

Manners, Norms and Transgressions in the History of English

EDITED BY

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Manners, Norms and Transgressions in the History of English

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Volume 312

*Manners, Norms and Transgressions in the History of English
Literary and linguistic approaches*

Edited by Andreas H. Jucker and Irma Taavitsainen

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Preface

The papers assembled in this volume go back to a seminar that the two editors organised at the 14th Conference of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE) held from August 29 to September 2, 2018 at the Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. The seminar was entitled “Blunders and other deviations from manners and politeness: Literary and linguistic approaches”. In the spirit of ESSE, a European federation of national associations devoted to English studies, we wanted to bring together linguists and literary scholars to share their ideas in an interdisciplinary effort to explore a common topic in the history of the English language, and it was our aim to approach the concept of manners, in the sense of polite or well-bred social behaviour, by focusing on deviations from such behaviour, in particular blunders and other transgressions.

Needless to say that the relevant concepts in this endeavour have undergone considerable changes over the centuries, which makes it difficult to pinpoint our object of investigation with any kind of certainty. The investigations in this volume are, therefore, based on two important assumptions. First, we assume that these changes have been – by and large – gradual, that is to say today’s concept of manners and blunders may be quite different from their counterparts in the Late Middle Ages, but they are somehow related through a long series of steps and developments. These steps and developments need not have been linear and very direct, but there is still a family resemblance that combines the concepts across time. And second, a volume such as this – or indeed a much larger volume – cannot possibly claim to cover this history in anything like a comprehensive manner. What we can offer is no more than a few particularly fascinating highlights along the way. The papers assembled here go back to the Late Middle English period with studies of a fourteenth-century Middle English retelling of an Anglo-Norman romance and Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women*. One paper is specifically devoted to blundering characters in Shakespeare’s plays, while five papers are partly or entirely devoted to data taken from the eighteenth century, which stands out as particularly interesting and exciting in the development of manners in the history of English. In fact, there appears to be some evidence that it was during this century that good manners were no longer seen as an unmitigated reflection of a good character and vice versa, but as a code of behaviour that was potentially

useful to cover up whatever was underneath. Of the remaining three papers, one is devoted to Lewis Carroll's Alice Books published in the nineteenth century and two are devoted to very recent sources, the television comedy drama *Doc Martin*, and J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter Books.

The authors are linguists or literary scholars, and their roots can generally be discerned in the specific discourses that they adopt in these paper, but all of them – in the spirit of interdisciplinary cooperation – have taken extra care to build bridges and to make their arguments approachable, intelligible and indeed beneficial for the other side, too.

We thank all our contributors for their willingness to embark on this interdisciplinary adventure as well as for their patience and cooperation in view of multiple requests for revisions and mutual understandability. We thank a number of anonymous reviewers who have helped us in improving the overall quality of this volume, and, last but not least, we thank Noora Kumpulainen in Helsinki and Anja Leu in Zurich for their help in desk editing and proof-reading the contributions.

Andreas H. Jucker and Irma Taavitsainen, March 2020

Manners, norms and transgressions

Introduction

Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas H. Jucker

University of Helsinki / University of Zurich

In this volume we focus on different types of manners, norms and their transgressions. One kind of transgression can be called “blunders” and deals with violations of accepted behaviour, conduct or manners. A second kind draws more attention to language use in interpersonal communication with violations of pragmatic principles or breaking the norms of appropriate writing styles. In this introduction, we first outline the change in the appropriation of manners in different periods discussed in this book. We then proceed to the theoretical background and suggest an overall line of diachronic changes. Our approach falls at the interface between language and literature, which is discussed before the chapter summaries.

Keywords: manners, norms, transgressions, politeness, history of politeness, language history, diachrony

1. Introduction

The gate of New College, Oxford, is adorned with a phrase ascribed to its founder, William of Wykeham (1324–1404): “Manners makyth man”. Wykeham was Bishop of Winchester and Chancellor of England and, in addition to New College (1379), he founded New College School (also 1379) and Winchester College (1382). According to the slogan on the college gate, *manners* is considered a fundamental quality and, indeed, the essence of human nature. But what exactly does the term entail? According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word is a borrowing from French and first attested in English in the thirteenth century. In its plural form and the sense most likely intended here, it occurs in 1225 in the *Ancrene Riwe* referring to “a person’s habitual behaviour or conduct; morals” (OED, 3rd edition, s.v. *manner*, sense 4.a). William of Wykeham’s formulation implies the idea that a person’s morality is reflected in their everyday behaviour. The outward conduct

was a direct expression of a person's inner self and there was no difference between the behaviour of a person and their moral integrity.

This stands in contrast to how today manners are often seen as the surface of a person's behaviour, the outward polish that is not necessarily related to what lies underneath. Table manners come to mind with their intricate rules of how to use the cutlery and where to put it when not using it, how to sit at the table, who to talk to and not to use your mobile phone while eating. The reasons given for such rules are concerned with making others comfortable or avoiding embarrassment.¹

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines this sense of the term *manners* as “a person's social behaviour or habits, judged according to the degree of politeness or the degree of conformity to accepted standards of behaviour or propriety” (OED, 3rd edition, *manner*, sense 6.a). This sense can also be seen in the many etiquette books on the market today with evocative titles such as *Miss Manners Rescues Civilization: From Sexual Harassment, Frivolous Lawsuits, Dissing and Other Lapses in Civility* (Martin 1996). It is noteworthy that the title emphasises the ways in which one should not behave and manners are defined negatively as not misbehaving. The cover blurb reinforces that impression.

From athletes who shout obscenities on national television to surgeons who blast their favorite music while operating, from gang members who kill those who've “dissed” them to mourners who treat funerals casually, we trample over the rights of others in a savage pursuit of individual agendas. We have cashed in etiquette (yes, the “E word”) for a generous helping of self-importance, and the exchange is crippling our ability to function as a civil society. (Martin 1996: cover blurb)

It seems to be a very long way from William of Wykeham to Miss Manners, and it begs the question at what point in the history of English manners and morality came to be dissociated. When did manners become a smooth veneer that hides what lies hidden below the surface?

The papers in this volume provide some fascinating snapshots along the way of this development, and they take deviations or transgressions as an object of analysis using mainly linguistic tools to probe deeper into their realisation patterns and functions. People have always been quick to criticise others for a lack of manners or more generally for their deviations from expected norms of behaviour or language use, and such criticism often helps the analyst to reconstruct what these expected norms were. Needless to say, the discourse on proper and improper ways of behaviour is not a straightforward indication of how people actually

1. See for instance <https://www.gentlemansgazette.com/table-etiquette-guide-informal-dining-manners/> (accessed August 10, 2019).

behaved, but it stands to reason that people only criticised behaviour as improper if at least some people actually engaged in that kind of behaviour.

Our history of English begins with the late medieval period with its different cultural context and its completely different modes of literary production and transmission. The mode of delivery was mainly oral as storytelling was a fashionable pastime in courtly environments and extant written versions are often an outcome of joint efforts by multiple authors. The “alterity” [‘otherness’] of the early periods is a sum of various deviant features (see Jauss 1979 and 2005). Our modern understanding of early literature is formed by the written traditions. It involves several paradigm changes, e.g. plural authorship gave way to singularity, texts became perceived as units instead of open-ended works that could be extended or cut down as needed, and were increasingly attributed to authors and were no longer anonymous. The question of significance and meaning surpasses the original communicative features. Early literature has validity even today as cultural documentation, although modern readers must make a learning effort to comprehend the aesthetic charm of the past and appreciate its special features, not least for language change as seen in semantic changes or preferred styles, for instance.

Our focus in this volume is mainly on transgressions from norms and on the meta-discourse about transgressions. We explore the many ways in which textual comments on transgressions reveal insights about what were considered to be the norms of proper behaviour and good manners. This means that the focus of the papers in this volume is squarely on a first-order perspective of relevant terms and concepts. Chapters in this volume investigate the different ways in which people talked about manners, norms and transgressions without imposing second-order definitions onto the data under analysis. We have more to say on this distinction in Section 2, where we also talk about the three waves of politeness theory. In Section 3, we will explore the diachronic development of the term *manners*, and its intricate relationship to some related terms, such as *civility* and *politeness*. Section 4 will be devoted to the question of how analytical tools can be used to study transgressions of norms in historical contexts. In Section 5, we will give a brief overview of the papers assembled in this volume. They are written by scholars who generally identify themselves either as linguists or as literary specialists, but in the papers in this volume the dividing line is less clear: both literary and non-literary data are dealt with in the volume, and the perspectives are combined as a whole, and each individual paper deals with the interface between language and literature, at least to some extent.

2. Three waves of politeness theory

Within politeness theory, there is a well-established tradition to distinguish between first-order concepts and second-order concepts (see in particular Watts, Ide & Ehlich 1992: 3; Watts 2003; and Kasper 2003). First-order concepts are those that members of a speech community use to talk about politeness and interaction, for instance. They argue whether some specific type of behaviour is polite or not, they admonish others to be polite in certain ways, or complain about the lack of politeness. This is described as the discursive struggle for politeness. People may differ in their opinions as to what constitutes politeness and what should be described as impolite or rude behaviour. These are the hallmarks of first-order politeness. A study of first-order concepts in this sense provides an ethnographic view of how a speech community deals with a particular concept. Second-order concepts, on the other hand, are defined by scholars as analytical tools and in order to delimit as precisely as possible the phenomenon under analysis. The scholars who introduced this distinction were generally unanimous in their opinion that politeness studies should primarily concern themselves with first-order politeness or politeness₁, as it was also called. Second-order politeness, or politeness₂, was considered to be artificial and derivative. Watts argued particularly forcefully for this position.

A theory of politeness₂ should concern itself with the discursive struggle over politeness₁, i.e. over the ways in which (im)polite behaviour is evaluated and commented on by lay members and not with ways in which social scientists lift the term '(im)politeness' out of the realm of everyday discourse and elevate it to the status of a theoretical concept in what is frequently called Politeness Theory. (Watts 2003: 9)

The distinction helps to distinguish between the earlier approaches to the study of politeness in the wake of Brown and Levinson's (1987) ground-breaking work. Brown and Levinson had provided a relatively precise but also rather narrow definition of politeness that focused mainly on the mitigation of so-called face-threatening acts. Recently this has been called "the first wave of politeness theory" (e.g. Grainger 2011 and Culpeper 2011; see also Culpeper & Hardaker 2017 and Jucker 2020: Chapter 1). Politeness was seen as a strategy to mitigate face-threatening acts, and the analytical focus centred on these strategies. Particular linguistic forms were analysed as being especially useful for the purpose of face-threat mitigation and, therefore, particularly polite. Initially this approach focused exclusively on polite behaviour but some early work using the same framework focused on what was seen as the flipside of politeness, i.e. impoliteness (e.g. Culpeper 1996).

The second wave grew out of criticism of Brown and Levinson's work and advocated a broadening of the perspective away from a unique focus on face-threat

mitigating strategies to a more comprehensive analysis of the interaction between speaker and addressee including not only polite and impolite behaviour but also the unmarked middle ground between the two (e.g. Eelen 2001; Mills 2003; Watts 2003; Locher & Watts 2005). Linguistic forms, it was argued, do not have inherent politeness (or impoliteness) values. Such values are always discursively negotiated in the course of interaction between the conversationalists. The second wave also criticised the first wave's reliance on scholarly definitions of what the term "politeness" (or the term "impoliteness") refers to, so-called second-order politeness. Instead it advocated an analysis that took the everyday notion of "politeness" (or "impoliteness") as a starting point, i.e. first-order politeness. The analytical focus shifted to how people use the term and how they negotiate their interaction. And it became standard practice to use the term "(im)politeness" rather than the opposition of "politeness" and "impoliteness" to refer to the whole spectrum of interpersonal behaviours (see, for instance, the papers in Culpeper, Haugh & Kádár 2017). According to Locher and Watts (2005: 16) the discursive politeness analysts do not start with a preconceived idea of what politeness might be but with a careful analysis of how members of a speech community discursively negotiate and enact what they consider to be polite or impolite modes of behaviour.

We consider it important to take native speaker assessments of politeness seriously and to make them the basis of a discursive, data-driven, bottom-up approach to politeness. The discursive dispute over such terms in instances of social practice should represent the locus of attention for politeness research. By discursive dispute we do not mean real instances of disagreement amongst members of a community of practice over the terms "polite", "impolite", etc. but rather the discursive structuring and reproduction of forms of behavior and their potential assessments (...) by individual participants. (Locher & Watts 2005: 16)

The third wave, finally, consists of a rapprochement of the first and second wave. It continues to put its analytical focus on the interaction between conversationalists, but linguistic forms are now analysed in their interaction between their conventional default meanings and the actual meanings that discursively emerge in actual situations of use. They "pay attention to context yet accommodate more stable meanings arising from particular linguistic forms" (Culpeper & Hardaker 2017: 208).

The work of first wave theorists implies, or seems to imply, that politeness and impoliteness values are mostly inherent and relatively fixed, and the work of second wave theorists implies, or seems to imply, that such values are almost entirely negotiated in interaction. However, a careful reading reveals that the differences between the first and second wave are often not as categorical as they may appear at first sight. Third wave theorists focus more explicitly on the balance and

the interaction between the inherent (conventional or default) meanings and the discursively negotiated meanings of specific linguistic elements and in this way the distinction between a first-order and a second-order approach gets increasingly blurred (e.g. Terkourafi 2001, 2008; Jucker 2012; Culpeper & Hardaker 2017).

Terkourafi (2011) argues for a rather different type of rapprochement between first-order politeness and second-order politeness. According to her, this distinction ultimately cannot be maintained because the two depend on each other. As evidence, she traces the writings about politeness back to the ancient Egyptians as well as to India and to China in the second half of the first millennium BCE. What they have in common is that the authors of these texts linked externally appropriate behaviour with the underlying morality of the person engaging in this kind of behaviour. The morality leads to the appropriate behaviour, and the appropriate behaviour in turn can lead to the attainment of the proper morality. Similar links between morality and behaviour can be found, according to Terkourafi, in one of the key terms of classical Arabic literature, i.e. the term *adab*, which can be translated as ‘good breeding’, ‘manners’, ‘culture’, ‘refinement’ or ‘*belles lettres*’ (Terkourafi 2011: 164 with reference to Kilpatrick 1998: 54). According to Terkourafi, the writings on this term suggest an intimate link between manners and morals which is interesting for two reasons:

First, because it turns received ideas about the relationship between manners and morals on their head: instead of treating manners as the externalization of a pre-existing cultivated inner self, in *adab* the directionality of this causal relationship is reversed. This raises the alternative possibility that, in true performative fashion, the clothes do maketh (sic!) the man, or, in this case, the manners maketh the morals. But the intimate link between manners and morals (...) is also important for another reason: because it forces us to rethink the separation of manners from morals that pervades contemporary Western ideas about etiquette.

(Terkourafi 2011: 165–6)

The first point raised by Terkourafi in this quotation concerns the directionality between morals and manners, and the second point brings us back to William of Wykeham and his use of the term *manners*, which also suggested an intimate link between manners and morals. Terkourafi discusses further examples in classical antiquity including texts from Aristotle and Cicero, and their legacy throughout the Middle Ages, and she locates the transitional period between the late Middle Ages and Early Modernity as the point at which manners were increasingly dissociated from the underlying morality (2011: 169).

She also uses these texts as evidence for her argument that “prescriptive norms historically follow and reflect descriptive ones, while at the same time constraining future practices and so feeding back into the descriptive norms that gave rise to

them in the first place” (2011: 176). Time and again, from the very early texts to the netiquettes of the present day, it can be shown that writers employ what they take to be exemplary behaviour of some people as a model for others to follow, and to the extent that people follow this advice, the prescriptive rules become the basis of description of what people actually do. Terkourafi links the descriptive rules to the domain of politeness₁ and the prescriptive rules to that of politeness₂ and, therefore, she comes to the conclusion that the two cannot be kept apart because “they are intertwined from the outset” (2011: 176). However, according to the traditional distinction between first-order and second-order concepts, both the descriptive and prescriptive rules of politeness or manners are part of the first-order domain of the discourse of the speech community about these concepts. They do not concern the academic endeavours to delimit and define specific concepts for analytical purposes.

The distinction between first-order concepts and second-order concepts remains an important one, and both analytical perspectives should be included into our investigations of manners and politeness in earlier periods. The first-order perspective will help us to get an ethnographic understanding of how people talked about manners, politeness and related concepts, both in their attempts to get other people to behave in certain ways and in their descriptions and evaluations of what was happening around them. The second-order perspective will help us as an analytical tool to delimit specific aspects of behaviour more precisely.

