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SPACE AND TIME IN MIDDLE ENGLISH LETTERS: DIALOGUES BETWEEN PASTON MEN AND WOMEN¹

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyse how Paston men and women communicated with each other by letters, laying emphasis on the spatio-temporal systems. Special attention will be given to the following points: (1) how writer's gender is related to the selection of spatio-temporal elements, (2) how the relationship between the writer and the recipient affects these elements, and (3) how that relationship is involved with the spatio-temporal systems in discourse.

KEYWORDS: Middle English, letter, the Pastons, spatio-temporal system, dialogue

STRESZCZENIE

Celem tego artykułu jest analiza sposobów komunikacji pomiędzy mężczyznami i kobietami z rodziny Paston, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem systemów przestrzenno-czasowych. Uwaga autora skupia się na następujących zagadnieniach: (1) jaki wpływ na wybór elementów przestrzenno-czasowych ma płeć piszącego, (2) jaki wpływ na te elementy ma związek istniejący pomiędzy autorem, a odbiorcą oraz (3) w jaki sposób związek ten jest odzwierciedlony w systemach przestrzenno-czasowych dyskursu.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: język średnioangielski, list, rodzina Pastonów, system przestrzenno-czasowy, dialog

INTRODUCTION

In the Middle English period, communication media were much more limited than in the present-day, and letters were important means of communication for family members who lived apart from each other. As Hernández-Campoy and Conde-Silvestre (2015: 17) state, “to a certain extent, letters are intended as dialogic exchanges, reflecting the personal communicative style of an author who maintains and negotiates

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a particular social relationship with his/her addressees in the situation and purpose of the letter". In such dialogic exchanges, the writer² selects language elements judging how far the things, people and situations they wish to put into language are from their domain, i.e. close or distant. As an example, in the following letter excerpted from the Paston letters (Davis 2004 [1971]), the writer John Paston II addresses his father John Paston I, employing such elements as pronouns, demonstratives, tense and modals:

(1) Ryght reuerent and wyrshypfull fadere, I recommand me vn-to you, besychyng you of youre blessing and gode faderhode. Pleasyt it you to vnderstond the grete expens that I haue dayly travelyng wyth the Kyng, as the berour here-of can enfourme you, and howe long that I am lyke to tary here in thys countray or I may speke wyth you a-gayn, and howe I am chargyd to haue myyn hors and harnys redy and in hasty wyse; (...)

(John II 232.1–6)³

These elements belong to the spatio-temporal systems, which reflect the way the writer/speaker sees the world around him/her, including the relationships with other participants in the letter/situation.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse how Paston men and women communicated with each other by letters, laying emphasis on the systems of space and time, that is, spatio-temporal systems (Nakayasu to appear). The analysis will be conducted regarding how the writer's gender is related to the selection of spatio-temporal elements (Nakayasu 2017b), how the relationship between the writer and the recipient affects the spatio-temporal systems, and how that relationship is involved with the spatio-temporal systems in discourse.

The discussion will begin with the texts of the present research, Paston letters. Next, the spatio-temporal systems are briefly defined, along with what elements are involved with the systems. Statistical analyses will then be carried out of which perspective, proximal or distal, is likely to be taken, depending of the relationship of the writer and the recipient. In addition, qualitative analysis of discourse will show how the writer addresses the recipient coordinating spatio-temporal elements. The final section will conclude the findings and explore implications for future research.

PASTON LETTERS

Paston letters are a collection of 422 documents written in the 15th to early 16th century (1421–1503), most of which are letters by and to the Norfolk family, i.e. the Pastons. Hernández-Campoy and Conde-Silvestre (2015: 21) remark that

² This paper employs the terms 'writer' and 'recipient' to refer to the author of the letter and the person to whom it was addressed.

³ All the texts in the present paper are taken from Davis 2004 [1971]). In each source, the name is the writer, the first digit refers to the number of the letter and the second one to the line(s) of the text.

the “historical and philological interest of these documents is outstanding, not only because they offer data on the political and domestic history of England, but also because they were composed at a crucial period in the development of the English language”. Female members of the family did not write letters themselves but dictated their letters to other hands, i.e. scribes. The present paper disregards the possible influences of such scribes, following Bergs (2015).

