

“report”, “phatic” etc.). While surface text types are traditionally based on material conditions and cultural models, the novel notion of socio-pragmatic subtypes is based for the most part on the different functions that language can fulfill (in the sense of Bühler, Jakobson, or Halliday, for example), an extended form of accommodation theory, and speech act theory. This is the topic, from a rather theoretical point of view, of the following section. In a second step, the differentiation into subtypes will be tested in an exploratory study of the late Middle English *Paston Letters* (ed. by Davis 1971). It will be shown that writers in the late Middle English and Early Modern English period were not simply constrained by the basic letter-writing conventions of the time, though these certainly played an important role, but that the function of the letter and the roles of addressee and author, i.e. its underlying, socio-pragmatic text subtype, were also of great importance in shaping its actual form. Therefore, this paper is eventually also concerned with the personal freedom of authors and how they employed the linguistic means available to them for their individual purposes.

2. Text types, genres, registers and related matters

The “terminological maze” (Moessner 2001) of text types, genres, styles, and registers is still a matter of dispute and controversial debates (see, e.g. Moessner 2001; Diller 2001). The present paper is not intended as yet another voice in this sometimes very dissonant chorus; it will not make any claims as to whether the distinctions introduced in the following are a matter of text type, genre, register, or style. Instead, “letters” will be regarded, superficially, as one “text type”, in contrast, for instance, to other text types such as “sermon”, “recipe”, “novel”, or “contract”. Text types differ from each other in both intra- and extra-linguistic features and are generally based on native speakers’ intuitions about these types. For example, a native speaker can always recognise and distinguish a recipe from a novel. That these text types and their individual features must also be understood as prototypes goes without saying. A novel might be very short, for example, or a recipe very long; a novel might contain a recipe, a recipe a brief narrative exposition — but both remain principally recipe and novel. Within the text type “letter” several “subtypes” can be defined. The most common distinction is between “private/personal letters” and “non-private/business/official letters”.¹ The external determinants in this case appear to be the purpose of the letter, publicity, and addressee (i.e. some social relationships and roles simply do not allow for private letters, e.g. John Paston I writing to King Henry IV in 1449 — this clearly has to be business communication, in this case an official petition). The internal, linguistic correlates depend, of course, on the cultural and linguistic background, but generally revolve around formal, literate constructions and forms expressing linguistic and social distance in

non-private documents (e.g. Latinate vocabulary, complex NP structures, sentence initial adverbials; cf. Kohnen 2001) and informal, oral constructions, and forms expressing linguistic and social proximity in private/personal correspondence (e.g. Germanic vocabulary, zero relativisation, short forms, simple NP structures, the use of complex predicates; see Kytö 2000 for an illustrative study of early American letters; see Koch and Oesterreicher 1994 for the "language of distance" versus "language of proximity" distinction). However, apart from this common distinction between private and non-private correspondence, there seem to be further subtypes of letters: "love letters", "requests", "orders" are more or less intuitive categories that spring to mind. The introduction of this distinction rehearses the theme of multiple determination of linguistic variation as outlined by Ferguson: "Every utterance (in speaking and writing) simultaneously exemplifies dialect, register, genre, and conversational variation in the senses used here" (1994:25). The differentiation of various subtypes plays on the themes of genre and conversational variation in Ferguson's terminology. It relates to genres in Fergusonian terms as most "letters", particularly in late Middle English and Early Modern English, have a clear, "identifying internal structure, differentiated from other message types in the repertoire of the community" (Ferguson 1994:21). In other words, they are commonly realised with very fixed formulae and structures (see Davis 1965, 1967; Nevalainen 2001; Sanchez Roura 2002 a,b), and thus leave very little room for personal choices. Letters, in late Middle English, were, after all, an *ars dictaminis* or *ars dictandi* (Schäfer 1995:316; cf. Markus 1988:172). Today, in contrast, we are witnessing a gradual loss of defining structural features for the genre/text type "letter", with no uniform greeting formulae, frequent lack of an exposition, or even without salutations and complimentary closes (cf. Wyss 2002:79, 87 on the loss of *epistolare Schreib-schriftlichkeit* 'epistolary written-ness'). Letters in Middle English were much more conventionalised with regard to their structure. But apart from that, speakers were relatively free in their choices how to fill the empty spaces between the various formulae and obligatory parts, as will be shown in the following sections. Even the obligatory parts themselves still left some choice, albeit very little (see Wood, this vol., for more details on variation in the opening and closing formulae). And this is the place where Ferguson's "conversion factor" plays a role: Language in general can be used for different functions. The Viennese psychologist Karl Bühler distinguished between three different functions: descriptive, expressive, appellative (Bühler 1934:28f). Language is used descriptively (in a symbolic function) when it relates states or events in this world. (Halliday and Lyons referred to this function also as ideational: e.g. "A man with a gun is waiting for you outside".) It is used expressively (in a symptomatic function) when it relates the thoughts or feelings of the speaker (e.g. "Ouch!" or "I'm tired"). The appellative (signalling)