The three waves of (im)politeness research outlined above can also be observed at work on historical data. The early pioneers in historical politeness research, Brown and Gilman (1989) and Kopytko (1995) relied very faithfully on the framework proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) to investigate positive and negative politeness strategies in a selection of Shakespeare’s plays, and Culpeper (1996) used their model to investigate impoliteness as a mirror image of politeness also in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. More recent historical work shifted away from such first-wave studies to a more discursive approach in an attempt to find out what specific historical speech communities considered to be polite or impolite. Watts (2011) used what he called a socio-cognitive approach to study politeness in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. He started from a careful analysis of the vocabulary of politeness with such terms as *polite*, *polished*, *refined*, *well-mannered*, *standoffish* and so on, in order to ‘reconstruct the forms of emergent social practice’ (2011: 104) and thus developed a second-wave approach to politeness. Ridealgh (2016) similarly used a second-wave approach for her analysis of the Late Ramesside Letters, a collection of personal communications written in Late Egyptian (c. 1099–1069 BCE), and Jucker (2014) investigated the discourse of courtesy in the anonymous, late fourteenth-century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Jucker (2012; see also Jucker 2020: Chapter 5) proposed what with hindsight can be classified as a third-wave approach for an analysis of a play by one of Shakespeare's contemporaries, Ben Jonson. The play, *Volpone, or The Fox*, was first performed in 1606 in London. It is a play full of greed and deceit in which the surface forms of excessive politeness are regularly in conflict with the characters' darker motives.

It is the interplay between the intrinsic politeness value of the linguistic forms and the discursive contexts in which they are used which decides whether an utterance comes across as interactionally appropriate, as impolite or rude, or as excessively over-polite and perhaps ironic. (Jucker 2012: 47)

Initially the distinction between first- and second-order concepts was mainly applied to politeness and impoliteness. But the same distinction applies to many other concepts which have a life both as an everyday expression and as a technical term. In fact, it can be applied to all terms that exist both as everyday expressions and as technical terms – or possible technical terms – used as analytical tools in academic research. This also applies to the key terms of this volume: manners, norms and transgressions. As first-order concepts they are words used by a particular speech community to talk about everyday concepts, and as such their meaning potential may be somewhat fuzzy and it changes over time. As second order-concepts they require a precise definition, but such definitions generally are fairly narrow and more specific than the everyday concept.

The papers in this volume vary to some extent whether they treat their key concepts as first-order or second-order terms, and, therefore, it is not possible to provide (second-order) definitions which would cover all of them. Instead, every paper has to explore how the terms are being used at a particular point in time in the history of English and in a particular (literary or non-literary) context.

3. The diachrony of manners and politeness

As pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the term *manners* (in the plural) in relation to a person's behaviour or conduct is first attested in English in 1225. However, a first attestation does not say anything about the frequency of a term. Culpeper (2017), who investigated the influence of Italian conduct manuals on politeness in England in the second half of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, noted that the term *manners* witnessed a dramatic increase in frequency in this period. He traced the term in the *Early English Books Online* (EEBO) from

1450 to 1725 (Culpeper 2017: 201). Here we would like to extend his search and add the data from the *Corpus of Late Modern English* (CLMET3.0).²

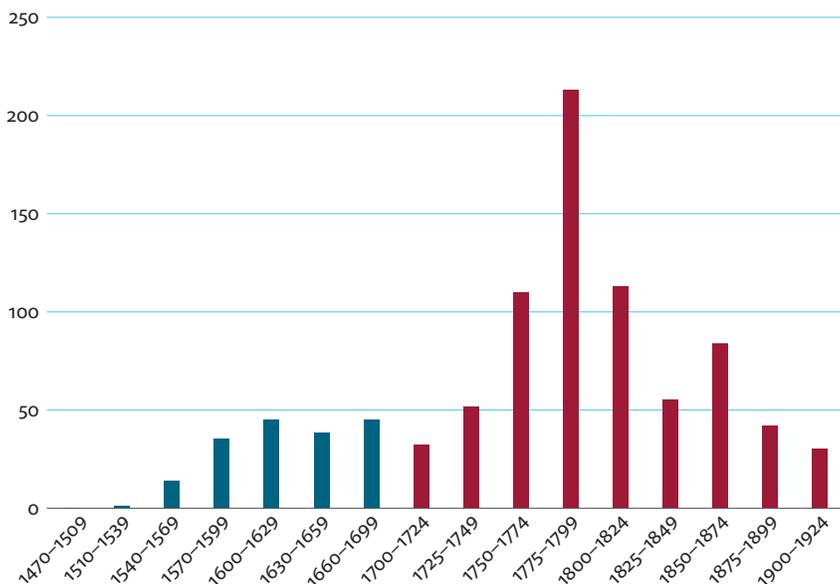


Figure 1. Frequency of the term *manners* in EEBO (1470–1699; blue) and CLMET3.0 (1700–1924; red) per million words.³

The increase of the term *manners* that Culpeper identified between 1550 and 1624 is discernible in Figure 1, but it somehow diminishes in significance in comparison with a much larger increase in the eighteenth century. Clearly, throughout the eighteenth century the texts compiled in the CLMET show a very remarkable increase of frequency. It more or less doubles from each quarter century to the next (32.3, 51.7, 109.8 and finally 213.3 per million words). In the nineteenth century frequencies diminish almost as quickly again as they rose in the previous century (see also Jucker this volume). It appears that the need for people to talk about manners (a first-order concept) rose considerably until the end of the eighteenth century and since then has receded again. But as always, such figures have to be

2. It is, of course, problematic to compare frequency figures across different corpora which may have been compiled on the basis of different sampling principles but the similarity of the figures at the point of contact of these two corpora suggests that the combination is not entirely unrealistic.

3. The figures for EEBO are retrieved from the website maintained by Mark Davies (see details under “Corpora”). This website provides frequency figures per decade. Here they are merged into periods of 30 years. The figures for CLMET3.0 were accessed with AntConc 3.4.4m.

treated with care. They are based on a very large database but it is reasonable to assume that its composition has changed considerably over time, and the development represented in Figure 1 might be due to some extent to shifts in the composition of the database.

The term *manners* is only one in a whole range of related terms within the semantic field of courtesy and politeness. In an earlier paper (Jucker, Taavitsainen & Schneider 2012), we traced this field across the history of the English language in an attempt to assess the usefulness of a research method that we named “metacommunicative expression analysis”, which consists of a first-order analysis of terms that are used in a speech community to talk about various aspects of communication, including issues of courtesy and politeness. We used the *Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Oxford English Dictionary* to compile a list of 67 expressions in this field. We then traced these expressions in the texts of the *Helsinki Corpus* with its data from Old English up to Early Modern English. In order to get a reasonable level of recall and precision, certain expressions which often occur with meanings that are not related to politeness and courtesy, such as *complement*, *fair*, *goodly* and *well*, had to be excluded. On the other hand, the list of search terms had to include relevant spelling variants. These adjustments produced a list of 185 search terms and a total of 1,164 hits in the entire *Helsinki Corpus*, which amounts to 0.663 hits per 1,000 words.

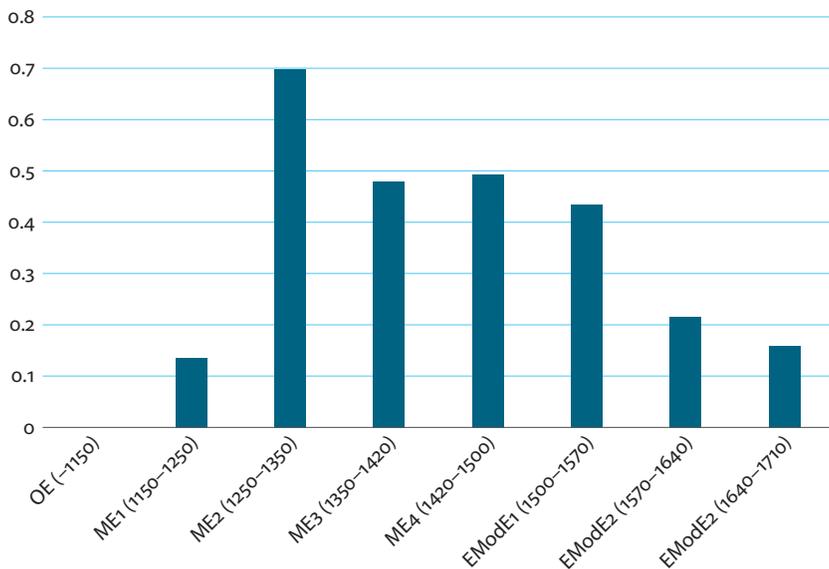


Figure 2. Politeness related vocabulary in the *Helsinki Corpus* by period (hits per 1,000 words) (based on Jucker, Taavitsainen & Schneider 2012).

Figure 2 reveals that the highest density of politeness-related vocabulary in the *Helsinki Corpus* can be found in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century of its Middle English part. The density remains high into the first Early Modern period in the sixteenth century and then decreases considerably. This stands in marked contrast to the situation depicted in Figure 1, which suggests that the period of most intense discourse about proper behaviour occurred much later, i.e. in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It is possible that the difference between these two figures is related to the earlier somewhat more pronounced concern for the morality of people than the increased concern for the outward appearance that must have started perhaps in the Renaissance period. At this point, this can be no more than a very tentative suggestion even though the papers collected in this volume appear to give it some support (see Section 5; see also Jucker 2020: Chapter 10 for similar claims). Clearly more research is needed on this.

In any case, the vocabulary of good manners and courtesy is not the only guide to the discourse on manners. At the beginning of this introduction, we mentioned table manners as an example of today's concern that may often seem superficial and merely concerned with the outward appearance. Such concerns are, of course, much older. Chaucer's well-known portrait of a prioress in the General Prologue of his *Canterbury Tales* may serve as an example.

- (1) At mete wel ytaught was she with alle;
 She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
 Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe;
 Wel koude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe
 That no drope ne fille upon hire brest.
 In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest. (Chaucer, GP I 127–132)⁴

'At dinner she was well taught indeed; she allowed no morsel to fall from her lips, and did not dip her fingers too deeply into the sauce; she knew well how to carry a morsel and take good care that not the slightest drop would fall on her breast; her greatest pleasure was in good manners (courtesy).'

Here, the prioress's impeccable table manners are described and praised in some detail. What is striking, though, is the fact that most of the descriptions that characterise her behaviour at the table are in the form of obvious blunders from which she refrains. She does not let a morsel drop from her lip, she does not wet her fingers in the sauce, and she makes sure that no drop stains her habit. The whole portrait is, of course, one of gentle satire. She is praised but for the wrong reasons. As a member of the clergy she should be praised for her devotion and piety. Instead, she is praised for attributes that would have been more appropriate for

4. The text is taken from the *Riverside Chaucer* (Benson 1987). The translation is our own.

an aristocratic lady, which is neatly summarised by the observation that “[h]er greatest pleasure was in good manners (courtesy)” (see also Jucker 2010: 183 and Jucker 2020: Chapter 3).

Courtesy with the above-mentioned aspects of good manners and behaviour with class distinctions is described in etiquette guides of late medieval English society. *The Babees Book* (ed. by Furnivall), written in easily memorable rhyming couplets, dates from c. 1475 and points out the reward for obeying such rules:

- (2) Kutte nouhte youre mete eke as it were Felde men,
That to theyre mete haue suche an appetite
That they ne rekke in what wyse, where ne when,
Nor how vngoodly they in theyre mete twyte;
But, swete children, haue al-vey *your* delyte
In curtesye, and in verrey gentylnesse,
And at youre myhte eschewe boystousnesse.

(*The Babees Book*, lines 176–182)

‘Don’t cut your meat like field labourers, who have such an appetite they don’t care how they hack their food. Sweet children, let your delight be in courtesy, and eschew rudeness.’ [The summary is given in the margin of the text by Furnivall.]

The guide is addressed to children of privileged classes, of nobility and royalty. Likewise, the target audience of medieval literature for entertainment, such as romances, consisted of the elite groups.

In the early modern period, rules of conduct are increasingly present in various literary and non-literary works, but conduct books were no longer addressed to the upper classes of society only, but the social basis had widened to include apprentices, and more attention was paid to lower classes.⁵ It is also worth noticing that proper behaviour and manners are defined by their opposites in these guidebooks (cf. above). With time, even women received attention. A young ladies’ guide from the end of the eighteenth century makes a direct link with manners and morals, as is evident in the following citation (*you* addresses the young ladies; *choice* ‘choice of husband’):

Great care, indeed, judgment, taste and vigilance, are absolutely necessary to direct you in the choice. A strict friendship is adopting, as it were, the sentiments, the manners, the morals, and, almost the happiness or misery of others.

(Bennett 1792: 13)

5. In recent decades, more attention has been paid to the poor and unprivileged classes (see Calvo Cortés in this volume).

4. Norms, blunders and transgressions

The papers assembled in this volume provide fascinating case studies of the clashes between norms and their transgressions. They provide an unusual angle that deviates from earlier studies that pay attention to prescriptive rules of correctness or analyse language from the angle of standardisation and its spread, which has recently been the main current in historical sociolinguistics (see e.g. Rutten, Vosters & Vandenbusshe 2014). Instead, the focus of several chapters in our volume is on breaches and transgressions against what was considered proper behaviour, providing empirical evidence on the ways verbal aggression was performed. The analysed texts provide ample evidence that people have always been deeply concerned with the issues pertaining to manners, politeness and norms of behaviour and language use, as well as blunders, transgressions and violations of such norms.

In this section we shall open up the mechanisms of norm violations in more detail. The papers show how various linguistic and pragmatic analytical tools are applied to reach a better understanding of norms in a particular temporal, social and cultural context. The chapters cover transgressions that occur in different genres, registers and traditions, and their historical time of writing places them against and in relation to a variety of linguistic and discursive norms. The challenge is to discover how these transgressions are realised; particular attention is paid to the functions of blunders and violations. Together the individual case studies make up a whole and offer what we see as a larger pattern of language use outside the mainstream.

Language norms can be defined as socio-historically determined conventions that were generally accepted at a given time and vary according to several parameters (see below). The contributions deal with both behaviour and language use devoting varying amounts of attention to these two components. The scope is wide and ranges from the preoccupation with manners in a medieval court to analyses of language use *per se* in the later periods. Attention is paid to trespasses where polite and co-operative communication gives way to impolite and disruptive behaviour in different social and professional contexts. Common knowledge available to the contemporary readers, however, is often lost; in several cases we have to rely on educated guesses instead of facts (see below). Period culture and societal norms have changed and there is a wide gap between literacy rates now and in the earlier periods.

Medieval and early modern times call for special explication of both historicity and alterity (cf. Bös & Claridge 2019). The notion of a *blunder*, for example, appears to have been a much more serious transgression in the Middle English period (Silec-Plessis in this volume), whereas today it often refers to relatively minor and unintentional deviations from expected norms. The medieval protagonists

behave in ways that transgress late medieval morality (see Pereira Dominiguez in this volume).

When we proceed in time to the early modern period, linguistic blunders are no more than unwitting offences that might have been avoided, had the speaker known better. In drama, the uneducated lower class characters excel in unintentional blunders that occur simply because of misunderstandings, malapropisms or unintended breaches of norms. Slips of the tongue have humorous effects, releasing laughter in the audience, but they also serve a particular function in literary characterisation in Shakespeare's plays (Kizelbach in this volume). The chapter on restoration drama presents a very different angle to transgressions as its approach is metatextual: it is concerned with the discourse on transgressions and its shifting emphasis (Jucker in this volume).

In non-literary writing, rules of proper conduct in handbooks were intended to help apprentices in their aspirations. Interestingly, they focus on what not to do even in the early modern period, detailing what kinds of transgressions the male apprentices should avoid (Shvanyukova in this volume). The same trend is present in the guidebooks for female readers of the upper classes. In them, the main reason for transgressing from these ideals is explained as the "demon anger", which makes women lose control and become disobedient and irrational (Kukorely in this volume). Literacy was still rare among servant classes. Illiterate women in need had to hire scribes to write petitions to institutions, and the scribes executed their writing tasks with varying degrees of competence. Norm violations in this context refer to deviations from the guidelines (Calvo Cortés in this volume). In contrast, the highly educated professional elite of the eighteenth century mastered wide repertoires of written language use. They could exploit their skill with verbal aggression and irony to violate the norms of collaborative communication in argumentation (see Nash 1985: 152–153 and Simpson 2011). Such transgressions include personal accusations, sarcastic comments on the skills and experience of opponents, and false modesty claims to ridicule the target with semantic and pragmatic presuppositions (Taavitsainen in this volume).

In the nineteenth century, the mechanisms of linguistic manipulation appear in a somewhat different light. Norm transgressions mostly depend on the failure to adhere to the underlying conversational maxims: Alice, the innocent protagonist, adheres to politeness, while her interlocutors in the fantasy world obey different rules where the overarching co-operative principle does not apply (Ermda in this volume).

