Year: 2011

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Authors, scribes, readers, listeners and communicating characters

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Before the advent of printing, written texts existed only in the form of manuscripts, produced by hand (Lat. *manu scriptum*) on parchment prepared of animal skin, on papyrus or, later, on paper. Each manuscript was unique, and even if several different manuscripts purportedly contain the same text, they rarely present exact copies of the original or of each other (see Burrow 1986, Parkes 1991). Each manuscript, perhaps even more than any printed text, has a communicative story to tell. And thus a medieval manuscript is not only the material evidence of a historical communicative act that took place many centuries ago but it also communicates to the modern scholar by revealing some of its communicative history. In addition to the communication of the manuscript and through the manuscript, there is often communication in the manuscript. The manuscript texts depict actual or fictional worlds with actual or fictional characters engaged in communication with each other. This volume provides a range of case studies that deal with these different levels of communication of manuscripts and in manuscripts, and the title of this volume is intended to capture all these communicative layers.

Manuscripts are the material evidence of communication between the author and the reader of the manuscript and as such they deserve our scholarly attention. The simple dyad of author and reader, however, is often complicated by the intervention of a scribe who copied a text authored by somebody else or who took down the text in dictation (see Parkes 1991, Beal and Edwards 2005). Different versions of the text can vary, for instance, in their substance, with passages of varying length omitted or added, by mistake or by intention. They can also display variation in the linguistic representation of the text, manifesting different dialectal or idiolectal features of the scribes who copied them (see e.g. Introduction to McIntosh *et al.* 1986). At the very least, their *mise-en-page*, the layout, the style of handwriting and the decorations usually vary. As a result, it may not always be easy to determine the difference between an author who creates something entirely new and a scribe who just copies. Furthermore, in an age when literacy was rare, the recipients of the communicative message may have either read the text themselves or it may have been read out to them. A pragmatic analysis

that wants to investigate the communicative history of a manuscript or a range of manuscripts must spell out in detail the roles of all the participants in the communicative situation created by the manuscript or, where sociohistorical facts are lacking, at least consider the possible alternative scenarios.

With the introduction of printing in the fifteenth century, it became possible to produce large numbers of identical texts (see e.g. Blake 1989, Hellinga and Trapp 1999). Texts became increasingly fixed. By committing texts to print, authors gained greater control over their texts. They no longer had to rely on scribes to copy their texts more or less faithfully. However, the process that turns a handwritten manuscript into a printed text is by no means straightforward. A handwritten text and a printed text are not the same thing. And, therefore, the process itself deserves a pragmatic analysis. What happens to a text and its communicative context if it is committed to print?

The introduction of printing did not immediately cause all handwritten manuscripts to be phased out. For many purposes, people still wrote by hand, and even today – in spite of the large range of printed and electronic text types including email messages and short text messages sent via mobile phone – handwriting still has its place. Manuscripts are still produced, either as drafts for texts that are to be turned into printed texts or as unique communicative events, as, for instance, in the form of letters.

In addition, many manuscripts contain accounts of communicative situations outside of the manuscript. They may depict fictional worlds with fictional characters that interact in many ways or they may depict actual conversations of actual people as, for instance, in diaries, in court records or in witness depositions. Fictional communication was long seen as unsuitable for pragmatic analysis because it is unclear how it compares to actual communication. But in historical pragmatics it has now been accepted that fictional communication is interesting in itself (see Jacobs and Jucker 1995; Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice 2007 and Taavitsainen and Jucker 2010). It is not to be taken as a poor substitute for the real thing, but provides a communicative world with its own values that can be compared to other equally contextualised communicative worlds. When we analyse the greeting routines used by the characters in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, there is no claim that this is how Chaucer's contemporaries greeted each other. But there is a claim that such an analysis of fictional data is of sufficient interest in itself. Our philological interest in Chaucer's language is no longer restricted to matters of phonology, morphology and perhaps syntax, but we also want to learn something about the communicative world that he depicted in his writings.

Court records and witness depositions purport to report actual conversations by actual interactants. But, in these cases, we also have to remember that the conversational behaviour of the interactants is contextualised. The

speech patterns recounted in court records cannot be taken as straightforward evidence for how people interacted outside of the courtroom. When we study courtroom interaction, we learn something about courtroom interaction, which is again of sufficient interest in itself. A defendant will have spoken very differently in the courtroom when questioned by the judge than at home when talking to his or her family.