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function of language takes precedence when language is meant to invoke some reaction in the hearer (e.g. through directive speech acts: "Give me the salt", "Be careful!"). For Bühler, these three language functions are idealisations which rarely, if ever, occur in isolated, pure forms. Instead, in real life utterances we find a mixture or overlap of all three functions, as in, for example, "I think I have forgotten my invitation". This can express simultaneously the speaker's thoughts and feelings (e.g. embarrassment), a description of the state of the world (e.g. the fact that the invitation is not there), and an indirect, directive speech act intended to provoke a reaction on part of the hearer (e.g. "let me in without the invitation").

How does that relate to the question of text types and letters in particular? It may be argued that all three language functions are, essentially, also present in written communication. Fictional writing, such as poetry and novels, prototypically fulfill the expressive function of language (although, of course, we also find programmatic fictional texts which have a strong appellative component or texts that border on the descriptive, ideational part). Newspaper reports, on the other hand, (should) lean towards the descriptive function. Cooking recipes, manuals, and similar texts are exemplars of appellative text types. Letters, however, seem to fall in between all these functions. They do not belong *per se* and prototypically to one single category, at least not in the late Middle English period. The first letters, written more than 5,000 years ago, were essentially business letters, i.e. they fulfilled descriptive and appellative tasks. Only with the advent of private, personal correspondence (but see footnote 1) did the expressive dimension enter the stage. By c. 1500 AD letters certainly fulfilled all three functions to a greater or lesser extent and were not necessarily subject to a strict division between private, personal and non-private, business letters. On the contrary: many Paston Letters, for example, actually show an interesting division within one single letter: while in half of the letter the author strictly talks business, the other half is decidedly more intimate and personal (cf. Kohl 1986:99). Descriptive, expressive, appellative functions clearly coexisted (pace Lass 1999:150).

How exactly do the different functions embodied in letters influence or shape the linguistic form? It has been mentioned above that letters in Middle English were quite formalised and that letters often employed fixed phrases and formulae. These, obviously, would show only few differences with respect to the various functions. However, it has also been argued that in between the formulae and even within the range of possible formulae there is a certain degree of variability which may be used for functional, communicative purposes. The first and most obvious difference in letter forms and functions lies in the speech act types that can be found. Quite simply, descriptive texts contain more representative speech acts, expressive texts more expressive speech acts, and appellative texts more directives. A second diagnostic may be simple lexical

variation, as has been noted in the late Middle English letters. The difference between the two and "I humbly recommend" and "I humbly recommend" affection, positive politeness, deference, negative politeness, socio-pragmatic functions, expressions. On top of that, particular letter also contain psychological principles (Giles 1982), or, more precisely, a nutshell, accommodate to the speech act, like us more for doing so, is the reverse use of the principle of accommodation (Spolsky 1988:108). This regards letter-writing, a matter of accommodation, mind of which the writer please, if not by favour, also discusses accommodation and Samuel Johnson's principle of uniformity (line of thought should be in the fifteenth century. We find her son, John II: (1) What be certain world ye should beseechings, bethe in bette and bette, trove ye shall, her son John I. Like Walpole about the employ a style "as low" does not necessarily in style and register awareness, freedom to utilise more. In this context, authors, seems to not wish to offend the

variation, as has been reported by Sanchez Roura (2002b) in her study of the late Middle English Cely Letters. She quite rightly points out that there is a big difference between the two commendations "I heartily recommend me to you" and "I humbly recommend me to you". The former clearly expresses warmth, affection, positive politeness (in Brown and Levinson's terms, 1987); the latter deference, negative politeness, "an act of self-humiliation" (2002b: 85). Thus, socio-pragmatic functions may determine lexical choices even in very fixed expressions. On top of these obvious differences, however, the function of a particular letter also makes itself felt in certain linguistic forms through socio-psychological principles such as accommodation and dissociation (Street and Giles 1982), or, more broadly speaking, identification theory (Smith 1996:9). In a nutshell, accommodation theory claims 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). Dissociation, on the other hand, is the reverse use of linguistic means to signal differentiation or separation (see Spolsky 1988: 108f; Hickey 2000 for extensive and illuminating discussions). As regards letter-writing, Fitzmaurice (2000: 362) quotes Horace Walpole on the matter of accommodation and dissociation: "a letter is addressed to a single mind of which the prejudices and partialities are known, and must therefore please, if not by favouring them, by forbearing to oppose them". Bax (2002) also discusses accommodation in the written exchanges of Hester Lynch Thrale and Samuel Johnson in the eighteenth century. Taking into account the principle of uniformity in linguistic change, there is no reason why a similar line of thought should not have played a role three hundred years earlier, in the fifteenth century. We find some support for this in Margaret Paston's advice to

her son, John II:

(1) What be entent therof was I wot not, but thowge he toke it but lyghly I

wold ye shuld not spare to write to hym ageyn as lowly as ye cane,

besecheyng hym to be your good fader, and send hym suche tydnyngs as

bethe in be contré ther ye bethe in, and that ye be ware of your expence

bettr and ye have be before thys tyme, and be your owne purse-berere. I

trowe ye shall fynd yt most profytalbe to you. (1463, Margaret Paston to

her son John II, no. 175, p. 288, ll. 13–18)

Like Walpole about three hundred years later, she suggests that the son should employ a style "as lowly as ye can" when asking his father for support. While this does not necessarily imply linguistic accommodation as such, it still shows clearly style and register awareness as well as the presence of enough individual linguistic freedom to utilise more or less subtle stylistic differences in letter forms. In this context it should also be noted that Walpole, just like most other authors, seems to have assumed basically cooperative speakers/writers who do not wish to offend their interlocutors, or who at least pay some attention to the

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addressees' personae. This is certainly important and true for the subtypes of "report" and "request". With these subtypes, speakers do well if they avoid language use that may be offensive to the addressee. In other words, if speakers need money or other important social and emotional resources, we expect greater accommodation to the language of the addressee, i.e. the grant-giver. If, however, a person in a socially more powerful position writes to a socially inferior person, as in the subtype "order", for example, we expect very little accommodation or perhaps even dissociation. As a somewhat complicating factor it should be added that power and status in relationships need not be static and fixed, but that these may be dynamic, negotiable, and evolving (cf. e.g. Watts 1991 for a comprehensive overview on power and status in family discourse). Fitzmaurice (2002) discusses the correspondence between Lady Mary Pierpont and Edward Wortley in the eighteenth century. In this study, she describes writers and readers who are not prototypically cooperative, as is commonly assumed, but who are constantly fighting for power in a generally problematic and shifting relationship — not so much because one of them is *per se* more powerful than the other, but because this is part of the battle of wits in the relationship itself. Dynamic relationships of this kind are of course much harder to document and analyse in historical sociolinguistics, even if they are perhaps more realistic and more fascinating. Sociolinguists, at least from a correlational point of view, often have to rely on stable patterns and factors; what they are looking for is a social still life, not a video clip (see Bergs in prep. for a detailed discussion).

As regards the question of style and sociolinguistic variation, it seems reasonable to assume that in the case of "dissociation" the actual style of the letter much more reflects the writer's own usage (is closer to the "vernacular") than in the case of "accommodation", where the writer tries to emulate the addressee's language as far as possible, for instance in order to flatter the recipient or create positive face. What also needs to be taken into account is Bell's Style Axiom, which says, in a nutshell, that intraspeaker variation only follows interspeaker variation, i.e. register and style variation generally should not exceed socially motivated variation. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg have tested this hypothesis on the basis of five changes documented in the Corpus of Early English Correspondence (CEEC; see Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1996) and have found the very same implicational scale to be operative in their data: "social variation (regional variation > gender variation) > register variation according to addressee" (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003:200). Thus, studies on linguistic variability in early data should also consider both intra- and interspeaker factors. In the present case, the Pastons provide data from roughly one geographical location (mostly Norfolk, Cambridge, and London) and very few female informants (four out of fifteen with approximately one third of the total data, of which in turn more

than 90% was produced in this vol., for a detailed appearance to be negotiated stylistic differences, to a certain extent with certain social hypotheses on the basis of evidence from between 1300 and 1500. In the following, the text type category are Middle English Letters and Papers by differentiation into Inventory, Testaments of Complaint, state Petition quality as the interactive/bidirectional Verses, Recipes etc. they are not necessarily the text type "letter" classification has been observations in the "Reports" basically descriptive function may be written from meant to be on the influence is to be expected to socially superior/hearer/addressee superior to inferior and appellative not give orders, do — though these are neutral. They still give advice. "Phatic" data expressive language, although they, too. Although it may

than 90% was produced by one single speaker, Margaret Paston — see Wood, this vol., for a detailed discussion of Margaret's language), so that these factors appear to be negligible. In sum, one basic hypothesis is that, apart from subtle stylistic differences, different subtypes of letters should correlate at least to some extent with certain salient linguistic variables. In the following, we will test this hypothesis on the basis of the Paston Letters, i.e. a corpus of family correspondence from between 1421 and 1503, with c. 245,000 words (ed. by Davis 1971).