The most recent data in our volume employs different mechanisms. *Doc Martin's* "creative" impoliteness violates good manners; and he does not care. The protagonist is not aware of his failure to comply but causes havoc and distress, which provides entertainment and laughter for the audience (Buckledee in this

volume). The last chapter of the volume focuses on Molly Weasley's impoliteness strategies. Her system of values is given as a guiding norm to assert her moral authority, but in some conflict situations she reverts to non-conventionalised forms of impoliteness (Pelclová in this volume).

5. Literary and linguistic approaches to data analysis

Both literary and non-literary writings are studied in this volume and the assessment calls for a more analytical frame to contextualise the variation. An approach that distinguishes between genres, text types, registers and traditions has already proved useful for further insights into discourse features (see Taavitsainen 2016). All three are abstractions based on individual texts and go beyond specific linguistic realisations, overriding an individual author's preferences. Genres can be defined by situational and functional criteria (see Biber and Conrad 2009: 16), text types by their linguistic features (Werlich 1982), registers represent fields of writing, and traditions build on continuity. The list of non-fictional materials includes conduct books and manuals, institutional and private letters, and medical texts. The earliest literary sources belong to the medieval genres of romances and saints' lives, both with long traditions, next comes Shakespeare's drama, Restoration and eighteenth-century plays, nineteenth-century Alice Books, and the recent *Doc Martin* comedy drama and Harry Potter novels. The registers vary from entertainment to education to scientific writing. The traditions of these kinds of writing go back to different time periods: vernacular medical writing stretched over several centuries in the eighteenth century and the Latin and Greek models over two thousand, while television comedies have a history of a few decades only. In fiction, the medieval and early modern genres of romances and saints' lives adhered to a tradition with some variation in individual narratives.

Two papers on the late medieval period in the history of English open the volume. Tatjana Silec-Plessis studies blunders and other forms of disturbance in the Middle English retellings of an Anglo-Norman romance called *Ipomédon*, composed in the late twelfth century, and three Middle English translations produced some two hundred years later. In the Middle Ages, blunders could have serious consequences both for the perpetrator and for those around him or her. In the original, written by Hue de Rotelande, the eponymous character is a young knight with impeccable courtly manners but lacking in chivalric bravery in courtly tournaments, and this presents an obstacle for the young queen to marry him. Thus, Ipomedon fails to live up to the expected standards, which in medieval terms amounts to a serious blunder and leads to grave consequences that reveal societal changes that had taken place in the two centuries that had passed since the composition of the Anglo-Norman original.

In the second contribution, Laura Pereira Domínguez deals with Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women*. In medieval societies the outward performance of a person reflected their true inner self: good manners signified good morality. The stories of Thisbe and Lucretia serve as illustrations. At the end of their legends, both commit suicide, albeit for different reasons: Lucretia as the result of having been raped by an unwanted suitor, Thisbe for witnessing the suicide of her lover who had assumed that she had been killed by a lion. Lucretia sacrifices herself to avoid dishonour for herself and her family, while Thisbe stabs herself with the suicide weapon of her lover. Both women seriously transgress the norms of behaviour and at the same time stay ultimately true to themselves.

Urszula Kizelbach focuses on Shakespeare. She analyses blunders perpetrated by two characters particularly prone to commit them, Mistress Quickly and Falstaff.⁶ In this context, blunders take on a distinctly different quality. Kizelbach analyses them as face threats which lead to unintended perlocutionary effects, and in addition to their face-threatening potential they often have a humorous effect, especially for bystanders and audiences. However, the two differ considerably in their production of blunders. Mistress Quickly's errors, often with sexual overtones, are the result of her lack of education, and she herself is blissfully unaware of her mistakes and never embarrassed. Falstaff's blunders, on the other hand, are more serious because of his higher level of "embarrassability" (Kizelbach in this volume). His transgressions are the result of carelessness rather than ignorance, and he can see his own mistakes perpetrated in misjudged situations. Thus, blunders turn out to be a perceptive analytical tool in literary characterisation.

Andreas H. Jucker bridges the early and the late modern periods with his study on the discourse of manners and politeness in Restoration and eighteenth-century drama. He focuses on norms of expected behaviour and polite manners. In a first step, he investigates relevant lexical items in large corpora covering the eighteenth and its adjacent centuries, and in a second step he examines a small corpus of selected plays in order to show how the frequency of some of the key terms changed throughout the period under investigation. In a third step, he provides detailed case studies of three plays that illustrate the changes within a hundred years: from 1676 to 1722 to 1773. The corpus perspectives and the close-reading exercise complement each other, and together they provide evidence for the salience of the discourse on manners and politeness and their violations with a shift from honour and reputation to morality and character description, and, finally, to polished manners.

6. Both appear in several plays: *Henry IV*, Part 1 and Part 2, *Henry V* (where Falstaff is only mentioned but does not appear as a character on stage) and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Four papers focus on data from the eighteenth century, reflecting the prominence of the term *manners* in this century (see Figure 1). Conduct books are discussed by Polina Shvanyukova, who focuses on didactic literature targeted at apprentices and young tradesmen, while Erzsi Kukorelly looks at guidebooks for young ladies. Nuria Calvo Cortés compares letter-writing manuals with petitions and letters signed by women, and Irma Taavitsainen investigates medical debates in various texts. All these sources bear witness to the tension between norms and their transgressions in different ways. The conduct books, both those targeted at young professionals and those for young ladies, present much of their advice in terms of behaviour to be avoided. The petitions signed by women often exhibit features that deviate from the models in the letter-writing manuals. The medical controversy highlights the existing norms through a close analysis of their impoliteness features.

Shvanyukova investigates Samuel Richardson's *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* (1734) that offered both practical advice and moral guidance to its target group of young learners of a trade mainly by detailing transgressions to be avoided on the path of becoming a virtuous and competent adult. Richardson's linguistic strategy relies on a coherent anti-code of behaviour, which is revealed by the analysis that focuses on what not to do. Swearing and cursing, for instance, were warned against as steps leading more or less directly to theft, robbery and murder, and thus, ultimately, to the gallows. By outlining this dismal path the author aims at improving the morals of his young readers, and to encourage them to improve their characters by following good examples and avoiding bad ones. Proper manners would automatically follow.

Kukorelly deals with norms of behaviour for young women and the perceived dangers of digressions from these norms in conduct books of the eighteenth century. Such books circulated in large numbers with closely related literary and non-literary versions of social etiquette and conduct. The main virtues of women, according to these books, consisted of self-control over body and mind, and obedience coupled with rationality and consciousness of the world; losing control because of anger is warned against as a severe transgression. In contrast, the perfect young lady attained her place in society through the ideal gender role. Manners are seen as the desired behaviour for the young lady to present herself to the world and to ensure society's approval.

Calvo Cortés focuses on the discrepancy between explicit norms and whether they were observed or ignored in real life in Late Modern England. Her data comes from both letter-writing manuals and two corpora of women's petitions. These letters were addressed to men in much higher social positions in the Foundling Hospital in London in the first corpus, and to the governors of the Bank of England in the second. The petitioners of the former corpus were unmarried young women

in desperate need of a home for their first children, while the letters addressed to the Bank of England came from women prisoners asking for money or for an earlier transportation to Australia. In spite of their common purpose and similar relationship between the senders and the recipients, the letters show considerable variation. It is evident that help had been necessary in their execution, especially as some are signed by a mere cross; the letter-writing manuals obviously acted as prescriptive guidelines for the petitioners and whoever helped them.

Medical debates are a very different genre, investigated by Irma Taavitsainen, in written documents including a biting sarcastic review letter. The controversy focuses on a new method of inoculation against smallpox, and the practice was argued pro and con. Three different styles were valid in eighteenth-century medical and scientific writing: the Royal Society plain style, rhetorical eloquence with polite society language use, and even the old scholastic style of argumentation was still valid. These norms are broken in a fierce pamphlet war where language use becomes aggressive and insulting, using irony and sarcasm as weapons, with additional derogatory meanings. These writings also create a contrast between the ingroup versus the outgroup, i.e. between Christians and Muslims, the English and the rest of the world.

The nineteenth century is represented by Isabel Ermida's study of impoliteness in Lewis Carroll's Alice books (1865 and 1871). She looks at the ways in which fictional characters transgress the norms of manners and politeness and, by doing so, show an acute awareness of what these norms actually are. Alice is the ultimately courteous figure and embodiment of linguistic and pragmatic politeness norms for a girl of her age and social class in the Victorian era. She is continuously confronted with the infringement of politeness norms by other characters who regularly comment on each other's behaviour and censure it as uncivil or rude. Ermida differentiates between linguistic and pragmatic transgressions. The former include puns, neologisms and relexicalisations; the latter violations of conversational maxims, the use of infelicitous speech acts and bald-on-record impoliteness. Alice struggles to make sense of what other characters say to her and how they treat her, but does not succeed. For the analyst, the blunders and transgressions provide a very rich source to study the underlying norms and expectations that were put on a small girl, albeit a fictional one, in the Victorian era.

The last two papers in our volume are devoted to very recent data, both of them dealing with fictional worlds. Steve Buckledee investigates the television comedy drama *Doc Martin*, which aired between 2004 and 2017, and Jana Pelclová J. K. Rowling's series of Harry Potter books, published between 1997 and 2007. The comedy drama *Doc Martin* provides an interesting contrast to the Alice Books. In *Doc Martin*, it is the protagonist, Dr Martin Ellingham, who baffles his surroundings with his own creative impoliteness. He is ill-mannered and continuously

offends the people he interacts with, but here, too, there are obvious transgressions of the norms of good manners and politeness. This causes distress to the interlocutors in the fictional world and provides a source of humour and entertainment for the audience. Buckledee draws a careful distinction between intentional and unintentional impoliteness or rudeness arguing that Dr Ellingham generally is not aware that his behaviour offends and appals his interlocutors as it is the result of his social ineptitude.

Jana Pelclová's analysis of Rowling's series of Harry Potter books focuses on a different type of protagonist. She does not analyse the eponymous character of her texts but Molly Weasley, mother of the Weasley clan and mother-figure to Harry Potter. Molly Weasley is neither the butt of humorous impoliteness, as in the case of Alice, nor the source of it, as in the case of Doc Martin, but she is a moral authority whose system of values and principles serves as a guiding norm for her family. Interestingly, she often resorts to impoliteness in order to assert her moral authority. Pelclová finds that in situations in which Molly Weasley's value system conflicts with that of her interlocutor, she prefers implicational (i.e. non-conventionalised) forms of impoliteness, which are more indirect and require contextual information in order to be understood (cf. Culpeper 2011). She resorts to conventionalised impoliteness, such as insulting language, in cases of emotionally charged situations, for instance when her relatives violate social norms and her anger or fear cause her to reinforce these norms in no uncertain terms. Pelclová identifies transgression of rules and principles as a genre feature of adolescent literature.

6. Conclusion

The papers assembled in this volume are fascinating case studies of the clashes between good behaviour and behavioural transgressions. The texts analysed in these papers provide ample evidence that people have always been deeply concerned with these issues pertaining to manners, politeness and norms of behaviour and language use, as well as blunders, transgressions and violations of such norms. The papers show how transgressions can serve as a versatile analytical tool to reach a better understanding of norms at a particular period in time and in a particular social and cultural context and people's attitudes towards these norms.

The papers cover a very diverse range of non-literary and literary data, and they are written from different analytical perspectives, but together they provide a long diachrony of manners and their transgressions, and they show how literary and linguistic approaches can inspire each other and combine to provide a deeper and more profound understanding of the issues at stake. Manners have always been seen as somehow related to the underlying morality, but the case studies

attest to significant shifts in this relationship. In the late medieval period, the two seem to have been more or less indistinguishable. Manners directly reflected the underlying morality. In the course of time, the relationship became less direct and more tenuous. Manners increasingly came to be seen as surface manifestations that were – at least to some extent – dissociated from the underlying motives but they could also serve as a path to an improved morality. Thus, if you behave according to the prescribed norms, you automatically become a better human being. But the concluding papers of this volume on fictional data from the twenty-first century make it abundantly clear that a tension prevails between proper behaviour and the underlying morality, e.g. in the strategies of impoliteness used or the social blunders committed by an ethically upright person like Doc Martin. Thus we may conclude by twisting the opening maxim and adding “women” to get from “Manners makyth man” to “Man and woman maken manners”.

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Ipomedon and the elusive nature of blunders in the courtly literature of medieval England

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When the word *blonder*, which comes from Old Norse, appeared in the English language in the late fourteenth century, it had a stronger and more negative meaning than its Present-Day reflex: rather than an embarrassing faux-pas, blunders always had potentially serious repercussions, not only for their perpetrators, but also for the society they lived in. This is exemplified in an Anglo-Norman romance called *Ipomedon*, in which the hero and the heroine's youthful gaffes have grave consequences. This poem was later adapted for English-speaking audiences with the characters' errors of judgment slightly modified. The changes made by the English compilers are analysed in this paper as they shed light on the evolution of politeness strategies (understood then as courtly behaviours) throughout the Middle Ages in England. They also show how difficult it was during that period to even consider the possibility of any transgression being a minor one.

Keywords: *Ipomedon*, *Ipomadon*, pragmatics, Anglo-Norman literature, Middle English literature, medieval literary theory, medieval ethics, translation

1. Introduction

Today a blunder is usually understood as an action which comes across as unwittingly offensive, and its perpetrator as either careless, silly or unaware that he or she violated expected patterns of behaviour or speech. But it was not always thus. The word, (spelled *blonder* originally), appeared in the English language towards the end of the fourteenth century, but it was rarely used until the Renaissance. It came from *blonderen*, a verb based on an Old Norse borrowing that referred primarily to the act of 'walking without seeing' or 'deluding oneself' but could also signify 'to damage'. According to the MED and the OED, *blonder* meant 'confusion', 'bewilderment', 'trouble', or 'disturbance', but the OED notes that early quotations

are “vague in sense”. This paper will try to show the connection between the modern and the medieval uses of the term: how a relatively harmless kind of offense (in our eyes) could have had serious repercussions in a heavily ritualised medieval world¹ informed by a “triad of value-systems that operated both inside and outside” of it: courtesy, chivalry and courtliness.² These value-systems were difficult to observe at the same time, since they overlapped in ways that created hard-to-solve conflicts. No matter how vigilant one might be in the observance of the ideals of restraint and exemplariness which were at the heart of the social code(s) of politeness,³ a courtly knight might find himself torn between the demands of a lady and the loyalty he owed to her lord (Jucker 2014: 25), while a courtly cleric would have struggled to reconcile what Jaeger (1985: 128) calls the “ethical” and the “social” codes of conduct so as to “[please] God and the world”.

As the editors of the present volume make clear, the meaning of courtesy evolved in the course of the Middle Ages. Since “many of the new terms of courtesy and politeness were imported from French”, together with “patterns of behaviour” (Jucker 2014: 6), a diachronic study of sources in French and English seemed in order to better track down early forms of blunders. This paper therefore focuses on a romance called *Ipomedon*, which was first composed in the Anglo-

1. In its search for early manifestations of improper behaviour, this paper touches on a variety of topics for which a tremendous amount of research has been done. It would be impossible to offer an exhaustive presentation of, or even an exhaustive bibliography for, each of these topics. Only the most pertinent references for the present analysis will therefore be provided. Regarding the importance of ritual in the medieval world, see Nicholls (1985), Schmitt (1990) and Crane (1997, 2002).

2. Scaglione (1992: 5–6) operates a useful distinction between the social and moral aspects of what medieval writers subsumed under the umbrella term “courtesy”. In his view, **chivalry** corresponds to “the ethico-ideological frame of mind that extended from knights to other classes and informed patterns of behavior regarded as ‘noble’”; **courtesy** to “the results of the civilizing process [...] whereby respect for others’ feelings and interests was expected as accepted behaviour and the sign of a noble nature”, while **courtliness** represents the “qualities pertaining to the social and cultural environment of princely courts”.

3. It has been shown that, contrary to what certain scholars may have hypothesized regarding what they see as a move away from barbarism towards civilization, understood as the foundation of the “civilizing process” in which politeness codes play an important part, the “new” ideas which form the basis of the etiquette books of the Renaissance were similar to those found in the works devoted to the subject of education in the Middle Ages. While there were few books clearly labelled as dealing with manners and how to refine them, they existed, and they relied on principles that went as far back as Cicero (Schmitt 1990: 38 sq.; Gillingham 2002: 279) and even ancient Greece (Jager 1985: 115).

Norman dialect by Hue de Rotelande in the twelfth century,⁴ and then translated or compiled in English in the late fourteenth century or the beginning of the fifteenth century.⁵ Only two of the three extant redactions of the original poem will be used here: a nearly 9,000-line long poem called *Ipomadon* and an unfinished prose compilation called *Ipomedon*. The much shorter *Lyfe of Ipomydon* was excluded from analysis, as it contains almost nothing of the source's preoccupation with courtly matters.

