maxim*: to minimise burden and maximise

benefits for the hearer, *generosity maxim*: attempt to maximise cost to self and minimise cost to the hearer (the first two are quite related); *sympathy maxim*: to minimise antipathy between self and other but instead to maximise sympathy between self and other; *agreement maxim*: to minimise disagreement between self and other, and to maximise agreement between self and other; and *approbation maxim*: to maximise praise to other (Leech 1983).

Goffman's (1967) original work on the concept of 'face' has greatly influenced this field, in particular through its adoption in the seminal work of Brown and Levinson (1987). Despite some early criticisms, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory has been the most embraced model of politeness in historical pragmatics (Nevala 2010: 419, Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013: 115). The fundamental concept in this theory is the 'face': the public self-image that people want to claim and/or maintain in relation to the other members of the society (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61). This concept is particularly useful as it also exists as an everyday notion that people can relate to. The idiom 'losing face', which means that one's public image suffers damage often resulting to humiliation or embarrassment, is commonly used in English (Culpeper 2011: 24).

Brown and Levinson distinguish between two distinct 'faces', i.e. the 'negative face' and the 'positive face.' The 'negative face' refers to one's unimpeded freedom to act. That is, not to be imposed upon by others and to have one's private sphere free from obstructions of others' will. The 'positive face', on the other hand, refers to one's desire to be liked, approved and appreciated: to be thought of in a positive way, or praised for one's actions (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61-62).

Positive and negative politeness are linguistic behaviours that attend to the addressee's face need in a certain situation (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 115). Schemes for positive politeness consist of strategies in which speakers aim to establish or maintain the addressee's face; while for negative politeness, the usual focus is to compensate for face threats (discussed below) and or to minimise its impacts (Stenroos & Mäkinen 2011: 93). The statement from a mother to a child *You will eat your salad dear, won't you?* is an imposition from the adult that the child should eat his salad and is a threat to the child's negative face, whilst using a word of endearment *dear* so as to alleviate the threat. This is 'non-imposition politeness' (Nevala 2010: 423, Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013: 115) which uses linguistic elements to give the impression (or pretend that) the addressee has a choice (e.g. by using an interrogative phrase). At the same time, the statement also makes use of 'deference

politeness' where the speaker uses words of affection or humble submission towards the addressee i.e. dear, honourable, worshipful lord, etc. (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013: 115).

Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) are actions or words (or both) that threaten the positive or negative face of the addressee (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015: 257). These acts need not be impolite and may be are expressed in varying degrees from simple request or question, indirect suggestion and mild insult, to direct commands, and aggressive behaviour (Culpeper 2011: 19-21).

Brown and Levinson give a general overview and examples of verbal and non-verbal FTAs. They are broadly divided into two categories corresponding the face concept:

1) acts that threaten the negative face:

(i) acts that pressure the addressee to do something or refrain from doing something, e.g. orders, requests, reminders, advice, threats, warnings

(ii) acts that suggests a positive future act of the speaker toward the addressee causing the latter to either reject or accept, thereby incurring a debt, e.g. offers and promises

(iii) acts that signify desire of the speaker towards the addressee's belonging which might lead to the addressee protecting the object or to granting the said object to the speaker unwillingly, e.g. expression of strong negative emotions, expressions of envy or admiration or merely compliments

2) acts that threaten the positive face:

(i) acts that express the speaker's negative evaluation of the addressee's positive face, e.g. criticism, contempt, ridicule, accusations, reprimands, complaints, insults, disagreement and contradictions

(ii) acts where the speaker shows indifference, e.g. divulging negative information about the addressee especially when others are present, boasting, expression of violent emotions, mentioning taboo topics, raising of potentially conflict-causing topics, and blatant non-cooperation in an activity (Brown and Levinson 1987: 65-67).

Face-saving approaches have varied through history. From the use of direct performative in the Anglo-Saxon period (Kohnen 2008: 27), to the direct expression of the speaker's wish as sufficient reason for outspokenness, to conventionalised phrasing and use of politeness markers (Kohnen 2002, in Taavitsainen and Jucker 2008: 8), to interrogatives as camouflage

to request. Modern speakers tend to camouflage directness by attending to negative politeness, seemingly offering the addressee a choice and making the utterance less authoritarian (Archer 2010: 384). When it comes to private letters, however, it has been suggested that this move from positive to negative politeness is not a universal or unbroken process in the history of English. Corpus-based studies of English correspondences from 1418-1680 indicate the increased use of positively polite words of endearment and nicknames, as well as a decreased use of negatively polite honorifics (Taavitsainen and Jucker 2008: 8).

Conventional politeness theory highlights self-interest, positive connection and sensibility. As mentioned earlier, politeness is a two-fold concept, and its reciprocal nature facilitates further politeness and promotes the concept as a rational choice. On the other hand, impoliteness is generally considered irrational, given that most people in most cultures do not like to be seen as impolite (Culpeper 2011:47).

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is very influential but has also been criticised by many scholars, especially on claiming to be universal. Mills (2003, as referred to in Wardhaug and Fuller 2015) has argued that it mainly describes stereotypical linguistic behaviour of white western females and may not be true in other societies around the globe. Jucker (2014: 7) critiques the theory as having static categories. He argues for a non-fixedness of politeness as discursively negotiated: that a certain utterance may be polite in a specific situation and impolite in another. For instance, indirect requests may be the courteous choice in a very formal situation where the requester is in a significantly subordinate position in relation to the addressee; however, the same linguistic formula may be perceived as sarcasm when done by a superior to an inferior (Jucker 2014: 8, Taavitsainen & Jucker 2008: 5). In addition, different languages have different strategies for downgrading FTAs in an utterance. For example, research that looked at requests in English, Hebrew and Korean showed a great disparity when it comes to indirectness (Blum-Kulka 1987). While English and Hebrew speakers heed indirectness for its polite effect, Korean speakers behave differently. In some cases, indirectness is considered impolite as it puts the burden of interpretation on the addressee (Blum-Kulka 1987 in Wardhaugh and Fuller 2015: 262). In other words, politeness is context and role-dependent. Watts (1989) and Ide (1989, in Jucker 2014: 8) use the terms 'politic behaviour' and 'discernment politeness', respectively, referring to knowing one's place in a given time and situation and acting upon it accordingly.

According to Jucker and Taavitsainen (2013: 114), there is no absolute divide between politeness and impoliteness, as part of everyday speech. What sounds polite for one speaker may be perceived by another as downright impolite, rude, or insincere. They distinguish between first and second order politeness to remedy the fuzziness of the terms. First order politeness refers to the blurry and subtle manners and speech codes that people consciously or unconsciously use to not offend others. Second order politeness refers to specific linguistic codes treated as technical terms for expressing politeness (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 114).

In the studies in Chapter 4, the comments on politeness features mainly draw on Brown and Levinson's concepts of face and face-threatening acts, as these are well-known and have been used successfully in numerous studies of historical English texts (e.g. Taavitsainen and Jucker 2008; Stenroos and Mäkinen 2011; Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013).

3.1.2 Speech Act Theory

The study of pragmatics, including politeness theory, is generally based on the idea of communication as following a set of rules of cooperation. The best-known formulation of such rules is known as the Gricean communication maxims (formulated by Grice 1975) of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. The general principle states that 'one's conversational contribution must be fit to what is required, at the stage that it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged' (Wardhaugh and Fuller 2015: 253). Nonetheless, it is possible to disregard these maxims to create what Grice calls 'implicature', which basically means implied meaning (Grice 1975 in Wardhaugh and Fuller 2015).

The concept of speech acts permits a detailed study of communicative acts and purposes. In 1962, the philosopher Austin started the modern study of speech acts in his *How to do things with words* (Sadock 2004: 54). Austin distinguished the 'performative utterance' from other kinds of speech acts. His widely accepted concept, that we not only *say* something when we utter words but are also *do*ing something, is central in speech act theory. For example, when a priest says *I now pronounce you man wife* or when a judge declares *You are hereby declared guilty of the offense*, the utterances are designed to do something; in this case, to *wed* and to *convict*, respectively.

In everyday interactions we may say *I am hungry* or *It is really warm in here* when we are *criticising* that the restaurant service is rather slow or we *complaining* about the air condition, respectively. The utterances that we say are termed as 'locutions', while the intent of the locution is the 'illocutionary act'; referring to the intent, the utterance may be said to have an 'illocutionary force' (Wardhaugh and Fuller 2015: 251) such as to complain or to criticise. 'Perlocutionary acts' are the intended or unintended by-products of the locution. It refers to the effects on the feelings, thoughts and actions of the listeners as well as the speaker (Saddock 2004: 55) for example, the waiter may offer a free appetizer, and someone might explain that the electricity bill had been unbearable causing them to cut the air-condition.

Grice's concept of 'implicature' allows the speakers and listeners to figure out the relationship between the said and the unsaid (Wardhaug and Fuller 2015: 256, Sadock 2004: 54). Also, it is clear that the concepts of 'face' and 'speech acts' are closely related. Speech acts allow us do things with language impacting our interlocutors (Archer 2010: 402). Grice suggests that everyday communication is not only convention-based but also dependent on the speaker and his communication intents and the manner he uses to get his message through his interlocutors.

Searle (1979: 5-20) categorises speech acts into five groups: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. He assigns each with a sincerity condition, which is the psychological state that is expressed in the illocutionary act. Table 2 shows an overview of the speech acts, their corresponding examples, and sincerity conditions. *Assertives* are statements where the speaker expresses something as a fact. To test the statement, one can simply ask: is it true or false? This may be illustrated by an example from the present data: 'these are the damages and wrongs done to your poor servant', followed by further assertives providing detail. *Directives* are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to act on something. Such attempts cover a broad range, i.e. from modest appeals to fierce demands. Requests, suggestions and commands belong to this category. *Commissives*, on the other hand, are illocutionary acts of which the purpose is to commit the speaker to a certain action in the future. For example, a statement of promise or a refusal implies that the speaker will or will not do something in the future. *Expressives*, as the name suggests, are utterances where the speaker expresses emotions such as statements of apology, congratulatory words, or condolences. Lastly, *declarations* are statements that, when successfully performed, cause changes in the status or condition of the object/s concerned. As Searle (1979:16) puts it 'one

brings a state of affairs into existence by declaring it to exist, so to speak, saying makes it so' e.g. 'I appoint you head of the military', 'I christen this ship (name)', and 'I quit!'

Speech act	***Statement types***	***Sincerity condition***
assertives	assertions, remarks, explanations, deductions	belief
directives	requests, orders, commands, prayers, beggings, entreaties	want, wish, desire
commissives	promises, vows, threats, pledges	intention
expressives	felicitations, congratulations, condolences	the point of the illocution is to itself express the sincerity condition
declarations	(declarations)	no sincerity condition

Table 2: Speech Acts, statement types, sincerity conditions based on Searle's text. Searle (1979: 5-20).

In historical pragmatics, the most studied speech acts are those which are most prone to create FTAs, that is, complaints, requests, and apologies (Taavitsainen and Jucker 2008: 7) falling under the headings directives and commissives. As the present study will deal with letters of complaint, in which narratives are central, the focus will be on the combination of assertive and directive speech acts.

Searle (1979: 66) first defined the assertive as a sentence with a propositional content. The producer of the assertive 'must have evidence or reasons for the truth or of the proposition expressed. He must believe that things are so or at least is responsible for believing that things are so.' In linguistic form, they are declarative sentences that either describe, report, or express an opinion. According to Searle, the members of this assertive class may be listed as follows: acts of stating, informing, reporting, insisting, swearing, hypothesizing, suggesting, boasting, concluding, deducing, complaining, and the likes. Common to these is that they can be categorised as true or false and need not be mere assertions (Searle 1979: 12-13, Sbisa 2020: 160, Alston 2000: 3).

Directives, as the name suggests, direct the hearer to a certain action. They can be imposing and, to a lesser or greater degree, delimit the sense of authority of the addressee thereby threatening their negative face (Taavitsainen & Jucker 2008: 8-11). Directives intend

to get the addressee to do something which he might otherwise would not have done (Taavitsainen and Jucker 2008: 11) and may be expressed with accompanying reasons. Requests in medieval English were usually composed as directives expressing the speaker's wish or desire. However, according to Taavitsainen and Jucker (2008: 8) this began to change by the end of the period. The petitioner's wish was no longer seen as sufficient justification for requests, and indirect requests became more common, as part of a general change towards negative politeness. Requests developed to become conventionalized directives using politeness markers such as *pray*, *beseech,* and *please*.

Searle (1979: 30) states that speakers tend to be indirect in order to be polite and use indirect speech acts. This means that 'the speaker utters a sentence, means the utterance, but also means something more.' In the example: 'I would like you to do it', the speaker means what he says, but although the utterance is a plain declarative statement, its purpose could be a request or even a command depending on the context. For the utterance's illocutionary force to be clear, both the speaker and the hearer must have a common understanding of the context. In the same manner, speech acts function only when they are contextualised, and a speech act without a context has no force at all (Holdcroft 1994, in Culpeper & Archer 2008: 51).

3.2 Fludernik's episodic narrative structure

Historically, narrative research dates back to analysis of novels by Spielhagen and Ludwig (Spielhagen 1967, Ludwig 1891). The so-called classical phase of narratology which developed in France was influenced by studies of folk tales of whom the most prominent name was Vladimir Propp whose *Morphology of the Folktale* was first published in 1927 (Propp 1968; see Martin and Martin 1984). However, the development of narrative theory was furthered by the French literary theorist Gerard Genette, who in his *Discours du recit* (1972; Genette 1980), gathered insights from many past studies and designed a new terminological framework for narrative analysis. Narrative studies established itself in the United States associated with scholars such as Gerald Prince, Seymour Chatman, Dorrit Cohn, and Susan Lanser (Fludernik 2006: 11).

The study of narratology is traditionally a subdiscipline of literature studies and is closely linked to poetics, genre theory and semiotics: poetics because they share some

commonalities like literary and aesthetic functions; genre theory as they deal with distinct issues of varied genres (i.e. drama, epic, novel, *Bildungsroman*, etc.), and semiotics due to the fact that they analyse narrative components in relation to their meaning (Fludernik 2006: 9). Through the latter two areas it also has a direct relevance for linguistic studies. In addition, it has developed information-based and media-technology based approaches, and among them is the historical approach spearheaded by Fludernik (e.g. 1996, 2000, 2004, 2007).

Humans are hard-wired to tell stories and storytelling happens every day. Stories are narratives and we can thus say that the prototypical form of narrative is oral narrative. Labov (1967) paved the way to the study of oral narratives. Before his influence, narrative studies were mainly about literary narratives (Tokunaga 2013:1). Fludernik's episodic narrative model is based on Labov's (1967) approach to narrative study, addressing the question of how a story is told. The Labovian model (Labov and Waletzky 1967) has four main sections: the abstract (introduction of the story), the orientation (points to where the story is heading), the complicating action (incidences in the story), and the evaluation (points out the significance of the story) which generally takes place just before the conflict in the story is resolved. Labov and Waletsky (1967) in their paper 'Narrative Analysis: Oral Version of Personal Experience' point out the common frame of oral narratives as told by ordinary people. Their model has provided a useful starting point for the narratives of both sophisticated and unsophisticated speakers and the varied narrative types that can be produced (Tokunaga 2013).

Scholars have no fixed definitions as to what a narrative is. Prince (1982) who produced the first dictionary of narratological terms defines a narrative as 'the recounting of one or more real or fictitious events communicated by one or more narrators…' (cited in Fludernik 2005: 41). Scholars like Culler (1975) and Prince (1982) support this plot-oriented definition (i.e. the recounting of events). Fludernik on the other hand, laid out a disputed counter-definition that is not focused on the plot but on what she calls *experientiality* (Fludernik 2004: 130). Experientiality is a narrative feature which Fludernik considers to be essential for a text to be defined as narrative but, for Prince (1982: 145-61), for example, is only an additional characteristic (Fludernik 2004: 131). Experientiality requires that a narrative has a human(ised) protagonist, that it is located in time and space, that the consciousness of the teller/protagonist is central (i.e. it is evaluative and steeped with emotionality), and lastly, that it has tellability and point which in other words mean: having

news value, performativity, and that it is dramatically told. With this definition, some historical texts are not considered narratives (see Fludernik 2005: 133).

The basic story structure of an experiential narrative as described in *Towards a Natural 'Narratology'* (Fludernik 1996) and *An Introduction to Narratology* (Fludernik 2006) is composed of these parts: an abstract, an introduction, an evaluation or resolution and a concluding coda. The *abstract* at the beginning announces the subject of the story (Labov and Waletzky: 1967), or it can also be seen as a prelude to the introduction meant to awaken the reader's attention and interest. The introduction can contain background information which is also called as the (macro/initial) *orientation*. This part may also introduce the reader to the details of the narrative that contribute to the establishment of the *setting*. The main parts of the story are shown in a series of narrative episodes which are mostly initiated by an *incipit* – a term used to label the start of the episode. Following this are either *incidences* (events that happen), embedded orientation in the form of *details, comments, results* and new *orientations, external actions, results of the incidences* and *delayed orientations*. *Delayed orientation* (Fludernik 1996: 329) consists of comments interrupting the sequence of events and are features of orality. They may display evaluative features that exhibit emotionality (Fludernik 2004: 145).

Towards the end, one can find the *evaluation* or *resolution* which is often an expression of the narrator's thoughts and feelings about the events. This part enunciates the point of the story from the writer's perspective affirming the story's point and tellability. Lastly, the *concluding coda*/*conclusion* in stories are usually comments on how the story culminated, normally with a remark about the future (Tokunaga 2013: 18, Fludernik 1996: 65, 2006: 48). In the texts included in this study, however, they are replaced with the petitions/requests and concluding health formulas that are appropriate to the letters' function.