The texts of the letters used for the present research are taken from *Paston letters and papers of the fifteenth century* edited by Davis (2004 [1971]). The selection of the letters is based on Davis (2008 [1963]), paying careful attention to the years when the letters were actually written. Table 1 below shows the list of family members, whose letters are included in the texts of the present study:

Table 1. The texts used for this study

Name	Gender	Words	Subtotal	Total
John I (1421–1466)	m	3,637	19,299	33,878
John II (1442–1479)	m	7,092		
John III (1444–1504)	m	8,570		
Agnes (?1400–1479)	f	1,917	14,579	
Margaret (?1420–1484)	f	12,662		

The texts consist of letters written by both men and women, and of letters addressed to the husband, the wife, the mother, the son and the brother. According to Bergs (2005), Gies and Gies (1998) and others, John I was a lawyer and landowner of Norfolk who spent a lot of time away on business. His mother Agnes (née Berry) was talented for business and had a strong character. John’s wife Margaret (née Mautby), a businesswoman likewise, had the responsibility of looking after their family estates, and thus communicated with her husband by letter during his absence. John II was the eldest son of John I and Margaret, and inherited his father’s land, but was a serious concern for the family. John III, born two years after his brother John II, was more stable and responsible than his brother.

SPATIO-TEMPORAL SYSTEMS

This section is devoted to the definition of spatio-temporal systems following Nakayasu (to appear). To give a brief history of the studies of the spatio-temporal systems in the history of English, Traugott (1974; 1978) was the first scholar to employ the term ‘spatio-temporal’ in an attempt to integrate the systems of space and time in historical data. A small number of works can be found regarding

such attempts: for example, Fries (1994) on text deixis in Early Modern English, Taavitsainen (1999) on personality and style of affect, and Nagucka (2000) on spatial and temporal meanings of *before*. Recently, the research in this area has seen a steady progress: Nakayasu (2015; to appear) on the spatio-temporal systems in Chaucer's language, and Nakayasu (2017a; 2017b) on Paston letters. These studies are in line with a relatively young research field, historical pragmatics, whose target is the language use in earlier periods and the developments of such language use (Taavitsainen and Jucker 2015).

The first important aspect of the spatio-temporal systems is that they are deictic in nature (Bühler (1934); Fillmore 1997 [1975]). The writer/speaker selects language elements judging how far the things, people and situations they want to express are from their domain: namely, the way they see the world is reflected in the spatio-temporal systems. The entities close to their domain are referred to as 'proximal', while those distant from it as 'distal' (Diessel 1999).

Second, the spatio-temporal systems encompass a variety of elements of both spatial and temporal domains. Table 2 below tabulates central spatio-temporal elements with a proximal and distal distinction:

Table 2. Elements of space and time

Category	Proximal	Distal
Pronoun	1st person (<i>I, we</i>)	3rd person (<i>he, she, it, they</i>)
	Medial: 2nd person (<i>thou, ye</i>)	
Demonstrative	<i>this, these</i>	<i>that, those</i>
Adverb (spatial)	<i>here</i>	<i>there</i>
Interjection*	<i>allas, O</i>	
Tense	present/non-past	past
Modal	<i>shall, will, can, may, must</i>	<i>should, would, could, might</i>
Adverb (temporal)	<i>now</i>	<i>then</i>

* Interjections belong to the integrated spatio-temporal domain, and can only be proximal because they are closely related to the writer's/speaker's domain. The present paper, however, excludes them from statistical analysis because the writers seldom employ them in Paston letters.

Primary elements belonging to the spatial domain are pronouns, demonstratives and spatial adverbs. Pronouns deserve special attention since they exhibit a trichotomy of proximal (1st person: writer/speaker), medial (2nd person: recipient/hearer) and distal (3rd person: other). Temporal elements chiefly consist of tenses (tense forms), modals and temporal adverbs. It should be noted that distal forms of tense and modal represent a metaphorical distance (from the speech act) and a hypothetical distance (from reality) in addition to the prototypical, temporal distance (from speech time) (Oakshott-Taylor 1984, Nakayasu 2009).