The Anglo-Norman romance under study has generated a great deal of interest in the past fifty years, due to its literary qualities, its detailed examination of the ethics of courtesy and courtly love, and their somewhat difficult combination with the code of chivalry. The reliability of its narrator has been called in question, and has produced contradictory evaluations regarding what the poem aims to be: either a defence of the right to marry who you want (Mora 2002), or a parody of courtly love⁶ combined with an attack on women (Krueger 1990). The appreciation of its English retellings has proved less problematic, as they move away from the more controversial aspects of their source, focusing instead on the elements in the story that provide their readers with a finer understanding of matters of conduct (Meale 1984). In that respect, they read as *mirrors*. *Mirrors* were a medieval alternative to courtesy books.⁷ Rather than merely providing readers with lists of things to do to become an accomplished man or woman, they presented them with characters whose behaviour they could emulate, so as to become their "mirror images". Even the Anglo-Norman *Ipomedon* can be called a *mirror* because, while its prologue introduces the poem as a warning against being too secretive for your own good, the poem itself mostly reads as a treatise on courtesy and chivalry, albeit one in which contradictory formulations of these ideals collide in a way that sets the story in motion.⁸ But there are also many dialogues which provide detailed

4. Hereafter called Fr. *Ipomedon* for short and to differentiate it from the English prose *Ipomedon*.

5. These texts were first published in a single volume by Kölbing, whose edition was used in this paper, together with his edition of the Anglo-Norman poem.

6. For research on the parodical aspects of the French narrative conducted in English, see Calin (1988) and Weiss (2005). Haugeard (2004) provides a summary of French research on the topic; for more recent French research, see Scarpini (2010) and V éran-Boussaadia (2016).

7. For a brief presentation of the various sources of medieval courtly literature, see Bryson (1998: 26 sq.) and Gillingham (2002).

8. Contrary to what some scholars have said, for instance Burnley (1998: 31), there is no straightforward exposition of the "opposition between *chevalerie* and *curteisie*" as well as between "*curteisie* and *vilanie*" in Fr. *Ipomedon*. While this comment (together with much of what

information on the courtly ways with which to address various kinds of people, from the king and queen of a country to the ostler of a city inn. It is no surprise then that the original poem should have been seen as a good way to learn courtly manners in a pleasing fashion. The English compilers remodelled the story told by Hue de Rotelande according to the social and ethical codes of their times. Their attempts were only partially successful, but they provide some clues regarding the evolution of the codes of courtesy and chivalry during the couple of centuries that separated the source from its English adaptations.

The first part of this paper will focus on the invariants in the three versions of the tale, and the various minor offenses the main characters commit.⁹ Special attention will be paid to what Jucker (2014: 8) calls “the discursive struggle of the interactants.” Descriptions of gestures, looks and other non-verbal modes of communication, which in the Middle Ages must also include clothing, will also be analysed as part of the communicative patterns Honegger calls “adversion” (Jucker 2014: 15).¹⁰ In the second part of my paper, I will show how the initial blunders made by Ipomedon¹¹ (and the lady he is in love with) are rewritten and reappraised in a way that makes them look like blunders in the modern sense rather than the medieval one, even if they are never truly identified as such.

2. The tale of Ipomedon as a succession of blunders

The story told by Hue is deceptively simple and can be summarised thus: Ipomedon, the well-bred son of the king and queen of Apulia, leaves his parents’

Burnley writes about the Anglo-Norman poem) could easily be applied to the Middle English *Ipomadon* or its prose compilation, it does not apply as easily to their source, which upon closer examination contains a criticism of the chivalric ethos *underneath* the more obvious parody of the courtly one.

9. Since the object of this paper is the study of an English term, the extracts used will be taken from *Ipomadon*, but the French source and the prose compilation will also be quoted when needed.

10. On the role that fabrics and colours played in medieval society, and the way they were used in matters of class differentiation, see Pastoureau (1997) or Dimitrova and Goehring (2015). For clothes as metaphors in fictional narratives, see Baert and Rudy (2007) or Crane (2002).

11. The name of the protagonist being variously spelled Ipomedon, Ipomadon or Ipomydon in English, I chose to use the first spelling only in this article, as it has the advantage of being written the same way in the French source. The same treatment was applied to the other characters, apart from the lady Ipomedon falls in love with. We only know her as La Fere, i.e. The Proud One, which is how she will be called in this paper.

kingdom at a very young age¹² for the court of Calabria, ostensibly to further his knowledge of courtly matters¹³ (he takes his tutor Tholomeu with him). In reality, he has developed an interest in the young Calabrian queen, whose praise he heard in Apulia. Once in Calabria, he becomes the lady's servant, thanks to his impeccable manners and his otherworldly handsomeness. Three years pass by. Ipomedon, who has refrained from revealing his identity, gives all satisfaction as a courtier. However, he shows no appetite for chivalric pursuits and ostentatious displays of bravery, despite having been trained in the arts of war before he left Apulia. This causes much discomfort and anguish to the queen, as she has fallen in love with the boy. She cannot act on her feelings, since she unwisely vowed to marry only the best knight on earth. Her clumsy attempt to convince him to adopt a more virile attitude backfires spectacularly: humiliated, Ipomedon leaves Calabria under a false pretext and goes back to Apulia, where he is made a knight by his father. He then becomes a knight-errant, touring the European continent in search of the best tournaments in which to hone his skills. This lasts for a few years during which, under several disguises, he saves his beloved from the unwanted attentions of a number of suitors until he is finally reunited with her, at which point, having become the best knight on earth, he can finally marry her.¹⁴

In this story, the main characters, Ipomedon and The Proud One, each make the kind of embarrassing mistake that could be characterized as a blunder in the modern sense. Those mistakes set the story in motion. The first one is made by Ipomedon and involves a garment worn at an inappropriate moment; the second

12. He is called *enfant* repeatedly in the French poem during his time at the Calabrian court and graduates to *jouvenceau* ('young man') only five years later, when he goes to Meleager's court.

13. In the French source the boy purportedly leaves Apulia to learn *affaitement*, a word which began to be used in the middle of the thirteenth century and referred to all the most amiable qualities one needed to possess in a courtly setting, making it the ancestor of politeness. This tells us, incidentally, that at the time the best way to acquire courtly manners was to find the right environment in which to learn them through observation, rather than from books of etiquette. Those were still far and few in the tenth and eleventh century anywhere in Europe (Jaeger 1985: 214). The situation improved a little in the twelfth and thirteenth century, but, as far as England is concerned, only a handful of books in the Anglo-Norman dialect, most of them "general treatises on the manners and morals thought appropriate to a social elite" (Gillingham 2002: 272), seem to have been in circulation then. A verse treatise in Latin dating back to the twelfth century, the *Urbanus Magnus* (also called *Liber Urbani*), written by one Daniel of Beccles, is the only extant book of manners of the period that can compare with early modern conduct books. It offers a detailed account of the ways a nobleman could behave in all kinds of situation in order to be praised for his manners. However, its role in the dissemination of new codes of conduct cannot be precisely ascertained (Gillingham 2002: 273).

14. For a detailed summary of the story, see Bliss (2008: 122 sq).

one is made by The Proud One when she chastises the young man in a manner that shames him. The third one is made by Ipomedon again, as he leaves the queen without properly informing her of his decision.

2.1 The incident with the boteler¹⁵

Courteous behaviours of the kind involving a lady and a knight are familiar to us due to the enduring success of Arthurian tales. However, they should be examined without preconceived ideas, much as ethnologists do today when they look into other cultures.¹⁶ Two aspects of medieval civilization are of particular importance here: the power of gestures as part of the “communicative patterns” (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013: 12) of that period,¹⁷ and the fact that good manners were seen as resulting from good morals. The direct correlation between outward patterns of behaviour and not just feelings, but moral principles, is an aspect of the earlier stages of the codes of manners that is alluded to in the introduction. It derives from the belief that gestures are the expression of a person’s true motives (Schmitt 1990: 18). This explains the attention paid to the way people dress, talk and even walk in medieval fictional narratives. A good example is provided at the beginning of the romance under study.

Ipomedon makes his first appearance at the Calabrian court in a way that is designed to impress (*Ipomadon*: ll. 357). He arrives on a palfrey, richly dressed in clothes that befit his princely origins in terms of fabric and colour: red velvet or silk, trimmed with ermine fur and gold. Once admitted in the hall, he walks at a stately pace¹⁸ (neither too fast nor too slow) towards the queen, whom he addresses courteously, asking her if she would allow him to become her *varlet*.¹⁹ The

15. The *boteler* was the chief cupbearer of a medieval court, the ancestor of the modern butler. He was responsible for the food and drink served at dinner.

16. I am particularly indebted to Eva Ogiermann’s book on apologising (2009), which provided me with the equivalent of an introduction to the field of pragmatics and to the pitfalls of a cross-cultural examination of politeness, as well as to the editors of this volume, whose research in the field of historical pragmatics proved invaluable.

17. In early medieval society, written documents were still far and few, and ritual gestures often played the performative (or illocutionary) part that speeches (written or oral) now do in modern society: to the men and women of those times, a gesture conveyed meaning better than words would as it involved the whole person, body and soul (Schmitt 1990: 14–18).

18. In accordance with the ideal of moderation in all things expounded by Cicero and Seneca (Schmitt 1990: 39) and later adopted by the medieval authors of courtesy books.

19. *Varlets* were young men who were given the task of attending to knights. Here Ipomedon wants to attend to the queen instead, something which places him firmly as a proponent of the ethics of courtly love.

boy's beauty, manners and deportment convince the young monarch to listen to him attentively, which must have been Ipomedon's objective. However, she does not accept his offer of service right away since he refuses to say who he is,²⁰ something which, while definitely odd, does not qualify as a blunder in the story, as it does not elicit mockery or condemnation on the part of the Calabrian court. The queen merely puts him to the test, giving him her cup and asking him to get her some wine. Ipomedon complies right away, and proceeds to the *botellerie* ('cellar') with his rich mantle still on, something which is unfavourably noticed by the courtiers. He realizes it and takes his mantle off, giving it to the butler who accepts it with gratitude (Fr. *Ipomedon*, ll. 476–500; *Ipomadon*, l. 443 onwards). Alas, the other varlets laugh some more, not realizing that the newcomer's attitude only proves how courteous and generous he is (Fr. *Ipomedon*, ll. 503–504; *Ipomadon*, ll. 500–502). The more discerning queen marvels at his impeccable manners and quickness of wit, qualities which convince her of his genteel breeding, and she grants him his request.

This little incident can be counted as the very first blunder Ipomedon makes, but his clever handling of the matter turns it into a sign of his noble birth, elevating him above the other courtiers right from that moment.

2.2 The Proud One's blunder

The queen, because of Ipomedon's refusal to reveal who he is, remains unaware that, as the prince of Apulia, he is her equal. This seriously impedes his chances of being considered a potential husband. Worse still, three years after meeting her, he still spends most of his time hunting instead of jousting like the other *varlets*.²¹ His attitude concerns the queen since she has made a vow to marry the best knight on earth. This vow earned her her nickname (*Ipomadon*, ll. 106–118), so that it has

20. Ipomedon never gives his name once he has left his country, a fact that has puzzled readers and scholars alike for centuries. Many explanations have been posited, either drawing on Celtic folklore (Stanesco 1985: 339 sq.) or on the relationship of this poem with a cluster of stories revolving around a nameless character referred to as The Fair Unknown (Bliss 2008). They fail to take into account what, to me, seems to be the decision of the French poet to not be constrained by the sources he draws upon in order to keep his story open to interpretation, – which would no doubt have been appreciated by a courtly audience as it would have given them something to discuss (see Bradbury 1994 on the subject of literacy and orality in Middle English romances).

21. In the Middle Ages hunting was an extremely important activity, which provided food as well as more symbolic and spiritual forms of sustenance, rather than the pastime it has now become in Western society (Marvin 2006: 20 sq.). In this courtly romance however, it is presented as being worthy of a young nobleman's interest only as a training for war and its closest equivalent in times of peace, jousting.

come to define who she is. As her beautiful *varlet* has no apparent desire to become a hero (Fr. *Ipomedon*, ll. 521–522; *Ipomadon*, l. 515), and shrugs off the taunting remarks levelled at him by the other boys, The Proud One decides to confront him. His feelings have started to show in the way he looks at her, and she fears people will not only notice them, but also the fact that she has been watching him a little more than she should. She devises a stratagem that involves a scapegoat who will bear the brunt of her rebuke, with *Ipomedon* standing at his side, fully aware that her words are really meant for him. Her choice falls on her cousin Jason, who has become *Ipomedon*'s best friend (*Ipomadon*, ll. 761–772). She upbraids him for throwing (imaginary) looks of love upon her lady-in-waiting *Imaine* in the mistaken belief that his courteous manners will be enough to win her heart.

“Be thou neuer of so grette bewte,
 Trowes thou this lady bryght of ble
 Here loue on the to laye
 For fayrehedde or for any largenesse,
 But thow were man of proves?
 I say the shortely: naye!
 Yf thou wylte love of laydes wynne,
 On othere wysse þou mvste begynne;
 Syr, for thy good I saye!
 Gyff the to justes or to turnaynge,
 Or els lett be thy nyce lokyng...²²

(*Ipomadon*, ll. 845–855)

Instead of addressing herself to *Ipomedon*, the queen directs her barbs at her cousin, who becomes the hapless victim of her scheme. Since the Proud One and Jason are related, she finds it possible to talk to him directly²³ and without disguising her face-threat as a polite request. She can mock him and call him a fool (*Ipomadon*, l. 840), without having to fear the kind of negative repercussions she would face if she offended someone who did not depend on her for his living. The fact that he is still a

22. ‘No matter how beautiful you might be, do you think this fair lady will bestow her love on you because you are handsome or generous, if you are not a man of prowess? The short answer, I tell you, is no! If you want to win her love, you must change tack. (I tell you that for your benefit.) You must joust and tourney, or else stop looking at her in that foolish way.’ (The translations in this paper are all mine unless stated otherwise.)

23. The compiler did not use *thou* pronominal forms (T) to indicate intimacy here, contrary to what one might find in other medieval texts, for example in *Gawain and the Green Knight* (Jucker 2014), as T appears in nearly all the dialogues of the Middle English romance, no matter who they may involve. In this he imitates Hue, who only uses polite *vous*-forms (V) in his poem. It shows that T could convey the “respect through the solidarity of mutual formality” (De Roo 1997: 234, quoted by Jucker 2014: 18) generally associated with V in French and Y in English when used as a kind of “default” form of address in courtly exchanges.

“child” (*Ipomadon*, l. 762) with a mild temperament (*Ipomadon*, l. 772) to boot, also explains her choice of the boy as the perfect “addressee-by-proxy” of her scolding.

While The Proud One’s subterfuge (Fr. *Ipomedon*, l. 826: “queintise”) might be interpreted as a desire to spare Ipomedon the embarrassment of being rebuked in public (even though it might result in shaming an innocent boy instead), the narrator makes it clear that she is motivated by fear: fear of the slanders that she might be subjected to once people realize that Ipomedon is in love with her (*Ipomadon*, ll. 815–20). The French source is even clearer in its presentation of her motives: the queen wants Ipomedon to leave the court if he fails to heed her advice because she worries that she will still love him despite his failings if he stays (Fr. *Ipomedon*, ll. 823–846). Such an infatuation demeans her as he is only a servant of unknown provenance and credentials. It reduces her positive face, which endangers her position at court.

As far as social interactions are concerned, one cannot stress enough the importance in medieval society not only of “saving face”²⁴ but also of presenting the “right face” to the world. While this would also apply to most human interactions today, presenting the right social face encompassed far more in the Middle Ages than today: firstly, as intimated in the introduction to this volume, because of the inextricable links between courtesy and chivalry, as well as between social and ethical values, and secondly because

[m]edieval and Renaissance man and woman could acquire an identity either by statute (as by the feudal, chivalric notion of nobility through blood and inheritance) or by education (as in the sociocultural making of the Renaissance courtier), but actions were always to be judged on the basis of membership in a specific social group. (Scaglione 1992: 2)

Part of The Proud One’s anguish comes from the fact that her love for such an unworthy recipient belittles her, thus threatening her status as the ruler of Calabria. She explains that ladies never choose their spouses for their good looks or their manners only, as they would run the risk of “losing their estates” if they did (*Ipomadon*, ll. 840–844). This is what nearly happens to her later, as her refusal to marry one of her many suitors (because she has secretly decided to wait for Ipomedon) results in her kingdom being attacked by foreign powers. The Proud One only reveals the real reason why she will not marry anyone to her confidant Imaine. In the lengthy discussions she has on the subject with her vassals as well as her uncle (who is called upon to arbitrate between the queen and her barons in their

24. To use the concept defined by Erving Goffman and those who followed his lead, most recently Terkourafi (2007: 313), whose definition of Face (which she calls Face2) aims at being truly universal and thus suits a study of its earlier forms.

dispute over who she should marry), she always pretends to be bound by her vow of marrying only the best knight on earth. She can defend her position as being the honourable thing to do, even though it may also be called a foolish decision.²⁵

The courtly society depicted in this romance is therefore one which relies on social distance and the appropriate expression of power relationships. It is a world in which a strong “desire for admiration” (Yabuuchi 2006: 323) collides with the “desire for solidarity” which Brown and Levinson saw as fundamental to their understanding of “positive face” (Yabuuchi 2006: 324). In Western medieval society those desires often contradicted each other: from a moral point of view, wanting to be admired was dangerous, as it was one of the many ways in which a person would succumb to the mortal sin of pride; from a social point of view, a strong sense of one’s own dignity was needed to keep an aristocrat from accidentally stooping to the level of a commoner. Seen in that light, The Proud One’s objections to Ipomedon’s conduct appear to stem from her need to be admired in all things, including in her choice of partner, in order to keep her status and protect the stability of her kingdom. That makes her guilty of the sin of pride, but her concern is justified from a social or political perspective.