Figure 1 shows Fludernik's model for episodic narrative structure:

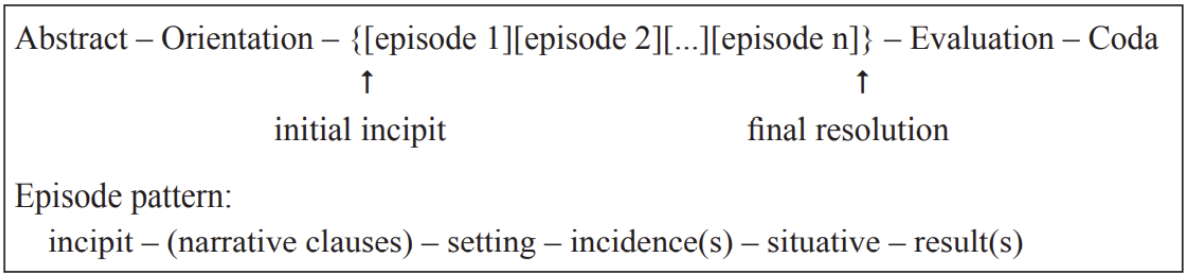

Figure 1. Episodic narrative structure (Fludernik 1996: 65)

Letters are narratives to a greater or a lesser degree depending on their purpose. Fludernik (2007) suggests that letters are of great interest in relation to narrativity since unlike prose romances, and verses, which clearly are narratives; 'letters are communication-based genres and are written versions of interaction between displaced interlocutors.' That means that the spontaneity of the oral language may be adapted in letter-writing but also revised, so 'they may be (partly) narrative as well as merely communicative' (Fludernik 2007: 241-242). Nonetheless, on the issue of orality and expressiveness imitating real-life correspondence, early letters appear to fall short. According to Fludernik (2007) 'they are extremely formulaic in structure and form, and peculiarly resistant to expressive and narrative elaboration' (Fludernik 2007: 242). She adds that they are 'brief, business-like and unemotional' (Fludernik 2007: 247). As noted above (see p. 8) Stenroos (2014), has shown that personal feelings do appear in early letters, even in formal contexts. Ormrod (2018: x), in his preface to Smith and Killick (2018) a book on petitions, also mentions that 'petitions were often made in the name of people who are comparatively marginalised by the usual formalities and whose predicaments sometimes make for very vivid narratives.'

Fludernik (2007: 251) notes that letters mostly exhibit paratactic structures, that is, clauses that start with coordinating conjunctions that function as discourse markers (e.g. *but* suddenly I was overwhelmed *and* at last I felt the ground *but* was thrown down *and so* was…). This is opposed to the Latinate hypotactic patterns which are characteristic of formal writing, and most often involve relative clauses and present participle clauses (Fludernik 2007: 247).

To illustrate the narrative structure, an example letter from the *Helsinki Corpus* studied by Fludernik (2007: 245, 250) is shown here. This letter is an account of a shipwreck in New England by Anthony Thacher in 1635 and is described by Fludernik as 'one of the most extended and sensational narrative letters.' In Figure 2, the letter is presented in episodic narratives (Fludernik 2007: 250).

Not long since the Prince, understanding that the Infanta was used to go some mornings to the *Casa de Campo,* a Summer-house the King hath on t'other side the River, to gather *May-dew*	delayed orientation
he rose betimes and went thither, taking your Brother with him; they were let into the House, and into the Garden, but the Infanta was in the Orchard:	incipit

and there being a high partition-wall between, and the door doubly bolted,	delayed orientation
the Prince got on the top of the wall, and sprung down a great height, and so made towards her;	incidences
but she spying him frst of all the rest, gave a shriek, and ran back:	reaction 2
the old Marquis that was then her Guardian came towards the Prince, and fell on his knees, conjuring His Highness to retire, in regard he hazarded his Head if he admitted any to her company;	reaction 1
so the door was open'd, and he came out under that wall over which he had got in.	result

Figure 2. Letter from Anthony Thacher to Peter Thacher, September 1635; Kermode and Kermode 2003: 31-32, studied in Fludernik 2007: 250)

3.3 Letter Genres

The word *genre* is traditionally applied when categorising different kinds of texts, especially literary texts. The recognition of a genre signals to the reader what to expect from the text.

> Genres help us to navigate the complex world of written communication and symbolic activity, because in recognising a text we recognise many things about the institutional and social setting, the activities being proposed, the roles available to writer and reader, the motives, ideas, ideology, and expected content of the document, and where all might fit into our lives (Bazerman 1997: 16).

Genres are not eternally fixed. Burrow (2008:1) defines genres as 'a historical phenomenon, that is, sets of conventions which shift and re-form from time to time, not abstract categories into which any text from any period should fit.' The idea of genre as malleable is a good starting point in the discussion of text categories, or the question how texts are grouped.

The MELD team adopt an even more flexible approach to the grouping (and regrouping) of documents (Mäkinen 2020; Stenroos, Bergstrøm and Thengs 2020). They dispense altogether with the traditional terms 'genre' and 'text type' and instead operate with the concept of 'text category.' The text categories may be defined by any combination of text external and text internal criteria, the former including parameters such as the function or context of a text and the latter including formal characteristics such as vocabulary choice or spelling. Depending on the focus of the inquiry, the set of criteria may be altered (Mäkinen 2020: 29). This allows for a dynamic and a more open-minded analysis of medieval texts, which may eventually lead scholars to spot undisclosed correlations.

Bergs (2004), in his study of the Paston letters, define letters as text type that is distinguishable from other kinds of texts, such as sermons and recipes. His article is not concerned with a general discussion about genre, but rather deals with subcategories of letters (e.g. private/personal letters and non-private/business/official letters). This distinction is based on the text external/internal letter characteristics, although he also admits that the categorisation is not always easy to define and may be used interchangeably.

Bergs further defines subcategories of letters, including *requests*, *orders* and even *love letters*. Although medieval letters are formulaic in nature, he shows that there is plenty of room for free self-expression, even the formulaic parts showing, to some degree, individual voices. Bergs considers the notion of a private-public continuum, not based on the purposes of the letters but on their contents. That is to say that private letters are concerned with daily issues, while official letters were to carry out a particular business (Bergs 2004). On the other hand, instead of using the private-public divide, Palander-Collin utilises the term 'personal' letters to avoid the sometimes difficult and rather rigid private-public distinction.

The use of a flexible terminology will allow for a range of aspects in a scholarly investigation, for example it may lean towards sociopragmatic aspects of this discourse type e.g. the identifiable personas mentioned in the letters and the surrounding external conditions that have shaped the decisions around the act of letter writing (Palander-Collin 2010). This is a useful notion for this thesis, as letters of complaint may be considered one of those letter types that are difficult to place in the private-public spectrum. They are official letters in the sense that they are sent to official persons; the composer has a specific business in mind; and the letter may be subject to public scrutiny. At the same time, they may possess a great deal of personal voices untypical of other official letter types.

The distinction between document types according to MELD (Stenroos, Bergstrøm and Thengs 2020: 47) is fundamental to this thesis. MELD categorises documents based on functions. Here, letters of all kinds make up the large category 'Correspondence', which is made up of four subcategories: petitions, complaints, requests and letters, the last one including all those that do not fit into the first three categories (Stenroos, Bergstrøm and Thengs 2020: 50).

The distinction between 'petitions' and 'complaints' is not commonly made in scholarly studies. Bevan (2013: 65-66, 212) in her important study of scriveners and their work, defined petitions as letters that contain complaints and sought redress. They are letters

from groups or individuals voicing their grievances and either indirectly or directly mentioning the hoped-for solution. Dodd (2012: 118), who interchangeably uses the words 'petition' and 'supplication' in his study of Crown records, defines this letter type as

> formal written supplications of the King's subjects presented in various contexts within the central government and usually requested—of the king, his council, or his ministers—some special dispensation or redress in matters that the supplicants could not resolve themselves.

The MELD distinction between complaints and petitions is discussed in Stenroos (2014). She notes that '[i]n practice, the categories are largely coterminous and the difference is one of emphasis.' The common features are described as follows (Stenroos 2014: 359):

> Typically, a petition or complaint contains a description of a series of events or a state of affairs shown or implied to be unfair. A request for some action that will rectify this may follow; however, the request, or the nature of the action requested, is often left to be inferred.

Both letter types involve unequal power relations and are characterised by a polite style, especially exhibited in the carefully chosen opening and closing formulae. The discussion of text categories in Stenroos, Bergstrøm and Thengs (2020) does not specify the distinction between the two; however, a MELD working document used as a basis for categorisation in the corpus provides definitions. Here, a complaint is defined as 'a letter addressed to an authority describing a perceived malpractice or injustice (usually with an implied petition)' while a petition is defined as 'a letter addressed to an authority of superior status/position, requesting a specific decision or course of action.' The difference is clearly not a very clear-cut one, and one of the aims of this study is to consider to what extent it makes sense with regard to the present texts.

The egodocument is a concept that has existed since the 1950s and was originally coined by Jacques Presser, a Dutch historian. Presser was interested in memoirs, autobiographies, diaries and personal letters and defined the term as:

> Those historical sources in which the researcher is faced with 'I', or a 'he' as a writing and describing subject with a continuous presence in the text.
>
> documents in which an ego deliberately or accidentally discloses or hides itself…

In an English text, the concept of the egodocument was first used by Peter Burke (1996). In Dutch, the word appeared in the standard Dutch dictionary by Van Dales from the 1950s (Dekker 2002: 18). However, Presser's colleagues were said to be reluctant to the use of this terminology, and it took five decades from Presser's introduction of the concept until it gained ground in academic writing.

Around 2000, a group of Dutch scholars led by Dekker reignited the interest on egodocuments and revived the concept. Lindeman (2001, in Dekker 2002: 14) noted that 'egodocuments contribute to historical knowledge by endowing ordinary lives with agency, dignity and texture.' More recently, the concept has been adopted by historical sociolinguists working with qualitative methods.

Letters are, finally, categorised as *imagined* text type (Wal and Rutten: 2013: 1-2) in the sense that the writer records potential conceived utterances by himself which, 'for the lack of the addressee, need to be written down rather than said; but he remains in a near-speech mode' (Schneider 2002: 61). They are, on the other hand, a combination of the speech-like reflecting the vernacular, and on the other hand they exhibit written language characterictics, e.g. epistolary conventions and formulae. Despite the conventions and expectations of hierarchal societies in the early ages, letters of petitions may elude these rigid traditional exigencies as the author's ego, deliberately or not, is revealed. Contrary to the general assumption that letters addressed to social superiors show little emotional involvement and ego referencing, some letters of petitions may contain a relatively large amount of ego-involvement of private nature (Włodarczyk 2013: 220). One of the questions considered in the present study is to what extent this might be the case with regard to letters of complaint as well.

4. The individual studies

The three letters included in this study were all produced in or around the first quarter of the sixteenth century. They were selected for study as good representatives of the category of 'letter of complaint' as defined in MELD: each text is of a considerable length and contains a long narrative part detailing the complaints.

All three letters present complaints to highly prominent addressees, detailing actions that are described as unjust. However, the three complaints deal with very different matters. D2578 concerns the hereditary right to a waste ground, which the complainant defends against what he considers an unlawful claim and finds his attempts at legal defence blocked. D4074 is an enumeration of a number of harsh, even violent, actions followed by legal battle by the complainant, a miller, against a powerful adversary. Finally, D0699 is a complaint by a married couple, describing a scheme to deprive the wife of her inheritance through what seems like manipulation of her sister.

This chapter presents detailed studies of all three texts. Each study is divided into two parts: a brief description of the historical context and the physical characteristics of the text, and a detailed analysis from the point of view of episodic structure, politeness features and speech acts. In analysing the letters, two considerations have been followed. When discussing the letters as narratives, the content of the letters is treated as presumably true, and its potential duplicity is not discussed as it is considered irrelevant to the study. Secondly, although the question of the respective contributions of the scribe and the complainant is not being avoided, when discussing the contents, the complainants are considered the authors of the letters.

The speech acts are identified in *italics*, using *A* for assertives and *D* for directives.

4.1 D2578 Preston, Lancashire Archive: DDIN/55/2 *(February 1504-April 1509)*

This is letter of complaint from a man named Robert Blundell to Sir Richard Empson, who was the Chancellor of the King of the Duchy of Lancaster. In this letter, Blundell expresses his frustration for not having been shown justice in his legal attempts to preserve his right to a certain waste ground. In addition, he also petitions to annul the claims of a certain Robert Ballard to the same waste ground.

Sir Richard Empson was a highly influential official under the reign of Henry VII, but fell out of favour after the king's death. The document must have been produced between February 1504 and April 1509, since Empson was knighted and titled Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in February 1504 and arrested in April 1509.

The document is made of thin parchment. The sheet, as well as the block of writing, broaden towards the base, making the size of the sheet 23-26 x 20,5 cm and of the text block 21-23 x 17,5 cm. This is the shortest text of the three included in this study, as well as the smallest in sheet size.

The text is arranged into a block with a two-line salutation separated with a blank line and centred at the top of the sheet. The document has eye-catching round holes which instantaneously indicate that the sheet is made of parchment. Two of the parchment holes are located in the left part, at the beginning of lines 8 and 11, and the third one is at the top, just above the salutation. The document exhibits a trace of being folded crosswise. Lines 11 and 12 are affected by wear because of the horizontal crease and there is more blurring of letters in that area than elsewhere in the manuscript. The document also shows signs of wear and use through creases and crumpled areas on the lower part. There are also grey dots on the right lower part, which could be remnants of a liquid spill. The document is, however, relatively easy to read and the ravages of time have had little effect on its decipherability. There are no signatures or any other authenticating means, and the space efficiency of the text, with narrow margins, suggests that this manuscript either was not sent as an ordinary letter or that it is a copy of the original.

The hand is an upright one with looped ascenders and descenders (e.g. the **d**'s, **l**'s and **b**'s). This appearance might give the impression of an Anglicana script (see Roberts 2005: 161-164, 211-13), but the majority of the distinctive letter forms suggest a medium-grade Secretary. The **g**'s are not looped and have the form of the Secretary **g**, with a closed top and a short descender curving to the left. Single-compartment **a**'s are used all throughout, the **w**'s are in three strokes, and the **x**'s are realised in a single stroke. The short 2-shaped **r** is used here, with flourishes in end position. There are two forms of **e;** both the round one (mainly Anglicana) and the 'horned e' (Secretary) are used irrespective of position.

This document is stamped with a seal of the Record Office of the County of Lancaster. Underlining and marginalia are also visible in what seemed to be of pencil marks distinctly of different colour and characteristic from the penned Secretary script.

Episodes and speech acts

To they Ryght worshypfull *sir* Ryc Empson knyght chanceler of y^{ei} kyng*es* duchie of lancas(ter)	salutation *A: greeting/stating*
Humbly and peteusly co*m*pleyneth vnto your gud mast*er*shype Rob Blundell of yns blundell in y^{e} counte of lanc	macro orientation *A: petitioning*

The letter begins with a standard salutation following the correct social code expected in letters from an inferior to a superior. The addressee is Richard Empson, who is addressed as 'right worshipful sir', followed by his name and his titles. The greeting attends to the addressee's positive face but is fully formulaic: the combination of 'right worshipful' is typical for official communication (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995: 558) making the greeting here straightforwardly appropriate.

The petitioning part that follows may also be said to be quite standard, using the combination *humbly and peteusly compleyneth* 'humbly and piteously complains' followed by the name and toponymic of the complainant. The adverbs *humbly* and *peteusly* 'piteously' underline the humility of the latter, and therefore the high status of the addressee, mitigating the face-threatening act that is made explicit with the term *compleyneth*.

y^{t} wher y^{ei} seid Rob blundell & hys aunc haue be peasably seased of a great wast grond Jn yns blundell beforeseid in y*er* demenas of fe tyme out of mynde	macro orientation *A: informing*
as pleynly appereth by hys ded*es* & euidens & ys also well knowen in y^{e} seid countre	delayed orientation strengthening orientation by historical and popular truth *A: informing*

The narrative begins with an informative macro-orientation part which provides the starting point: 'Robert Blundell and his ancestors have peacefully possessed a great waste ground in the beforementioned Ince Blundell, in their demesne of fee, since time immemorial.' The use of the word *peasably* 'peacefully' to describe the state of affairs before the action is regularly used in legal documents to indicate the lack of disturbance or legal challenges; the use of the term here clearly indicates the reason behind this petitioning.

This continues with a historical truth statement (delayed orientation) that is provided to verify the previous statement: ‘as it clearly appears from his deeds and evidence and is also well known in the said county.’ Reference is made here to the two main sources of legal justification: the newer one, by written documents, and the traditional one, by common knowledge (Clanchy 2013: 2-3).

on rob ballard	setting (part1)
ayenst and ord*er* of y^{e} lawe*ȝ* & direct *con*sciens	evaluative comment
hath long vexed Sued & troubleid y^{ei} seid rob for diu*er ȝ par*cels of y^{e} seid Wast grond befor y^{e} dean of y^{ei} kyng*es* most honorable chapell & o-d*er* of thei kyng*es* conseill*e*	setting (part2) *A: reporting*
& y*er* opteined a sentens & decre a-yenst y^{e} seid Rob blundell y^{t} he shuld suffur y^{e} seid Rob ballard to possede & enioie diu*er*s *par*cels of y^{e} seid wast grond vnto y^{e} fest of candilmas in y^{e} xxj yere of kyng henr y^{e} viith	incipit/incidence *A: reporting*
& y/t y^{en} J your seid orat*ur* shuld ~~~ bryng & sufficient mat*er* shew & hys euidens to defeat and distroie y^{e} title of y^{e} seid Rob ballard	delayed orientation *A: informing*
wych decre in hym-self appereth to be void a-yenst y^{e} law & Justifficiens for so much as hys appereth by y^{e} seid decre y^{t} y^{ei} title of y^{e} seid Rob~ ballard	comment 1 *A: commenting*
y^{s} Feyned & not sufficient by y^{e} coen lawe	comment 2 reinforcing the previous comment *A: commenting*
and y^{t} not w^{t}-stondyng y^{e} seid orat*ur* came at y^{e} seid fest of candilmas to y^{e} seid ~~~ dean & od*er* of y^{e} kyng*es* conseil & y^{en} offered to shew sufficient mat*er* & euidens to a-void y^{e} title of y^{e} seid Rob ballard	result 1 remedial action *A: reporting*
wych to see or heer y^{e} seid conseill as yitt haue denyed & refuce	result 2 *A: reporting*
to y^{e} ext*re*me vndoyng of y^{e} seid orat*ur*	comment *A: commenting*

Upon establishing the background of the narrative, the letter continues by introducing the cause for complaint. The person whose actions are complained of is introduced as ‘one Robert Ballard’ and his actions are summarized as *hath long~ vexed Sued & troubleid y^{ei} seid rob~ for diuerȝ parcels of y^{e} seid wast grond* ‘has long annoyed, sued and troubled the said Robert for various parcels of the said waste ground.’ The present perfect verb forms here

make clear that the action has been going on for some time and is still ongoing. The verb *sued* makes clear that Ballard has gone to legal action; the use of multiple synonyms (bi- or trinomials) is common in legal language (Dunn 2011: 96) and here also adds to the effect of unfairness being described.

