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Transforming Early English shows how historical pragmatics can offer a powerful explanatory framework for the changes medieval English and Older Scots texts undergo, as they are transmitted over time and space. The book argues that formal features such as spelling, script and font, and punctuation – often neglected in critical engagement with past texts – relate closely to dynamic, shifting socio-cultural processes, imperatives and functions. This theme is illustrated through numerous case studies in textual recuperation, ranging from the reinvention of Old English poetry and prose in the later medieval and early modern periods, to the eighteenth-century 'vernacular revival' of literature in Older Scots.

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The Reinvention of Early English and Older Scots

JEREMY J. SMITH

University of Glasgow

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For Elaine
And In Memoriam R.M.H.

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Preface

This book argues that the functionalist approach known as *historical pragmatics* offers a powerful explanatory paradigm for the formal changes medieval English and Scots texts undergo as they are transmitted in writing over time and space.

Although I hope that the book offers something new both in terms of general insights, and for those interested in the particular illustrative case studies discussed, its overall argument has been long in the making. It derives from conversations, beginning in the late 1970s, with three especially remarkable scholars: Christian Kay, Malcolm Parkes and Michael Samuels. All are sadly no longer with us. My colleague Christian introduced me many years ago to pragmatics as an approach to the study of texts, and I cannot put a value on our friendship and her innumerable kindnesses; her death in 2016 was a huge blow to everyone who knew her. Malcolm, inter alia an inspirational conversationalist, was wont to say that 'the greatest mistake a paleographer makes is to forget the nature of the text being copied'. This axiom has stuck with me for the last forty years, and its emphasis on the relationship of textual form to socio-cultural function is central to this book's argument. And Michael's sustained and profoundly principled focus on the importance of the human element in linguistic and philological study has been a key influence on my thinking.

Other friends and colleagues have been crucial in helping me develop my initial, inchoate thoughts, although all remaining flaws are entirely my responsibility. Merja Kytö, my general editor, and Irma Taavitsainen have been engaged with every aspect of the book from the outset, and I am deeply grateful for their enthusiastic input. I owe a very special debt to John Thompson, whose thoughtful and supportive comradeship has been an inspiration throughout, and to Ian Johnson and Crawford Gribben, all of whom have collaborated with me in the larger and continuing *Textual Afterlives* research programme of which this book is a part. Tim Machan gave me some invaluable encouragement and feedback for which I am

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extremely grateful, and I am also particularly indebted to Wendy Scase, who gave meticulous comments on a late draft, and whose forthcoming monograph on medieval English writing-systems in relation to socio-cultural functions is highly relevant to its concerns. My colleague Katie Lowe has been, as ever, encouraging in multiple ways, as has my long-term collaborator at Stavanger, Merja Stenroos. Dauvit Broun, Gerry Carruthers, Isabel de la Cruz Cabanillas, Maria José Esteve Ramos, Frank Ferguson, Simon Horobin, David Jasper, Joanna Kopaczyk, Nigel Leask, Linne Mooney, Veronica O'Mara, Murray Pittock, Andrew Prescott and Alison Wiggins have helped me with generous support, and with detailed references and comments. My graduate students (past and present) have always demonstrated that the supervisory process is one of mutual learning. In the specific context of this book, however, I should like to thank the following: Juulia Ahvensalmi, Fraser Dallachy, Laura Esteban Segura, Danni Glover, George Head, Lauren McClelland, Imogen Marcus, Manon Thuillier, Gillian Weir, Graham Williams, Hiroshi Yadomi and the late Vanessa Yuille, and above all Lena Leitner, Francesca Mackay, Diane Scott and David Selfe.

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Verweij, Dan Wakelin, Ron Waldron, Keith Williamson, and Laura Wright. I should also like to thank Marc Alexander and Alice Jenkins, my line managers in 2017–19, for their unstinting encouragement.

I am indebted to audiences at the following locations where I have presented on matters relating to this project: Aberdeen, Alcala de Henares, Belfast, Cambridge, Castellon de la Plana (Morella), Edinburgh, Florence, Glasgow, Helsinki, Hull, Kalamazoo, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Oviedo, Oxford, Seville, Sheffield, South Bend (Notre Dame), St Andrews, Stavanger, Uppsala, and Zurich.