Last, but not least, manuscripts also communicate to the modern scholar. They reveal their textual histories and allow the researcher glimpses and insights into a communicative world that lives on in these artefacts (see Renevey and Caie 2008). Even if this kind of communication is not dyadic – the scholar cannot talk back to the manuscript – it is an important aspect captured in the title of this book. In this volume, we deal with early English manuscripts that tell us their communicative stories. The individual chapters differ in the way in which they take up these communicative stories. While some focus on the material histories of individual manuscripts and thus provide the groundwork for a more pragmatic analysis of the communicative situation for which the manuscript was originally produced, others focus directly on the pragmatics of the communicative situation or on the pragmatics of the conversations depicted within the manuscripts.

Thus, while most research on early English manuscripts has tended to be philological in nature, producing text editions of previously unprinted texts, focusing on the origin and transmission of texts or their specific linguistic characteristics, or examining manuscript codices in the frame of book history, the starting point in this book is very different, as it foregrounds the documents as pieces of communication. The types of communication analysed in the book vary from texts documenting language use in public or formal registers, e.g. in business letters, to more private contexts of discourse, e.g. in private letters. In addition to letters, a wide range of genres is addressed in the chapters, including literary texts of both poetry and prose, play-texts, religious writings, trial records and scientific treatises. The chapters also represent a range of theoretical and methodological approaches to the analysis of language and texts, including historical pragmatics, historical sociolinguistics, variation analysis, genre and register analysis, text and discourse studies, corpus linguistics, text editing and codicology. Finally, the chapters draw their data from manuscripts that extend over a long time-span – well into the modern period. Thus, the volume addresses handwritten sources both from the height of the English manuscript era and from the period of early printing; manuscript material of the latter, in particular, has often been neglected in historical language studies, as the focus of research has been on printed texts.

The sixteen chapters of this book fall into four parts. The first part containing five chapters is devoted to authors, scribes and their audiences. Four of these analyse specific manuscripts and the ways in which their authors and scribes communicated with their audiences through various linguistic

and textual practices, while one chapter examines the interaction between authors and audiences in a diachronic frame in a dataset extending over a longer period of time.

Thomas Kohnen opens this section with a study of commonplace books, that is to say, compilations of texts and text extracts, such as medical recipes, letters, proverbs, prayers, obituaries and so on. He carries out a pragmatic analysis of the text genres and communicative context of one particular fifteenth-century commonplace book, the notes by Robert Reynes, which are contained in MS Tanner 407. Reynes was a churchwarden who communicated with a large range of people, and Kohnen provides a classification of the texts that Reynes included in his collection and the different role-relationships of the original senders and addressees of these texts. Reynes included in his collection texts that he wrote to a range of addressees as well as texts that he received.

The chapter by *Gabriella Del Lungo Camiciotti* is a case study of medieval textuality as represented in two works from different genres, both surviving in unique fifteenth-century manuscript copies: *The Book of Margery Kempe* (a life story of a pious lay woman, dictated by Kempe herself and written by two scribes) and the *Legends of Holy Women* (a collection of saints' lives by Osbern Bokenham mainly based on the Latin *Legenda Aurea*). The texts use different rhetorical strategies for creating interpersonality and audience involvement. These differences arise from a number of factors related to the production circumstances of the texts, different genre conventions and the envisaged author–audience relationship. The findings illustrate that the shift from an oral-based textual culture (texts meant for oral performance) to a literacy-based one (silent reading) is more complex than customarily realised and pre-dates the technological innovation of printing, to which this shift is often assigned.

Patricia Deery Kurtz and *Linda Ehrsam Voigts* focus in their chapter on the significance of MS Bute 13, a mixed-language paper manuscript that in the sixteenth century brought together a range of important astronomical and astrological treatises in Middle English, Early Modern English and Latin. In the 1980s, the codex was dismembered into four parts that are now dispersed. Kurtz and Voigts provide a detailed reconstruction of the original manuscript, showing that its compiler had the conscious aim to communicate a comprehensive body of knowledge required for astrological calculation and its uses. Although the manuscript contains some important unique vernacular treatises bearing witness to the vernacularisation of contemporary science, the value of the codex as a whole, with its complementary English and Latin texts, is even greater for our understanding of the communication of early scientific knowledge than the sum of its individual parts.

Maurizio Gotti and *Stefania Maci* provide a detailed analysis of the text of *Mary Magdalene*, a Middle English play preserved in a Bodleian Library manuscript, Digby 133. The manuscript contains several other texts as well,

all of them probably written in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century. They focus, in particular, on what until now has been described as scribal inconsistency or carelessness. Their close analysis reveals that the use of a variety of morphological and syntactic features is far from arbitrary and, in fact, communicates specific social attitudes and moral values to the reader. Morpho-syntactically innovative features, for instance, are used to identify evil characters, while pious characters use more conservative linguistic forms in line with local usage. These variations are, therefore, interpreted as effective stylistic means that communicate specific messages to the readers and reinforce the religious and social identities of the characters of the play.