Next, the immediate result of the action by Ballard is described: 'Robert Ballard has obtained a sentence and decree against the said Robert Blundell that he should allow the said Robert Ballard to possess and enjoy various parts of the said waste ground.' A time constraint is given as 'to the feast of the Candlemas the 21st year of Henry VII.'

The narrative continues and the reader is informed that Blundell has to appear and provide evidence in order to oppose the settlement. Here, a comment is inserted into the narrative, stating that Robert Ballard's papers are *feyned & not sufficient by y^e^ coen lawe* 'false and not acceptable by the common law.' The purpose of the comment seems to be to make clear that the demand that Blundell should provide evidence is preposterous. However (*not w^t^-stondyng*), to gratify the said request, it is further told that Blundell came to the King's council, as he reports in the letter (result 1): 'the said petitioner came at the said Feast of the Candlemas to the said dean and others of the King's council and offered to show sufficient proof and evidence to make void the title of the said Robert Ballard.' This however, resulted in nothing as 'the said council has denied and refused to see or hear' him (result 2).

The narrative is presented in an objective tone. The sentences are mostly reportative or informative with minimal embellishment, keeping to the point. However, this part ends with a comment *to y^e^ extreme vndoyng of y^e^ seid oratur* 'to the extreme ruin of the said petitioner' which is an evaluative feature articulating the intensity of the injustice to Robert Blundell and the seriousness of the situation; it is in particular the word 'extreme' that brings in a subjective element here.

& also wher of late your seid orat*ur* had a p*ri*ue seale to hym directid y^t^ he shuld suffur on henr faryngton & georg bekynshaw esq*ui*ers to diuyde & seu*er*e y^ei^ seid Wast grond by-twyx y^e^ seid Rob ballard & yo*ur* seid orat*ur*	incidence *A: reporting*
or elꝫ y^t^ yo*ur* seid orat*ur* shuld apper be-for y^e^ kyng*es* g*ra*ce & hys conseill in y^e^ xv day next aft*ur* hest*ur* last past to shewe whye he shuld not obey y^e^ seid ord*er* & decre	delayed orientation condition related to previous incidence *A: reporting*

at wych day yo*ur* seid orat*ur* hath appered & dayly syns hath gyffyn attend*a*ns & ys redy to shewe hys title & evidens for y^{e} p*re*mis*ses* wher vnto as yet he can not be resceyved	action + result *A: informing*
to his vtt*ur con*fusion & excesseu domage	comment

The letter further reports another set of incidence and result which brings the narrative closer to the present time, as indicated by the introductory *wher of late* 'not long ago.' Another decree was directed to the petitioner asking him to comply: 'not long ago, your said petitioner had a royal letter addressed to him, that he should allow a certain Henry Faryngton and George Bekynshaw, esquires, to divide and partition the said waste ground between the said Robert Ballard and your said petitioner' with a condition (delayed orientation) that states that 'he should else appear before the king's presence and his council in the fifteenth day after the Easter that has passed in order to explain why he should not obey the said order and decree.'

Again, it is stated that Robert Blundell heeded the instruction, and was met with the same result (action + result): 'On that day, your said petitioner appeared and has since that day been in attendance and is ready to show his title and evidence for this matter, and he still has not been admitted, to his utter confusion and extreme destruction.' This time, the result is a description of an ongoing situation: Blundell is now present at Westminster and is still waiting to be admitted.

In this concluding comment, Blundell again uses the emphatic adjectives 'utter' and 'extreme' bringing in a subjective evaluation of the situation; here he refers directly to his state of mind ('utter confusion') as well as the material effect ('extreme damage'). As before in the letter, the subjective comments are added to the otherwise business-like reporting, giving the letter a personal element that is not always present in letters of complaint.

for redresse Wherof please hyt yo*ur* gud mast*er*shype	resolution 1 free supplication speech *A: stating*
for so much as y^{ei} seid rob ballard ys a man of greate sbst*a*ns[sic] of lond*es* god*es* & catell & y^{ei} mat*er* touchyng lond*es* te*nn*t*es* & inherit*a*ns det*er*mible by y^{ei} coen law w^{t}-yn y^{ei} seid counte palentyn	delayed orientation/ comment *A: stating*
to call*e* y^{ei} seid *par*tie*ȝ* before you to exa*min*e y*er* tytle & Jnt*er*est yn y^{ei} p*re*mis*ses* or els to remitt y^{em} doon to y^{e} lawe w^{t}-yn y^{ei} seid counte y*er* to discussed & decide accordyng to justic & gud *con*sciens	resolution 2 direct suggestion *D: petitioning*

& ye seid orat*ur* shal dayle p*ra*y to god for yo*ur pro*sperien*s* & *conser*uacon*e*	conclusion/health formula *A: stating*

In the final part of the letter, Blundell formulates a petition that plainly suggests two alternative courses of action. The directive itself is formulated as a wish: 'For remedy of which…..**may it** please your good mastership.' Before the suggested actions are specified, however, a comment is inserted explaining two reasons why these actions would be needed to resolve the matter. First, it is noted that 'Robert Ballard is a man of great possessions of lands, goods, and castle', and secondly that 'the matter regarding lands, dwellings and inheritance being determined by the common law within the said county palatine.' The first point may refer to Ballard's power as well as, perhaps, the injustice of his claim; the latter, however, makes the clear legal point that the matter should be dealt with within the Duchy of Lancaster, not at Westminster.

The two suggested actions are then given: 'to call the said parties before your presence in order to examine their titles as well as their interests on the matter' or, alternatively, 'make them submit to the law within the said county, according to justice and good conscience.' The indication is clearly that Ballard's action in taking the matter to the King's council is felt as unjust, and Blundell hopes for a fairer treatment at the local court, this being an evaluative comment.

The proposal is very direct, giving very clear directions to the addressee, and may therefore be seen as involving a considerable negative face threat to the addressee. There is very little attempt to mitigate the FTA, apart from the indirectness of the phrase 'may it please.' Using the formulaic phrase 'your good mastership' may be seen as attending to the addressee's positive face but simultaneously functions as a reminder of the addressee's duty to help because of his office.

The letter's valediction in the end is a polite health formula in the form of a promised prayer: 'and your said petitioner shall pray to god daily for your prosperity and protection.' This attends to the addressee's positive face and is a conventional formulae (Davis 1965: 236).

4.2 D4074 Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: 1300/155 *(1513-1524)*

D4074 is a long complaint letter from a certain Thomas Hall addressed to Sir Thomas Lovell, knight. Lovell was a prominent political figure during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. He was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1485 by Henry VII and reappointed by Henry VIII; he was knighted in 1513 and died in 1524. The letter must therefore be written between 1513 and 1524. The position of Sir Thomas seems to have been weakened by the rise of Cardinal Wolsey (see p. 58) and it is perhaps likely that the letter was written not long after he was knighted in 1513.

The letter details the bad treatment that Thomas Hall has been subjected to by John Seymour, also a man of high social high standing. Seymour, who was the father of Jane Seymour and the grandfather of Edward VI (reigned 1547-1553), had been knighted in 1497 and held several local offices, including Sheriff of Wiltshire as well as of Somerset and Dorset during the period here concerned. It is of interest that his arrogant and lawless behaviour towards a plaintiff was also documented in 1502.[1]

The text is written on a 32 x 44 cm paper sheet. The document shows signs of wear and use. Its middle and left side portions have significant water damage expunging some words. The water-damaged middle parts are aligned in such a manner that one can infer that the damage occurred while the document was folded crosswise.

The letter is composed of a neatly aligned 35-line text, including the two-line salutation, which is separated from the text with a blank line and centred. There is marginal space on the left side of the text block but none on the right, and the most generous space is in the bottom margin. The text space is measured to be 27,5 x 33 cm.

This text is neatly written in an Anglicana media script, also known as the ‘court hand’, which was the most common script used in English documents in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was continually in use as a legal hand to the eighteenth century (Roberts 2015: 4). The letters are mostly relatively easy to distinguish, and there are many looped ascenders and descenders. There are two-compartment **a**’s, while the **g**’s are 8-shaped. Many of the final **s**’s are sigma-shaped. Tall **s**’s also occur, sometimes leading to confusion between **s** and **f**, which is, however, generally solved by the context. There are also round **e**’s

[1] www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/seymour-sir-john-147374-1536

with a distinct top swirl, while the **x**'s are penned in two strokes. The majuscule **w**'s are realised in an 'llb' shape. All these are typical characteristics of the Anglicana script.[2]

There are no indications of tags, seals, or signatures in this manuscript, which may suggest that this might be a copy of the original text.

Episodes and speech acts

To the Ryght Honorable and Hys synguler' & especyall' good master Syr Thomas lowell knight	salutation *A: greeting/stating*

The letter starts with a salutation that greets the reader in accordance with the established social protocol: 'To the right, honourable and his eminent and greatly distinguished good master Sir Thomas Lowell, knight.' The use of the honorific adjectives *ryght, honorable, singuler, especyal* and *good* can be interpreted as a positive politeness strategy, whereby the writer expresses social deference and respect. The combination 'right honourable' was specifically used to address persons in the nobility class, while other combinations were conventionalised for other classes i.e. 'right reverend' for the clergy and 'right worshipful' for official communication (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995: 558). Thomas Lovell, who belonged to the gentry although not to the highest nobility, served as Chancellor of the Exchequer under both Henry VII and Henry VIII and was therefore in a very high position of power, making the term of address appropriate. This type of linguistic coding shows the careful consideration of the hierarchal relationship at play in this correspondence (Palander-Collin 2010: 655, Bergs 2004: 209).

This letter is very clearly episodic in nature. The episodes are quite easy to distinguish from each other as the narrative is rich in the use of discourse markers signalling the episodes. 'And' both spelled out and in ampersand (&) form is the most used discourse marker, while also *fyrste* (first), *wherof* (whereof), *also, then* are used.

Thes ben Jniures & wrong*es* done vnto yo*ur* po*ur* s*er*u*a*nt & daily bedman Thomas hall by Syr John Saym*er* knight	abstract *A: reporting*
wherof the sayd thomas hall besechith your mastershippe to see reformacon for the love of god and in the weye of charytee	petition *D: petitioning*

[2] See chapter VII of Jane Roberts (2015) *Guide to Scripts used in English writings up to the 1500s* for a fuller description.

The narrative starts by giving an orientation of what the letter is about: 'these are the damages and wrongs done to your poor servant.' This opening assertive speech act has two functions. First, it signals that this will be a report and enumeration of injustices, and at the same time announces that this is a letter of complaint. In addition, it specifies both people involved: the sender (Thomas Hall) and the person about whom he complains (Sir John Seymour). What follows is a request, which makes this a directive speech act. This directive makes use of the verb *besechith*. To 'beseech' is to beg earnestly and entreat the person (to negotiate) on one's behalf (OED). Beseech is an emotive verb reflecting an emotional strain. It also is oriented towards negative politeness and marks a greater social distance between the petitioner and the respected addressee than if he had used *pray* (Williams 2013: 150). In Williams' (2013: 146) examination of letters, he states that 'beseech is preferred in times of particular desperation and/or exchanges particularly sensitive to negative politeness' where *pray* would be inadequate. This act of beseeching is the core speech act of this document. This initial part of the letter gives the reader explicit information as to what the rest of the letter will be about and serves as a prelude to the series of incidences or results that follow.

Fyrste where y^{e} seyd Syr John by hys dede endentyd lett & dymysed vnto one Rob*er*t Dushell & mawde hys wyffe all that hys water Myll with the *pro*fit*es* & comoditee*ȝ* lying in Croston in the Cowntie of wilteshyre for t*er*me of ther lyues yeldyng yerly therfore c*er*ten rent betwene them agreed	macro orientation/ incipit *A: informing*
be force wherof the seyd Rob*er*t & mawde were therof pesably possessyd vnto the tyme the sayde Rob*er*t dyed	setting *A: informing*
Aft*er* whoys deth*e* the sayd mawde hys wyff possessyd of the seyd lese toke to husbond yo*ur* pour s*er*u*a*nt Thomas Hall	result *A: informing*

The setting of the story is introduced in the incipit signalled by a sequential adverb *fyrste* 'first.' The rest of the incipit explains the background of the narrative providing the reader with knowledge of the past in order to understand the present. It is immediately followed by another setting that builds and strengthens the cohesion of the story (setting): 'in accordance with this, Robert and Maud were peacefully in possession of the mill until the death of Robert.' He does not only say that he and his wife were in possession of the mill but that they

‘peacefully possessed’ it (*pesably possessyd*). ‘Peacefully’ is an evaluative comment that is commonly used in legal texts to mark the lack of legal objections.

What follows are two resulting actions: Maud *possessed the lese + toke to husband…Thomas Hall* ‘Maud owned the lease + married Thomas Hall’ (hereafter TH) which may be considered as the starting point of the whole story, in the sense that it is from these two actions that the rest of the events spring from. Had not Maud married TH while she was in possession of the mill, there would be no offense done to TH. Had Maud possessed the lease and married another man than TH, the offense might possibly have been directed to that man. It is not known whether there were previous grudges between TH and John Seymour (hereafter JS) or his party. This part has now introduced the reader to the large picture as well as to the initial incidents.

and after mariage betwene then hadde the seyd syr John Saym*er* of hys gret myght & extort pour beryng extreme malice vnto your sayd pour s*eruan*t wolde not suffer the sayd Thomas pesably to enjoye the seyd lese	setting/ external reaction *A: reporting*
vnles he wolde gyff hym in mony v m*erkes* by colour of a fyne	conditional incident *A: reporting*
which the seyd thomas truly payd hym to have hys ffauo*ur* & good mast*er*shippe	result (accommodating the conditional incident) *A: informing*

After the resulting action, the reader is introduced to what looks like a new setting that brings the narrative to the point that has occasioned the complaint, namely a conflict. JS did not seem to accept that TH had any right to take over the lease of the mill through his marriage, and this resulted in violence on his part (setting/external action): ‘JS with his great might and extortionate power, bearing extreme malice unto your said poor servant, would not allow the said Thomas to peacefully enjoy the said lease.’ The juxtaposition of the words ‘extreme malice’ and ‘to peacefully enjoy’ gives a contrast effect that can be likened to dark vs. light, which may be seen as a well-planned rhetorical device. Additionally, the use of the adjective *extreme* functions as an evaluative comment. The first action by JS reported by TH is the placing of a condition, signalled by **unless,** and followed immediately by TH’s reaction to the said condition: ‘which the said Thomas truly paid him.’ The initial conflict in the narrative was successfully mitigated by TH through his compliance to JS’s condition which resulted in a temporary truce.

And yt thys not w^{t}stondyng aft*er*-warde by the space of iij yeres whan the seyd Syr John had *per*ceyued the sayd Thomas had well & newly [restored] the sayd mylle vnto the charg*es* of xx mrc or a-boue	orientation/incipit (describing a new situation) *A: informing*
he pute owte the seyd thomas & mawde hys wyffe of the seyd myll w^{t}owte eny lawfull cause or colo*ur* in ryght or consciens	incidence 1 *A: reporting*
& ther pytuosly the sayd Thomas beynge absent drewe owte the sayd mawde hys wyffe & all hys stuffe & good*es* beyng then in the seyd Mille in to the hye street	incidence 2 *A: reporting*
wherby the sayd thomas hadde losse by hurte of hys sayd wyffe enbeselyng & dystruccon of hys good*es* to the sum of xx li and above	result *A: informing*
It **also** the seyde Thomas was remoued thus by strength owte of the ffe & lordshipp of the seyd Syr John	incidence 3
yt the seyd Syr John	incidence 4 – part 1 *A: reporting*
[intending] vtt*er*ly to dystroye the seyd thomas & not to leue hym in pease	comment (author's thoughts) *A: remarking*
sent iiij of hys s*eru*a*nte*s vnto the pour howse of the sayd thomas	incidence 4 – part 2 *A: reporting*
he **thene** beyng absent	additional information *A: informing*
entendyng as he supposith to haue [murdered him if he] be *pre*sent	comment (author's thoughts) *A: remarking*

The next part is a new orientation/incipit. The events reported here took place three years after TH met JS's condition to pay five marks[3] in order to retain the mill. JS takes notice of the restoration of the mill, and this leads to a number of incidents of escalating violence towards TH and his wife Maud. First, JS evicts TH and Maud from the property and throws out Maud and their belongings on the High Street. Given the conventional manners observed in medieval England, it is safe to presume that this is a very rude act meant to humiliate TH. These two incidents (the eviction and dragging of TH's wife and goods) resulted in losses for TH of which he converted into the monetary value of '20 pounds or more' presumably to give a proper accounting suited to the document's purpose of an envisaged compensation.

[3] Five marks is approximately 67 shillings. In comparison, a good quality cow costs 10 shillings. Source: Medieval Price List (ucdavis.edu).