Third, the spatio-temporal systems are not the simple addition of both spatial and temporal systems, but an integration of both systems. The writer/speaker may coordinate proximal or distal elements in either the spatial or temporal domain, also coordinate proximal or distal elements to take either proximal or distal perspective in an integrated spatio-temporal domain, and may even alternate these perspectives in discourse.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF PROXIMAL AND DISTAL PERSPECTIVES

Having briefly defined spatio-temporal systems along with the elements belonging to the systems, I will now examine how frequently the writer employs elements of space and time, and which perspective, proximal or distal, he or she is likely to take in communicating with the recipient.

Table 3 summarises the frequency of spatio-temporal elements employed by both men and women in the corpus (Nakayasu 2017b). Those elements listed in Table 2 are classified into proximal or distal elements (proximal, medial or distal elements as regards pronouns) and the percentages are given for each spatio-temporal category:

Table 3. The writers and the spatio-temporal elements

Category	Proximal/distal	Men		Women		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Pronoun	Proximal	1340	44.0	798	31.7	2138	38.4
	Medial	765	25.1	680	27.0	1445	26.0
	Distal	938	30.8	1040	41.3	1978	35.6
Demonstrative	Proximal	122	70.9	100	79.4	222	74.5
	Distal	50	29.1	26	20.6	76	25.5
Spatial adverb	Proximal	41	43.6	32	36.4	73	40.1
	Distal	53	56.4	56	63.6	109	59.9
Tense	Proximal	1046	73.6	683	55.2	1729	65.0
	Distal	375	26.4	554	44.8	929	35.0
Modal	Proximal	388	68.0	226	50.9	614	60.5
	Distal	183	32.0	218	49.1	401	39.5
Temporal adverb	Proximal	34	81.0	11	52.4	45	71.4
	Distal	8	19.0	10	47.6	18	28.6

The analysis of pronouns shows that men (44.0%) write about themselves more often than women (31.7%), while women (27.0%) address the recipient slightly more often than men (25.1%). It is also interesting to note that women (41.3%) report of others and of what has happened using distal pronouns more often than men (30.8%), which could be derived from the women's role to take responsibility for their family estates particularly in their husbands' absence (Gies and Gies 1998). Proximal demonstratives are more widely used than distal ones, with women's slightly higher frequent use than men's (79.4% vs. 70.9%) found in the text. As regards spatial adverbs, by contrast, proximal adverbs are employed less frequently, and women (36.4%) use them less often than men (43.6%).⁴

Moving the focus onto the temporal systems, that is, tenses, modals and temporal adverbs, these three temporal categories all exhibit a clear contrast between men and women: the ratios of proximal elements used by men (73.6%, 68.0%, and 81.0%, respectively) are higher than those by women (55.2%, 50.9%, and 52.4%, respectively), while the ratios of distal elements are vice versa. It may be safe to assume that men tend to make use of proximal elements to address others directly, expressing what they want to say or ask in a more straight way, whereas women resort to distal elements to report what happened recently or to express tentativeness and politeness.

To summarise the findings so far, Table 4 presents which perspective, proximal or distal, the writer is likely to take in the spatial, the temporal, and in the integrated spatio-temporal domains, comparing men and women (Nakayasu 2017b):

Table 4. Summary of the spatio-temporal systems

Category	Proximal/distal	Men		Women		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Spatial system	Proximal	2268	68.5	1610	58.9	3878	64.2
	Distal	1041	31.5	1122	41.1	2163	35.8
Temporal system	Proximal	1468	72.2	920	54.1	2388	63.9
	Distal	566	27.8	782	45.9	1348	36.1
Spatio-temporal system	Proximal	3736	69.9	2530	57.1	6266	64.1
	Distal	1607	30.1	1904	42.9	3511	35.9

⁴ It should be noted, however, that these smaller ratios in Paston letters are more pronounced when compared with Chaucer's works. According to Nakayasu (to appear), the percentage of proximal spatial adverbs in *The Canterbury tales* is 28.1%, and it declines to 4.8% in *A treatise on the astrolabe*. It is likely that these disparities highlight the characteristics of family letters to report what happens around the writer.