3. The linguistic consequences of socio-pragmatic text types

In the following, the linguistic consequences of a socio-pragmatic division of the text type category "letter" will be described and discussed on the basis of the late Middle English Paston Letters. The authoritative edition of the *Paston Letters and Papers* by Davis (1971)² already contains some intuitive and basic differentiation into different text types: Letter, Indenture, Memorandum, Inventory, Testament/Draft Will, Declaration, Schedule, Verses, Account, Bill of Complaint, Statement, Recipe, Draft Deed, and Petition. Only Letter and Petition qualify as belonging to the text type "letter", since they are the only interactive/bidirectional texts, i.e. written for a particular recipient. Schedules, Verses, Recipes etc. are not necessarily written with any addressee in mind, i.e. they are not necessarily interactive/bidirectional and thus cannot be included in the text type "letter". In terms of socio-pragmatic subtypes, the following classification has been used in this study: reports, requests, orders, counsel letters, phatic letters.³ This division is based in part on phenomenological observations in the texts, but also on the language functions discussed above: "Reports" basically report, i.e. describe some facts or state of affairs (the descriptive function) from a socio-psychologically neutral point of view. They may be written from superior to inferior and vice versa, but since their focus is meant to be on description rather than on social relationships, only little influence is to be expected. "Requests" are generally made from socially inferior hearer/addressee. "Orders" are also appellative in nature, but made from superior to inferior. "Counsel" letters are borderline cases between the descriptive and appellative function. They are rather characterised *ex negativo*: they do not give orders, do not express requests, and they do not focus on descriptions — though these may also be present. Socio-psychologically, they are also rather neutral. They simply give counsel without forcing the addressee to follow the advice. "Phatic" letters are a mixture of phatic communion, descriptive, and expressive language functions. They show no socio-psychological asymmetries, although they, too, can be directed from superior to inferior and vice versa. Although it may be suggested that this list, certainly non-comprehensive,

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represents parts of a universal text type inventory, as it reflects universal language functions (cf. Bühler 1934:26ff), it also seems clear that individual linguistic communities at different times, in different regions, and in different cultures may employ these subtypes differently. Some types may simply be absent; others may be added through more finely grained distinctions. The development of (at least European) letters in general, from official business letters to a general means of written communication, is a case in point in this respect.

Table 1. Socio-pragmatic differentiation of text types

Text type(s)	Subtype(s)
Letter	Report (= descriptive, neutral) Request (= appellative, socially inferior to superior) Orders (= appellative, socially superior to inferior) Counsel (= descriptive-appellative) Phatic (= phatic-descriptive-expressive)
Petition	Request (= appellative, socially inferior to socially superior)

Some examples: Letter no. 346 (1471), from John Paston III to his mother Margaret, belongs, of course, to the general text type "letter". Pragmatically, however, it should be classified as a "request". It begins with the traditional formulaic introduction:

(2) Afyr humbyll and most dew recommendacyon, in as humbyll wyse as I can I besече you of your blyssynge, preyng God to reward you wyth as myche plesyer and hertys ease as I have latward causyd you to have trowbyll and thowghtr. (1471, John Paston III to his mother Margaret, no. 346, p. 565, ll. 1-4)

This introduction and greeting, though formulated along traditional lines, is extremely humble in comparison to other similar letters (cf. e.g. Sanchez-Kouras comments on lexical variation between "heartily" and "humbly" mentioned above). In the rest of the letter John asks for money and help; in doing so he frequently employs phrases such as "ye may spare eny money" (l. 8), "do your almesse" and "in as hasty wyse as is possybyll" (both l. 9). These seem to underline his very unfortunate position. The letter culminates in John's exclamation that he has "neyther met, drink, clothyng, lechecraft, nor money but vp-on borowynge" (ll 12f). He asks for money, clothing, information on certain important issues, help, and many other substantial things and ends by ascertaining that all his renderings are "trew for very serteyn" (l. 40). In brief, this is an almost prototypical example of the subtype "request".

Letter no. 339 (from John Paston III to his brother John Paston II in 1470)

was also classified primarily as "letter". Pragmatically, however, this turns out to be more like a "report". It also begins with a formulaic opening; this, however, is much shorter and much less humble in comparison to his brother's: "Ryght worchefull syr, I recomand me to you aftry þe old maner, sertyfying you þat I have comonlyd wyth my modyr for your comyng hom [...]"(II 1F). Interesting here is his mentioning of "þe old maner" of introducing a letter and of recommending the author. This interesting metalinguistic comment hints at some kind of awareness with regard to the traditional, old-fashioned, high prestige form of beginning letters (Davis 1965, 1967; see also Sanchez Roura 2002b: 81–84, Nevalainen 2001), and, what is more, it shows that authors had the chance to vary these forms at their discretion. In this particular case, it may indicate the expressively low-key tone, orality, and informality of the letter. John goes on in a list-like fashion, telling his brother about various things that have been discussed before: "Item, as for your clok at Harcourtys, it wyll be nye Estern er it be redy [...] Item, the caryer forgat your byll behynd hym [...] Item, [...]"(p. 554, II 5ff). All this indicates a report rather than a request. The fact that there are a few lines in which John asks for minor things ("Item, I pray you that ye wyll make aqwetance on-to the person of Mawtby [...]"(II 13f), "Item, I prey you send me swyr tydy[n]gys of the world in hast" (I. 41)) does not change the essential character of this letter, which is that of a report. Many forms and constructions that we find here would be stylistically awkward in a humble request. A request involves asking the person for vital, important things, and a strong dependence on the fulfillment of this request. An order has a similar kind of function, but here we find a reversal of power between addressee and author:

(3) I grete you wele, letyng you wete that þer was told me a thing in your

absens þat goth right right nere myn herf [...] Where-fore, in eschwynng of þe greet slandre and inconveniens þat may grow þer-of, I requyre you and more-ouer charge you vp-on my blissyng, and as ye wull have my good will [...] that ye restreyn it. [...] And how so euer wull counsell you the cont[r]ary, do as I advyse you in this behalffe or ell trost neuer to have comfort in of me. [...] There-fore send me word þe berere here-of wheder ye haue assent to any such thing or nought, and how that ye be disposid to do there-in; for I shal not be quiete in myn herf till I vnderstonde you of þe cont[r]ary disposition.

Be your moder
(c. 1472, Margaret Paston to her son John II, no. 214, p. 361ff)

In this letter, Margaret comes straight to the point and simply leaves out most formulae and formal features, such as the common commendation and pious valediction (see Sanchez Roura 2002b, Nevalainen 2001). She addresses her son

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directly, gives orders in a very straightforward fashion, and even includes some threats should he not comply. It seems very reasonable to assume that Margaret did not even try to emulate her son's language to create familiarity or positive face, as would have been expected on the basis of general socio-psychological findings (see also, e.g. Walpole's advice quoted above). She is the more powerful person in this relationship, the *materfamilias*, a strong woman with a good sense of business (see Wood, this vol.). So, on the contrary, it seems very likely that this is her very own style, quite close to her "vernacular" in the traditional Labovian sense,⁴ and hardly tainted by any social conventions.

In what way do social status and pragmatic/stylistic function interact in these letters? In other words, how much of the form is determined by mere social status and conventions, how much is due to individual decisions resting on socio-psychological principles, such as accommodation? It is to be expected, for instance, that the two brothers John II and John III *per se* interact differently with each other than with their mother Margaret. While the differences between the two factors and their effects are certainly very complex and hard to establish in each and every case, some general indicators can be found. Margaret, on the one hand, being the more powerful person, shows very little variation in her salutations and complimentary closes. In the letters to her husband, she almost exclusively uses "right worshipful husband" and some deity-invoking formula at the end (e.g. "The blyssyd Trynyte haue yow in his keepyng", 1454, no. 151, p. 2-55, l. 21). This is in perfect accord with decorum and contemporary (English) letter-writing style (see Sanchez-Roura 2002 a,b; Nevalainen 2001). However, in some very few cases, she either uses brief forms ("In hast, all in hast", 1459, no. 152, p. 257, l. 45) or leaves out the formulae altogether. John II, on the other hand, being the less powerful person,⁵ shows much more variation. In writing to his mother he effectively varies between no address or pious valediction and the whole battery of polite usage ("Most worschypffull and kynde moodre" (1472, no. 266, p. 445, l. 1); "No more to yow atthys tyme, but thesu have yow in hys keepyng" (1473, no. 279, p. 467, l. 42)). Intermediate forms include, *inter alia*, simple "Moodre" (1469, no. 243, p. 405, l. 1), and "Affredew recommendacion" (1474, no. 286, p. 477, l. 1). It is very interesting to note that he stops using most formulaic language in letters to his mother in or during 1476, i.e. from letter no. 295 onwards. How far this is related to his success in regaining Caister, the family estate, is a matter of speculation, or sociolinguistic still-life versus video clip. In letters to his brother, John III, we find a similar bandwidth of variation, albeit with different formulae. The most common forms of address are minor variations of "Ryght wyschypffull and hertly beloved brothere" (1473, no. 282, p. 470, l. 1) and the simple "I comande me to yow" (1471, no. 264, p. 442, l. 1). Pious valedictions are almost completely absent from these letters. One of the very few occurrences clearly exemplifies the status of this rhetorical element: "I schall sende yow tydyng of othere

thyngs in haste, with the grace of God, who &c" (1468, no. 238, p. 399, ll. 31ff, emphasis added). What can be made of this? These patterns seem to suggest that some basic variability, such as the presence or absence of pious valedictions, might be governed mostly by social status. On the other hand, some of the variation cannot be accounted for in terms of social status alone. It seems to be based on other factors, including subject matter and the author's intention, in other words: socio-pragmatic subtypes.