The letter then describes the fourth incidence: JS sending in his servants to look for TH. Here, the statement of this fact includes a comment 'intending to utterly destroy Thomas and not leave him in peace.' The strong negative expression 'utterly to destroy', juxtaposed with 'not leave him in peace' again gives a contrastive effect. In the next comment, TH expresses his own thoughts, evident through the use of the verb *supposith*, regarding this matter before he details the incident. He wrote *he thene beyng absent entendyng as he supposith to haue [murdered him if he] be present* 'intending, as it seems, to [to have murdered him, if he had] been present.' The use of *as he supposith* here shows a careful distinction between fact and assumption, making clear that TH is suggesting a charge of attempted murder but not claiming it as a fact.

and thes sayd hys s*er*u*a*nt*es* brake ryotusly with force the howse of the seyd Thomas the howse abowte	incidence 5 *A: reporting*
& kepet hys pour wyffe w^{t}in leste she should have [made] for helpe to hyr [...]	detail to incidence 5 *A: reporting*
of this ther was enbeseled & take a-waye by them iiij spones of silu*er* & a payer of beed*es* of ambyr w^{t} ryng*es* of sylu*er* & [...] pend*a*unt & a bokell of sylu*er* to the valeue of iiij m*ar*c or above	result *A: informing*

In the next incidence (5), JS's servants *ryotusly with force* 'violently' broke into the house of TH while he was away. The description is generally factual, but the use of descriptive terms such as *ryotously, with force, pour* in *his pour wyffe* add emotionality to the text. Two points of accusation are made: first, one of violence, as TH states that the four attacking men held his wife so that she could not fetch help, and secondly, the theft of many valuables from the household which are enumerated and evaluated in the letter: 'four silver spoons, a pair of amber beads with rings of silver and [...] pendant and a buckle of silver, totally amounting to the value of four marks or more', again presumably to give a proper accounting suited to the document's purpose of asking for compensation.

Also where oon symond Rumbessey a ten*a*nt of syr John Seymo*er* beryng malice vnto the seyd Thomas for hys seyd mast*er*s sale	orientation/ comment (author's thoughts and evaluation regarding the person) *A: reporting & remarking*
toke oon Oxe of the seyd thomas in the comen Feld callyd Croston sand*es*	incidence 1 *A: reporting*

and afte*r* enpowndyd the sayd Oxe in the comen pownde of Croston belongynge vnto my lord fitzwaren	incidence 2 *A: reporting*
And thus knowyng the sayd syr John Saym*er*	incidence 3- part 1 *A: reporting*
supposyng the sayd thomas shuld haue owte of the pownde hys sayd Oxe vpon convenient suerte to answere the lawe	comment *A: remarking on a presumption*
to∧^{ke} the sayd Oxe [out] of that pownde & put yt [in his] Aven P*e*arke	incidence 3 – part 2 *A: reporting*
& so yt to thys daye reteyneth the same and will not delyu*er* yt for suerte plegge nor other [... ...] And good consciens ∴∴∴∴	latest update on the incident *A: reporting & remarking*

In the orientation, TH introduces a new name, Simon Rumbessey, a tenant of JS. Here, he provides his own evaluation of Simon's motives: 'bearing malice to the said Thomas due to his said master's sale.' This is the second time the word *malice* is used in connection to JS and his actions. This repetitive discourse technique, using a strongly negative word, contributes to the emotional effect of the narrative.

Two incidences, both involving action by Simon: '(Simon) took one ox belonging to the said Thomas in the common field called Croston Sands…and placed the ox in an enclosure…' The next action is taken by JS, who took the said ox out of that enclosure and placed it [in his] own park.' This third assertive is split up by an expression of TH's mind, again using the evaluative verb *supposing* 'supposing', this time with reference to JS himself. Here TH gives an interpretation of the reason why JS moved the ox to his own property, namely that he foresaw that TH might be able to justly reclaim his own ox. Again, by giving this interpretation of JS's motives, TH portrays him as a scheming and dishonest person. He closes this part by bringing the whole story into the present time: *& so yt to thys daye reteyneth* 'and it remains there to this day', and adds a remark: 'he will not deliver it….for anything else [...] and good conscience', which is an evaluative comment.

Also where oon rob*er*t d*e*ushall seruant vnto the sayd [john] saym*er* before my lorde Cobham & other bowte the title and lese of [the] Mylle aboue namyd of the sayd Thomas hall and [his] wyffe for the Su of vj li xiij^{s} iiij^{d} to be payd w^{t}in a [a certain time] after the sayd bargain	orientation/setting *A: reporting*
and thys consyderynge the [said] Syr John suffered the sayd rob*er*t Dushell to haue possessyon [according] to the seyd lese and yt wold	detail to the previous setting *A: complaining*

not suffer vpon [pain of his] dysplesure the sayd Rob*er*t Dushell to paye the sayde Thomas the sayde mony	
And where your sayd pour s*eru**a**n*t [Thomas Hall has sued the] seyd rob*er*t Dushell at the kyng*es* comon lawe for payament of the sayd mony	result *A: informing*
And for the same [...] seyd Syr John p*re*vely hath dyscharged the sayde sute and owtlawry	parallel result *A: reporting*

The last section of the letter moves from the description of physical wrongs and injuries to the legal dispute concerning the mill. The orientation, again, introduces a new person and situation. A certain Robert Dushell has now bought the lease and the title of the disputed property from TH and his wife, before a certain Lord Cobham and others. The role of Cobham and the others was presumably to witness and validate the sale, and the sum is given as six pounds, 13 shillings and four pence, to be paid at a given point of time which is illegible in the manuscript. There is no indication as to whether TH and his wife themselves took the initiative to sell the lease.

The last, and major, point of complaint is, then, that TH and his wife have sold the lease of the mill but have not been compensated. It is made clear that JS in fact enabled Dushell to take possession of the mill, but did not allow him to pay TH. As a result, TH has gone to legal action: 'And... your poor servant [Thomas Hall has sued the] said Robert Dushell at the King's common law for the payment of the same money.' As a further result, it is revealed that JS managed to secretly dismiss the legal suit, and the demand of *outlawry* for Dushell until the sum is paid, a term still at this point used in the legal system for barring a person from financial dealings until a debt is settled.

And so infenytly entendyth to put to grevos charg*es* the sayd Thomas for sute of the same	free speech *A: deducing*
which*e* he sall not be able to bere nor neu*er* haue remedy with-owte the comfort of your good mastershipp to hym nowe be shewyd in thes p*re*misse3 for the loue of god And in the way of charyte	petition/conclusion *D: petitioning*

The narrative is brought to a close with an evaluation of the future: it is suggested that JS 'infinitely intends' to charge TH for having sued Robert Dushell; the indication here is a

continued legal battle in which TH has no chance against the power and influence of JS. Using the word *infenytly*, TH sees no end to the injustices caused by JS and he expresses that the matter has become unbearable.

The concluding part consists of free speech when viewed as a part of the narrative. It explains clearly and concisely the hopelessness of TH's situation. Apart from the use of the single term *grevos* 'grievous', the emotional effect is mainly provided by the strong time terms: *infenytly* 'infinitely' and *neuer* 'never', as well as the triple negative *not... nor neuer* 'not… nor never.' This evaluation of the situation is then turned into a petitioning act, suggesting that remedy can only be had by the help of the addressee: 'which he will not be able to bear, nor ever have any remedy unless the help and assistance of your good mastership may now be shown with regard to these matters.' This formulation finally makes explicit to the addressee the action that is hoped for, or expected, by the petitioner. On the superficial level, it may seem like an assertive speech act, but in the context it is clearly a directive (Searle 1969: 13) as it is a rather direct appeal for help. Since this concluding statement is a face-threatening act, TH adds a justification for it, suggesting that every dutiful Christian must act upon this injustice 'for the love of God and in the way of charity.' This might be a formulaic construction, but consciously chosen.

The letter lists a remarkable number of insults and injuries against the offended Thomas Hall. They may be summarized as follows:

Perpetrator	**Action**
John Seymour	forcefully demanded money from TH
John Seymour	vanquished TH and Maud's right to the mill
John Seymour	dragged TH's wife and his goods to the high street
John Seymour	forcefully removed TH out of the property
Four of JS's servants	broke into TH's house and stole valuable goods
Symond Rumbessey, JS's tenant	stole an ox from TH
Lord Fitzwaren	the stolen ox was kept in his field
John Seymour	took the ox to his own field and kept it there
Robert Dueshall	bought the title and lease of the mill (presumably encouraged by JS)
John Seymour	secretly discharged the lawsuit

As the list shows, several people mentioned in this letter contributed to the violations for which TH is now seeking help and reconciliation. John Seymour is the main villain and, as

Thomas Hall describes in this narrative, all the ‘insults and injuries’ are authored and expedited by him, who ‘intends to destroy him utterly.’

The villain’s motive is not speculated in any manner in this letter, apart from the single practical reason given for moving TH’s ox to his own field (that TH might otherwise be able to recover it). The letter does not seek to understand John Seymour but simply to portray his actions as evil and unjust. However, towards the end, the mention of another ‘Robert Deushall’ may be a clue to a better understanding of the narrative. The namesake of the dead husband of TH’s wife, who managed to buy the title and lease of the debated mill, was most probably close kin of the deceased, perhaps even a son, and may therefore have had some legal claim that is not shown in TH’s letter.

Although TH is fairly direct in seeking help and remedy to the offenses, and his financial losses are clearly recorded, his concluding petition and evaluation are left unspecified, in contrast to the two other letters in this study. The action is left solely for the addressee to decide, making the FTA to his negative face a relatively mild one.

4.3 D0699 Hereford, Herefordshire Archive: AL40/1031 *(1518-1529)*

This letter of complaint is addressed to Thomas Wolsey, who rose to great heights of power with multiple titles, as Archbishop of York (title gained in 1514), Lord Chancellor of England (title gained 1515), Cardinal (also from 1515) and papal legate (title gained in 1518). These offices, and the favour of both Henry VII and (to begin with) Henry VIII made him an enormously powerful statesman, described by Nair James (2009: 1) as ‘the most powerful man in England except, possibly, for the king.’ Wolsey fell out of royal favour and lost his government office in 1529, and died in November 1530. This document, which includes all his four titles, was thus produced between around 1518 and 1529.

This letter is from Phelypp Skydamore and his wife Johane. It outlines a plot whereby Johane, who is heir to the newly deceased James Skydamore, together with her sister Elinor, is being cheated out of her inheritance. The people attempting to do this are named as the brothers Thomas and James Baskarvyle, the latter of whom is the legal guardian of Elinor. The Baskarvyles have got hold of documents which they intend to use to exclude Johane from her inheritance to the benefit of Elinor, whose marriage they will then arrange according to their wishes, presumably in order to control all or part of the inheritance themselves.

Phelypp and Johane are petitioning Wolsey to have the Baskarvyles summoned to the Court of Chancery, as they themselves are blocked from taking legal action.

The following people are mentioned in the letter:

Philip and Johane Skydamore – the complainants; Johane is the daughter and one of the two heirs of James Skydamore
James Skydamore – the father of Johane and Elinor, newly deceased
Elinor – daughter and one of the two heirs of James Skydamore; under custody of James Baskarvyld
David ap Guyllyam Morgan, John Skydamore and *others* – enfeoffed by James Skydamore in the lands here concerned, for the use of James and his heirs
Thomas Baskarvyle – in possession of legal papers concerning the lands
James Baskarvyld – brother of Thomas and the custodian of Elinor
Dame Elizabeth – wife of Thomas, former wife of Richard Delabere

Both families involved – the Skydamores and the Baskarvyles – were based in Herefordshire, which is also where the lands concerned lay; it may also be noted that Richard Delabere, mentioned in passing in the document, was a powerful Herefordshire official. The document thus has a very strongly local concern. It may be noted that Thomas and James' family name has two different spellings in the manuscript i.e. *Baskarvyle* and *Baskarvyld*, showing that names were no different from the rest of the vocabulary with regard to spelling variation.

The document gives a first impression of a neatly penned and well-preserved letter. The text is written in brown ink on a 44 x 29 cm sheet of parchment. The 26-line text occupies almost the whole space and forms a 42 x 24 cm block. In addition to that, the two-line salutation on top fills a 1,5 x 20 cm. space. There is a 2 cm left margin and a 4 cm bottom margin, while on the right hand side the writing continues to the end of the sheet, with quite crowded last words on some of the lines. On four locations (lines 10 and 11, and twice in line 23) there are rubbed-out words replaced with fillers, three of which precede a proper name of a person. There is nothing on the dorse.

There are some indications that this document might be a draft. There are numerous corrections and rubbed-out names, and the text does not seem to include any proper concluding formulae. As there are no visible signatures nor seals, the present copy has not been sent as a letter. Moreover, there is also the absence of the convention of showing

reverence to the addressee by allowing a generous amount of free space around the writing. The draft may have been kept as a copy for practical reasons and ended up in the archive.

The handwriting of this document is a very clear example of the Secretary script. The hand shows the typical Secretary script characteristic of contrasting thick and thin strokes.[4] It mostly shows single-compartment **a,** although word initial **a**'s are almost consistently double-compartment. Other features of the hand that agree with Secretary are the three-stroked **w**'s, which is easily recognisable for modern readers; the **g** that is closed in the head with a distinct line coupled with an open tail curled to the left; and the sole letter **x** in the word "vex", written in a single stroke. This hand also has features of Anglicana: many of the final **s**'s are sigma-shaped, there are tall **s**'s which can cause confusion between **s** and **f**, but is generally solved by the context, and there are both pointed and round **e** varieties (Roberts 2015: 161).

Episodes and speech acts

The episodic character of this narrative is not difficult to trace. The letter starts with a general overview and then moves to several layers of incidences as well as new orientations/settings which are easily identifiable. To a certain degree, they are also interlaced with subjective comments and repetitive phrases which may be considered features of orality and emotivity.

To the most Reuerend Father in god Thomas Archebysshoppe of yorke lord Cardynall legate of the See appostolyke and Chaunceler of Englond	salutation *A: greeting/stating*

This very formal salutation signals the utmost care that is considered in the formulation of the greeting part. All three titles of the addressee are stated. The salutation is a polite speech act that exhibits the writer's awareness of the status of the addressee; at the same time, however, it is a standard greeting. In contrast to D4074, which contained adjectives aimed to preserve the addressee's positive face (right, good), this salutation is plain and official, despite its detail. According to the Church of England website, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey was rather uninvolved with his official functions and despite being the Archbishop of York for a long

[4] See pages 241, 245, 248 of Jane Roberts (2015) *Guide to Scripts used in English writings up to the 1500s* for specific examples and comparisons of the letter forms, and the whole of chapter VIII for a thorough description.

time, he never actually visited York.[5] One might wonder whether the strict formality of the salutation might reflect an assumption that the letter might not be read by the addressee himself but would be dealt with by others. He is, however, a person of great influence closely connected to the king, and this might be the simple reason for both the letter itself and the rigid formality.

In most Humble wyse shewyth and compleynyth vnto yo*ur* grace yo*ur* dayly orato*ur*s phelypp Skydamore and Johane hys wyffe one of the dowghters & heiers of Jamys ~~~ Skydamore dysceassyd	orientation/abstract *D: petitioning/ complaining*

The petitioning starts in a formulaic manner making use of the verbs *shewyth* 'show' and *compleynyth* 'complain' which are clear indications of the purpose of the letter which is to present a complaint. The letter starts with the words *in most humble wyse* 'in most humble manner' where the writer displays a deferential attitude taking into consideration the power inequality at play. This polite act is further strengthened by the expressions *your grace* and *your dayly oratours* 'your grace' and 'your loyal petitioners' identifying the persons involved as well as showing deference. Additionally, the topic of the complaint, which is about a threatened inheritance is also established here through the mention of Johane being an heir of *Jamys Skydamore dysceassyd* 'the deceased James Skydamore'.