Note that medial pronouns are included in the proximal elements in the spatial system to provide a systematic contrast between proximal and distal elements.⁵ It is shown from the data in Table 4 that, generally speaking, the writers of Paston letters are more likely to take a proximal perspective. As regards differences in the writer's gender, men have a stronger tendency for a proximal perspective than women (69.9% vs. 57.1%), while women are more likely to take a distal perspective than men (42.9% vs. 30.1%).

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE WRITER AND THE RECIPIENT

As has been pointed out in the introduction, letters are considered to be dialogic exchanges between the writer and the recipient. How does the writer select elements of space and time in interactions with the recipient? The next task is to analyse how the relationships between the writer and the recipient will affect the selection of spatio-temporal elements.

Table 5 tabulates the combinations of the writer and the recipient found in the text, the relationship of the recipient to the writer, and which perspective, proximal or distal, is likely to be taken in the spatial and temporal domains for each combination:

Table 5. The writers and the recipients in the spatio-temporal systems

Writer	Recipient	Description	Domain	N (%)	
				Proximal	Distal
John I	Margaret	wife	spatial	104 (63.4%)	60 (36.6%)
			temporal	82 (70.7%)	34 (29.3%)
	Margaret, etc.	wife & friends	spatial	226 (66.5%)	114 (33.5%)
			temporal	165 (67.9%)	78 (32.1%)
	Lord Grey	administrator/ nobleman	spatial	39 (73.6%)	14 (26.4%)
			temporal	16 (61.5%)	10 (38.5%)
John II	John I	father	spatial	201 (70.0%)	86 (30.0%)
			temporal	69 (51.1%)	66 (48.9%)
	John III	younger brother	spatial	430 (68.6%)	197 (31.4%)
			temporal	306 (71.7%)	121 (28.3%)
	Margaret	mother	spatial	216 (63.2%)	126 (36.8%)
			temporal	165 (77.1%)	49 (22.9%)

⁵ This follows Halliday and Hasan (1976), who distinguish the roles of speaker and addressee from other roles.

Table 5 cont.

Writer	Recipient	Description	Domain	N (%)		
				Proximal	Distal	
John III	John I	father	spatial	110 (76.9%)	33 (23.1%)	
			temporal	65 (77.4%)	19 (22.6%)	
	John II	elder brother	spatial	538 (67.3%)	262 (32.8%)	
			temporal	323 (72.1%)	125 (27.9%)	
	Margaret	mother	spatial	369 (77.0%)	110 (23.0%)	
			temporal	236 (84.0%)	45 (16.0%)	
	Thomas Playter	legal advisor	spatial	20 (39.2%)	31 (60.8%)	
			temporal	30 (68.2%)	14 (31.8%)	
	Margery	wife	spatial	19 (63.3%)	11 (36.7%)	
			temporal	10 (66.7%)	5 (33.3%)	
	Agnes	William I	husband	spatial	21 (72.4%)	8 (27.6%)
				temporal	11 (57.9%)	8 (42.1%)
Edmond I		son	spatial	33 (62.3%)	20 (37.7%)	
			temporal	26 (54.2%)	22 (45.8%)	
John I		son	spatial	149 (60.1%)	99 (39.9%)	
			temporal	27 (27.0%)	73 (73.0%)	
Margaret	John I	husband	spatial	790 (53.5%)	686 (46.5%)	
			temporal	488 (48.5%)	519 (51.5%)	
	John II	son	spatial	315 (63.9%)	178 (36.1%)	
			temporal	193 (68.4%)	89 (31.6%)	
	John III	son	spatial	130 (68.1%)	61 (31.9%)	
			temporal	65 (62.5%)	39 (37.5%)	
	James Gloys	chaplain	spatial	141 (71.2%)	57 (28.8%)	
			temporal	77 (74.0%)	27 (26.0%)	
	Dame Brews	daughter-in-law's mother	spatial	59 (81.9%)	13 (18.1%)	
			temporal	33 (86.8%)	56 (13.2%)	

