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978-0-521-19329-0 - Communicating Early English Manuscripts

Edited by Paivi Pahta and Andreas H. Jucker

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## **Communicating Early English Manuscripts**

In an obvious way, manuscripts communicate. This is the first book to focus on the communicative aspects of English manuscripts from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries. It investigates how the authors and scribes of these manuscripts communicated with their audiences, how the characters depicted in these manuscripts communicate with each other, and how the manuscripts communicate with scholars and audiences in the twenty-first century. It covers a wide variety of genres, such as stories, scientific writing, witchcraft records, personal letters, war correspondence, courtroom records and plays. The volume demonstrates how these handwritten texts can be used to analyse the history of language as communication between individuals and groups, and discusses the challenges these documents present to present-day scholars. It is unique in bringing together studies by distinguished international experts examining primary handwritten sources from the perspectives of several fields, including historical pragmatics, historical sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics and literary scholarship.

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and

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# List of abbreviations

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19CSC	<i>Corpus of Nineteenth-century Scottish Correspondence</i>
ARCHER	<i>A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers</i>
CED	<i>A Corpus of English Dialogues, 1560–1760</i>
EEBO	Early English Books Online
EETS	Early English Text Society
EMEMT	<i>Corpus of Early Modern English Medical Texts</i>
f., ff.	folio, folios
FTA	face-threatening act
LALME	<i>A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English</i>
ME	Middle English
MED	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
MEMT	<i>Corpus of Middle English Medical Texts</i>
MF	Maitland Folio Manuscript
MS	manuscript
NLS	National Library of Scotland
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
OE	Old English
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
PDE	Present-day English
PP	prepositional phrase
r	recto
RV	reporting verb
STS	Scottish Text Society
UCREL	University Centre for Computer Corpus Research on Language, Lancaster
v	verso

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Kurtz *Scientific and Medical Writings in Old and Middle English: An Electronic Reference* (CD-ROM, 2000). A second edition, eVK2, is now hosted by the University of Missouri at Kansas City and can be searched on-line using a link at <http://medievalacademy.org>. This link also allows searching of eTK, an electronic version prepared by Voigts of Lynn Thorndike and Pearl Kibre, *A Catalogue of Incipits of Mediaeval Scientific Writings in Latin* (1963). Her publications include studies and editions of late medieval scientific and medical texts in Middle English and Latin.

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## Preface

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This book deals with the communicating power of early English manuscripts. It seeks to shed light on how handwritten texts from the (late) medieval and (early) modern periods can be used to analyse the history of language as communication between individuals and groups, and to discuss the challenges these documents present to present-day scholars. As such, it is a bold attempt to combine manuscript studies and pragmatics. In an obvious way, manuscripts communicate. They are communicative means of interaction between an author and his or her audience, they tell their communicative histories to the scholar investigating them and they often relate communicative interactions between actual or fictional characters depicted within them. On all these levels, manuscripts provide ample opportunities for pragmatic analysis and this is exactly what the chapters in this book set out to do. They offer case studies that focus on one or the other of these communicative layers in early English manuscripts.

For the two editors, this book is our first collaboration, but we share a long and rewarding history of regular and intensive scholarly cooperation, albeit on independent projects, with Irma Taavitsainen. For both of us, Irma has been and still is the most important professional colleague with whom we cooperate on an almost daily basis. And it is for this reason that – on the occasion of her forthcoming birthday – we dedicate this book to her. But the book is not meant as a *festschrift* in the traditional sense. We knew that if we wanted to honour Irma with a book it would have to be a topically coherent volume of the highest possible standard and this is what we have endeavoured to achieve in order to pay respect to Irma's groundbreaking work on early English manuscripts, as an editor of such manuscripts, as a corpus compiler of medieval and early modern texts and as a historical pragmaticist interested in the communication of and within such manuscripts.

The jacket illustration of this book shows a leaf from a British Library manuscript, Harley 2320, f. 31, containing a passage from a Middle English astrological text called *Storia lune*. It is an extract of a text Irma edited in 1987. She also studied it in her doctoral research and the folio is reproduced in her PhD thesis, *Middle English Lunaries: A Study of a Genre*, published in the Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique in 1988. We thank the British

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Library for permission to reproduce the folio here and the Research Unit for Variation, Contacts and Change in English (VARIENG) at the University of Helsinki for financial support in acquiring it.

We thank the contributors for their exemplary cooperation in the preparation of this volume, Danielle Hickey for her care in preparing the manuscript for print, Helen Barton and Merja Kytö for their encouragement and for recommending the book for publication in the series *Studies in English Language*, and the Cambridge University Press Syndicate for accepting it.

Together with all the contributors we present this book to Irma with our heartfelt thanks for her outstanding contributions to the fields of manuscript studies and historical pragmatics; for her cooperation on so many different projects; for her patience and enthusiasm; for sharing her scholarly insights with us; and above all for her friendship.

Andreas H. Jucker and Päivi Pahta  
Zurich and Tampere, January 2010