That where the said Jamys Skydamore was seassyd of and in the Castell & man*er*s of bradwarden radmore & Grove w^{t} th app*er*ten*a*nc*es* & of dyu*er*se lond*es* & te*ntes* rent*es* & *ser*uyces in bradwarden in the Countie of herford in his demeane as of Fee	macro orientation *A: stating*
and he **so** therof beyng seassyd thereof Infeoffyd dauyd ap guyllyam Morgan john skydamore Esqyers & other to haue to them and ther heiers to the vse & behoffe of the said jamys & th eiers of his body lawfully begottyn	orientation with comment *A: informing*
by force whereof the said davyd and his other cofeoffes was of the said Castell man*er*s lond*es* & te*ntes* Seassyd in ther demeane as of Fee to the vse & behoffe off the said jamys and th eiers of his bodye lawfully begottyn	result with comment *A: reporting*

[5] www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Cardinal-Wolsey , www.archbishopofyork.org/archbishop-york/precious-archbishops-york

In the following part, the background to the inheritance is presented and the lands and rights involved are described (macro orientation). First, it is stated that 'the deceased person, James Skydamore, was seized of the castle and manors of Bradwardine, Radmore and Grove, with all their annexes and income.' It is then explained that he had enfeoffed a group of people, including David ap Guyllyam Morgan and John Skydamore, of these properties for the use and benefit of James himself and his legal heirs. This statement is given in two ways: first in active form (he...enfeoffed) and then repeated as a result, from the point of view of the feoffees, but only mentioning David by name while the other names are referred to as 'his other cofeoffees.' In both statements detailing the arrangement, the central *eiers of his bodye lawfully begottyn* 'heirs legally begotten of his body' is repeated. The use of repetition, very prevalent in this letter, is a common characteristic of orality, but also of legal language.

and aft*er* that the said jamys dyed	incidence *A: informing*
aft*er* whos deth the ryght vse & jnt*er*est of the said man*er*s & other the p*re*mysses dyscendyd and came & of ryght owghte to dyscende and come vnto the said johan*n*e and Elyno*ur* her syster as doughters & heiers of the bodye of the said jamys lawfully begottyn	delayed orientation or comment to incidence *A: stating*
by force wherof the said dauyd and his other cofeoffes was / & yett bene of the said man*er*s & other the p*re*misses seassyd in ther demeane as off Fee to the vse & behoffe of the sayd Johane & Elyno*ur* and the eiers of ther bodyes lawfully begottyn	result/prevailing setting *A: stating*

The next part of the letter deals with the death of James Skydamore and its legal consequences. After a short mention of the death (incidence), the letter proceeds by stating the expected legal results: 'the right, use and interest of the said manors and other estates descended and came, and by right ought to descend and come, to the said Johanne, and Elinor her sister, as daughters and legal heirs.' This statement is first stated from the point of view of the Skydamores and is, again, being immediately repeated (prevailing setting), this time from the feoffees' point of view: 'David and his other cofeoffees continue to hold the castle, manors, lands and tenements, but now for the use and benefit of the said James and his heirs, legally begotten of his body.' The letter has now given the background narrative of the state of affairs.

and so it is gracious lord that Certen Evydenc*es* escrypt*es* & munyments cons*er*nyng the p*re*mysses ar com*m*yn to the hand*es* & possessyon of ~~~~~~~~~ Thomas Baskarvyle & Dame ~~~ Elyzabeth his wyffe late wyffe of Syr Rychard delabere Knyghte	orientation of the present situation *A: reporting*

What follows brings the narrative to its current state (orientation of the present situation). This part starts with the discourse marker *and so* followed by a direct address to the addressee *gracious lord*. Both features are indications of orality, and the use of the direct address here presumably also serves as a reminder that the text is to be read as a letter, asking for a reaction, rather than simply as a report or record of events. The sender reports that certain people, Thomas Baskarvyle and his wife Elizabeth, are in possession of legal papers related to the described property. The vague phrase *commyn to the hands* 'coming to the hands' suggests routes that are not necessarily legal and can be interpreted as an evaluative comment hinting at the deceitfulness of the Baskarvyles. The mention of Sir Richard Delabere (d. 1514), the former husband of Elizabeth who had been a prominent person in Herefordshire, presumably simply serves as additional identity.

and so it is that the said Elyno*ur* is in the gou*ern*ance of ~~~ Jamys Baskarvyle esquyer broder of the said Thomas	setting *A: informing*
w^{t} ∧ ^{the} whyche Jamys & Thomas the said Elyno*ur* vpon p*ro*myse by her made to them that she shuld not sew nor medle for the havyng of the said Evydenc*es* and vpon her p*ro*myse Also made vnto the said Jamys and Thomas to be maryed at ther appoyntment and vpon her bonde oblygatory made to them	details on the setting *A: reporting*
for the same the said jamys and thomas haue *pro*mysyd her that they by meanes & colo*ur* of the hauyng og the said Evydenc*es* shall & wyll Convey estat*es* off the said Man*er*s & other the p*re*mysses or great p*ar*te of them vnto the said Elyno*ur* or to other to her vse	related detail to the previous detail *A: reporting*
and Convey & put he said joha*n*ne frome the same	more detail *A: reporting*
ayest all Ryght & good concyence	evaluative comment *A: commenting*

The narrative now moves to provide a connection that makes clear the reason for the complaint: Elinor, one of the heirs and sister of Johane, is under the custody of James Baskarvyle; in addition, she is being compelled to obey them, by having signed a bond where

she promises to refrain from any action, and to be married after their wishes (details on the setting). The following statement notes that, in return, the Baskarvyles will use the documents to make sure that Elinor receives all or most of the inheritance (related detail to the previous detail) while Johane is excluded from the inheritance (more detail). This factual statement is followed by an evaluative comment, *ayest all Ryght & good concyence* 'against all right and good conscience' evoking the principle of fairness.

and ther vpon the said Elyno*ur* hath made *pro*myse & also bounde her-selffe to them not to sew vex or troble them for the same evydence*es*	result 1 *A: reporting*
& that she shall doo in All thyng*es* as they wyll devyse to cause them to reteigne & keppe styll the said Evydence*es*	result 2 *A: reporting*

Again, there is a repetition, reiterating most of the last points, now from Elinor's point of view. Her promises, made legal in a bond, are summarized in two parts, a negative and positive one: 'not to sue, disturb nor trouble them regarding the evidence' (result 1) and 'act in all matters as they will tell her, in order to allow them to retain and keep in their possession the said evidences' (result 2). The use of repetition, with a change of point of view and a slightly different formulation, is a very effective way of ensuring clarity, and it may also be argued that it creates a dramatic effect.

The narrative part of this text is largely completed here. The narrative in the letter may be said to consist of three parts, each part stating specific main points: 1) James Skydamore was seized of lands which he enfeoffed to a group of men for his own use; 2) after the death of Skydamore, the use and benefits of these lands would be inherited by his legal heirs, Johane and Elinor; and 3) Elinor signed a bond and will not help her sister Johane claim her part of their father's inheritance, which is being threatened by the Baskarvyles. The bond would hinder her from acting even if she wished to, as it may involve huge sanction towards her as the breaching party. All three sequences of the letter use the same technique of repetition, paraphrasing the same information and shifting the point of view.

and so by colyn betwen the said Elyno*ur* Jamys & Thom*a*s Baskarvyld the said joha*n*ne is lykly to be dysherytyd for lake of the said Euydenc*es*	evaluation/ expected result *A: hypothesising*

for-as-moche as they by meanes of the said Evydence*es* Jntende vntrewly to co*n*vey estat*es* of the p*re*misses to the further*a*unce of ther forsaid p*er*tensyd p*ur*pos to the dysheryson of the said johane	delayed orientation/ free speech *A: reinstating assumption*
And for the whyche Evydence*es* yo*ur* said orators haue no remedy by the Course of the coen law	delayed orientation/ comment on previous part *A: stating*
for as-moche as they Can not have eny Accon for the said Evydence*es* But Joyntly w^{t} the said Elyno*ur* whyche Ayenst her forsaid bonde & *pro*myse wyl not joyne in accon w^{t} yo*ur* said orato*ur*s Ayenst the said jamys & Thomas	delayed orientation/more comment *A: stating*
and for that also that yo*ur* said orato*ur*s know not the Certentie of the said Evydence*es* nor wherin they be Jnclosyd so that they may haue eny accon therfor by the Course of the *com*en lawe	delayed orientation/ expression of uncertainty *A: informing*

The next part of the letter starts with an overall evaluation of the situation described, stating that, due to the fact that the 'evidences', or legal papers, are not in the proper hands, Johane will most probably lose her share of the inheritance. This reflects the power of the physical possession of written scripts, suggesting that their possession may be more important than their content. One must have access to the written title of the property that the family owns. Written documents in medieval England functioned as a living authority and necessary proof, although they could also be forged (Clanchy 2013: 195).

The following statements explain why the complainants are in a difficult situation. Due to Elinor's signing of the bond which bound her to silence, Johane and her husband cannot proceed to any legal action to claim her legal rights. The letter has mostly been keeping an objective tone, clearly describing the situation and the consequences thereof. There are, however, two evaluative comments in this part, in the form of an adverb and adjective that describe the Baskarvyles' plans as morally condemnable: that point to the deceitful act of the persons being complained *Jntende **vntrewly** to convey estates of the premisses to the furtheraunce of ther forsaid **pertensyd** purpos* 'intend to **unrightfully** convey the estates of the premisses to advance their **false** purpose.'

The reason for the complaint is thereafter explained: according to the complainants, they are unable to pursue the case through common law because of the bond and promise made by Elinor:

> *for as-moche as they Can not have eny Accon~ for the said Evydencees But Joyntly w^{t} the said Elynour whyche Ayenst her forsaid bonde & promyse wyl not joyne and in accon~ w^{t} your said oratours Ayenst the said jamys & Thomas*
>
> 'since they cannot make any lawsuit for the said evidences except together with the said Elinor, who, because of the aforementioned bond and promise, will not join to sue with your said petitioners against the said James and Thomas.'

In addition, the complainants add that they are hindered from legal action as they have no certainty as to the contents or whereabouts of the said papers (last delayed orientation above): 'Also, your petitioners have no proof of the said evidences nor where they are enclosed so that they could go to legal action through the common law.' The expression of this uncertainty strengthens their reason for writing this letter of complaint, leading to the request that action should be taken at a higher level.

Jt may therfor please yo*ur* grace the ~~~ the p*re*mysses consyderyd to graunte te kyng*es* wryttes of subpena to be derectyd vn-to the said james Baskarvyle Thomas Baskarvyld & Elyȝabeth his wyffe comaundyng them & eu*er*ly of them by the same to Appere affor the kyng in his chauncery at a certen day & vnder a certen payne by yo*ur* grace to be ~~~ lymyttyd ther to make Aunwsr or to be ordryd in the p*re*misses as may stond w^{t} Ryght & good Concyence	resolution *D: petitioning*
and yo*ur* said orato*ur*s shall dayly pray to god for the good & long p*reser*uacon of yo*ur* grace long to Jnduer	conclusion/health formula *A: stating*

In the final part of the letter, the actual petition is formulated, in a polite but clear manner. The request itself is formed as a statement, '**it may** therefore please your grace' instead of using the subjunctive to make a more explicit request, as in '**may it** therefore please your grace.' On the one hand, it may be argued that the formulation used mitigates the face-threatening act by leaving the decision to act entirely to the addressee. On the other hand, it might have the opposite effect, raising the face-threatening degree of this directive speech act, as it can be interpreted as 'it should be done as this is the only logical course of action.'

The latter meaning is later reinforced with the words *may stond w^{t} Ryght & good Concyence* 'as it is in accordance with right and with good conscience.'

The request itself is very clearly specified, leaving no room for doubt as to what the petitioners ask for. That is 'to cause the King's writs of subpoena to be addressed to the said James Baskarvyle, Thomas Baskarvyld, and his wife Elizabeth, commanding each of them, by the same writ, to appear before the King in his Chancery at a certain day under a certain penalty', with further instructions that they should be detained in order to be interrogated. Lastly, the concluding health formula which is usually not seen as a part of the narrative proper, is a formulaic statement that adheres to the politeness decorum of letter-writing in medieval England. These very precise instructions may be related to Wolsey's notoriety of being unconcerned of his official obligations, and the complainants perhaps expected intermediaries to handle the case. On the other hand, similar precise instructions are also given in D2578, although not in the third letter here studied, D4074.

No clear indication is given as to why Phelypp and Johane Skydamore are addressing the complaint specifically to Cardinal Wolsey; at the beginning of the letter, they style themselves as 'his daily orators' but this may not be intended literally. Unlike the other letters here studied, there is no mention of 'good mastership' that would point to a particular relationship, and Wolsey does not seem to have had any connection to Herefordshire. Presumably the choice of addressee simply reflects Wolsey's great influence at the time, having by 1514 become, as Wikipedia expresses it, 'the controlling figure in virtually all matters of state.'

5. Discussion

This section aims to present a general overview of the characteristics of the letters in this study and answer the questions that were posed at the beginning of the thesis:

- To what extent do we find orality and personal voices in the letters?
- To what extent are the letters conventional, and how far do they represent individual compositions?
- To what extent do their characteristics help us to further define the distinctions between different types of late medieval letter, in particular that between petition and complaint?

The characteristics and genre features of the letters are first discussed in detail in 5.1. Drawing on this discussion, each of the questions are then addressed in turn.

5.1 The characteristics of the letters studied

The function of the letters is to articulate and assert the grievances and injustices that the complainant(s) have suffered or expect to suffer if no action is taken. Their ultimate purpose is to elicit such action by convincing the addressee of the justness of their case. Because of this shared function and goal, the three letters share many common characteristics, but they also display that the writers make some very different choices.

All three letters show the same layout. The writing forms a large block with narrow margins, and has a two-line heading centred above the text block. None of the texts show indications of having been sent as a letter, such as signatures or seals. This may be contrasted with Anderson's (2021) study of nineteen petitions and requests in MELD, dealing with shorter letters that focussed on asking favours rather than detailing complaints. While Anderson did not describe the physical documents, a study of the images kept in the MELD archive shows that they all contain seals and/or signatures. The physical form and uniformity of the present texts may suggest that they were produced by professional clerks, either as drafts or copies. The fact that all three of the documents survive in local archives in their areas of origin might suggest that the documents were copies produced either for the complainants themselves or for the accused, or their lawyers.

The letters may very broadly be said to consist of three parts: an opening consisting of partly formulaic elements, a narrative, and a closing part which includes both the request, or petition and a health formula. This corresponds to the tripartite division propagated by French correspondence manuals (Nevalainen 2001: 214; see p.15). In all three letters, the narrative forms by far the largest part of the letter, the others being relatively short. Because of their functions, the texts largely contain two kinds of speech acts: assertives and directives. By far most speech acts identified here are assertives, reflecting the dominance of the narrative that details the complaint. Most of the assertives may be further classified as either stating, informing or reporting (see 3.1.2).

The centred headings, which are the only part that stands out as physically marked, consist of formal salutations expressing social deference as well as attending to the addressees' positive face:

> D2578 'To the very distinguished Sir Richard Empson, knight, Chancellor of the King's Duchy of Lancaster'
>
> D4074 'To the right, honorable and his eminent and greatly distinguished good master Sir Thomas Lowell, knight'
>
> D0699 'To the most reverend father in God, Thomas, archbishop of York, Lord Cardinal Legate of the Apostolic See and Chancellor of England'

Of the three salutations, D4074 stands out as the most personal. In contrast to D2578 and D0699, it does not include formal titles. Additionally, it contains the word 'master' which can be an indication of an actual connection between the complainant and the addressee.

In all three letters, the complainants refer to themselves, with their full names, in the third person as they formally express their petitions, or the purpose of the letter, right after the salutation part:

> D2578 Humbly and peteusly co*m*pleyneth vnto your gud mast*er*shype Rob*ert* Blundell of yns blundell in y^{e} counte of lanc
> D4074 Thes ben... Jniures & wrong*es* done vnto yo*ur* po*ur* s*eru*ant & daily bedman' Thomas hall / by Syr John Saym*er*' knyght
> D0699 In most Humble wyse shewyth and compleynyth vnto yo*ur* grace yo*ur* dayly orato*ur*s phelypp Skydamore and Johane hys wyffe

It may be noted that the introductory clauses of the letters differ. D2578 and D0699 starts in a petition-like manner with the conventional *humbly/humble* and c*ompleyneth*. D4075, on the other hand, goes straight to the point of informing the reader what this letter will contain.

By providing the full names of the complainants, this highly relevant information is immediately revealed to the addressee, making the context of the following narrative clear. The third person reference is maintained throughout the letters, maintaining the formal stance of the sender (Palander-Collin and Nevala 2011, see p.75). It may also be noted that all three letters mention the full names of people who, to a lesser or greater degree, are related to the case; when appropriate, they provide extra identification, as in identifying Elizabeth, wife of Thomas Baskarvyle, in D0699 also by reference to her former husband. As these are complaint letters, the purpose of this measure may be to establish the integrity of the case, as the persons mentioned can be interrogated, the story investigated, and the facts validated.

The opening part is immediately followed by the start of the narrative. All three narratives begin from past events, which are generally related in chronological order, the last events bringing the story up to the present situation. In D2578, Robert Blundell describes his repeated attempts to be heard by a court, the last of which is still ongoing, but to no avail. In D4074, a stolen ox has not been delivered back but is being kept by John Seymour. Finally, in D0699, the possession of legal the documents by Thomas Baskarvyle and his wife is posing an ongoing threat to the complainants.

All three letters start in an objective tone, and maintain it to varying degrees through the narrative part. However, in all letters, evaluative comments are interlaced in the seemingly objective narration of events. The sentences in D4074 are largely informative and reportative, however the letter shows several instances of evaluative comments: ‘against order, law and conscience’, ‘to the extreme ruin of the said petitioner’ and ‘to his (the petitioner’s) utter confusion and excessive damage.’

D4074, being the most emotive of the three letters, abounds in evaluative adjectives such as ‘piteously’ and ‘utterly’, as well as many subjective and evaluative comments: ‘with his great might and extortionate power, bearing extreme malice’, ‘intending utterly to destroy’, ‘without any lawful cause or any grounds in reason nor conscience’ and ‘intending, as it seems, to [have murdered him, if he had] been present.’

D0699, in contrast, exhibits the most objective tone with minimal emotionality, only describing the incidences and consequences in a straightforward manner. Nevertheless, four

evaluative comments are found in the letter: the phrase ‘coming to the hands’ (p.63) hinting at illegal possession, ‘against all right and good conscience’ (p.64) calling forth the principle of fairness, and ‘intend to **unrightfully** convey … to advance their **false** purpose’ (p.65) describing the Baskarvyles’ actions.

As noted above, all three letters consist for the most part of narratives. In Chapter 4, the letters were analysed using Fludernik’s episodic narrative structure, which worked very well as a model of analysis for these texts. There is no doubt that the narratives in all three texts fulfil the criterion of experientiality which Fludernik considers necessary for a text to be considered a narrative (Fludernik 2004: 130; see p. 35-36). Firstly, they are situated at a specific time and space, with dates given and recognisable personas being very specifically named. Secondly, there is a very clear presence of protagonists and antagonists in the narratives. Thirdly, even if the tellers are referred to in the third person, the stories are clearly told through their viewpoint and contain evaluative elements. Finally, there is clearly a narrative-like exposition of the episodes in the stories, they have news value, and there is, to a lesser or greater degree, a dramatic unfolding of the events.

All the stories are complex, and a common feature of them is the ample amount of discourse markers. The analysis of discourse markers is one of the concerns of historical pragmatics (Jucker 2008; see p. 27). Discourse markers regulate the process of communication and serve to mark signal points of the (oral) episodic narrative structure; when used to build up long narratives by linking individual parts, they indicate an oral quality of the text, as the same features are typical of conversational storytelling (Fludernik 2000). This use of discourse markers in the texts, and their oral qualities, will be further discussed in 5.2.

There is no doubt that the narratives are carefully structured and planned in order to carry out efficiently the purpose of the letters. The letters detail settings, incidences and results that contribute to the understanding and clarification of the aim of the letter. Perhaps the most striking structure is that of D0699, which immediately repeats each of the three main parts of the narrative from a slightly different viewpoint. All the narratives start with explaining the background and build on it to establish their cases, eventually bringing the narrative into the relevant present.

The final part of the texts consists of the petition or request itself, as well as a conventional closing formula. This is where the letters differ in important ways. Two of

them, D2578 and D0699, express a very direct suggestion to the course of action, which may be seen as considerable face-threatening acts. In D2578, two alternative suggestions for action are given: 'to call the said parties before your presence in order to examine their titles as well as their interests on the matter' or 'make them submit to the law within the said county, according to justice and good conscience.' The directive is here expressed as a wish: 'for remedy of which…..may it please your good mastership.'