John I employs proximal temporal elements more frequently when he writes to his wife Margaret (70.7%) than to Lord Grey (61.5%), though the ratios reverse in the spatial domain (63.4% vs. 73.6%). It is possible that regarding the temporal domain, he addresses his wife in a more direct manner, while he tries to show deference to his superior, Lord Grey, making use of distal tenses and modals more often. In the spatial domain, on the other hand, he seems to write more about other people when addressing Margaret. Although elements in the spatial domain do not reveal significant

differences, temporal elements employed by John II show an interesting contrast. He employs distal temporal elements more frequently to address his father John I (48.9%) than his younger brother John III (28.3%), and least frequently to his mother Margaret (22.9%). His younger brother John III has a slightly stronger tendency for a proximal perspective when addressing his family members. On the other hand, when distal temporal elements are concerned, the ratios are smaller: his father John I (22.6%), his elder brother John II (27.9%) and his mother Margaret (16.0%). What can be said from these ratios are that John III does not exploit distal senses so extensively to address his father as John II, who seems to pay more deference to his father, and that both of the brothers actively employ proximal elements to address their mother. When addressing their brothers, it does not seem to matter whether they are elder or younger. Another conspicuous characteristic regarding John III is his frequent use of distal spatial elements to Thomas Playter (60.8%), due to repeated use of distal pronouns, which could be derived from their business relationship.

Generally speaking, the Paston women employ distal temporal elements more frequently than men. Agnes makes use of proximal spatial elements (72.4%) to her husband William more often than her sons (62.3% and 60.1%, respectively) when she reports what happens around her to him. On the other hand, she resorts to distal temporal elements (73.0%) when she addresses her son John I to express tentativeness. Margaret shows a clear and interesting contrast among her letters' recipients. She uses distal elements most frequently, both spatial and temporal, to her husband John I (46.5% and 51.5%, respectively) to show deference to him. However, the ratios of proximal elements increase as the relationship changes from husband (John I), through son (John II and John II), then chaplain (James Gloys) and to daughter-in-law's mother (Dame Brews). To the female recipient, Dame Brews, she employs proximal elements (81.9% spatial and 86.8% temporal) most frequently. This is most likely she is trying to show positive politeness to Dame Brews by employing many proximal elements.

To sum up, the overall tendency, particularly in the temporal domain, is that when the social status of the recipient is superior to the writer, the distal perspective is likely to be taken in order to show deference: a wife writing to her husband, or a man writing to his lord. On the other hand, the proximal perspective is more likely to be taken, for instance, in cases of a man writing to his wife or his mother, and especially, of a woman corresponding with another woman.

DISCOURSE, DIALOGUE AND FAMILY MATTERS

The previous section has examined how frequently the writer employs the elements of space and time, and which perspective, proximal or distal, he or she is likely to take in communicating with the recipient, regarding letters as dialogues between them. Adopting this viewpoint, the next step is to carry out a qualitative

analysis of discourse in order to see how the relationships and messages between the writer and the recipient are connected to the spatio-temporal systems.

The first context most clearly shows how family matters can affect the choice of spatio-temporal elements. In (2), John I expresses a deep concern as an absent husband about his wife's health:

(2) Jon Hobbys tellith me þat ye be seekly, wech me lekith not to here, prayi[n]g yow hartyly þat ye take what may do yow eese and spare not, and in any wyse take no thowth ne to moch labor for þes materis, ne set it not so to yowr hert þat ye fare þe wers for it. And as for þe mater, so þey ouercome yow not with fors ne bosting I shall have þe maner sewrlyer to me and my þan þe Dewk shall haue Cossey, dowl ye not. And jn cas I come not hom within thre wekis, I pray yow come to me; and Wykes hath promysid to kepe the plase in yowr absens.

(John I 74.9–16)

His concern makes him address Margaret directly, employing a variety of proximal elements, i.e. proximal and medial pronouns, proximal modals and proximal tense forms including the deictic verb *come*, as in *I pray yow come to me*.

Next, an example of a correspondence between women, where Margaret addresses Dame Elizabeth Brews, the lady whose daughter is marry her son:

(3) Ryght wurchepful and my cheff lady and cosyn, as hertly as I can I recomaunde me to yow. Madam, lyeketh yow to vndyrstand that þe cheff cause of my wrytyng to yow at thys season ys thys. I wot well yt ys not vnremembred wyth yow the large comunycacyon that dyuers tymes hathe ben had towchyng the maryage of my cosyn Margery yowyr dowghter and my son John, of whyche I haue ben as glad, and now late-wardes as sory, as euyr I was for eny maryage in my lyve.