Elizabeth Closs Traugott investigates the communicative context of a very different type of text, the proceedings of the trials carried out at the Old Bailey in the years 1674–1834, contained in the *Old Bailey Corpus*. In the beginning, these printed texts were produced from originally handwritten proceedings as a commercial enterprise and were somewhat sensational in order to attract a readership. In later years, the printed versions were required to be approved by the Mayor of London and to be fair and accurate reports of the proceedings. Traugott shows how the authors of these texts interacted with their audiences. While in the early years they actively constructed an audience with a view to moral improvement, later they turned to a more objective tone.

The second part of this book contains four chapters on handwritten correspondence. In this case, the data continue several centuries into the era of print and demonstrate the importance of handwritten documents into the nineteenth century.

In the first chapter of this part, *Merja Stenroos* and *Martti Mäkinen* study three letters connected to the late stages of the Welsh Uprising in the early fifteenth century. The letters were written by representatives of opposing sides of the uprising, and one is addressed to the Prince of Wales. Stenroos and Mäkinen locate these letters within their social and historical context and then provide a detailed analysis on the three levels of the scribal text itself, its pragmatic impact in terms of politeness and impoliteness, and its significance for an understanding of the historical events surrounding these letters.

Minna Palander-Collin and *Minna Nevala* study sixteenth-century letters by Nathaniel Bacon (1546?–1622), a 'county magnate' and local politician. These letters were written to a wide range of addressees, including family members, servants, local yeomen, noblemen and other gentlemen. Dealing with family matters, with the management of estates and with county administration, they contain many references to people, and these referring expressions reflect the sociohistorical context. They indicate a person's social rank and gender and very often also his or her relation to the writer of the letter, and thus they place the person referred to within a societal and hierarchical framework. But the referring expressions also have a place in creating

and maintaining certain text types and genres, and they are used to express the writer's interactional persona and his local communicative needs.

The chapter by Susan *Fitzmaurice* is devoted to two letters written by the diplomat and poet George Stepney. One of these letters, written on 24 February 1695, was addressed to his publisher Jacob Tonson; the other, written on 2 April 1695, to his friend Matthew Prior. In the first, Stepney makes some suggestions for revisions to one of his poems and asks Tonson to circulate it among some friends for their comments and suggestions, while in the second he discusses and criticises a poem written by the addressee of the letter, Matthew Prior. These letters serve as examples of the communication between literary collaborators. They highlight the interactive and sociable nature of literary production in the late seventeenth century among the members of a social network.

The final chapter in this section, by *Marina Dossena*, is devoted to hand-written business communication in the late nineteenth century, that is, at a time when, due to new technology, typed and printed messages were already beginning to spread. The analysis shows the importance of the physical appearance of the letter with neat and error-free handwriting, a generous spread of the text with empty lines between the main elements of the letter, printed letter heads and so on. On this basis, Dossena argues that politeness and face considerations went beyond the linguistic choices. These elements were designed to show due respect to the recipient of the letter. The Victorian times imposed what she calls a 'dress-code' on the genre of business communication and insisted on a high level of decorum.

The third part of this volume contains five chapters that focus on the transition from manuscript to print. The studies highlight and compare communicative features of writings in the two media from various angles. Some studies investigate specific manuscript copies of individual texts and how they were treated when they were committed to print. Others take a more general perspective, comparing and contrasting textual and discoursal features of texts originally composed in manuscript and printed forms.

In the opening chapter of this part, *Graham D. Caie* examines a literary text, the *Romaunt of the Rose*, a work frequently attributed to Geoffrey Chaucer. Caie analyses the relationship of the single extant Middle English manuscript copy of the text, held in Glasgow University Library, MS Hunter 409, and an early printed version of the text, included in the first printed edition of the collected works of Chaucer, by William Thynne in 1532. The study illustrates how a detailed linguistic analysis can be combined with a careful examination of physical manuscript evidence to establish a link between the handwritten and printed versions of the same text. In this case, for example, marks left in the margins of the manuscript by the printer preparing the edition, indicating textual problems in the manuscript or providing instructions on the layout of the printed text, show how Thynne used the Hunter manuscript in communicating the *Romaunt of the Rose* in print.