D0699 is similarly blatantly clear about what is being asked: 'to cause the King's writs of subpoena to be addressed to the said James Baskarvyle, Thomas Baskarvyld, and his wife Elizabeth, commanding each of them, by the same writ, to appear before the King in his Chancery at a certain day under a certain penalty… to be detained there in order to answer or to be ordered in these matters.' Here the directive is however expressed in a statement form 'it may…please your grace' instead of the subjunctive form 'may it'; it was suggested that this could be interpreted in two ways: either as a face-mitigating strategy or a face-threatening act (p. 66).

Finally, D4074 does not indicate any specific actions to be taken, but leaves the specific countermeasure entirely to the prerogative of the addressee, simply stating that the situation is one that *he sall not be able to bere nor neuer haue remedy with-owte the comfort of your' good mastershipp to hym nowe be shewyd* 'he will not be able to bear, nor ever have any remedy unless the help and assistance of your good mastership may now be shown.' Apart from avoiding a direct FTA against the addressee's negative face, this also sets D4074 apart from the other two texts, making the petition a much less visible part of it.

The letters end with very brief conventional formulas:

D2578 & ye seid orat*ur* shal dayle p*ray* to god for yo*ur pro*speriens & *conser*uacon*e*

D4074 for the loue of god And in the way of charyte

D0699 and yo*ur* said orato*ur*s shall dayly pray to god for the good & long p*reser*uacon' of yo*ur* grace long to Jnduer

Again, D4074 stands out. Both D2578 and D0699 conclude with a health formula, including the formulaic statement that 'your said petitioner(s) shall pray to God daily for your (prosperity and long life)', with only the formulation of the last part showing variation. In

contrast, D4074 simply ends with a very general pleading, ‘for the love of God and in the way of charity.’ This further suggests that D4074 is a different type of text, following slightly different conventions from those used in the other two.

These initial and concluding parts of the letters adhere to letter writing conventions propagated by *ars dictaminis.* They are also in accord with the expected social behaviour at the time of writing displaying courteous social distance (Held 2010, Häcker 2011, Nevalainen 2007, Nevalainen 2001, Wood 2007; see 2.2.1). However, it seems that the three letters in this study follow two somewhat different models, as D4074 differs from the other two texts both in its opening and closing formulas.

5.2 Orality and personal voices in the letters

The abundance of the use of discourse markers is one indication of orality in these letters. It is a linguistic feature that serves to mark signal points of the (oral) episodic narrative structure (Fludernik 2007: 233). It was noted above that all three letters use the tripartite schema common in the sixteenth century proliferated by French letter manuals (Nevalainen 2001: 214; see p.15), they make use of appropriate opening and closing formulae, and there are clear attempts to maintain the written formality of the text. For example, D0699 uses twice the formal, written-style adverb *by force whereof* ‘accordingly’ to introduce new episodic parts, as well as, the phrase *for as-moche as* ‘for as much as’, used also twice. However, by far, most of the episodic parts in this letter are introduced with the discourse marker ‘and’, which appears eleven times; this is also the most common discourse marker in the other letters.

Table 3 shows the number of episodic parts and the use of discourse markers to link them. The salutations and conclusions have been included in the count of episodic parts, even though they are, strictly speaking, not a part of the narrative.

Letter	**Number of episodic parts**	**Discourse markers**
D2578	20	*and* 5 *wych to* 1 *for so much as* 1 *or elȝ* 1
D4074	31	*and* 12 *also* 2 v*nles* 1 *thene* 1 *wherby* 1 *fyrste* 1
D0699	23	*and* 11 w*ith the whyche* 1 *for as-moche as* 2

Table 3. Number of parts in the episodic parts and the discourse markers.

This use of discourse markers, with the conjunction 'and' as the most commonly used, would seem to mark a high degree of orality. Formal writings in late medieval and early modern England aimed towards a hypotactic structure as they usually were Latinate (Fludernik 2007: 263; see p.37). These letters, however, display much parataxis using coordinating conjunctions to connect both clauses and narrative episodes.

As already noted in 5.1 above, the considerable number of evaluative expressions is also an indication of orality, as well as of personal voices. They enhance the emotiveness of the 'most tellable' sections (Fludernik 2004: 130; see p.35-36) and (intentionally or unintentionally) provide an indication of the writer's personality, which is considered untypical of this letter type (Fludernik 2007: 242; see p.37). Even if the letter is produced by a clerk, the narrative that forms the major part of it has been told by the complainant, and the use of the vernacular makes a relatively close reproduction of the narrative possible and perhaps even likely (Smith and Killick 2018: 6-7; see p.17). The narratives may, accordingly, be assumed to include an element of genuinely emotional statements, even if the final text had to be, on the whole, objective and factual enough to serve as a basis for legal action. On the whole, it may be concluded that orality and personal voices are present in all three letters

to a considerable degree, displayed in the abundant use of discourse markers, paratactic constructions, evaluative and subjective comments, and even explicit expressions of the writer's own thoughts.

5.3 Conventionality and individual composition

The letters exhibit characteristics typical of medieval letters of petition and complaint. They display skilful rhetoric, detailing incidents and events, providing systematic detail about the injuries acquired as well as the personal deficits incurred. The letters keep a formal linguistic tone and refer to the writing through the third person nominal/pronominal form which is primary in order to achieve recognition with minimal expressive means (Palander-Collin and Nevala 2011: 105; see discussion in 5.1).

To a large extent, the letters adhere to formulaic expressions and conventionalised rhetoric as guided by the tradition of *ars dictaminis.* The salutations are in standard formulaic language, addressing the positive face of the addressee as well exhibiting a good deal of social sensitivity. The concluding parts of the letters are also plainly formulaic, even if they seem to belong to two different conventions, D4074 differing from the two others. Even though the styles are varied, clearly the salutations and the end health formulas show that the letters comply to letter-writing conventions and social decorum of the period. At the same time, there are clearly choices made: the salutation of D4074 leaves out the official titles of the addressee, rather choosing to address him more personally as 'master.'

The narrative parts also contain formulaic phrases. However, here they are simply used as required for describing the legal matters concerned, as when referring to 'the heirs of his body lawfully begotten' (D0699). Such formulaic phrases are required by the story rather than the complaint genre itself, and as all the stories are different, their use may be seen as unpredictable.

The letters are to a great degree business-like in the sense that they seek to clearly and briefly report events that have occurred in relation to the case, and that they also present information, offer proofs, or name names that may suggest further inquiry and investigation of the addressed authority. Nevertheless, they are also idiosyncratic: while the structure of D0699 is based on repetitive retellings of each incidence, the narrative in D4074 contains constant emotive references commenting on the story. It was suggested in 5.3. that all three

letters, to a certain degree may be assumed to reflect the personal voice of the complainant. This is, of course, not the same as to suggest that the structure of the narratives, or the wording in general, represent a composition by the complaints themselves; to what extent they took part in it cannot be known. However, all three narratives are very clearly written in different ways, making their own choices and blending formality and informality. Apart from the formulae chosen for their openings and closings, they clearly seem to be unique individual compositions.

5.4 Defining letter categories: petition vs complaint

As discussed above, the three letters have much in common. They all address a person of superior social status and present a list of complaints followed by a more or less direct request for help. All three letters were chosen from the MELD archive as examples of what MELD defines as 'letters of complaint', distinguishing them from 'petitions' on the basis of the emphasis on a long narrative or list of complaints, rather than on the petition itself. As Stenroos (2014: 359) suggests, letters of complaints typically leave the amending solution implied and not directly stated.

It is clear from the present study that both D2578 and D0699 include explicit suggestions for the course of action, and might thus be closer to the 'petition' category. Interestingly, they also show other differences which make them different from D4074. As shown in 5.1., they make use of different salutations and end health formulae, suggesting that they may have been felt to belong to a different letter genre. In particular the salutations seem to be more formal in style, and the narratives seem to show emotionality in comparison to D4074.

In other words, D4074 stands out as the one with distinctive traits. This letter focuses more on the complaint itself, diving into it from the very beginning: *Thes ben Jniures & wronges done vnto your pour seruant* 'these are the damages and wrongs done to your poor servant.' However, it does not, in the end, formulate the actions needed to remedy the injustices. As suggested in 5.1 above (p. 58 and 72), the petitioning style is less apparent in this letter and it clearly has a greater intent to lay out the complaints themselves and leave the decisive action to the authority. Following the MELD distinction, it would therefore seem

most sensible to classify D4074 as a letter of complaint, while D2578 and D0699 might be classified as petitions.

To answer the final question: To what extent do their characteristics help us to further define the distinctions between different types of late medieval letter, in particular that between petition and complaint? As noted earlier, MELD considers petitions as letters that focus on the actual request and often explicitly suggest the course of remedying actions, while letters of complaints focus on the complaints themselves and are more indirect about the request. The present three letters clearly illustrate these differences, which also seem to correlate with different formal characteristics (the choice of formulae). It therefore seems that the MELD definition may well serve as a starting point to a further exploration of this particular question.

It should be pointed out that the limited scope and material of the study only allows for a suggestive conclusion. It is suggested that more work is needed to study the criteria that differentiate petitions from complaints, as suggested in MELD. It would be useful to analyse many more manuscripts of this type, that can help shed light to the question of their typical characteristics. Applying the same methodology to other types of correspondences in the MELD corpus and elsewhere may result in further interesting results. In particular, such studies might focus on the defining characteristics of the four subcategories of 'correspondence' in MELD, as well as relating the linguistic styles of the letters to their historical context.

PART II: THE EDITION

Editing conventions

The edition presented here is a diplomatic edition of three letters of complaint, written in English, from the early sixteenth century. It is based on the transcription conventions of *Corpus of Middle English Local Documents* (MELD) and intends to provide a close representation of the original texts as they appear in the manuscript, suitable for linguistic study. The edition retains manuscript spelling, capitalisation, line and word division, superscript and punctuation. The main modification to the text is that abbreviation marks are represented by letter combinations in italics. Images of the actual abbreviations used in the text are provided in Appendix 1, and the edition is accompanied by translations to Present-Day English (Appendix 2).

The MELD transcription conventions distinguish 31 different letters and take into account the sub-graphemic distinctions between <i/j> and <u/v>. Other letter variants like double compartment <a>, different realisations of <r> or <w> are not distinguished.

The dental fricatives are mainly spelt <th>. However, in D 2578, the letter <y> represents the initial voiced dental fricative (i.e. /ð/) in the words 'the' and 'them.' The article 'the' is realised as both y^{e} and y^{ei} sporadically in the whole text. The letter *y* also represents the vowel in words such as *his, it* and *is,* although not consistently.

In all three texts, the phonemes /u/ and /v/ are represented by both <v> and <v>, where <v> is consistently used in initial positions and <u> in most commonly used in middle and final positions; exceptions where <v> is used medially are rare. The following examples are from D 2578.

> ***v* in initial positions:** *vnto* 'unto' (lines 1, 7, 17), *vndoyng* 'undoing' (line 12), *vttur* 'utter' (line 17)
> ***u* in middle and final positions:** *haue* 'have' (lines 2 and 12), diu*er*ȝ/diuers 'diverse' (line 4/6), *euidens* 'evidence' (line 8) *priue* 'privy', *diuyde* 'divide' (line 14), *seuere* 'severe' (line 14), *exccesseu* 'exccessive' (line 17), *conseruacone* 'conservation' (line 22)
> ***v* in middle positions:** *evidens* 'evidence', *resceyved* 'received' (line 17)

Similarly, <j> is used both for the consonant and the vowel. In both D4074 and D2578, a capitalized form of <j> *J* represents the first-person singular pronoun *I* (e.g. D2578, line 7), and it is also used in initial positions of words usually spelt with <i> as the initial letter, e.g. *Jnterest* 'interest' (D2578, line 20), *Jnclosyd* 'enclosed' (D0699, line 22), *Jt* 'it' (D0699, line 23), *Jnduer* 'endure' (D0699, line 26) and *Jntende* 'intend' (D0699, line 18).

The minuscule form of <j> is also employed as the final minim in number sequences both in D4074 and D 2578:

> **D 4074**: *iij yeres* 'three years' (line 9), *iiij of his* 'four of hys' (line 16), *iiij spones* 'four spoons' (line 19), *iiij marc* 'four marks' (line 20), *vj li xiij*^{s} *iiij*^{d} 'six pounds, thirteen shillings and four pence' (line 28)
> **D 2578**: *xxj* 'twenty-first' (line 7)

Capitalization is on the whole variable. For example, both forms of <j> are indiscriminately used in the initial letters of two proper nouns mentioned throughout the document D0699, namely, *Johane/johane* 'Joan' and *Jamys/jamys* 'James.' Moreover, the capital *J* is also used to represent the letter *i* in initial positions of these words. The double form *ff* in word-initial positions, regularly used as the capital form of F, is transcribed as capital F (D0699, lines 3 and 5).

Accents over *i* appear occasionally in D2578 and D4074, and have been transcribed as *í.* Superscript letters employed in abbreviations, such as w^{t} and y^{e}, are transcribed as superscripts, while substantial flourishes at the end of letters are represented by a single apostrophe. Abbreviation signs have been transcribed consistently using the system of letter representations used in MELD, itself building on Hector (1966). They are indicated in *italics* in the editions here, and include *-s*, *-es*, *-ur*, *-ar*, *-er*, *-re* and *con-*. The following examples illustrate the practice:

- an upward flourishing stroke curved to the right from a letter's top stroke or last minim = *er* or *re* depending on the context (Hector 3)
- a sign which looks like the letter 'e' with a descending tail curved to the right = *es* (Hector 9)
- a sign that looks like the letter 'ꝛ' or 'ȝ'= *ur* (Hector 4)

These abbreviations may be found in initial, medial and final positions of words. The conjunction ‘and’ appears both in full and abbreviated forms and are transcribed accordingly as *and* or &. For a full overview of the abbreviations that appear in the manuscripts, see Appendix 2.

Crossbars are found in D4074 and D2578 over letters such as *h* and *l,* e.g. *rygħt* ‘right’, calł ‘call’. These may be considered parts of the letter shape and have not been indicated in the present edition.

The punctuation marks *punctus*, *punctus elevatus*, *virgule*, and the *positura* are used in the texts and are transcribed as a period (.), a semi-colon (;), a slash (/), and as triad dots (∴), respectively. The symbol ~ represents the use fillers in the manuscript.

When a word is inserted or added and written above the line through a caret <˄>, the appearance is also preserved, as in: *w*^{t} ˄ ^{the} *whyche* ‘with the which’ (D0699,line 12).

When words that are now considered single units are separated, they are transcribed with a hyphen. There are ten instances of this in D2578: *o-der*, *a-yenst*, *hym-self*, *a-yenst*, *w*^{t}-*stondyng*, *a-void*, *by-twyx*, *be-for*, *w*^{t}-*yn*, and *w*^{t}-*yn* (lines 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15,19 and 21, respectively). Similarly, words that are written as one but in the present-day language is composed of two words, are split and the original form is indicated in footnotes. Examples from D0699 include: *wylnot* (wyl not ‘will not’) and *acerten* (a certen ‘a certain’), lines 21 and 24, respectively.

Wholly or partly illegible words are represented in the transcription by dots contained within brackets and reconstructions are, where possible, given in the footnotes. Rubbed-out words with new writings over them are mentioned in the footnotes. A crossed-out word in the manuscript is reproduced in the transcription, and unexpected written forms suspected to be scribal errors are commented in the footnotes.