(Margaret 226.1–7)

Recall the data in Table 5, which indicates that she employs proximal elements most frequently to Dame Brews. The text in (3) demonstrates that she exploits forms of address several times in her letter including those in the above extract, in addition to various types of proximal elements such as proximal and medial pronouns, the proximal demonstrative *thys*, proximal tense forms, and proximal temporal adverbials. These proximal elements altogether can be considered to be positive politeness strategies to offer a common ground, as pointed out in the discussion of Table 5 in the previous section.

In (4) below, Margaret writes to her eldest son John II after the death of his father:

(4) And at the reuerens of God, spede youre maters soo thys terme that we may be in rest heraftere, and lette not for no labour for the season; and remembere the grete cost and charge that we haue had hedyre-toward, and thynk verely it may not lange endure.

(Margaret 198.21–24)

She exhorts him to take action without any delay, effectively employing various proximal elements in combination with imperatives.

A form of address followed by proximal elements can be observed frequently in Paston letters. In (5), John III takes a direct approach, asking his mother to send him money with a form of address and a variety of proximal elements:

(5) Modyr, I beseche yow, and ye may spare eny money, þat ye wyll do yowr almesse on me and send me some in as hasty wyse as is possybyll, for by my trowthe my lechecrafte and fesyk, and rewardys to them that haue kept me and condyt me to London, hathe cost me sythe Estern Day more then v li. And now I haue neythyr met, drink, clothys, lechecraft, nor money but vp-on borowyng, and I haue asayid my frendys so ferre that they be-gyn to fayle now in my gretest ned that euyr I was in.

(John III 346.8–14)

It has already been pointed out in the discussion of Table 5 that John III (and his brother John II) actively employ proximal elements for their mother.

By contrast, the writer can also take a distal perspective in asking the recipient to do something. In her first letter to her son John II, Margaret makes her polite requests and expresses her wish about the marriage of one of her servants, combining two distal modals, i.e. *wold* and *shuld*:

(6) Item, I wold ye shuld speke wyth Wekis and knowe hys dysposysion to Jane Walsham. She hathe seyde syn he departed hens but she myght have hym she wold neuer [be] maryyd; hyr hert ys sore set on hym. She told me þat he seyde to hyr þat ther was no woman in þe world he lovyd so welle. I wold not he shuld jape hyr, for she menythe good feythe, and yf he wolle not have hyr late me wete in hast and I shall purvey for hyr in othyr wysse.

(Margaret 175.23–29)

The first modal *wold* is used as a main verb, while the second *shuld* is an auxiliary. This particular pattern is taken exclusively by Margaret to express her tentativeness and negative politeness (Nakayasu 2017a).

In the following letter in (7), Margaret asks her son John III to help her to get money back from his brother John II. She states the reason why she needs that money, using distal elements such as past tense forms, 3rd person pronouns and adverbials:

(7) And he had yet be-forn thys tyme haue sent me l marc. þer-of yet, I wold haue thowth that he had had som consideracion of myn daungere that I haue put me in fore hym. Remember hym that I haue excusyd hym of xx li. þat þe Priore of Bromholm had which shwld ell haue be in that daungere þat yt shwld haue be to ws a gret rebwke wyth-owt that he myth haue ben holpyn wyth shwch money as he shuld haue had of ywyre fadyrs beqwest; and I payd to þe shreue fore hym also money. All thes shwld haue holpyn me well þer-to, by-syde othyre thyngys that I haue boryn these yerys þat I speke not of.

(Margaret 209.23–31)

Note that she exploits the pattern ‘distal modal + perfect infinitive’ 6 times in this letter. By making skillful use of these distal (hypothetical in particular) senses, she is trying to persuade her son to help her with the matter.

The next typical case to coordinate distal elements is to report what happened in the writer's domain to the recipient. In (8) below, Margaret describes an attack of a certain Wymondham and his men on her chaplain James Gloys in her letter to her husband John I:

(8) Ryght worshipfull husbond, I recomaund me to yow, and prey yow to wete þat on Friday last passed be-fore noon, (...) And Jamys Gloys come with his hatte on his hede betwen bothe his men, as he was wont of custome to do. And whanne Gloys was a-yenst Wymondham he seid þus, 'Couere thy heed!' And Gloys seid ageyn, 'So I shall for the.' And whanne Gloys was farther passed by þe space of iij or iiij strede, Wymondham drew owt his dagger and seid, 'Shalt þow so, knave?'