Before the distinction between text types and socio-pragmatic subtypes is put to the test with two linguistic variables, one word of caution is in order. While many of the letters have to be analysed from the perspective of critical discourse analysis in order to determine their actual function, sometimes authors explicitly state their intention:

- (4) After all dewtes of recommendacyon, in as humblyll wyse as I can I besече yow of *your* blyssyng. The cheff cause that I wryght to yow for at this season is for that I vnderstand that my lady wold be ryght glad to haue yow a-bought hys at hys laboure [...]
- (John Paston III to his mother Margaret, no. 371, 1476, p. 602, ll. 1–4)

John goes on to explain that his wife will write to Margaret soon and that he would be glad if she could be there. The rest is a report-like list. This may be regarded as a borderline case between "request" and "report" and shows that the differentiation into subtypes does not have the same empirical background and precision as the distinction of text types in general. In fact, as has been pointed out above, socio-pragmatic text types, just like Bühler's language functions, may show a great deal of overlap and should thus be treated as non-discrete constructs with *prototypical exemplars* (see Taylor 1995 on *prototype theory* in general). It has been shown in previous studies (e.g. Kytö 2000) that the distinction between private and non-private letters not only surfaces in different speech acts and styles, but that it also has consequences for the distribution of certain linguistic variables, for instance the use of first and second person pronouns, possibility modals and wh-questions. In the following, the differentiation into socio-pragmatic text types will be tested with regard to the distribution of two important variables of late Middle English: the third person plural pronouns (i.e. *hem* and *here* versus *them* and *their*) and some *relativisation patterns*, in particular the new forms *who*, *whose*, *whom*.

3.1 Personal pronouns

During the Middle English period, the Old English third person plural pronouns *hi*, *here*, *hem* were progressively ousted by the Scandinavian loan forms *they*, *their*, and *them*. While *they* had already been firmly established by the beginning of the fourteenth century, perhaps even earlier, *here* and *hem* can still

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be found, sporadically, until about the first quarter of the sixteenth century (see Lass 1992:120f; Werner 1991; Bergs, in prep.). Thus, we can expect some variation in the Paston Letters, which were written between 1421 and 1503. The basic results for this corpus can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Personal pronouns in the Paston Letters⁶ (text types)

Text types	Pronoun	Agnes	John I	John III	Margaret	William II	Total
Letter	hem	7	58	65	190	8	328
	them		12	76	118	9	215
	here	1	1	42			44
	their		9	60			69
Petition	hem		35				35
	them		18				18
	here		19				19
	their		17				17
Total		8	169	141	410	17	745

Ignoring all language internal factors, such as phonetic environment, syntactic function, referent type etc., this distribution maps onto subtypes as outlined in Table 3 below.

First, it must be said that Table 3 shows no clear, uniform results, i.e. there is no clear and strong correlation between the subtypes and linguistic forms. We do notice, however, an interesting correlation between *th*-pronouns and "orders" and "phatic" as subtypes. Both subtypes, and "orders" in particular, show a significant increase in *th*-forms, "Request" and "report", on the other hand, show significantly higher numbers of traditional *h*-forms. How can we account for this distribution? Table 3 demonstrates that this distribution is not due to any individual preferences on the part of the authors — on the contrary. The author with the proportionally highest number of *th*-pronouns (the most progressive speaker/writer) is John Paston III; but he did not produce many "orders" which are characterised by innovative forms. John I, on the other hand, is one of the more traditional speakers with many instances of *hem* and many "report" texts. These show many instances of *here*, although John I does not use many possessive forms, so that this part of the data is independent of him as an individual speaker. Another interesting fact that should be taken into account can be seen in a comparison of "petition/request" and "letter/request". In both groups, the proportion of *hem/them* is roughly the same (2:1); data for the possessive forms is, unfortunately, too scanty in the case of "letter/request" to allow for any conclusions. Nevertheless, both groups show a similar distribution of the objective forms, which suggests that the subdivision within

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 1997:111).

Letter Total
 Petition
 Petition Total
 Total

Table 3. Personal pronoun
 Text types
 Letter

Table 3. Personal pronouns (socio-pragmatic subtypes)

Text types	Subtypes	Pronouns	Total
Letter	Counsel	hem	3
	Phatic	hem	1
Orders		them	6
		hem	4
Report		them	166
		hem	306
Request		here	2
		their	20
Request		hem	14
		them	8
Petition		here	2
		hem	656
Request		hem	35
		them	18
Petition Total		here	19
		their	17
Petition Total			89
Total			745

the group "letters" is actually mirrored in Davis's original types "letters" and "petition". The actual reasons for this kind of overall distribution, i.e. innovative, *th*-forms being associated with "order" or "letter", are hard to make out. Two major factors come to mind, though. First, as has been pointed out above, certain socio-pragmatic subtypes naturally call for more conservative language use and thus reflect a more formal, careful style. "Requests" in particular are often made by someone socially inferior (often younger) to someone socially superior (often older). The accommodation principle then would require the use of more traditional, conservative, "older" variants, just to please the addressee. This is also partly confirmed by the data on relativisation (see below). Second, the *th*-pronouns may also be described as carrying greater phonetic signalling value (see Kitt 2001; Bergs in prep.), which in turn corresponds to more important and official texts, which depend on clarity and precision (cf. Lüdtke 1980). This accounts for the fact that the new forms are