The texts

D 2578 Letter of complaint to Sir Richard Empson from Robert Blundell
Preston, Lancashire Archive: DDIN/55/2

To they Ryght' worshypfull *sir* Ryc' Empson'[6] knyght'
chanceler' of y^ei kynge*s* duchie of lancas'[7]

Humbly and peteusly co*m*pleyneth vnto your' gud mast*er*shype
Rob' Blundell of yns blundell[8] in y^e counte of lanc' 1
y^t wher' y^ei seid Rob' blundell & hys aunc' haue be peasably seased
of a great wast grond[9] Jn yns blundell[10] beforeseid 2
in y*er* demenas' of fe tyme out of mynde as pleynly appereth by
hys ded*es* & euidens & ys also well knowen' in y^e seid countre 3
on rob' ballard ayenst and ord*er* of y^e lawe3 & direct *con*sciens hath long'
vexed Sued & troubleid y^ei seid rob' for diue*r*3[11] 4
*par*cels of y^e seid Wast grond befor' y^e dean of y^ei kynge*s* most honorable
chapell & o-d*er* of thei kynge*s* conseill*e* & y*er* opteined 5
a sentens & decre a-yenst y^e seid Rob' blundell y^t he shuld suffur y^e
seid Rob' ballard[12] to possede & enióie diue*r*s *par*cels 6
of y^e seid wast grond vnto y^e fest of candilmas in y^e xxj yere of
kyng' henr' y^e vii^th & y/t y^en J your' seid orat*ur* shuld ~~~ 7
bryng' &[13] sufficient mat*er* shew & hys euídens to defeat and distroie
y^e title of y^e seid Rob' ballard wych decre ín hym-self 8
appereth to be void a-yenst y^e law & Justifficiens for so much[14] as
hys appereth by y^e seid decre y^t y^ei title of y^e seid Rob' ballard 9
y^s Feyned & not sufficient by y^e coen'[15] lawe and y^t not w^t-stondyng y^e

[6] Parchment hole right above the letter 'E.'
[7] This salutation is written at the centre of the document.
[8] *Rob' Blundell of yns blundell* is underlined with a pencil mark having a different and distinct colour from the ink used in the manuscript.
[9] *Wast grond* is underlined with a pencil mark having a different and distinct colour from the ink used in the manuscript.
[10] *yns blu* is underlined with a pencil mark having a different and distinct colour from the ink used in the manuscript.
[11] There is a stain mark touching the first letters of lines 4 and 5 but it does not affect legibility.
[12] *Rob' balla* is underlined with a pencil mark having a different and distinct colour from the ink used in the manuscript.
[13] Parchment hole between *bryng'* and *&*.
[14] MS: so much
[15] A one-word space between *y^e* and *coen'*. Unsure if there was an expuncted word.

seid orat*ur* came at y^e^ seid fest of candilmas to y^e^ seid ~~~ 10
dean & od*er*[16] of y^e^ kyng*es* conseil & y^en^ offered to shew sufficient mat*er*
& euidens to a-void y^e^ title of y^e^ seid Rob' ballard[17] 11
wych to see or heer' y^e^ seid conseill as yitt haue denyed &
refuce to y^e^ ext*re*me vndoyng' of y^e^ seid orat*ur* & 12
also wher' of late your' seid orat*ur* had a p*ri*ue seale to hym directid y^t^
he shuld suffur' on henr' faryngton & georg' 13
bekynshaw esq*ui*ers to díuyde & seu*er*e y^ei^ seid Wast grond by-twyx y^e^
seid Rob' ballard & yo*ur* seid orat*ur* or elȝ y^t^ yo*ur* seid 14
orat*ur* shuld apper' be-for' y^e^ kyng*es* g*ra*ce & hys conseill in
y^e^ xv day next aft*ur* hest*ur* last past to shewe whye[18] he shuld not 15
obey y^e^ seid ord*er* & decre at wych' day yo*ur* seid orat*ur* hath' appered
& dayly syns hath gyffyn attend*a*ns & ys redy to shewe 16
hys title & evidens for y^e^ p*re*miss*es* wher' vnto as yet he can not be
resceyved to his vtt*ur* *con*fusion' & excesseu' domage 17
for redresse Wherof please hyt yo*ur* gud mast*er*shype and for' so
much' as y^ei^ seid rob' ballard ys a man of greate sbst*a*ns[sic][19] 18
of lond*es* god*es* & catell & y^ei^ mat*er* touchyng lond*es* te*n*nt*es* &
inherit*a*ns det*er*mible by y^ei^ coen' law w^t^-yn y^ei^ seid counte 19
palentyn' to call*e* y^ei^ seid *par*tieȝ before you to exa*mi*n*e* y*er* tytle &
Jnt*er*est yn y^ei^ p*re*miss*es* or' els to remitt y^em^ doon to y^e^ lawe 20
w^t^-yn y^ei^ seid counte y*er* to discussed & decide accordyng to justic' &
gud *con*sciens & ye seid orat*ur* shal dayle p*ra*y to god for 21
yo*ur* *pro*speriens & *conse* *r*uacon*e* 22

[16] Parchment hole between *dean* and *oder*.
[17] Parchment is heavily creased between lines 11 and 12, but readability is unaffected.
[18] MS: shewewhye
[19] Presumably a scribal error for *substans.*

D 4074 Letter of complaint to Sir Thomas Lowell from Thomas Hall
Clippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: 1300/155

To the Ryght Honorable and Hys synguler' & especyall¨'
good master Syr Thomas lowell knyght[20]

Thes ben [the][21] Jníures & wrong*es* done vnto yo*ur* po*ur* s*er*u*a*nt & daily bedman'
Thomas hall / by Syr John Saym*er*' knyght wherof the sayd thomas hall 1
besechith your' mastershippe to see reformacon' for the love of god
and in the weye of charytee / 2
Fyrste where y^e^ seyd Syr John by hys dede endentyd lett & dymysed
vnto one Rob*er*t Dushell & mawde hys wyffe all that hys water Myll with 3
the *pro*fit*es* & comoditeeȝ lying' in Croston' in the Cowntie of
wilteshyre for t*er*me of ther lyues yeldyng' yerly therfore c*er*ten' rent betwene them 4
Agreed / be force[22] wherof the seyd Robert & mawde were therof
pesably possessyd vnto the tyme the sayde Robert dyed Aft*er* whoys deth*e* the sayd 5
mawde hys wyff possessyd of the seyd lese / toke to husbond
yo*ur* pour' s*er*u*a*nt Thomas Hall / and after mariage betwene / then hadde the seyd 6
syr John Saym*er* of hys gret myght & extort pour' beryng'
extreme malice vnto your' sayd pour' s*er*u*a*nt wolde not suffer' the sayd Thomas 7
pesably to enjoye the seyd lese / vnles he wolde gyff hym in mony' v m*er*k*es*
by colour' of a fyne which the seyd thomas truly ~~~ 8
payd hym to have hys ffauo*ur* & good mast*er*shippe And yt thys
not w^t^stondyng' aft*er*-warde by the space of iij yeres whan the seyd Syr' John 9
Had *per*ceyued the sayd Thomas had well & newly [...] the sayd
Mylle vnto the charg*es* of xx mrc' or a-boue / he pute owte the 10
seyd thomas & mawde hys wyffe of the seyd myll w^t^owte eny'
lawfull cause or colo*ur* in ryght or consciens & ther pytuosly the sayd 11
Thomas beynge absent drewe owte the sayd mawde hys wyffe & all hys stuffe &
good*es* beyng' then' in the seyd Mille in to the hye 12
strete / wherby the sayd thomas hadde losse by hurte of hys sayd

[20] This salutation is written at the centre of the document.
[21] Most of the word is invisible due to what looks like water damage.
[22] MS: beforce

wyffe enbeselyng & dystruccon' of hys good*es* to the Su' of xx li 13
And above ∴∴∴[23] 14
It' also the seyde Thomas was remoued thus by strength owte of the ffe &
lordshipp of the seyd Syr' John / yt the seyd Syr John [entending][24] 15
vtt*er*ly to dystroye the seyd thomas & not to leue hym in pease /
sent iiij of hys s*eru**an**tes* vnto the pour howse of the sayd thomas he thene 16
beyng' absent / entendyng' as he supposith to haue [murdered] [...][25]
be *pre*sent and thes sayd hys s*eru**an**tes* brake ryotusly with force 17
the howse of the seyd thomas [...][26] the howse abowte & kepet
hys pour wyffe w^{t}in leste she should 18
have [made] [...][27] for helpe to hyr [...][28] of this ther' was enbeseled &
take a-waye by them iiij spones of silu*er* 19
& a payer'[29] of beed*es* of ambyr' w^{t} ryng*es* of sylu*er* & [...][30]
pend*a*unt & a bokell[31] of sylu*er* to the valeue of iiij m*ar*c' or above ~~~∴∴[32] [33] 20
Also where oon' symond Rumbessey a ten*a*nt of syr John Seymo*er* /
beryng' malice vnto the seyd Thomas for hys seyd mast*er*s sale 21
toke oon' Oxe of the seyd thomas / in the comen' Feld callyd Croston' sand*es* /
and aft*er* enpowndyd the sayd Oxe in the comen pownde of 22
Croston belongynge vnto my lord fitzwaren And thus knowyng' the
sayd syr' John Saym*er* supposyng' the sayd thomas shuld haue owte of 23
the pownde hys sayd Oxe / vpon convenient suerte to answere the lawe toΛ^{ke}
the sayd Oxe [...] of that pownde & put yt [...][34] 24
Aven' P*e*arke & so yt to thys daye reteyneth the same and will not delyu*er*

[23] Positura: a sign usually consisting of three or more dots that may pattern somewhat like a present-day 'smiley', used to signal the end of a text.
[24] Cramped up ending of the line. Only the first five letters are visible.
[25] Three-four words unclear due to what looks like water damage. The first word has quite visible 'm' and 'd'; of the rest, only the ascenders are visible. Basing on the context, it is reconstructed as 'murdered him if he.
[26] Four to five words completely illegible due to what looks like water damage.
[27] About three words only very vaguely visible due to what looks like water damage.
[28] Two to three words erased due to what looks like water damage. Words are not reconstructed.
[29] MS: apayer
[30] A word or two only partly visible due to what looks like water damage, probably adjectives describing *pendaunt*.
[31] MS: abokell
[32] Positura. See footnote 23 above.
[33] A water damage spot affects the visibility of some words on lines 17-20.
[34] Two words illegible; the reconstruction is based on the context.

yt for suerte plegge nor other mone / [...][35] 25

And good consciens ∴∴∴∴∴[36] 26

Also where oon' rob*er*t d*e*ushall seruant vnto the sayd [Sir John][37]saym*er* /

before my lorde Cobham & other' bowte the title and lese of [the][38] 27

Mylle aboue namyd of the sayd Thomas hall and [Maud his][39]

wyffe for the Su' of vj li xiij^{s} iiij^{d} to be payd w^{t}in a [...][40] 28[41]

After' the sayd bargayn' / and thys consyderynge the [said][42] Syr John

suffered the sayd rob*er*t Dushell to haue possessyon [according][43] 29

to the seyd lese and yt wold not suffer' vpon' [pain of his][44] dysplesure the sayd

Rob*er*t Dushell to paye the sayde Thomas the 30

sayde mony And where your' sayd pour' s*eru*ant [Robert Hall has sued the][45]seyd rob*er*t

Dushell at the kyng*es* comon' lawe for 31

payament of the sayd mony' / And for the same [...][46] seyd Syr' John p*re*vely

hath dyscharged the sayde[47] 32[48]

sute and owtlawry / And so infenytly entendyth to put to grevos charg*es* the sayd

Thomas for sute of the same / which*e* 33

he sall not be able to bere nor neu*er* haue remedy with-owte the comfort

of your' good mastershipp to hym nowe be shewyd 34

in thes p*re*misse3 for the loue of god And ín the way of charyte 35

[35] Two to three words illegible due to what looks like water damage.
[36] Positura. See footnote 23 above.
[37] Two words illegible due to what looks like water damage.
[38] One word illegible due to what looks like water damage.
[39] Two words only partly visible due to what looks like water damage. M and s are visible.
[40] Words only partly visible due to what looks like water damage.
[41] End part of lines 23, 24, 25, 27, and 28 are affected by a water damage spot. Line 26 is a very short line and is therefore unaffected.
[42] One word erased due to what looks like water damage.
[43] One word only partly visible due to what looks like water damage. Basing on the context, it is reconstructed as 'according.'
[44] Words totally erased due to what looks like water damage. Reconstruction based on context.
[45] Words totally erased due to what looks like water damage. Reconstruction based on context.
[46] Words totally erased due to what looks like water damage.
[47] The biggest water damage spot of this manuscript is in the lower middle part affecting the visibility of some words belonging to lines 27-32.
[48] The biggest water damage spot of this manuscript is in the lower middle part affecting the visibility of some words belonging to lines 27-32.

D 0699 Letter of complaint to Thomas Archbishop of York from Philip Skydamore and his wife Johane

Hereford, Herefordshire Archive: AL40/1031

To the most Reuerend Father in god Thomas Archebysshoppe of yorke
lord Cardynall legate of the See appostolyke and Chaunceler of Englond[49]

In most Humble wyse shewyth and compleynyth vnto yo*ur* grace yo*ur* dayly orato*ur*s
phelypp Skydamore and Johane hys wyffe one of the dowghters & heiers of Jamys ~~~ 1
Skydamore dysceassyd / That where the said Jamys Skydamore was seassyd of and
in the Castell & man*er*s of bradwarden' radmore & Grove w^{t} th app*er*ten*an*c*es* & of 2
dyu*er*se lond*es* & te*ntes* rent*es* & *ser*uyces in bradwarden in the Countie of herford
in his demeane as of Fee and he so therof beyng seassyd thereof Infeoffyd 3
dauyd ap guyllyam' Morgan' john skydamore Esqyers & other to haue to them'
and ther heiers to the vse & behoffe of the said jamys & th eiers of his 4
body lawfully begottyn' by force whereof the said davyd and his other cofeoffes
was of the said Castell man*er*s lond*es* & te*ntes* Seassyd in ther demeane as of Fee 5
to the vse & behoffe off the said jamys and th eiers of his bodye lawfully begottyn'
and aft*er* that the said jamys dyed aft*er* whos deth the ryght vse & jnt*er*est of the 6
said man*er*s & other the p*re*mysses dyscendyd and came & of ryght owghte to dyscende
and come vnto the said johan*n*e and Elyno*ur* her syster as doughters & heiers of the 7
bodye of the said jamys lawfully begottyn' by force wherof the said dauyd and his
other cofeoffes was / & yett bene of the said man*er*s & other the p*re*misses seassyd in 8
ther demeane as off Fee to the vse & behoffe of the sayd Johane & Elyno*ur* and
the eiers of ther bodyes lawfully begottyn' and so it is gracious lord that Certen' 9
Evydenc*es* escrypt*es* & munyments con*ser*nyng the p*re*mysses ar com*m*yn' to
the hand*es* & possessyon' of ~~~~~~~~~~[50] Thomas Baskarvyle & Dame ~~~ 10
Elyzabeth his wyffe late wyffe of Syr Rychard delabere Knyghte and so it is that
the said Elyno*ur* as in the gou*er*n*a*nce of ~~~[51] Jamys Baskarvyle esquyer broder 11
of the said Thomas w^{t} ∧ ^{the} whyche Jamys & Thomas the said Elyno*ur* vpon' p*ro*myse
by her made to them' that she shuld' not sew nor medle for the havyng of 12
the said Evydenc*es* and vpon' her p*ro*myse Also made vnto the said Jamys and Thomas

[49] This salutation is written at the centre of the document.
[50] There seem to be expuncted words later filled with fillers.
[51] There seem to be an expuncted word later filled with fillers.

to be maryed at ther appoyntment and vpon her bonde oblygatory made to them' 13
for the same the said jamys and thomas haue *pro*mysyd her that they by meanes &
colo*ur* of the hauyng og the said Evydenc*es* shall & wyll Convey estat*es* off the 14
said Man*er*s & other the p*re*mysses or great p*ar*te of them' vnto the said Elyno*ur* or
to other to her vse and Convey & put he said joha*n*ne frome the same ayest all 15
Ryght & good concyence and ther vpon the said Elyno*ur* hath made *pro*myse & also
bounde her-selffe to them' not to sew vex or troble them' for the same evydence*es* & 16
that she shall doo in All thyng*es* as they wyll devyse to cause them' to reteigne & keppe
styll the said Evydence*es* and so by colyn' betwen the said Elyno*ur* Jamys & Thom*a*s 17
Baskarvyld the said joha*n*ne is lykly to be dysherytyd for lake of the said Euydenc*es*
for-as-moche as they by meanes of the said Evydence*es* Jntende vntrewly to 18
co*n*vey estat*es* of the p*re*misses to the further*a*unce of ther forsaid p*er*tensyd p*ur*pos to the
dysheryson' of the said johane And for the whyche Evydence*es* yo*ur* said orators haue 19
no remedy by the Course of the coen' law for as-moche as they Can not have eny
Accon' for the said Evydence*es* But Joyntly w^{t} the said Elyno*ur* whyche Ayenst her 20
forsaid bonde & *pro*myse wyl not[52] joyne and in accon' w^{t} yo*ur* said orato*ur*s Ayenst
the said jamys & Thomas and for that also that yo*ur* said orato*ur*s know not the
Certentie of the 21
said Evydence*es* nor wherin they be Jnclosyd so that they may haue eny accon'
therfor by the Course of the coen' lawe Jt may therfor please yo*ur* grace the ~~~ 22
the p*re*mysses consyderyd to graunte te kyng*es* [several][53] wryttes' of subpena to be derectyd
vn-to the said [james Baskarvyle][54] Thomas Baskarvyld & Elyȝabeth 23
his wyffe comaundyng them' & eu*er*ly of them' by the same to Appere affor the
kyng in his chauncery at a certen'[55] day & vnder a certen payne by yo*ur* grace to be ~~~ 24
lymyttyd ther to make Aunwsr or to be ordryd in the p*re*misses as may stond w^{t}
Ryght & good Concyence and yo*ur* said orato*ur*s shall dayly pray to god for the good 25
& long p*reser*uacon' of yo*ur* grace long to Jnduer 26

[52] MS: wylnot
[53] There seem to be an expuncted word later filled with fillers.
[54] There seem to be an expuncted words later filled with fillers.'
[55] MS: acerten

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www.britannica.com

www.wikipedia.org

Dictionary of National Biography 1885-1900, www.wikisource.org

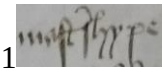
History of Parliament Online, www.historyofparliamentonline.org

APPENDIX 1. Abbreviations in the manuscripts

Here is a detailed overview of all the abbreviations found in all three letters of this study, followed in the end by comments. The transcriptions are here given in the MELD Base version, which was used for transcribing and from which the editions have been produced. It should be noted that these transcription conventions distinguish between the two different shapes of Hector 4, transcribed <or> and <ur> respectively; both appear as *ur* in the edition.