(Margaret 129.1–12)

She basically employs distal forms in her report: distal tense forms, distal pronouns, and adverbials denoting a particular point in the past such as *on Friday last passed be-fore noon* and *whanne* clauses (Nakayasu 2017). Note that she exploits direct speeches to report what was actually uttered, where she effectively uses proximal and medial forms, and the impolite address term *knave*. In particular, she utilises three th-forms of the medial (2nd person) pronoun here, although she uses y-forms in other parts. Davis (1954: 131) states that "[w]here the singular occurs in the Paston letters, it always implies anger, contempt or hostility".

The following letter by Margaret in (9) also reports to her husband what happened in her domain, coordinating distal elements: 3rd person pronouns, past tense forms, the distal modal *kowd*, the distal demonstrative *tho*:

(9) Your fader and myn was dys day sevenyth at Bekelys for a matyr of the Pryor of Bromholme, and he lay at Gerlyston þat nyth and was þer tyl it was ix of þe cloke and þe toder day. And I sentte thedyr for a gounne, and my moder seyde þat I xulde non have dens tyl I had be þer a-3en; and so þei cowde non gete.

(Margaret 126.13–17)

ALTERNATION BETWEEN PROXIMAL AND DISTAL PERSPECTIVES

It follows from what has been observed in the previous section that the writers are actively involved with the spatio-temporal systems in their dialogues with the recipients, paying attention to their relationships with them and the messages they wish to deliver. The present section will examine how the writers manage the spatio-temporal systems alternating proximal and distal perspectives to interact with the recipients. It should be noted, however, that such alternations in perspectives in Paston letters are not so dynamic as in fictions such as *Canterbury tales* (Nakayasu 2017), because the letter writers do not aim for dramatic effects but try to state what has happened around them as it was and request the recipients to do something.

First, alternations in perspectives can occur in either the spatial or the temporal domain only. In (10) below, Margaret is concerned about her husband John I because she has not heard from him for a while, and she alternates the perspective only in the temporal domain (Nakayasu 2017a, Nakayasu 2017b):

(10) Ryth worchepfull husbond, I recomand me to yow. Plesyt yow to wet þat I sent yow a lettyr by Barneys man of Wychyngham wyche was wretyn on Seynt Thomas Day in Crystmas, and I had no tydyngys nor lettyr of yow sene the weke befor Crystmas, wher-of I mervayle sore. I ferre me it is not well wyth yow be-cawse ye came not home or sent er thys tyme. I hopyd verily ye schold haue ben at home by Twelthe at þe ferthest. I pray yow hertly þat ye wole wychesaue to send me word how ye do as hastily as ye may, for my hert schall nevyr be in ese tyll I haue tydyngys fro yow.

(Margaret 168.1–9)

She starts her letter with the proximal perspective, with the aid of a form of address *ryth worchepfull husbond* and proximal tense forms. She then alternates it to the distal perspective when she mentions the topic of the letter she sent to him to try to direct his attention to it. She employs adverbials to denote the past, *on Seynt Thomas Day in Crystmas*, *sene the weke befor Crystmas*, *er thys tyme* and *by Twelthe* together with distal tense forms, and occasionally expresses her feelings with proximal tense forms. Finally, she goes back to her concerns again exploiting proximal tense forms and proximal modals *wole*, *may* and *schall*. In the spatial domain, on the other hand, she continues to use proximal and medial pronouns, keeping the perspective proximal.

The change in perspectives can also occur only in the spatial domain. In the following letter in (11), John II writes to his brother John III, informing that Lord and Lady Norfolk will come to London and to ask for his advice.