Upon closer examination, however, it appears that there is more to her displeasure than a desire to save face. The Proud One’s anger at the strange boy she has fallen in love with also has moral overtones, or even existential ones.²⁶ She has been brought up to believe that appearance, manners and looks are the outward expressions of a person’s moral integrity,²⁷ and her anger is not fuelled by her pride only as is obvious in the next quotation:

Alias, that euer so grette gentryse
 Ys loste on hym for cowardise,
 oo worthe destone,
 Syn he is so fayre of face,
 That god had not gevyn hym that grace
 Of hertt hardy to bee! ...²⁸ (*Ipomedon*: ll. 539–544)

25. Something her barons do right from the moment she makes her resolve known on the day she ascends the throne (Fr. *Ipomedon*, l. 133 sq.; *Ipomedon*, l. 122 sq.)

26. See Terkourafi (2011: 166 sq.) for a general overview, and Nicholls (1985) or Schmitt (1990) for more detailed explorations of the topic in the medieval period.

27. This exacting, and even punishing, way of looking at appearances (in the sense of manners *and* looks) as the outward expression of inner qualities so that one cannot go without the other is especially present in early French courtly literature (Silec 2013: 76–79).

28. ‘What a shame that such gentlemanly qualities should be lost on him because of his cowardice! [How unlucky] since he is so fair of face, that God did not grant him the gift of a hardy heart!’

She cannot comprehend why God should have given such vast amounts of beauty and such nobility of manners (*gentryse*) to the foreign *varlet*, only to make him a coward, as it goes against her conviction that one cannot exist without the other.²⁹ The Proud One's disapproval therefore appears to be motivated by moral considerations as well as social ones, which would have been considered as perfectly acceptable by her peers.

However, what is both socially and morally reprehensible is the way she makes her displeasure known to Ipomedon, as she forgets to observe the virtue of temperance³⁰ at the same time as she throws all pretences of politeness to the wind in her diatribe. This is where she may be said to blunder. The Proud One calls her action a "*leidure*" ('an ugly thing') in the Fr. *Ipomedon* l. 1040, which is translated as a "laythe" ('loathly') thing in *Ipomadon* (l. 1008): both words are very strong and establish a correspondence between the nature of her action and the way it looked. Of course, this is The Proud One's interpretation of her offense, and it may be said to be coloured by the shame she feels in retrospect. Still, her speech, a succession of rhetorical questions to which she provides short, blunt answers, threatens the positive face of not just one, but two people: the real target of her words, Ipomedon, and the target-by-proxy, Jason. What is more, her exclamations ll. 851 and 854, together with her insulting language, make it clear that this is not just a rebuke, but an assault. This full-blown attack, barely softened by the expression of her desire to help Jason obtain his heart's desire l. 853 and her polite address to him as "Sir", is understood as such by both Jason and Ipomadon. The latter calls it an "vmbryde" l. 872, a word which translates as both a 'reproach' and an 'insult' according to the MED. Thus, it seems as though she is not the only one to consider her outburst as a serious lapse in manners.

Her transgression remains a minor one, however, since it is the only time in the narrative when she acts in an inappropriate way. What is more, she tries to atone for her offense. It does not take long for her to realize that her little scheme was badly done and that she has a responsibility in the way Ipomedon reacts after

29. Her feelings are reciprocated by all the characters in the narrative who do not dismiss Ipomedon as a fool or a sinner: his friend Jason, the lady Imaine, the Sicilian queen he becomes the servant of once he leaves Calabria, and his half-brother.

30. A virtue Gillingham (2002) shows to have been extremely important in the early medieval concept of courtesy, contrary to the commonly held view according to which attention to other people's feelings began to be part of politeness strategies in the early modern period only (see Bryson 1998: 105 sq. for such a perspective). The extent of the queen's shame once she realizes how badly she has treated Ipomedon, and which is expressed in detail in the French source, lends weight to Gillingham's thesis.

she scolded him.³¹ She spends the night reproaching herself for “la honte, qe li feistes,/ comme par orgoil lui sordeites?”³² (Fr. *Ipomedon*, ll. 1041–1042). She resolves to have a proper conversation with him as soon as possible, because his good looks and his perfect manners mean he cannot “be lower than a king” (*Ipomedon*, ll. 977–78).³³ Unfortunately, *Ipomedon* has already left her court by then.

2.3 *Ipomedon* the troublemaker

Ipomedon’s decision not to emulate his peers in their love of jousting is a threat to the world he lives in, not just to The Proud One’s good name, and the consequences of his obstinacy are potentially very serious: what if the other *varlets* decided to devote their time to the lesser art of hunting and refused to become knights? In a short while, Calabria would lose her protectors, and become prey to foreign powers (something which nearly happens, in fact). This error therefore could not be construed as minor; it does not qualify as a blunder in the modern sense, but in the medieval one instead, as it is a potential source of social and political unrest. The boy’s failure to realize that he must at least *try* to show an interest in warfare is never properly explained in any version of the story: in the French tale, the young man offers so many justifications for it that they cancel each other out (Haugeard 2004: 138). In any case, *Ipomedon*’s impetuous behaviour exemplifies the difficulties inherent in the “reshaping” of what Elias saw as the “economy of impulses” governing a warrior’s life (Jaeger 1985: 211).

While *Ipomedon* understands straight away that the queen’s remarks are meant for him, he does not react as the courtly audience of the original poem (or the readers of the Middle English versions) would have expected. He does not “straighten his act”; he does not take up jousting speedily and ostentatiously as the queen hoped he would. Neither does he run in a state of bewilderment and shame to the nearest forest as a punishment for his sins. Such deportment would have been expected by medieval readers, as exemplified by Arthurian poems in which Lancelot, Yvain, or Tristan do exactly that.³⁴ Instead, he departs from her court

31. This extends to his treatment of her during the tournament, as she construes his keeping his distance as the appropriate form of retribution for her earlier disdain. (Fr. *Ipomedon*, l. 6357 sq.)

32. “The horrible shame you caused him when in your pride you humiliated him?”

33. Interestingly, it is only once she has regained her faith in her value-system that she resolves to speak to him.

34. “When they believe they have been slighted in love, these warriors have a way of breaking all bonds, sometimes stripping themselves naked, and invariably repairing to the woods, expressing their sadness and degradation by leading the life of the wild man” (Bernheimer 1952: 14).

without informing her of his decision, which is at the same time uncourteous and uncourtly, according to Scaglione's distinction presented in the introduction.³⁵ This is his second blunder, and a much more serious one than the face-threat which spurred it. It demonstrates his willingness to pursue his desires at the expense of his duties (while the queen merely tried to fulfil what she thought were her duties, but in an inappropriate way). In other words, he privileges negative face over positive face, i.e. his desire to be unimpeded by other people's expectations over the need to conform to the role society has given him.

Ipomedon transgresses the norms of his times in ways that are often so subtle that they escape the notice of his peers. His biggest transgressions (refusing to marry The Proud One right after having won her hand; adopting shameful disguises) are outside of the compass of this paper, but they come along with minor ones as well. For instance the state in which he arrives in Sicily could be seen as an error of judgment on his part.³⁶ The company he keeps is large enough to pass for an army, and it worries the first people who see them, and even the king who wonders at first whether the strangers have come to deprive him of his kingdom (*Ipomadon* ll. 2511–2512). In fact, his regal retinue is designed to impress king Meleager, so that the latter will feel obliged to make an extraordinary show of generosity in order to regain his footing. This is how Ipomedon manages to become the servant of the Sicilian queen. The veritable pageant he stages for king Meleager's benefit is part of an elaborate scheme, in which he manipulates the Sicilian ruler into giving him the place he wants at his court.

Seen in this light, Ipomedon's refusal to give his name, and the many disguises he adopts in the course of the story, seem to be part of a "language of self-presentation" rather than "self-concealment", identified by Susan Crane, whereby "incognito is only the end point on a continuum of visible signs through which knights perform and manipulate their identities" (Crane 1997: 70). This is why Ipomedon's later transgressions once he has left Calabria only qualify as blunders in the medieval sense of the word: they do not result from either stupidity or carelessness and they generate considerable disturbance.

The *faux-pas* studied above revolve around what was expected from a noble in terms of courtly behaviour and the disastrous consequences the merest lapse

35. Here Hue produces a feeble argument (faithfully reproduced by the *Ipomadon* poet) meant to mitigate Ipomedon's rudeness: he does take his leave from The Proud One after the incident, but in very ambiguous terms. It is only after he has left that the queen begins to wonder what he meant exactly when he took his leave as he usually did each evening. (Fr. *Ipomedon*, l. 1049 sq.; *Ipomadon*, l. 1001 sq.)

36. "The custum was not in þo days/ Knighttes to ride with suche harnays" (*Ipomadon*, ll. 2492–2493). ('it was not customary for knights to ride in such array in those days')

could have in a world where every gesture, every utterance, was not only seen as deriving from a person's morals, but also contributed (when appropriately performed) to the stability of society. As we have seen, Ipomedon's failings, big and small, stem from a refusal to conform, or to be bound by the norms of his time, which jeopardizes the stability of his world. This makes it difficult to derive any kind of ready-made code of conduct from his tale, something which complicated the later use of the narrative as a "mirror for princes and merchants" (Meale 1984).

3. The evolution of politeness strategies in the Middle English retellings of Fr. *Ipomedon*

The fact that Ipomedon's story was compiled and adapted more than two centuries after the Anglo-Norman poem was composed testifies to its popularity.³⁷ *Ipomadon* is the most faithful of the three texts to its source, which can be seen in its length: the French poem is 10,578 lines long, while *Ipomadon*, which stands at 8,891 lines, is only slightly shorter. Still, their comparable length should not be seen as evidence that the verse retelling is a close translation of its source. Careful examination of the two texts reveal subtle differences. The story in Fr. *Ipomedon* is interspersed with lengthy passages during which the characters argue with their confidants (or with themselves) over matters of conduct. These passages are condensed and simplified in the English verse redaction, and to an even greater extent in the much shorter prose compilation as well. Such emendations emanate from a desire for clarification, as the redactors add comments of their own to those made by the original narrator whenever the motivations of the characters become hard to fathom. In that respect, some of their remarks constitute mere additions to the source, rather than departures from it. They bring to light the attention they pay to the hero's education (Gillingham 2002: 276) and the way they attempt to present his story "in the colour and rhetoric of an idealised society", one that was meant to appear "courteously unproblematic" (Field 1989: 140). But they also rewrite the behaviour of the hero in more acceptable terms, according to the changes in matters of conduct that occurred in the two or three centuries separating them from their source.

37. One of these redactions appeared in a list of the most popular verse romances in England dating from 1520 (Sánchez-Martí 2009: 1).

3.1 The refashioning of minor transgressions

The standard patterns of behaviour which nowadays are the staple of politeness studies can only be identified in embryonic forms in the early medieval romances. In the late medieval ones, on the contrary, communicative patterns very similar to those of the polite society of the eighteenth century may already be found, as exemplified in the differences between the first speech Ipomedon makes to the Calabrian queen in the French poem and the English *Ipomadon*:

“Dame, an estrange valet sui
E hors d’estrangle terre esmui.
Pur vous server, si bel vous est,
Veiez moy ay, dame, tut prest,
[E] pur oir vostre voler,
Si volez mon service aver.”³⁸
(Fr. *Ipomedon*, ll. 463–468)

Dereworthy damysell,
Grette god kepe the in hele
And all thy fayre mené!
Vnder heyvyn is holdyn none
So worthy a lady, as thow arte on,
Ne of so grette bewete:
Ofte sythes this haue I harde saye:
A nobler courte, then thyne allwaye,
There may non holdyn bee;
The to serve haue I thowghte,
Therefore haue I hedyr sought
Oute of faire contre.³⁹
(*Ipomadon*, ll. 394–405)

Ipomedon wastes no time before getting to the purpose of his trip in the Anglo-Norman romance, contrary to his English avatar, who begins his speech by paying compliments to the lady and her court, and expressing the hope that they will always be in good health – sentiments that would not be amiss in a Regency novel – before getting to the point. Nor has he finished talking after stating the

38. ‘Milady, I am a foreign varlet, come from a foreign land to serve you, if it is agreeable to you. I am quite ready to be your varlet, if you should want my service.’

39. ‘Worthy damsel, God keep you well, you and all your fair company! No other lady on this earth is held so worthy or has such rich possessions. I have often heard that no court was as noble as yours. I have resolved to serve you, which is why I have left my fair country.’

reason for his visit, as he continues for the next nine lines with the expression of his desire to do everything the queen should want him to do, which is in keeping with courtly ideals, and a far cry from the French character's rather blunt offer of *service* as a varlet.

While the hero of the versified retelling comes across as more refined and more polite than the character in the French poem, this is due to the evolution of the role of a courtier. In all the texts under study, Ipomedon is presented as the epitome of courtesy and courtliness. There are many passages in the French and English texts in which the protagonist is described as incredibly handsome, attentive, and with impeccable manners. The French source also adds that he is *franc*, which signifies that he has a noble heart.⁴⁰ The value-system of Fr. *Ipomedon* relies on two early aspects of the codes of courtesy and chivalry which were closely connected: good "service" and the strict observance of hierarchical differences. In *Ipomadon* and the prose compilation, however, differences in station are mitigated in social interactions through the use of the kind of polite discourse that aims at protecting, and even increasing if possible, the positive face of the interactants. An excellent example of the growing complexity of polite strategies in the second part of the Middle Ages is provided by the incident with the butler which I analysed earlier. In *Ipomadon* it offers evidence of the "noble heart" the French narrator credits his hero with. In the fourteenth or fifteenth century, such a quality obviously included paying attention to the people who were below you, not only to those above you, and the following passage was amended in order to offer an example of Ipomedon's good breeding in that respect.

Li autres vales l'esgarderent
 De lui se ristrent & gaberent,
 Mes poi savoient, q'il pensa:
 Ly valet son mantel osta
 Si l'ad done al botellier
 Et si lui dit: "Beau sire chier,
 Kar prenez or(e) cest mantelet,
 Trop [par] est le don petitet,
 Mes, si nus vivons en saunte,
 Assez vus ert mellor done."⁴¹
 (Fr. *Ipomedon*, ll. 489–499)

40. *Franchise*: "noblesse de cœur, de caractère" (ca 1150) according to the CNRTL French etymological dictionary online.

41. "The other varlets looked at him; they laughed and mocked him, but little did they know what he meant [to do]. He took off his mantle and gave it to the butler, saying: "Dear sir, please

It were semande, they sayd ilkone,
 Away his mantell ware;
 But littill knewe pey his entente:
 To the buttery dore he went
 And offe he caste hit yare.
 To the boteler than went hee:
 "Syr, this mantell gyff I the,
 As I haue happe or sele:
 And thow wylte take pis sympull gyfte,
 It shall be mendyd, be my thryfte,
 Wyth efte so good a wille!"⁴²
 (*Ipomedon*, ll. 462–478)

The redactor does not retain the original ambiguity of Hue de Rotelande's poem in the lines that precede the extract regarding what prompted Ipomedon's decision to give the offending garment away: true liberality or a quick-witted assessment of the situation. Instead he adds a sentence which presents it as an early instance of his munificence. We are told that the young man had meant to give his coat to the servant all along (*Ipomedon*, l. 464), which brings to light the enduring "prestige of largesse" throughout the Middle Ages (Burnley 1998: 34). The modification of a tiny detail in such a long narrative must be ascribed to the fact that he was adapting the story for the new audiences⁴³ who had begun to acquire such tales. This had been made possible by the professional workshops which now produced manuscripts at a cheaper price and on a larger scale than the *scriptoria* of monasteries.⁴⁴ The rich burgesses and wealthy landowners (who were now rubbing shoulders with the aristocracy in Parliament and who constituted the new readership of romances) might have been tempted to disparage Ipomedon's

take this simple mantle; it is only a small present, but if it keeps us both in good health, I will give you something better."