I am very grateful to the following libraries both for access to/information about their collections, and for their online resources: Glasgow University Library above all (especially Julie Gardham, Bob Maclean, Niki Russell and the team in Special Collections, always so helpful and knowledgeable); the Beinecke Library, Yale; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the British Library, London; Cambridge University Library; the Royal Library, Copenhagen; Edinburgh University Library; Exeter Cathedral Library; the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC; the Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Lambeth Palace Library, London; Lichfield Cathedral Library; the Linen Hall Library, Belfast; London University Library; the library of Longleat House; the Mitchell Library, Glasgow; the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh (especially Helen Vincent); the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York; the Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge (especially Catherine Sutherland); the library of Petworth House, Kent; Princeton University Library; Queen's University Library, Belfast (especially Michael O'Connor and Deirdre Wildy); the Arni Magnusson Institute, Reykjavík; St John's College Library, Cambridge (especially Kathryn McKee); the library of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge (especially Nicholas Rogers); the library of the Society of Antiquaries; the library of Trinity College, Cambridge; the library of Trinity College, Oxford; the library of University College, Oxford; the Biblioteca Capitolare, Vercelli; Waseda University Library, Tokyo; the Royal Library, Windsor Castle; Worcester Cathedral Library. I am grateful to several of these libraries for permission to publish the plates that are an important part of the book.

Versions of parts of the book have been published elsewhere, although all have been substantially revised. Part of Chapter 2 appeared as 'The evolution of Old and Middle English texts' in Machan (2017); parts of Chapter 3 appeared first as 'Mapping the language of the Vernon Manuscript', in Scase (2013a), and as 'The afterlives of Nicholas Love', in

Studia Neophilologica, Smith (2017b); and part of Chapter 5 appeared first as 'Textual afterlives: Barbour's *Bruce* and Hary's *Wallace*', in Kirk and Macleod (2013). I am grateful to the editors for their forbearance in allowing me to rework this material.

I am greatly indebted to institutions and other bodies who have supported this project: All Souls College, Oxford, who elected me to a Visiting Fellowship in 2010, enabling me, while completing other tasks, to formulate the key research questions addressed in this book; the Royal Society of Edinburgh, who supported John, Ian, Crawford and myself in a related workshop programme in 2010–11; and above all the Leverhulme Trust, whose extremely generous award of a Research Fellowship for 2017–19 made it possible for me to write this book. The Trust's emphasis on personal vision, as well as on support for academics whose research has been held back by lengthy periods in managerial or administrative roles, has been particularly appreciated. And I have been exceptionally lucky with my publishers: Helen Barton at Cambridge University Press has been encouraging and positive from the outset of the project, and I am hugely grateful for the skills and professionalism of her team, most notably Isabel Collins, Bethany Johnson and Chris Jackson.

I owe more than I can say to my wife, Elaine Higgleton, and to our daughter, Amy Smith. To them, as ever, all my love.

A Note on the Transcriptions

As in a previous publication (Smith 2012a), the many transcribed texts used for illustration in this book are edited diplomatically directly from the manuscripts and early printed editions concerned. These transcriptions follow, with some minor modifications, principles laid down by Grant Simpson for transcribing the handwriting of Scottish documents: the 'purpose of the transcripts . . . is to show the reader as exactly as possible what the writing in each document was intended to represent' (Simpson 1998: 47). Thus the following editorial principles are adopted:

(1) Spelling is given exactly as in the witness concerned, including the original distribution of *u* and *v*, *i* and *j* (see Simpson 1998: 47).

(2) Capitals are generally reproduced as they appear in the witnesses, but I have departed from Simpson's practice in using long-*I* (i.e. *J*) whenever it appears, whether it represents the letter *I* or *J*. Sometimes it is hard to tell in handwriting whether a capital letter is intended; if this is the case, I have adopted modern conventions. I have also used *ff* whenever it appears for the capital form of *f*, not replacing it with *F*. However, I do not make a distinction between long- and short-*s*, since long-*s* can easily be confused with other letters.

(3) The lineation of the original texts is reproduced as far as possible.

(4) If words – or forms that modern readers might consider separate words – are written conjoined, either accidentally or deliberately, they appear in the transcriptions in that form, e.g. *shalbe* for 'shall be'.

(5) An attempt has been made to reproduce the punctuation of the original witnesses insofar as that is typographically possible. For the *punctus interrogativus* in manuscripts, a question-mark <?> is used, while the *punctus elevatus* is reproduced as <⸴>. The *virgula suspensiva* (virgule) appears as </>; the simple *punctus*, even when it appears in mid-line position, appears as <.>.