(11) I recomande me to yow, prayng yow hertely þat I maye have weetyng whan þat my lorde and ladye off Norffolk shalle be at London, and howgh longe they shall tery there, and in especiall my lorde off Norffolk, for vppon there comyng to London were it for me to be guydyd. Neuerthesse I wolde be soory to come there but iff I nedys most. (...) wherffore iff ye thynke it be convenyent that I come thyddre, I praye yow sende me worde as hastely as ye maye, and by what tyme ye thynke most convenyent þat I sholde be there. (...) wherffor jff I so doo by lyklyhod it woll be a xiiij dayes er I be heer ageyn.

(John II 289.1–15)

Basically, he uses proximal tense forms and modals with some exceptions in the temporal domain, and in the spatial domain, he continues to use proximal and medial pronouns as far as the person is concerned. As regards spatial adverbs, by contrast, he demonstrates a skillful switch from the distal to the proximal perspective. He exploits distal spatial adverbs to refer to London such as *there* and *thydre* while he utilises the proximal adverb *heer* to signify Norfolk. It is also interesting to note, in passing, that he combines distal adverbs with the verb *come* as in *come there*

and *come thyddre*. Although he is in Norfolk (proximal for him), his attention is on London, the city which is a distal place but he purposes to approach.

Having examined the alternations in perspectives in either the temporal or the spatial domain, the final step is to analyse an alternation in the integrated spatio-temporal domain. In his letter to his father John I in (12), John II writes about the election for knight of the shire, and then concludes his letter with complimentary remarks:

(12) It is talkyd here howe þat ye and Howard schuld a streuyn to-gyddre on þe schere daye, and on of Howardys me[n] sc[h]uld a strekyn yow twyess wyth a dagere, and soo ye schuld a þen hurt but fore a good dobelet þat ye hadde on at that tyme. Blyssyd be God that ye hadde it on.

No more I wryth to yowere good faderhod at thys tym, but Allmygthy God haue yowe in hys kepyng and send yowe vyttorye of yowre elmyse and worschyp jncressyng to yowre lyuys endyn.

(John II 231.63–69)

He begins this part of his letter with a proximal perspective, i.e. a proximal tense form and the proximal spatial adverb *here*, and switches to the distal perspective when he starts writing about Howard and his men, employing the ‘modal + perfect infinitive’ pattern three times as in *schuld a strekyn*, distal tense forms and the temporal adverbial containing a distal demonstrative *at that tyme*. He then makes complimentary remarks to address his father more directly, returning to the proximal perspective: he changes the tense to proximal and employs the temporal adverbial with a proximal demonstrative *at thys tym*.

These texts exemplify that, although the alternations between perspectives are not so dramatic, the writers in Paston letters are actively involved with the spatio-temporal systems in dialogue, taking the message and the relationships with their recipients into consideration.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has analysed how Paston men and women communicated with each other by letters, paying careful attention to the spatio-temporal systems. Regarding letters as dialogues between the writer and the recipient, statistical analyses were conducted of how frequently the elements of space and time are employed by men and women with a contrast between proximal and distal elements. Men have a stronger tendency for a proximal perspective than women, while women are more likely to take a distal perspective than men. A detailed examination of the relationship between the writer and the recipient showed that when the social status of the recipient is superior to the writer, a distal perspective is more likely to be taken. On the other hand, a proximal perspective is more often adopted when the

recipient is a woman, for example, the wife and the mother, and this tendency for a proximal perspective is the strongest in a case of correspondence between women.

Qualitative analyses of discourse were then performed to examine how the messages deriving from family matters and the relationships between the writer and the recipient are involved with the spatio-temporal systems. A proximal perspective is taken, for example, when a man is concerned about his wife's health, and a son is requesting his mother to lend him money. By contrast, a distal perspective may be taken, for instance, when the writer is a mother trying to persuade her son to help her, and a wife reporting on incidents to her husband. Examinations of the texts from a wider perspective revealed that alternations between proximal and distal perspectives occur either in the spatial or the temporal domain, or in the integrated spatio-temporal domain. Although these alternations are not so dramatic in Paston letters, they demonstrated how the letter writers are involved with the spatio-temporal systems in dialogues with their recipients.

In conclusion, this paper has offered a new approach for the analysis of space and time in Paston letters, and shed fresh light on the relationships between medieval society, language and literature. Further explorations into other genres and other periods may afford illuminating insights in the developing systems of space and time, viewed from an expanded perspective.

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