42. 'It was seemly, they all said, to take off your coat [before going to the cellar]. But little did they know what his real purpose was. When he arrived at the cellar, he took off his mantle and gave it to the butler, saying: "Sir, I give you this mantle, as it is propitious to do so. If you accept this simple gift, it shall be mended by your good will and my prosperity!' (The last two lines are ambiguous but can be understood as Ipomedon's discreet promise to shower the butler with even more gifts if he accepts the present one gracefully.)

43. I should point out here that scholarly opinions vary regarding the level of sophistication of the readership of *Ipomedon*; see Sánchez-Martí (2006: 155–156) for a comprehensive overview. (This kind of disagreement is the norm for most romances as, given the lack of data, it is difficult to make any definite statement regarding readership.)

44. See Sánchez-Martí (2006, 2009) or, for a summarized account, Burnley (1998: 29).

extraordinary display of generosity. Such behaviour went against the moral values of prudence and thrift observed by wealthy city dwellers as well as by many members of the gentry whose ancestors had to squander their wealth in knightly pursuits.⁴⁵ Hence the need to explain in plain terms why it should be praised. Given Ipomedon's later careless treatment of the persons he interacts with, the *Ipomedon* poet may also have felt that he had to insist on the reward his character gets from his polite consideration of the butler's feelings. In his version of the story, Ipomedon wins the undying devotion of the cupbearer, whose answer is more developed than in the source, in which it is summed up in just one line (compare Fr. *Ipomedon* l. 500 with *Ipomedon* ll. 473–478). It shows the greater attention paid to characters of lower status in *Ipomedon*. In this text, they are represented as worthy proponents of courtly codes of conduct. Even the *varlets* are rescued to a certain extent from the negative portrayal they are given in the Anglo-Norman source, in which they begin to snigger upon seeing Ipomedon leave for the cellar in an inappropriate accoutrement. This mockery, which allowed me to qualify Ipomedon's gesture as a blunder, is replaced with the expression of the norm he has transgressed in the English retelling: going to the cellar with your mantle on is not "semand" ('seemly'). No explanation is given as to why this is inappropriate, but it might be because of the risks a *varlet* would run of soiling his clothes or, worse still, the clothes worn by the people he is attending to, as a cape, even a small one, would get in the way. Another reason might be found in the laws that forbade commoners from wearing garments that outshone those of their betters.⁴⁶ As the exact status of a rich merchant or a landowner had become a matter of dispute once they were given a place in Parliament, it is not surprising that the compiler should have explained the matter in clearer terms than Hue, who composed his poem for a less diversified audience.

While Ipomedon's early blunder is rewritten as no blunder at all, The Proud One's offense is also refashioned to make it look less like a spiteful diatribe designed to shame its addressee, and more like a well-meaning reproach that misses its target because of the lady's anger: a true blunder, rather than the "loathly" thing The Proud One calls it. The positive treatment the queen receives involves the suppression of the misogynistic comments on the wiles of women which pepper

45. Relatively few English romances deal, even briefly, with that aspect of the life of a knight, however. Only one satirizes it at length, as far as I know: *Sir Launfal*, a late fourteenth-century poem which deals with the misadventures of a noble steward. Launfal becomes destitute because the king forgets to reward him for his services and is only saved from poverty and shame by a fairy.

46. This norm was often transgressed, as the number of sumptuary laws issued from the reign of Edward III in England shows.

the original text, not just with regards to the trick she plays on the hero and his friend (Fr. *Ipomedon*, ll. 830–832; 847–848), but in the rest of the story as well. The original reactions of the recipients of her tirade are also reconsidered. In the French poem, Jason is so angry that he is left speechless (Fr. *Ipomedon*, ll. 909–910) and unable to defend himself. In the verse redaction he is heart-broken and in awe of her anger, but he seems to accept her rebuke as valid. The text implies that he shares some of Ipomedon's reluctance to leave aside the service of ladies (*Ipomadon*, ll. 859–860) and take up jousting, so that The Proud One's scolding is not entirely undeserved (but still rude).

3.2 The reinvention of Ipomedon as a fallible human being *and* a model of courtly values

Ipomedon's initial refusal to joust is also revised to make it less unworthy of a truly courteous man in the eyes of fifteenth-century readers. Here, the *Ipomadon* poet (like the compiler who penned the prose version), adopts a clever strategy, which begins with a more down-to-earth appreciation of the character's qualities at the beginning of the tale.

Vallet estait & beaus & gent,
De merveillous afaitement:
N'out el mund(e) si beau juvenceus
Ne si aligne ne si beaus
Ne si mult curteys ne si vaillant,
Si franc, si duc ne si soffrant.⁴⁷
(Fr. *Ipomedon*, ll. 187–192)

Thus was he holdyn in his days
Comely, kynde and curtayes
Bothe wyth kynge and quene,
Hende and happy ther wyth all;⁴⁸
(*Ipomadon*, ll. 154–168)

While in the French text the hero is from the beginning a paragon of virtues, in the English version he is presented as a promising lad, with the kind of qualities that came as a matter of course to the noble heroes of romances: being “comely,

47. ‘He was a varlet, and so handsome, with such amiable manners, that in the world there was no one, as well-proportioned or as beautiful, as courteous or as valiant, as noble, as gentle or as patient.’

48. ‘He was considered at the time to be comely, kind and courteous, both with king and queen; noble and merry with all.’

kynde and curtayes” was quite ordinary for them. What is more, the English redactors continue their revision of the hero’s initial make-up by mentioning that Ipomedon has no experience of the world (*Ipomadon*, l. 162), much to his shame (*Ipomedon*, p. 324), something which does not feature in the source. This is an important emendation. It provides something of an excuse for his behaviour, at least in its early stages, as a man with little experience of the world will necessarily stumble at first once he steps out into it. It is an excuse specifically tailored for fifteenth-century readers of the romance. In the French poem, the narrator focuses instead on the young age of the hero, who has much to learn, despite being “bien lettrez” (Fr. *Ipomedon*, ll. 203–206). There is no mention of an outside world whose complex rules can only be mastered over time, or of Ipomedon being aware that he might still have something to learn. As we have seen, his desire to go abroad to improve his manners is merely the lie he serves his parents; he never, ever doubts his skills as a courtier in the Anglo-Norman poem. Yet the English compilers turn the blissful ignorance in which he stands with regards to his shortcomings into all-consuming feelings of inadequacy: a fundamental rewriting of the original character aimed at making him more palatable to middle-class readers who might have suffered from the same misgivings.

While this strategy works particularly well for the hero’s blunders at the beginning of the story, it does not explain Ipomedon’s behaviour once he leaves The Proud One’s court. Here the author of the prose compilation and the man behind the versified redaction depart somewhat in their appreciation of the problem and the ways in which to solve it.

The anonymity provided by Ipomedon’s life at the Calabrian court as the “foreign varlet” allows him to ignore the duties he would have had to shoulder as a king’s son, something the English redactors tried to gloss over or, when that proved impossible, were careful to condemn. The strategy of self-presentation Susan Crane (1997) observed, not just in fictional narratives, but also in the pageants and disguisings organised by English kings and princes, was obviously not acceptable to the compilers. It was not the kind of scheme that their readers should try to emulate in order to improve their standing. Nor was the refusal to be constrained by the norms of the times. It is the author of the prose *Ipomedon* who pronounces the harshest judgment upon the hero’s initial refusal to joust, although he quickly adds that Ipomedon went on to be “a noble, worthy man of arms” so as not to lose his readers’ interest at such an early point in the tale, while admitting that he does not see why “he preved him self ... so privelie and so in covert, that wonder was...”⁴⁹ (*Ipomedon*, p. 325). Still, he is keen to have his readers see the character in a positive light, and thus chooses among the various excuses Ipomedon offers in the

49. ‘he proved himself to be...so discreet and so secretive, that it was baffling.’

source the only one that makes sense, both from an ethical and a social perspective. His hero thus says in his defence that “[a] man, that has pride in his wele dooing and makes boist therof, both he displeses god and hyndres his astate”⁵⁰ (*Ipomedon*, p. 330–31). Ipomedon conflates the acknowledgment of his prowess with boasting (and therefore with the mortal sin of pride) and a lessening of one’s “estate” (or positive face). In his view, it becomes a self-inflicted face-threat: a somewhat contradictory stance in which the humility of the first reason he provides collides with the deep-seated haughtiness which transpires in the second. This is something the author of *Ipomadon* realized, and he made a different choice. Instead, he presents his character as being a little too proud for his own good rather than too secretive. Rather than making him be concerned by his “estate”, he ingratiates him to his readers by implying that the boy is so in love that it impairs his reason. Ipomedon’s grand assertion that “In few wordes ys curtesye:/ Lette his dedes bere wittenes, why/ He shuld be louyde agayne!”⁵¹ (*Ipomadon*, ll. 2339–2341) reads as the protestation of a spurned lover, rather than as the kind of gnomic assertion that is usually used by people when they want to appear wise. The first part of his declaration is only loosely connected to the second, and the word “courtesy” appears to have been tagged there in lieu of “true valour” (or something similar) precisely because courtesy is the compiler’s main object in *Ipomadon*, rather the character’s chivalric deeds. It also looks rather foolish because, as exemplified in the dialogues analysed above, by the time the Anglo-Norman romance was rewritten in English, courtesy was not “in few words” anymore, – quite the opposite.

4. Conclusion

In the French *Ipomedon* we are invited to look at the hero as the greatest lover on earth, although many scholars agree that this is a joke on the part of Hue de Rotelände. The narrators of the Middle English retellings studied here are more cautious in their conclusions. Since the ending is missing in *Ipomedon*, we do not know what the compiler made of the moral of the tale. In *Ipomadon* the audience is told that the hero is a “straunge lover” (l. 15) and that his story is proof that being united with one’s love at last is a worthy recompense for one’s travails (ll. 8736–39): a rather bland comment and further evidence that the redactor felt uncomfortable with certain aspects of his source. The dichotomy between the way

50. ‘A man who is proud of his good deeds and boasts about them displeases God and loses some of his dignity.’

51. ‘[True] courtesy speaks little. Let a man’s deeds bear witness to why he should be loved again!’

Ipomedon is presented by the original narrator as the ideal courtier and knight, and what his actions reveal (i.e. that he is far from perfect), was a source of concern to the English compilers. Judging from the emendations they made to their source, the correspondence between manners and morals seems to have become more stringent in the two or three centuries that separate the Anglo-Norman poem from its English redactions. The various manners in which they try to mitigate the hero's failures, or at least to provide an explanation for them, testify to a crystallization (or calcification) of the prescriptive norms of courtly behaviour (and the ethics that informed them) in English romances. This phenomenon occurred at a time when those norms were also subjected to the kind of social and political forces that would eventually pave the way for new forms of politeness, whose influence can also be seen in the changes made to the texts under study. Their authors provide psychosocial explanations for Ipomedon's behaviour that do not feature in the source and hint at the fact that it was becoming possible to distinguish between a person's origins, morals and manners by the end of the fourteenth century. With his perfect features, his inscrutable motives, his quizzical and at times downright cruel behaviour, Hue's hero shared many characteristics with the fairies of Celtic folklore, and he seemed a little inhuman: a cypher rather than a creature of flesh and blood. In the English narratives under study, he turns into a fallible character, capable of incredible deeds, but also of incredibly stupid actions, despite his princely origins and his good breeding.

In the introduction I wondered whether there was any possibility for the kind of mistake we now call *blunder* to be experienced and reported as such in medieval narratives, maybe under some other name. Judging from the texts under study, the answer is: no, not really. The fact that the word itself had to be borrowed from another language shows that it filled a void. Once manners (and even looks, with the right tailor and barber) became something you could acquire, no matter what your origins were, minor transgressions of the kind Ipomedon makes in his youth could be rewritten as temporary lapses of judgment rather than expressions of moral failure. While the authors of the prose compilation and the verse adaptation were clearly aware that blunders *were* possible, they were unable to conceptualize them fully. If romances often reveal "attitudes and behaviours that are not always completely articulated (...) and indeed not always acknowledged even as a possibility" (Radulescu and Rashton 2009: 4), as opposed to books of manners in which only approved, well-identified behaviours are presented, then the *Ipomedon* cluster of texts does not only lend weight to this view, it also shows that the value of fictional narratives for politeness studies lies not only in the concepts they elaborate upon, but also in those they fail to adequately define or even represent.

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Unrestrained acting and norms of behaviour

Excess and instruction in *The Legend of Good Women*

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This paper analyses two stories of *The Legend of Good Women*, by Geoffrey Chaucer, as examples of the reception of Ovidian tradition in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Europe. The main characters of these fictions embody desired virtues for women, but a closer scrutiny reveals that these supposedly exemplary characters transgress the limits of the morality of the period through actions and gestures that would not be acceptable for real women. These descriptions of ethically unrestrained bodily movement cannot be read as literal norms of conduct. Rather, these actions are used as a means to achieve the emotional experience. This paper examines how these actions are depicted and what their relation is to the overall meaning of the narrative.

Keywords: Geoffrey Chaucer, bodily movement, performance, virtue, conduct, Medieval literature, *The Legend of Good Women*

1. Introduction

Deviations from behavioural norms in medieval literature opens up a study framework closely bound to ethics. Finding blunders in medieval culture, at least as we understand the concept today, is not a simple task, since actions, virtues and habits were unavoidably connected at a time when stylized acts conveyed fundamental meanings in society. In accordance with medieval ethics, internal values are reflected on one's physical appearance and vice versa. Following Aristotelian ethics, virtue in the Late Middle Ages was understood as "a *habitus* formed by the repeated exercise of inborn human abilities" (Bejczy 2007: 1).¹ In other words, individuals were expected to practise good habits repeatedly and these repetitions

1. Aristotle's ethics flourished in the thirteenth century, his ideas were known in earlier times due to the transmission by other authors. See Bejczy (2007) on the topic.

formed the virtues of their souls. In this sense, an action defined by its inadequacy in a given situation could not be considered a blunder or a mistake; rather, for medieval society, every act entailed a demonstration of one's true self. The actions that people performed exhibited their virtues. The first step in trying to understand how medieval norms of conduct² and deviations from them work is the examination of books that address such guidelines. Among them was the widely disseminated late medieval genre of *exempla*, or short narratives of a character's remarkable deeds inserted in larger works to illustrate and strengthen an argument. They depicted gestures and actions to obtain their didactic objectives. These tales constituted a fundamental part of various types of behavioural literature, but they were also used with different ends in works of fiction.³

These tales originate from different cultural contexts, such as ancient mythology, hagiography or even historiography, but in this chapter, I will examine two particular stories from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, the legends of Thisbe and of Lucretia. They retell the outstanding lives of classical characters within a tradition that arrives to late medieval culture primarily from Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris*, but also from classical works by Titus Livy or Ovid. Chaucer shapes the *Legend* as a collection of biographies of good women who may be seen as truly exemplary women or as part of a literary convention that allows Chaucer to play with the literary tradition.⁴ In any case, these exemplary tales show actions that transgress or deviate from the norms of conduct that the medieval society commonly accepted. In a fictional frame this type of actions does not call the attention of readers and critics, but in the context of (ironical or not) *exempla*, they invite us to consider their function and their relation to the meaning of the whole narrative.

2. *Exempla* and the idea of good women

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the lives of good women were treated as *exempla*, or short stories that "can be used as evidence in support of a doctrinal, religious or moral exposition" (Welter, in Lacarra 1986: 25). This genre brings

2. In this essay I will refer to Christian morality and the Christian interpretation of the cardinal and the theological virtues.

3. I refer to behavioural literature as a wide range of books that include some sort of recommendations for medieval people.

4. In the "Prologue" to *The Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer echoes *Le roman de la Rose* and recognizes the importance of the "olde bokes" for remembrance (vv. 25–26).

together the three rhetorical functions: *docere* ('to teach'), *delectare* ('to entertain') and *movere* ('to move'). An *exemplum* was an important part of educative discourses throughout the Middle Ages, but by the end of the period, *exempla* developed from unequivocal parables to stories with various meanings, depending on the author's moral argument.⁵ During the last centuries of the European Middle Ages and the Renaissance, a change took place in the preferred sources, characters, reception and intention. In addition to religious *exempla*, traditionally inserted in sermons, a whole new range of narratives from biblical, classical or contemporary sources were assimilated to the new tradition (Harto Trujillo 2011).