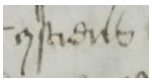
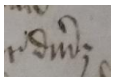
D2578

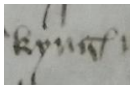
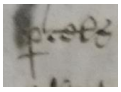
Salutation  KYNGes

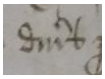
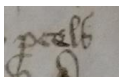
Line 1  MASTerSHYPE  YOUR

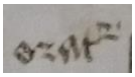
Line 2  & (consistent throughout the whole text)

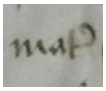
Line 3  Yer  DEDes

Line 4   conSCIENS, DIUerz

Line 5     Yer, Oder, KYNGes, parCELS

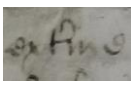
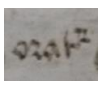
Line 6   DIUerS, parCELS

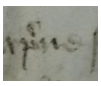
Line 7  ORATor

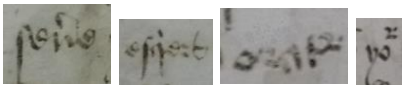
Line 8  MATer

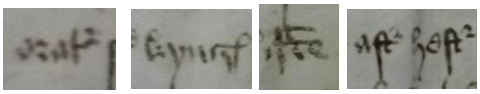
Line 10  ORATor

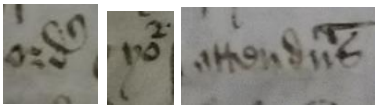
Line 11   ODer, MATer

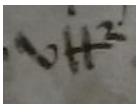
Line 12   EXTreME, ORATor

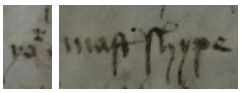
Line 13   PriUE, ORATor

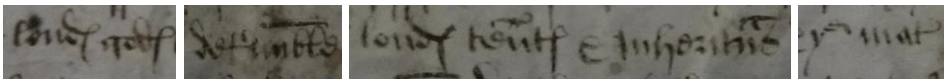
Line 14  SEUerE ,ESQuiERS, ORATor, YOor

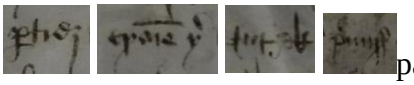
Line 15  ORATor, KYNGes, Grace, AFTor, HESTor

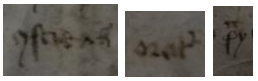
Line 16  ORDer, YOor, ATTENDaNS

Line 17  VTTor

Line 18  YOor, MASTerSHYPE

Line 19 
LONDes GODes, DETerMIxBLE, LONDes TEnNTes & INHERITaNS, MATer

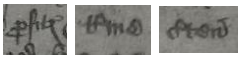
Line 20  parTIEz, EXAmInE, JNTerEST, PreMISses

Line 21  conSCIENS, ORATor, PraY

Line 22  YOor

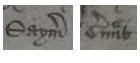
D4074

Line1  YOur POur SerUaNT, SAYMer

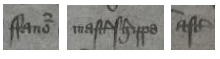
Line 4  proFITes, TerME, CerTEN

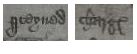
Line 5  AFTer

Line 6  Your, SerUaNT

Line 7  SAYMer, SerUaNT

Line 8  MerKes

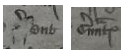
Line 9  FFAUOur, MASTerSHIPPE, AFTer

Line 10  perCEYUED, CHARGes

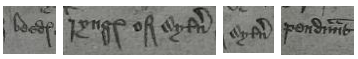
Line 11  COLOur

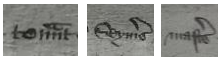
Line 13  GOODes

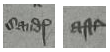
Line 16  VTTerLY, SerUaNTes

Line 17  preSENT, SerUaNTes

Line 19  SILUer

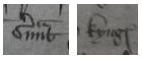
Line 20  BEEDes, RYNGes OF SYLUer, SYLUer, PENDaUNT

Line 21  TENaNT, SEYMOer, MASTerS

Line 22  SANDes, AFTer

Line 23  SAYMer

Line 25  DELYUer

Line 31  SerUaNT, KYNGes

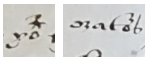
Line 32  PreVELY

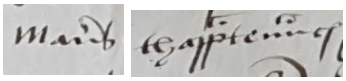
Line 33  CHARGes

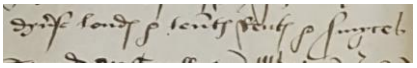
Line 34  NEUer

Line 25  PreMISSEz

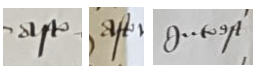
D0699

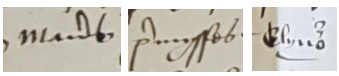
Line 1  Your, ORATOurS

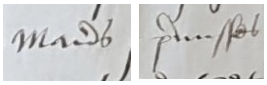
Line 2  MANerS, APPerTENaNCes

Line 3  DYUerSE LONDes & TEnTes RENTes & serUYCES

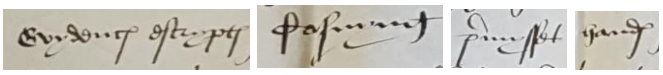
Line 5  MANerS LONDes & TEnTes

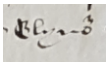
Line 6  AFTer, AFTer, JNTerEST

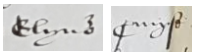
Line 7  MANerS, PreMYSSES, ELYNOor

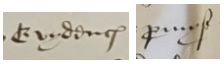
Line 8  MANerS, PreMISSES

Line 9  ELYNOor

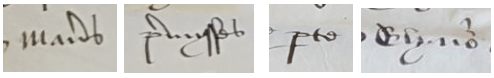
Line 10 
EVYDENCes ESCRYPTes, CONserNYNG, PreMYSSES, HANDes

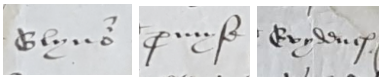
Line 11  ELYNOor

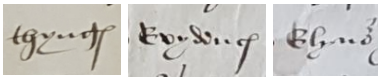
Line 12  ELYNOor, ProMYSE

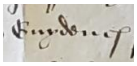
Line 13  EVYDENCes, ProMYSE

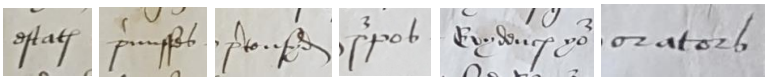
Line 14 
proMYSYD, COLOor, EVYDENCes, ESTATes

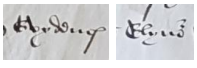
Line 15  MANerS, PreMYSSES, ParTE, ELYNOor

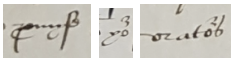
Line 16  ELYNOor, proMYSE, EVYDENCes

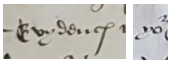
Line 17  THYNGes, EVYDENCes, ELYNOor

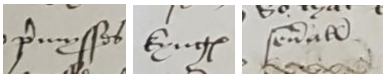
Line 18  EVYDENCes

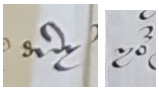
Line 19 
ESTATes, PreMISSES, PerTENSYD, PorPOS, EVYDENCEes YOor ORATORS
 FURTHERaUNCE

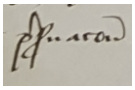
Line 20  EVYDENCEes, ELYNOor

Line 21  proMYSE, YOor, ORATOorS

Line 22  EVYDENCEes, YOor

Line 23  PreMYSSES, KYNGes, SEUerALL

Line 24  EUerLY, YOor

Line 25  PreserUACON, YOor

Notes on the abbreviations and hands

D2578

- *er* and *re* in ORDer (lines 5,11,16) and MATer (lines 8,11,19) abbreviations are not distinct from each other, EXTreME (line 12)
- *your* are written in three manners: YOUR (line 1), Yer (lines 3,5), YOor (line 16 and consistent in the text)
- *par* in parTIEz (line 20: looped tail under) and parCELS (line 5: cross bar on the descender) have different form
- *pri* and *pre* in PriUE (line 13) and PreMISses (line 20) are the same
- *and* is used 41 times in the whole manuscript: abbreviated 36times (distributed all throughout) and spelled out 5 times (lines 1, 4, 8, 10, 18)

D4074

- My general impression: a more consistent and formal hand
- *er* as endings are realised as an upward looped tail ascending from the preceding letter
- *er* in the word SerVANT (lines 6, 7, 16, 17, 31) are also consistently realised as a looped extension of the initial *s*, except for the one in line 1
- *er* following a *t* are also uniformly realised except for MASTerS in line 21 where the loop is unclosed
- *per*, *pro* and *pre* each have their own distinct realisation i.e. perCEYUED (line 10), proFITes (line 4), preSENT (line 17), PreVELY (line 32)
- *es* endings are consistent
- *and* is used 66 times in the whole manuscript: abbreviated 39 times and spelled out 27 times (both realisations are distributed evenly throughout the whole manuscript)

D0699

- *er* and *re* within words are consistently realised as an upward looped tail ascending from the preceding letter i.e. MANerS (line 2), DYUerSE (line 3), SEUerALL (line 23), EUerLY (line 24)
- *er* and *re* after a *t* (be it word ending or not) are also consistently represented as a looped extension of the cross bar of the *t* in the words AFTer (line 6), JNTerEST (line 6)

- *or* in the words ELINOor, YOor, ORATORor/s, COLOor, PorPOS are realised in two ways, either as a superscript resembling the numeral 2 (counted 5 of them) or as a superscript resembling the numeral 3 (counted 12 of them)
- *pre, pro* and *par* i.e. in the words PreMYSSES (lines 7, 8, 10, 15, 23), proMYSYD (lines 12, 13, 14, 16, 21), ParTE (line 15) each have their own form except for PreMISSES in line 19 which is realised as what looks like an inverted apostrophe above the *p*
- *es* endings are consistent
- BASKARVYLE AND BASKARVYLD realisations of the family name of certain Thomas and James
- *and* is used 44 times in the whole manuscript: spelled out 19 times and abbreviated 25 times where abbreviation ceased in line 27, 9 of the fully spelled ‘and’ can be found in the last 9 lines.

APPENDIX 2. Translations to Present-Day English

The texts are here reproduced in Present-Day English. Words that are illegible in the manuscript are indicated with square brackets [ ], with a reconstruction where that can be made reasonably confidently; completely illegible words or passages which cannot be worked out from the context are marked as [...]. Round brackets ( ) are used for words inserted in order to make sense in Present-Day English.

D 2578 Letter of complaint to Sir Richard Empson from Robert Blundell Preston, Lancashire Archive: DDIN/55/2

To the very distinguished Sir Richard Empson, knight, Chancellor of the King's Duchy of Lancaster,

Robert Blundell of Ince Blundell in the county of Lancaster humbly and reverently complains to your good mastership. As the said Robert Blundell and his ancestors have peacefully possessed a great waste ground in the beforementioned Ince Blundell,

which has been held by them through enfeoffment since time immemorial, as it clearly appears from his deeds and evidence and is also well known in the said county, a certain Robert Ballard has long annoyed, sued, and troubled the said Robert, against order, law and conscience, for various parts of the said waste ground, before the dean of the king's most honourable chapel and others of the king's council.

There he has obtained a sentence and decree against the said Robert Blundell that he should allow the said Robert Ballard to possess and enjoy various parts of the said waste ground to the Feast of the Candlemas in the twenty-first year of king Henry VII, and that then, I, your said petitioner, should bring and show sufficient proof in order to defeat his evidence and destroy the title of the said Robert Ballard

This decree in itself appears to be void against the law and justice, because it appears from the said decree that the title of the said Robert Ballard is false and not acceptable by the common law. Despite this, the said petitioner came at the said Feast of the Candlemas to the said dean and others of the King's council and offered to show sufficient proof and evidence to make void the title of the said Robert Ballard, which the said council has as yet denied and refused to see or hear, to the extreme ruin of the said petitioner.

Also, not long ago, your said petitioner had a royal letter addressed to him, that he should allow a certain Henry Faryngton and George Bekynshaw, esquires, to divide and partition the said waste ground between the said Robert Ballard and your said petitioner, or else your said petitioner should appear before the king's presence and his council in the fifteenth day after the Easter that has passed in order to explain why he should not obey the said order and decree. On that day, your said petitioner appeared and has since that day been in attendance and is ready to show his title and evidence for this matter, and he still has not been admitted, to his utter confusion and extreme destruction.

For remedy of which, and because the said Robert Ballard is a man of great possessions of lands, goods, and castle, the matter regarding lands, dwellings and inheritance being determined by the common law within the said county palatine – may it please your good mastership to call the said parties before your presence in order to examine their titles as well as their interests on the matter, or alternatively make them submit to the law within the said county; there to be discussed and decided according to justice and good conscience.

And your said petitioner shall pray to god daily for your prosperity and protection.

D 4074 Letter of complaint to Sir Thomas Lowell from Thomas Hall
Clippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: 1300/155

To the right, honorable and his eminent and greatly distinguished good master Sir Thomas Lowell, knight.

These are the damages and wrongs done to your poor servant and regular petitioner, Thomas Hall, by Sir John Seymour, knight, for which the said Thomas Hall earnestly begs your mastership to effect restoration for the love of God and by way of charity.

First, the said Sir John leased and conveyed by his indenture to a certain Robert Dushell and his wife Maud his water mill along with all its profits and commodities, lying in Croston in the County of Wiltshire, for the term of their lives, with them paying yearly for it a certain rent which was agreed between him and them.

In accordance with this, Robert and Maud were peacefully in possession of the mill until the death of Robert, after which, Maud his wife, who now possessed the said lease, took your poor servant Thomas Hall as husband.

After their marriage, the said John Seymour, with his great might and extortionate power, bearing extreme malice unto your said poor servant, would not allow the said Thomas to peacefully enjoy the said lease unless he would pay him five marks of money, by way of a fee, which the said Thomas indeed paid in order to gain his favour and goodwill.

However, after three years, when the said Sir John took notice that the said Thomas had well and newly [restore]d the said mill to the cost of twenty marks or more, he expelled the said Thomas and his wife from the said mill without any lawful cause or any grounds in reason nor conscience. While Thomas was absent, he cruelly drove out the said Maud, his wife, and all his things and goods that were in the said mill, into to the high street. From this, the said Thomas suffered losses, for the hurting of his said wife and the taking away and destruction of his goods, amounting to the sum of twenty pounds or more.

Also, the said Thomas was forcefully removed out of the landholding and lordship of the said Sir John in the following way. The said Sir John, [intending] to utterly destroy the said Thomas and not leave him in peace, sent four of his servants to the poor house of the said Thomas who was then absent, intending, as it seems, to [have murdered him, if he had] been present. These said servants of his violently broke the house of the said Thomas [...] the house about and kept his poor wife inside in case she should have ma[de] […] [as a result] of

this there was removed and taken away by them four silver spoons, a pair of amber beads with rings of silver and [...] pendant and a buckle of silver, totally amounting to the value of four marks or more.

Also, a certain Simon Rumbessey, a tenant of Sir John Seymour, bearing malice to the said Thomas due to his said master's sale, took one ox belonging to the said Thomas in the common field called Croston Sands. After that he impounded the said ox in the common enclosure of Croston belonging to my Lord Fitzwaren. When the said Sir John Seymour knew about this, thinking that the said Thomas would (be able to) have his ox out of the enclosure upon suitable guarantee in accordance with the law, he took the said ox out of that enclosure and placed it [in his] own park. It remains there to this day, and he will not deliver it in exchange for any guarantee or pledge or for anything else [...] and good conscience.

Also, a certain Robert Dushell, who is a servant of the said Sir John Seymour, bought before lord Cobham and others the title and lease of the above named mill from the said Thomas Hall and his wife Maud for the sum of six pounds, thirteen shillings and four pence to be paid within a [certain time] after the said bargain. Considering this, the [said] Sir John allowed the said Robert Dushell to take possession [according] to the said lease and yet would not allow, on [pain of his] displeasure, the said Robert Dushell to pay the said money to the said Thomas.

And your poor servant [Thomas Hall has sued the] said Robert Dushell at the King's common law for the payment of the same money. And for the same [...] the said Sir John has secretly discharged the said suit and outlawry, and so intends infinitely to put the said Thomas to grievous charges for pursuing the same, which he will not be able to bear, nor ever have any remedy unless the help and assistance of your good mastership may now be shown with regard to these matters, for the love of God and in the way of charity.

D 0699 Letter of complaint to Thomas Archbishop of York from Philip Skydamore and his wife Johane

Hereford, Herefordshire Archive: AL40/1031

To the most reverend father in God, Thomas, archbishop of York, Lord Cardinal, Legate of the Apostolic See and Chancellor of England.

In the most humble manner, your loyal petitioners, Philip Skydamore and his wife Joan, one of the daughters and heirs of James Skydamore, now deceased, show and complain to your grace.

That as the said James Skydamore possessed the legal right of the castle and manors of Bradwardine Radmore and Grove with all their appurtenances, as well as of various lands, tenements, incomes, and services in Bradwardine in Herefordshire. Holding them in fee, he enfeoffed David ap Guyllyam and Morgan John Skydamore, esquires, and others, for themselves and their heirs, to hold them for the use and benefit of the said James and his heirs, legally begotten of his body. By the force of this enfeoffment, the said David and his other cofeoffees were seized of the said castle, manors, lands and tenements, in fee, for the use and benefit of the said James and his heirs, legally begotten of his body.

After that the said James died. After his death, the right, use and interest of the said manors and other estates descended and came, and by right ought to descend and come to the said Joan and Eleanor her sister as daughters and legal heirs of the said James, and accordingly the said David and his other cofeoffees continued to hold, and still hold, the said manors and the other premisses in fee for the use and benefit of Joan and Eleanor and their legal heirs.

And so it is, your grace, that certain evidences, writings and muniments concerning the estates have come into the hands and possession of Thomas Baskarvyle and Dame Elizabeth his wife, formerly the wife of Sir Richard Delabere, knight. And it is so that the said Elinor is under the authority of James Baskarvyle, esquire, brother of the said Thomas,

Which James and Thomas, upon a promise made by the said Eleanor to them that she should not sue nor meddle regarding the possession of the said evidences, and upon her promise also made to the said James and Thomas that she will be married at their will, and upon a bond of obligation made by her to them.

Because of the same, the said James and Thomas have promised her that they, by means and legal strength of having the said evidences, shall and will transfer the holding of the manors

and the other premisses, or a large part of them, to the said Eleanor or to others for her use, and to remove the said Joan from the same, against all right and good conscience. And so, the said Eleanor has promised and bound herself to them not to sue, disturb nor trouble them regarding the evidence. Also, that she shall act in all matters as they will tell her, in order to allow them to retain and keep in their possession the said evidences. And so, by agreement between the said, Eleanor, James and Thomas Baskarvyld, the said Joan is likely to be disinherited for lack of the said evidences, because they intend unrightfully to convey the estates and their premisses to advance their false purpose leading to the disinheritance of Joan.

And because of the said evidences, your petitioners have no remedy through the common law, since they cannot make any lawsuit for the said evidences except together with the said Elinor, who, because of the aforementioned bond and promise, will not join to sue with your said petitioners against the said James and Thomas. Also, your petitioners have no proof of the said evidences nor where they are enclosed so that they could go to legal action through the common law.

It may therefore, please your grace, considering the above, to cause the King's writs of subpoena to be addressed to the said James Baskarvyle, Thomas Baskarvyld, and his wife Elizabeth, commanding each of them, by the same writ, to appear before the King in his Chancery at a certain day under a certain penalty, by your grace, to be detained there in order to answer or to be ordered in these matters as it is in accordance with right and with good conscience.

And your said petitioners shall daily pray to God for the good and continuous preservation of your grace which we hope will endure long.