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328	215	9	8
44	69	35	18
17	19	17	745

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associated with "orders" as one socio-pragmatic subtype. Further studies will have to deal with this problem in greater detail. Suffice it to say at this point that a subdivision of the text type "letter" according to socio-pragmatic principles has led to significant and interesting results, which cannot be explained on the basis of social status alone and thus need to be further explored.

3.2 Relative clauses

During the Middle English period, *that* as a relativiser was gradually replaced and complemented by the *wh*-relativisers *which*, *who*, *whose*, and *whom* (see Fischer 1992 for details). Just as with personal pronouns, the Paston Letters exhibit a great deal of variation in this respect. Ignoring all language-internal factors, Table 4 below already shows an interesting distribution of forms: "Letter", with the majority of overall token occurrences, has by far the greatest bandwidth of variation.

Table 4. Relative clauses⁷ (text types)

Text types	<i>that</i>	<i>which</i>	<i>who</i>	<i>whose</i>	<i>whom</i>	<i>the which</i>	Total
Letter	1159	457	31	24	49	70	1790
Petition	37	24	5	5	1	3	70
Total	1196	481	31	29	50	73	1860

"Petition", on the other hand, has a significantly ($p < 0.01$) higher frequency of *whose*. In the following, it will be shown that this is due to the socio-pragmatic nature of the text types in question. Table 5 divides the text type "letter" into six different socio-pragmatic subtypes.

Most "letters" actually function as "reports", i.e. neutral descriptions about some state of affairs. Second come "requests" and then "orders". "Requests" have a surprisingly high number of *who*, *whose*, *whom* forms in comparison to other types, a fact which is mirrored in the "petition" surface group. How can that be explained? In order to account for this distribution it is important to look at the individual contexts of these occurrences. In late Middle English, *who*, *whose*, and *whom* predominantly occur in fixed formulae and with deity antecedents, such as in "By þe grace of God, who haue yow in hys keypyng" or "Please it you to wete that myn awnte is dissesid, whos sowle God assoyll" (see Meier 1967; Rydén 1983; Bergs & Stein 2001; Bergs in prep.). These phrases, in turn, can mostly be found in requests and similar texts. Again, the reason for this fact lies in accommodation and discourse-pragmatic principles. When somebody asks for money or assistance, it certainly helps to invoke God, the Holy Trinity, or some Saints, and to express all sorts of well-wishing formulae,

4. Summary and

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Text types	Subtypes	Letter	Petition	Total
	Counsel			
	Phatic			
	Orders			
	Report			
	Request			
	Request			

Table 5. Relative clauses

It has been shown that be modified and extended. In English, these socio-structure and make

Table 5. Relative clauses (socio-pragmatic subtypes)

Text types	Subtypes	that	which	who	whose	whom	the	which	Total
Letter	Counsel	2							2
	Phatic	22	9			4			35
	Orders	101	15	2	1	6			129
	Report	916	380	18	21	30	60		1425
	Request	118	53	11	2	9	5		198
Petition	Request	37	24	5	5	1	3		70
Total		1196	481	31	29	50	73		1860

pious valedictions, and blessings. Such rhetorical strategies would hardly be required in "orders" — after all, why should authors send somebody their best wishes and blessings if they want the addressee to pay some bill or perform some task? Also, and this is important, these formulae must have had the connotation of being traditional, old-fashioned forms. Some speakers (e.g. William Cely II, Harold Stawton, see Bergs & Stein 2001: 88) take the liberty of abbreviating the formulae into sequences such as "By ye grace of God, who &c." This underlines the idea that the use of these formulae had been available for communicative-functional purposes, such as accommodation or dissociation. This particular case seems to be of even greater interest, as it is commonly assumed in studies on late Middle English relativisation that all "wh"-pronouns are at least functionally equivalent, and can thus be grouped together into one single category (Romaine 1982; see also Lavandera 1978 on the issue of functional equivalence). If *who*, *whose*, *whom* were indeed largely restricted to deity antecedents and fixed formulae, and these formulae predominantly occurred in "requests" and similar subtypes, this could have far-reaching consequences for statistical analyses, and it should be considered whether such a grouping into one single category is actually desirable. Instead, careful differentiation can lead to interesting results with regard to the development of individual forms, in the sense that early occurrences, such as those discussed here, may have acted as diachronic vectors in synchrony and may have shaped future developments through reanalysis by (invited) inferences (see Bergs & Stein 2001; Bergs in prep.).