Different possible interpretations of *exempla* implied the opportunity for ascribing new meanings to the protagonists' character and their actions in the story, and this new perspective coincided in time with a shift in society that can be explained by historical factors of various kinds. On an intellectual level, the historical-cultural context is defined by the influence of humanistic ideas, which gained in popularity at French universities in the thirteenth century and quickly spread throughout Europe.⁶ These ideas affected the ways in which human customs and individual actions were valorised in the definition of a person, to the detriment of a class determinism. From a political point of view, the consequences of this new approach were a more flexible class mobility, fostered by the value placed on the individual, and a new need to distinguish oneself from others. Since individual decisions were gradually growing in importance, courtiers began to control their customs and physical attitudes in order to maintain a social status which was threatened by an increasingly wealthy bourgeoisie.⁷

On a historical level, the position of women in society was also re-evaluated as they played more visible roles in society. During the Black Death in England, as Sturges (2006) explains, women assumed new spaces in the labour market and this allowed them a more independent life, a reality depicted by Geoffrey Chaucer in his *Canterbury Interlude* (Bolens 2011). Also, Chaucer invokes an influential

5. Berlioz (1980) suggests that *exempla* when used as a part of a medieval sermon have an unequivocal reading, which explains their effectiveness. Owst (1966) studied various types of fictions used in medieval sermons.

6. Collette (2014) examines Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* in the light of the early humanism, a term she uses "to signify a sharpening focus on classical-Christian ideas of moral and ethical praxis which appears in late fourteenth century European writing" (2014: 4). I refer to this broad set of ideas and literary interests as "humanism" although its repercussion in late medieval culture is not uniform and certainly differs from later approaches, as it is commonly the case with intellectual trends.

7. Elias (1997) studied how manners were used by social groups to delimit their spaces in the society.

female literary audience in some of his works (McDonald 2000), a tendency that reveals how female action in society was increasingly acknowledged. In the European context, these general circumstances facilitated the emergence of the *querelle des femmes*, ‘the woman question’, a proliferation of texts and debates that supported a favourable vision of women.

On an intellectual level, the genre of conduct books for women underwent a fundamental shift, from a pious perspective to a focus on action.⁸ The attention to women’s social duties and actions heeded in behavioural literature was aligned with the spreading of a new repertoire of *exempla* that show female characters in action, and one example of the consolidation of these collections is *The Legend of Good Women*.

The heroines of Chaucer’s *Legend* come from the classical tradition with the above-mentioned humanist ethos, which was beginning to form in the last decades of the Middle Ages. Throughout the nine chapters of the *Legend*, Chaucer retells ten stories centred on characters from Greek mythology and Roman history: Cleopatra, Thisbe, Dido, Hypsipyle, Medea, Lucretia, Ariadne, Philomela, Phyllis and Hypermnestra. According to his own words, his main sources are Titus Livy and Ovid (vv. 1683), who were two of the authors that were more widely used by medieval writers, such as Giovanni Boccaccio in Italy, Christine de Pizan in France or Álvaro de Luna in Castile, in their recreation of the outstanding actions of these legendary women.⁹ Although drawn from the same tradition, these legendary characters offer slightly different versions in every book. Their meanings become clearer with the presence of myths: “moral exempla must be read not as conveyors of universal values but as products of the interests of particular authors” Shutters (2009: 79). The very concept of myth ensures its return to varying cultural contexts for which its components are re-interpreted and re-used to offer explanations of the world, but each textual tradition or each culture that reformulates the myth determines certain narrative features that limit its meaning. Classical myths in medieval literature deal with topics that are relevant to medieval society, while the remote spatial and temporal frame of the story allows the writers to exploit the

8. Mews (2011) locates the origin of this change in the *Specula dominarum*, a book written by Durand of Champagne in 1300 and addressed to Jeanne of Navarre. According to Mews, this book means “a significant shift in the character of religious writing for women, in moving away from a purely interior focus to one that combines spiritual advice with ethical discussion, of a sort traditionally conducted in a scholastic milieu and addressed only to men” (Mews 2011: 14).

9. Boccaccio was a reputed Latin author in the Middle Ages and his *De mulieribus claris* (1361–75) inspired notable poets, such as Chaucer himself, Christine de Pizan (*La cité des dames*, 1405) or Álvaro de Luna (*Virtuosas e claras mugeres*, 1446). In addition to Boccaccio’s influence, these poets draw their legends from other classical sources, in particular from Ovid and Titus Livy.

depiction of shocking deeds, extraordinary characters, immoral actions or marvellous events for the sake of entertainment.

Exemplarity, as a main aspect of the lives of outstanding women, pose some questions about the meaning and form of actions that seem to divert Christian morality. In a strict sense, the *Legend of Good Women* is not an educational book. Rather, Chaucer plays with literary conventions related to courtly love.¹⁰ However, the heroines he chooses address what Burger (2018: 76) considers the continuum of conduct literature, a notion that means that “textual genres and terrains that might once have been kept separate – sermons, exemplary stories, devotional literature, satire, *fin’amors* texts and practices, the *speculum principis*, biblical history, rhetorical manuals, debate, how-to collections, and wise sayings – can be brought together to produce innovative, hybrid models for female subjectivity and right action in the world.” Moreover, Chaucer’s *Legend* starts with a prologue in which the narrator affirms to be willing to retract his previous defamations of women¹¹ and this statement initiates a collection of lives of good women that illustrate this argument.

True or not, this premise creates an exemplary aura over the characters. Exemplarity conveys two meanings: firstly, these heroines are a model for literary characters; secondly, the same model also applies to good women. As to the first sense, the narrator, who we can identify as Chaucer, aspires to compensate other amorous narratives in which women are portrayed by misogynistic clichés. The collection of *exempla* addresses, then, “the topic of women’s fidelity and steadfastness in love functions” (Collette 2014: 34). But in the latter sense, the book raises questions of discipline and conduct regulations that were very relevant in the historical context, and accordingly the depiction of these heroines in action follow and set models of behaviour for women. This does not mean that the expected audience for the *Legend* were exclusively women; however, it is possible to find different references to a feminine audience in various parts of the book.¹² These

10. In the *Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer re-creates the *fin’amors* conventions or, as contemporary critics refer to it, courtly love. Percival (2005) offers a suggestive reading of the motif of the daisy in the Prologue of Chaucer’s *Legend*, connected to the French love tradition. According to St John (2000), in the *Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer invites the reader to engage critically with the poetry of *fin’amors*.

11. On the differences between the two versions of the Prologue see Quinn (1994) and Percival (1998).

12. Some of these references can be found in the story of Thisbe: “And rightwis god to every lover sende, / that loveth trewely, more prosperitee / than ever hadde Piramus and Tisbe! / And lat no gentil woman her assure / to putten her in swiche an aventure” (vv. 905–909, ‘And may God send to every lover who loves truly more prosperity than ever had Pyramus and Thisbe!

direct allusions are usually introduced as part of the narrator's remarks that make explicit the educational message of the narrative or, at least, reinforce the exemplarity of the fictions. Also, the forms of the texts and the whole collection draw parallels to hagiography, which was a popular genre in medieval culture. In the Middle Ages, lives of saints "present idealized feminine behaviour and encourage female audiences to adopt it" (Sanok 2007: ix). This way of reading these narratives was certainly in the mind of Chaucer's audience.¹³

Apart from the form and reception connections, Chaucer's legends and hagiography share an important feature: both types of texts depict extraordinary events that deal with the marvellous or incredible elements.¹⁴ In the case of the story of Philomena and Procne, for instance, the reader encounters the intervention of gods while in the lives of saints, God usually interferes to change the fortune of the protagonists. Marvellous elements contribute to the creation of a remote world from the daily life of the readers. Meanwhile, Roman legends are presented as historical narrations and, therefore, these *exempla* belong to the category of *historia* ("true deeds that have happened") or *argumentum* (plausible narrations, "things that, even if they have not happened, nevertheless could happen"), if we consider the distinction established by Isidore of Seville.¹⁵

At the same time, the *Legend* can be read as a "historicizing project, a means of bringing the past into the present" (Collette 2014: 34). Chaucer as the narrator comments on the legends and draws parallels between the legendary world and his contemporary context in order to create an illusion of history. These authorial clarifications bridge the gap between the world of the characters and that of the readers and, in addition to reconciling both worlds, they enhance the verisimilitude of the stories. This means that the world depicted in the *Legend* is not the same as the readers' world, even if both share some features. Alterity, as Jauss suggested,

And let no gentlewomen start such an adventure'). Or in the legend of Lucretia: "And as of men, loketh which tyrannye / they doon alday; assay hem who so liste, / the trewest is ful brotel for to triste" (vv. 1883–1885, 'And as for men, see what tyranny they always cause; test them as you please, the truest is too weak for you to trust').

13. Such is the case that McDonald (2000: 22) suggests that the *Legend of Good Women* "is constructed on the model of saint's lives but records the histories of markedly unholy pagan women." Scanlon (2009: 172) goes a step further and affirms that "Chaucer clearly intends 'legend' to be read in its medieval association with hagiography."

14. "Hagiography" is the account of the life of a saint and his or her miracles.

15. "History, 'plausible narration' (*argumentum*), and fable differ from one another. Histories are true deeds that have happened, plausible narrations are things that, even if they have not happened, nevertheless could happen, and fables are things that have not happened and cannot happen, because they are contrary to nature" (Barney et al. 2010: 67).

makes possible the recognition of the otherness of a world that, at first glance, can be read as known, but then “in order to become conscious of this otherness of a departed past, a reflective consideration of its surprising aspects is called for” (Jauss 1979: 182). Jauss’ theory explains how readers engage with past narratives to activate heuristic procedures. According to his theory, “literary understanding first becomes dialogic when the alterity of the text is sought out and acknowledged before the horizon of one’s own expectations – with the result that instead of attempting a naive fusion of horizons, one’s own expectation will be corrected and expanded through the experience of the other” (Jauss, in Rush 1997: 111). This idea might be the first clue that helps to understand how some gestures can be received as morally exemplary, although these same gestures would be despicable when performed in the readers’ world.

The process explained by Jauss is very similar to that described by Sanok for medieval women readers of lives of saints, who “needed to attend to the historical difference separating them from the saints they were encouraged to take as examples, whether or not they did so self-consciously” (Sanok 2007: 7–8) in order to adapt the case to their cultural context. In this sense, *exempla* enable a reception that is sensitive to striking deeds but can easily extract a moral lesson out of them. More or less delimited in time, this particular characterization of the past of *exempla* unfolds different “horizons of expectation” (Jauss 1979) in which certain excessive actions are plausible and easily combined with the ideology of the readers. Beyond the educational purpose, this cultural distance allows the reader to find amusement in these narratives, and thus the text fulfils the *delectare* dimension of *exempla*.

Chaucer creates this specific temporal frame in his legends, which is paradoxically both far from and close to the reality of his audience. The legends are set far enough to contain deeds that transgress the morality of his time, but close enough to the readers’ reality to be understood as a model of behaviour for medieval women.

3. The representation of despicable actions

Readers of the *Legend* engage with the lives of the good women by two means: the volume is a collection of exemplary characters (and thus it teaches), and it is a literary exercise (and thus it amuses). Both sides of the lives affect the moral conception of the characters as well as the action that reveal their virtues. Nonetheless, it is necessary to explain the modes of representation and functions of despicable or undesirable actions in the *Legend of Good Women*. I will analyse two lives; the legend of Thisbe, from the Greek tradition, and the legend of Lucretia, one of the most widespread Roman stories in the Middle Ages. These are examples of lives of

women who stand out because of their fidelity and, surprisingly, one of the most repeated actions that show a desirable attitude to suicide.¹⁶

Different characters of the *Legend of Good Women* end their own lives for reasons related to love, but every case is unique. If we take into consideration the history of Lucretia and Thisbe, the singularity of the depiction of each action becomes clear. Chaucer's Lucretia commits suicide after being raped, an action that has been read as proof of marital *affectio* (Shutters 2009).¹⁷ The reasons for Thisbe's suicide, however, must be found in a non-marital sphere in which passion and disobedience to her family are the primary forces that trigger her action. This has led to an ambiguous interpretation of the narrative, even an ironic one (Spisak 1984).

Thisbe and Pyramus are two young lovers from Babylon whose parents forbid their relationship, so they decide to escape from the city and meet far from the city walls. Thisbe arrives to the meeting point first, cloaked in a veil, and waits for Pyramus. In the meantime, a lioness appears with her bloody jaws, so the young woman flees with such haste that she leaves behind her veil. The lioness finds it and destroys it, leaving stains of blood from a previous prey. Shortly after, Pyramus arrives at the agreed place and he is horrified by the sight of Thisbe's veil, which leads him to believe that she has been killed. Regretting his delay, he stabs himself with his sword. When Thisbe comes out of her hiding, she finds her dying lover and decides to kill herself with the same weapon.

The story can be found in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, and in that version the white berries of a near bush turn red because of the lovers' shed blood. This marvellous element, which explains the origin of blueberries, is deleted in Chaucer's version, a decision that brings this account closer to a plausible past. The illusion is reinforced by a clear temporal delimitation: at the beginning of the legend the narrator specifies that the story takes place in Babylon when queen Semiramis is the ruler of the empire (vv. 706–709). Hence the legendary time is presented as historical. The explanations of the customs of the fictional world,¹⁸ disseminated throughout

16. Murray (1998) explains how suicide in the Middle Ages was considered a sin and a cause of dishonour, to the extent that in most regions of Europe the suicidal body could be punished in public and even the family could lose their properties.

17. This is an important issue in the Late Middle Ages, when the debates around marriage were continuous. Eventually, these debates led to consider marriage as a sacrament.

18. These clarifications focus on the customs of the departed past: "As ofte in grete tounes is the wone", v. 714 ('as often in great towns is the custom'); "for in that ctree yit, withouten doute, / maidens been y-kept, for ielosye, / fil streite", vv.721–723 ('for in that country still, without a doubt, maidens were guarded jealously and restrictively'); "for olde payens that ydoles heried / useden tho in felde to ben beried", vv. 786–787 ('old pagans who praised idols were usually buried in the open country').

the story, also serve to underline the verisimilitude of the story. The narrator does not necessarily seek historiographic rigour. He rather creates plausibility through this mechanism and simultaneously draws the readers' attention to the differences between the everyday life and the legendary world.

In the legend of Lucretia, the narrator follows a very similar strategy even though the Roman tradition was commonly read as a nearer past by the medieval audience, in comparison with Greek mythology. The history of Lucretia recounts her rape and consequent suicide. Her husband Collatinus when engaged in a discussion with a group of men about their wives, decided to prove that Lucretia was the most virtuous wife of all. With that in mind, he invited the group to spy on his wife. Among them, there was Tarquinius (the son of the king), who became inflamed with desire as a result of the vision of the virtuous Lucretia in her chamber. Taking advantage of the silent night, Tarquinius entered Lucretia's room and raped her. This aggression caused great suffering in Lucretia, so she confessed to her family and friends what had happened and, then, committed suicide. This striking deed inspired the overthrow of the monarchy.

The temporal frame of the *exemplum* is delimited by the mention of the Roman kings, indicating the time when the story takes place. The narrator also declares, and comments on, the sources of the history: Ovid, Titus Livy and Augustine of Hippo. So the text intertwines devices to generate verisimilitude and authority. Throughout the story, the narrator offers different clarifications on customs of the legendary world, just as in the legend of Thisbe.¹⁹ Again, this strategy creates closeness and distance at the same time. When the narrator indicates the similarity of both realities, he also acknowledges their differences.

This is a deliberate authorial decision aimed to direct the readers' interpretation of the fiction. In a plausible context, morally transgressive actions have a greater impact on the audience, and the author achieves one of the objectives of the *exempla* more easily: moving the readers. To this end, the author uses three basic techniques that define the poetics of the depiction of these actions. First, the central episodes of the story strengthen the visuality of the narration through narrated gestures. Bringing action to narrative enables kinesthetic empathy, which allows the readers to infer kinesthetic sensations via their memory (Bolens 2012). When the narrator presents the actions focusing on the bodily movements, the readers connect their literary perception to their kinesthetic knowledge, an operation that

19. As an example, we can mention an explanation of a Roman common attitude, according to the narrator: "thise Romain wyves loveden so hir name / at thilke tyme" (v. 1812–1813) ('these Roman wives loved their name at that time').

creates the illusion of seeing the events before one's eyes and therefore enhances the effectiveness of the narrative.²⁰

Second, most of the gestures are *gesticulationes*, in other words, non-tempered gestures. Schmitt (1990) noted the emergence of two different Latin words in the Middle Ages, *gestus*, or gesture in a neutral sense, and *gesticulatio*, or undesirable gesture. The difference is purely moral and a *gesticulatio* is the consequence of disorders and sins,²¹ in other words, these gestures are the result of a lack of temperance in one's soul. Temperance is the cardinal virtue that ensures the control of appetites and evil inclinations and it was highly recommended by medieval conduct discourses. Nevertheless, referring to women, temperance used to involve sexual restraint, due to the medieval conception of female beauty as a source of sins.²² *Gesticulatio*, then, comprised ignoble and mean gestures (that could be related to vices such as luxury or pride), extreme ways of showing emotions, or actions typically associated with certain social groups, among which Schmitt mentions minstrels and prostitutes (Schmitt 1990: 140).