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(6) Engrossed forms are flagged in bold (and noted) where relevant to the discussion. Large decorated, historiated or illuminated letters cannot be easily reproduced, for typographical reasons. In such cases, I have adopted a convention – rather clumsy, I fear – whereby the form in question is emboldened and a gap is left to indicate the space it occupies, e.g.

> **W**   han that Aprill with hise shoures soote
>   The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
>   And bathed euery veyne in swich licour
>   Of which *ver*tu/ engendred is the flour
>   Whan zephirus eek/ wᵗ his swete breeth   5
> Inspired hath in euery holt and heeth
> The tendre croppes/ and the yonge sonne
> Hath in the Ram/ his half cours yronne

or, when the space left is smaller, as follows:

> **F** ram þa*m* halȝan easterlican dæȝe꞉ synd ȝetealde
> fiftiȝ daȝa to þisu*m* dæȝe.

(7) In accordance with usual practice, I have used italics in transcriptions to indicate contractions where what is intended by the scribe or printer is clear. However, there are some exceptions in printed texts where italic font was sometimes employed for (e.g.) aesthetic or emphatic reasons, and I wish to retain that distinction. I have, however, generally not expanded 'function' words such as *yᵗ*, *wᵗ*, *&* (i.e. *that*, *with*, *and*) etc., where the context makes the meaning clear, but where possible alternative expansions (e.g. *þet*, *wyth*, *ant*) are attested in Middle English. In some Old and Early Middle English texts a 'crossed thorn', signifying *þæt* etc., appears, e.g. *ꝥ*, and it is reproduced as such. 'Otiose strokes' or flourishes, common in late medieval English and Older Scots, present special problems for the interpretation of handwriting, and I deal with them on a case-by-case basis, since they seem often to be simply decorative (see further Houwen 1990: 22 and references there cited). I use <ß> for the 'flourished *s*' that is a feature of some kinds of Scottish handwriting.

(8) The form <y> is used for both the letter *y* and the letter *þ* ('thorn') when the two letters are not distinguished in the handwriting of the texts; in texts where the two letters are kept distinct <y> appears for the letter *y* and <þ> appears for thorn. Distinguishing, or failing to distinguish, thorn from *y* has a philological implication in Middle

English and Older Scots, and should therefore be marked in editions such as those provided here (see Benskin 1982, to be supplemented by the discursive note in Laing and Williamson 1994: 115–16).

(9)   Omitted or damaged letters are generally omitted, and marked by rows of dots, e.g. [. . .]. Very occasionally conjectural emendations are offered, and these are also placed in square brackets.

(10) Yogh can appear as either ʒ or z; I have kept the distinction between the two, since the history of both letters has some interest for philologists (see the OED entries for the letters, and also Smith 2000a and references there cited). I have also used ʒ when it appears as a marker of plurality, e.g. *seruauntʒ* 'servants'. The Anglo-Saxon form for <w>, namely *p* ('wynn'), is used when appropriate, both in Old English texts and to represent the 'counterfeit' versions of Old English script developed from the sixteenth century onwards (see Chapter 2 below). For typographical reasons I have also used ʒ to reflect the Anglo-Saxon 'insular *g*'; the appearance of this form, in both manuscript and 'counterfeit' versions, may be seen in Plates II, V and VI.

(11) When ornaments are used, an attempt is made to reproduce them. The pilcrow or paraph-mark is quite common, i.e. ¶, as is – especially in early printed books – the hedera or ivy-leaf, i.e. ❧, and the manicule, i.e. ☞.

(12) Interlineations and additions by the scribe are shown thus: ⌐cowart⌐ (cf. Simpson 1998: 48); glosses are offered if the addition is marginal rather than interlinear. Deletions in the text are marked as struck through, e.g. ~~rewme~~.

(13) Changes of folio are marked, e.g. *folio 6v* for 'folio 6 verso (i.e. left-hand side of the opening)', *folio 7r* for 'folio 7 recto (i.e. right-hand side of the opening)'. Page-breaks, where used, are flagged similarly. In some early printed books, no pagination or foliation is given; in these cases, signatures are treated as folios, with final *v* and *r* flagging verso and recto respectively, e.g. *sig. K.iij r, sig. a.2r*.

(14) In manuscripts, various coloured inks are often deployed for pragmatic reasons, as are engrossed forms, while in some printed books there is variation between fonts (i.e. italic versus roman, or roman versus blackletter), and there are differing practices of justification. I have approached these issues on a case-by-case basis, flagging in discussion the local transcription-conventions I have adopted.