4. Summary and Conclusions

It has been shown that the traditional category of "letters" as one text type can be modified and expanded through the introduction of socio-pragmatically motivated subtypes, such as "report", "request", and "orders". In late Middle English, these socio-pragmatic subtypes do not necessarily differ in their overall structure and make-up, though they do show interesting and significant

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Notes

* I wish to thank Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen, Johanna Wood, Anette Rosenbach, and the anonymous reviewers for many inspiring comments, suggestions, and critical remarks regarding various aspects of this paper. I am particularly grateful to Terttu Nevalainen who, *inter alia*, suggested the term "socio-pragmatic text types". Needless to say, all folly is mine.

1. Note the interesting terminological confusion between "business", "non-private", and "official" letters. To my knowledge, no clear distinction between these types has been made so far and the terms seem to be more or less freely interchangeable in this collocation. Also, many historians and sociologists have voiced their skepticism about the distinction between "private" and "public" in the European Middle Ages. In terms of letter writing, Tjeken-Boon van Ostade (2000) has demonstrated that even in eighteenth-century England hardly any writings could be kept "private", i.e. hidden from others, which in turn led to something like the "observer's paradox" — even in letter writing. Still, I would like to contend that a notional distinction can and should be made between letters primarily concerned with private, daily issues, and official letters concerned with business, at least as two extremes on a continuum. It should be kept in mind, though, that "private" in this context is not defined by use, but by content.

2. Published in two volumes. Only the first volume containing letters written by the Pastons will be used here. It comprises 421 documents and c. 245,000 words by fifteen authors. The Paston Letters count as one of the earliest collections of "private/personal letters" in English. 3. The classification proposed by Erasmus (outlined in Nevalainen 2001: 211), for example, is also based on functional properties and distinguishes between *persuasive*, *demonstrative*, and *judicial* letters on the one hand, and *familiar* letters (to socially equals or inferiors) on the other. The latter "may be informative, announcing public or private news, or narrative, congratulating, lamenting, instructing, expressing gratitude, and offering assistance, or joking" (Nevalainen 2001: 211). While these contemporary categories and concepts are certainly very helpful in describing and accounting for many phenomena, an interesting possibility is to group some of these categories together on the basis of Bühler's language functions: Demonstrative, narrative, informative, and announcing letters may all fall under the label of "description", congratulating, expressing gratitude, and lamenting is essentially "expressive" and so on.

4. Needless to say, we are talking about written language here, not spoken language or written representations thereof. Nevertheless, it might be argued that particularly for pre- or non-standardised languages, such as Middle English, certain writings reflect the authors' personal, unbiased style more closely than others. This in turn is reminiscent of the Labovian definition of "vernacular", i.e. completely unmonitored speech. Margaret's letter to her son primarily reflects her own *written language* style, not her *spoken language*. How far the latter can also be traced in these documents is still a matter of dispute (see, e.g. Tjeken-Boon van Ostade 2000).

5. The issue of power in this relationship is problematic. Technically speaking, Margaret was only more powerful than her son(s) in some sense while her husband was still alive. After the death of John I in 1466, John II became the head of the family, and thus also more powerful. However, socio-psychologically one has the impression that Margaret never ceased to hold the reins in family affairs, actually managing the estates and the family fortune while John II was travelling abroad or leading the life of a rather careless *bon vivant* (see Wood, this vol.,

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for a detailed analysis of Margaret's role). And so we are faced again with still lives versus video clips of social reality.

6. Only the so-called "Variation Group" has been taken account, i.e. only those speakers who actually do vary in their pronoun forms to any noteworthy extent. All the other family members either use only traditional forms (e.g. William I) or only innovative forms (e.g. John II). For the methodological background, see Bergs (in prep.).

7. All family members vary here, so that the introduction of a "Variation Group" was not necessary.

8. There is, of course, some evidence that suggests that there were stigmatised varieties of English before 1500 (see Smith 1992 and references therein). However, the stigmatisation of some varieties does not necessarily imply the supra-local, overt prestige of others. Before 1400 at least, only French carried such a label. Also, it seems unclear whether some varieties of Middle English were stigmatised on social or geographical grounds, or both. Evidence from literature (e.g. from Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*, or the Wakefield Master's *Second Shepherd's Play*) is difficult to interpret and does not allow for indubitable conclusions (cf. Muggleston 2003: 7ff). Thus, many varieties might have been recognised just as such: regional or social varieties of English. They may have provoked certain associations, as studied, e.g. in perceptual dialectology (Preston 2002). William of Malmebury's comments on North-umbrian Middle English (quoted in Smith 1992: 58) read very much like some comments elicited in Preston's studies on present-day American English. But these associations should not be confused with the complex notion of linguistic standard(s) and standard ideologies in modern languages.

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