Jonathan Culpeper and *Jane Demmen* study the development of play-texts from manuscript to print. The chapter focuses on five plays written and performed in the time of Shakespeare, but the diachronic perspective is actually much longer, as the authors compare the dialogue of earlier plays, shaped by particular manuscript practices, with the dialogue of present-day plays, shaped by the context of printing. The corpus-based comparative analysis of early modern and present-day play-texts shows interesting differences in the dialogue that can be explained by the different media, including differences in the length of turns, level of lexical richness and the frequency of address terms.

The chapter by *Päivi Pahta, Turo Hiltunen, Ville Marttila, Maura Ratia, Carla Suhr* and *Jukka Tyrkkö* investigates medical communication in three early English versions of *Methodus medendi*, an ancient text by Galen, a Greek physician who remained the ultimate authority on Western medicine until the seventeenth century. The earliest version examined here, a unique copy of the text in a British Library manuscript, Sloane 6, is the first and only substantial medieval English translation of the authentic writings of this great ancient physician. In the analysis, the authors compare some textual and linguistic features of the three versions to illustrate variation and change in the communication of the same medical information to English readers over two centuries, a period that was characterised not only by the change in the medium of communication but also by major sociocultural and domain-specific changes affecting the construction and transmission of scientific knowledge.

Douglas Biber, Bethany Gray, Alpo Honkapohja and *Päivi Pahta* trace the origins and early history of a key characteristic of present-day academic writing, i.e. the heavy reliance on non-clausal modification in the noun phrase. They analyse the frequencies and meanings of *in* and *on* prepositional phrases as noun modifiers in specialised treatises in two medical corpora, *Middle English Medical Texts*, containing writings that circulated in manuscript sources, and *Early Modern English Medical Texts*, consisting of early printed texts. The study shows that the use of *in/on* prepositional phrases in noun modification can be traced back to medical communication in treatises of the manuscript era; however, it is only in the early printed treatises that the phrases begin to develop extended abstract meanings that dominate in present-day written academic communication.

In the last chapter of this part, *Jeremy Smith* and *Christian Kay* provide a critical examination of the process of editing manuscript texts. They problematise a range of contextual factors that affect the communication of early handwritten texts to modern readers in print. Their main focus is the key role of the 'third participant' in the communicative situation, i.e. the scribe or editor who mediates between the creator and the reader of the text. Their case in point is the complex editorial history of a short Older Scots poem, William Dunbar's *Discretioun in Taking*, extant in three early modern

manuscripts. The analysis of the original manuscript texts and the various published editions of the poem shows that editors have brought their own time- and taste-driven interpretations of the poem to bear on their task, often without explicitly informing their readers about their choices. The study is an important reminder of the fact that editing is a transformative process, which can impede as well as aid communication and, by definition, always transmits an 'edited truth' of the original manuscript text.

The last part contains two chapters on communication as depicted in early English manuscripts. The papers look at conversations between characters in fictional writing and at conversations between the individuals involved in a trial.

The chapter by *Andreas H. Jucker* studies conversational behaviour as depicted in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The *Canterbury Tales* provides a rich source of fictional characters both in the frame story and in the stories told by the individual pilgrims. Jucker provides an analysis of two particularly interesting speech acts: greetings and farewells. These speech acts, which open and close spoken interaction, show considerable variability and creativity, and very little formulaicity. Several elements, such as well-wishing, identifying the addressee or interjections can be identified. They occur frequently with greetings and farewells but none of these elements seems to be obligatory.

Leena Kahlas-Tarkka and *Matti Rissanen* also look at the communication between characters depicted in manuscripts, but in this case the characters are actual historical people and the recorded conversations are purported to have taken place in reality. Kahlas-Tarkka and Rissanen investigate the newly re-edited records of the Salem Witchcraft Trials that took place in colonial Massachusetts in the years 1692–3. They focus on the discourse strategies chosen by the defendants, who found themselves in an extreme and life-threatening situation in which the choice of the wrong strategy could lead to a death sentence. Their survival very much depended on whether they chose a simple and factual, an unsociable and aggressive, or a sarcastic and derisive strategy.

This book, then, illustrates a number of ways in which written materials from early periods can provide insights into the history of human interaction and its development across time. In the early days of pragmatics, pragmaticists focused exclusively on oral communication, but in recent years written communication has increasingly become the focus of attention for many pragmaticists. In fact, the inception of historical pragmatics as a field of study in the 1990s relied exactly on the acceptance of written material as legitimate data for pragmatics. The chapters in this book take this endeavour an important step beyond the mere acceptance of early written material for pragmatic analysis. They study the mediality and the communicative histories of these early texts themselves and thus provide fresh insights into the communication of, through and in early English manuscripts.