And third, sex and death are the subjects of the central scenes. Although sex and death were a common matter of literature and art in the Middle Ages, their presence is still disturbing, especially when both elements are combined. The resulting images reach great poetic and aesthetic intensity,²³ which contributes to the emotional dimension of the narrative and is connected to the *exempla's* defining intention of *movere*. Now, I will look more closely at the literary configuration of these actions.

20. Bolens (2012) follows Alain Berthoz to define kinesthesia as “the ensemble of information provided by muscular articulatory proprioceptors and by the motor commands of locomotion” (Berthoz, in Bolens 2012: 2).

21. According to Schmitt, “le couple ennemi *gestus-gesticulatio* est l'une des grandes figures de l'antagonisme de l'ordre et du désordre sur la scène médiévale des gestes” (1990: 30) (“the opposite pair *gestus-gesticulatio* is one of the great figures of the antagonism of order and disorder on the medieval scene of gestures”).

22. This idea was already present in religious authors, such as Tertullian in his *De cultu feminarum* (see Colish 1990), and became a *topos* of misogynistic literature.

23. Cueto (2005) suggests that the intensity of the effect sought by the author with the depiction of death lays in its aesthetic dimension, in the stylization of death, rather than in its cultural meaning.

4. The legend of Thisbe

The legend of Thisbe focuses on two moments of Thisbe's life: her first years when she falls in love with Pyramus and the lovers' flight from the city with its tragic ending. The subject of the first moment is the growing love between Pyramus and Thisbe. According to the *fin'amors* conventions that Chaucer adopts in the *Legend*, chaste love is an arrow shot from the woman's eyes when she looks at the man, but in this case the author stresses that the link between the two lovers is the voice rather than the sight. The gossip of some neighbours fuels the desire of young Pyramus and Thisbe. Women who encourage secret love could remind the readers of the role of the old procuress, whose objective was to divert chaste love to a more physical desire. However, the walls of their homes make physicality impossible between Pyramus and Thisbe. Only a narrow cleft in the walls that keep them separated allows them to hear each other's voices. Their gazes never meet. In *fin'amors* practices, impossible love causes great physical and emotional suffering, but the text portrays a different lover's reaction: "the colde wal they wolden kisse of stoon" (v.768) ('they would kiss the cold wall of stone'). The chastity and the honesty of their love is not highlighted in any part of the text; rather, the narrator shows how Pyramus and Thisbe try to connect their bodies through a sensual action (kissing), although they are kept separated. In order to achieve his objective, the narrator describes actions and physical sensation. In addition, chaste conception of love is reinforced by the use of lexicon of desire (*kissen*, 'kiss'; *fyr*, 'fire', *love*) and deceit (*sleighte*, 'stratagem'; *deceyve*, 'deceive'; *begyl*, 'beguile') throughout the first passage, until the young lovers escape.

The second moment of the narrative starts when Thisbe leaves her home secretly in the night, after promising Pyramus that they would escape together.

- (1) This Tisbe hath so greet affecciuoun
 And so greet lyking Pirus to see,
 That, whan she seigh her tyme mighte be,
 At night she stal away ful prively
 With her face y-wimpled subtilly. (vv.793–797)

"Thisbe had such great affection
 and such desire to see Pyramus
 that when she saw her time had come,
 at night she stole away in concealment
 with her face covered with a wimple subtly."

In these five lines, the narrator summarizes the situation that he has created in the long first section of the story from Thisbe's perspective. Love inspires unstoppable

emotions (affection and desire) that lead the characters to deceive their families and friends in order to meet each other. Thisbe arrives at the meadow where the lovers will meet. The second moment of the narrative is located outdoors, far from the city, and far from family and friends in their role as guardians of the lovers and as safeguards of social norms. In contrast to the city, the natural environment enables the lovers' encounter.

From a narratological perspective, this section of the story is characterized by visuality, which is achieved through narrated gestures, generally motivated by emotions. The great affection that brings Thisbe to the meadow turns into terror when the lioness reaches the field where she is waiting for Pyramus. Love had made her "so hardy" (v. 803, 'so brave') that she left her family and friends, but when she feels threatened by the lioness, "she rist her up, with a ful drery herte / and in a cave with dreadful foot she sterte" (vv. 810–811, 'she rose up with a heart full of dread and darted into a cave with fearful foot'). Gestures are carefully depicted, and the alliance between emotions and gestures achieves a more complex visuality affecting the reader. When Pyramus arrives in the field the terror increases, which is also expressed with embodied emotions: "in his herte he sodeinly agroos, / and pale he wex, therwith his heer aroos" (vv. 830–831, 'in his heart he suddenly trembled and became pale and therewith his hair arose').

We find more and more references to emotion and gestures until we reach the climax of the legend, the physical encounter of Thisbe and a dying Pyramus:

- (2) Who coude wryte whiche a deedly chere
 Hath Tisbe now, and how her heer she rente,
 And how she gan her-selve to turmente,
 And how she lyth and swowneth on the grounde,
 How medeleth she his blood with her compleynte,
 And with his blood her-selven gan she peynte;
 How clippeth she the dede cors, allas?
 How doth this woful Tisbe in this cas!
 How kisseth she his frosty mouth so cold! (vv. 869–878)

'Who could write what deadly face
 had Thisbe now, and how she rent her hair,
 and how she began herself to torment,
 and how she remained and swooned on the ground,
 how she mingled his blood with her lament,
 and with his blood she began to paint herself,
 how she embraced the dead body, alas!
 How this woeful Thisbe acted in this case!
 How she kissed his frosty mouth so cold!'

Emotion and body movements are crucial in this narrative. Furthermore, emotions are expressed through movements of the body. If we take into consideration the effect of the text on the readers, we can argue that gestures play an important part in creating emotions in the audience. This is an idea that arose in classical poetics, which claimed that the effect of fiction was stronger when the writer put *ante oculos* (before one's eyes)²⁴ the story, in other words, when the writer presented it vividly. When Thisbe arrives on the scene again, the narrator's voice seems to disappear while Thisbe performs gestures and pronounces her speech, achieving the illusion that the reader *sees* and *listens* to the character. Narrated gestures have an essential role in creating this effect, since they activate our kinesic intelligence, that is, "the faculty that enables us to produce and use perceptual simulations in order to understand narrated movements and gestures" (Bolens 2012: 19). Narrated gestures and actions activate this kind of knowledge, which is the same when we perceive a work of art or a real gesture.

The dynamism of this scene creates the illusion in the reader's mind of seeing the narrated events, and hence the emotional dimension of the *exempla* is enhanced. The same rhetorical component is achieved using *gesticulationes*. In these verses, the text shows a Thisbe who is overwhelmed with emotion, and her deep sorrow is portrayed through extreme gestures, such as lying on the ground, rending her hair or painting her body with Pyramus' blood. In parallel, she interacts with a dead body performing sensual acts like kissing, even though the coldness of the body lessens the sexual connotation of the scene.

Via visuality, the narrator can manipulate the rhythm of the narration, accelerating it with vocabulary that reinforces the illusion of movement or slowing it down with amplifications that also generate tension during the fatal moments. The rhythm of the passage reveals the highlighted scenes. The first sequence in the meadow is dominated by danger, and the narrative rhythm reinforces this sensation. Action verbs dominate the section centred on Thisbe and the lioness, and only when Pyramus appears does the rhythm of the text seem to slow down. At this moment, in contrast to the tension presented before, the narrator explains Pyramus' delay and describes the natural scenery that the character can see. When the narrator speaks, the characters are not acting, and therefore the time of the plot

24. According to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, the best stylistic decision that a poet can make in telling a story is putting the events before his and the audience's eyes. As Janko explains in his edition of the *Poetics*, "the poet should visualise the events both as they happened and as they will appear, when represented, to the audience. 'Before the eyes' is almost a technical term for 'vivid', in the *Rhetoric*, where it is defined as 'to indicate things in activity' (*energeia*)" (Janko 1987: 116). Aristotle devoted a section of his *Rhetoric* to the meaning of the expression, which is closely related to the metaphor, and he linked it to the signs of action, in other words, to the expressions that make the matter of the text sensitive and visible.

expands. This illusion is strengthened by the reproduction of Pyramus' lament, and then the scene suddenly ends with the description of his suicide, in just three lines.

- (3) And with that worde he smoot him to the herte.
 The blood out of the wounde as brode sterte
 As water, whan the conduit broken is (v. 850–853)

‘And with these words he smote him to the heart.
 The blood started to come out of the wound widely
 as water when the conduit is broken.’

The narrator here uses a metaphor to express how the blood flows out of Pyramus' body, creating a powerful and moving image before the reader's eyes. Just after Pyramus' suicide, Thisbe enters the scene and the tempo of the narration varies: Thisbe sees Pyramus on the ground and the speed increases by means of the accumulation of emotional actions; the lovers touch in a slow and descriptive action (vv. 883–886); the tempo accelerates again with action verbs referring to Thisbe (*rist up, seigh her wimpel, spak she*) and culminates in her lament and suicide. Thisbe's death is the climax of the episode and the three elements, emotion, gesture and tempo, are combined in its portrayal.

- (4) And, with that worde, his swerd she took as swythe,
 That warm was of her loves blood and hoot,
 And to the herte she her-selven smoot. (vv. 912–915)

‘And with that word she took his sword swiftly,
 which was still warm with her lover's blood and hot,
 and she smote it to her own heart.’

The lack of fear in Thisbe's heart creates a new emotional tone, which is radically different from the previous one. The gesture is narrated with two different points of time: first, she holds the sword, and then, she smites her body with Pyramus' weapon. At this moment, the action is delayed by the description of the weapon covered in blood before Thisbe kills herself. As a result, the final action is expanded in time.

A key element in the interpretation of the story is the addition of a third feature: virtue. Love inspires Thisbe's *strenghthe* and *hardinesse*, ‘strength’ and ‘boldness’, two of the moral components of the cardinal virtue *fortitudo*. For medieval ethics, *fortitudo* is associated with moral strength shown through endurance and resilience, or through courage. Thisbe carries out a bold action for which she needs a sword, a manly tool that highlights her physical vigour. The sword does not conform with an ideal maiden, but she holds it and uses it without fear. In the conclusion, the narrator suggests a meaning for the *exemplum*: “a woman can

/ Been as trewe and loving as a man!” (vv. 910–911, ‘a woman can be as true and loving as a man’). In this way Thisbe becomes equal to men from a moral perspective; nevertheless, she had already been assimilated to masculine virtues through her own actions. Far from the city, Thisbe acts physically and morally as a man. The *exemplum* shows how women can love as honestly and loyally as men, insofar as the lover “loveth trewely” (v. 906). With this condition, the ambiguity suggested by Spisak (1984) arises, since the first section of the story, apparently, does not recommend the type of love that was shared by Pyramus and Thisbe. The origin of love is questioned, along with the trickery they used to circumvent their parents’ prohibition. And Pyramus, in his verbal lament, regrets his reckless attitude that led to Thisbe’s death. It is possible to affirm, then, that Chaucer “shows us that women are indeed as capable of living up to their promises in love as men; but in order to live up to those promises, they have to be as foolish as the men who make them” (Spisak 1984: 209).

5. The legend of Lucretia

At this point we can recall the legend of Lucretia, whose interpretation as an exemplary character is undeniable.²⁵ The comparison of the two depictions of suicide clarifies the representation of excessive gestures with exemplary purposes. At the beginning of the story, readers can see Lucretia through the eyes of the men who spy on her. Her vision has a significant effect on two men: Collatinus is moved by his wife’s virtue, revealed through her actions, and a great desire inflames Tarquinius. Lucretia’s image inspires compassion and love in Collatinus, but a wicked desire in Tarquinius. This desire is defined by contrast with the true love that Lucretia shows for her husband, and even by Tarquinius’ inability to be moved. Tarquinius does not act according to reason and, eventually, he rapes Lucretia. As a result of this violence, Lucretia comes before her family and friends, who act as witnesses of her plaint and suicide.

The plot concatenates a series of short episodes on a cause-effect chain of events: the men’s discussion leads them to spy on Lucretia; the vision moves Collatinus and inspires Tarquinius’ desire; because of his desire, Tarquinius becomes mad; this madness causes Lucretia’s rape; the rape produces great suffering for Lucretia, and she acts accordingly (she grieves and commits suicide); the sight of her dead body moves the people, and Tarquinius’ father, the king, is deposed. This relation between the parts of the plot serves a double purpose. From

25. The irony in some of the stories of the *Legend* has been pointed out by Spisak (1984) or Percival (1998). But the legend of Lucretia is commonly read as a serious text.

a narrative perspective, it generates a growing tension that culminates in a very shocking action, i.e. Lucretia's suicide in front of her beloved ones. In addition, concerning the meaning of the *exemplum*, this disposition of the events exonerates Lucretia, who is presented as a victim until the last moment.

Regarding the visuality of narrated gestures, the story can be divided into three main scenes. First, the text presents Lucretia in the privacy of her home where she performs actions that reveal her virtue.

- (5) This noble wyf sat by her beddes syde
Dischevele, for no malice she ne thoghte;
And softe wolle our book seith that she wroghte
To kepen her fro slouthe and ydelnesse (vv. 1719–1722)
- ‘This noble wife sat by her bedside
with her hair down, there was no malice in her mind,
and our book says she worked soft wool
to keep herself from laziness and idleness.’

Lucretia is alone and busy with her domestic duties, a desirable behaviour for medieval women, so despite the cultural distance Lucretia becomes a role model for medieval wives. She is depicted with her hair down, an image that can be read simultaneously as a sign of sensual femininity and as an opposition to the despised use of cosmetics.²⁶ Moreover Lucretia is sewing to avoid idleness, a commonly valued feminine activity. The resulting image is the portrayal of a good wife in the serenity of her room, a safe space. Lucretia's observers are hidden, and she does not suspect any dangers. She is allowed to act *as she is*, and this turns out to be in a virtuous manner. She is performing her virtue through her actions, and furthermore these actions refer to habits, like sewing.²⁷ After revealing to her servants her concern for her husband, Lucretia acts as follows.

26. Hair is a very significant physical attribute. In ancient Rome, women's long hair was related to fertility and sexuality (Ciment 2016), as is still the case today. In other types of portraits, “hair also signifies as a marker between the civilized and the uncivilized” (Oswald 2010: 72), in which wild men and women used to have hairy bodies. A frequent *topos* in medieval misogynistic books is the satire of women who embellish their bodies with cosmetics. While the use of cosmetics was a common practice associated with medicine (see Cabré 2000), Christian authors did not approve of cosmetics as ornament, which related to beauty and lust.

27. Shutters (2009) offers a suggestive analysis of the role of the *affectio maritalis* in medieval Lucretias. According to Shutters, “the narrative elements of the Lucretia story, particularly her use of suicide to affirm her internal will, complement a widespread late medieval interest in the connection between a wife's internal, emotional attitude toward her husband and the external, ethical actions thought best to exemplify virtuous wifehood” (2009: 63). She argues that while Lucretia's story served political (for instance, in Livy's version) or ethical (in Augustine's

(6) And ther-with-al ful tenderly she weep,
 And of her werk she took no more keep,
 But mekely she leet her eyen falle;
 And thilke semblant sat her wel with-alle.
 And eek her teres, ful of honestee,
 Embelissed her wyfly chastitee;
 Her countenance is to her herte digne,
 For they acordeden in dede and signe

(vv. 1732–1739)

‘And therewithal she wept tenderly,
 and she thought no longer on her work,
 but meekly she let her eyes fall,
 and that face suited her withal.
 And also her tears, full of honesty,
 embellished her wifely chastity;
 her countenance is worthy of her heart,
 for they agreed in deed and sign.’

In this scene, her gestures and actions are evidence of her virtues, especially chastity and honesty, two attributes intimately connected and highly valued for men and women in the Middle Ages. This is an interesting example of how women are expected to act privately. Gestures and emotions have an essential social component when presenting oneself in daily life, and Lucretia’s behaviour is set in a domestic sphere where she believes nobody can see her. Therefore, Lucretia’s behaviour is connected to her habits and virtue, not to her social persona. This is a moral recommendation, in terms of a spirituality, which is simultaneously private and social, since she must cultivate it through her habits. It shapes the public image that other members of society judge. The narrator’s remarks, expressed in the last two lines, are significant in this sense. The partnership between virtue and action becomes crucial in the last decades of the Middle Ages. In those days, good manners cannot be considered desirable behaviours in the social interaction that varies depending on the context; rather a good behaviour in the Middle Ages must be permanently cultivated as a habit, since habits reveal one’s virtue, and repeated habits control natural inclinations and lead to virtue.²⁸ Hence the importance of this private scene where Lucretia can act without concealment, in other words, where her action leaves no place for pretence and shows a true virtuous soul.

reading) purposes, medieval recreations of the myth focus on her role as a loving wife, due to the institutionalisation of marriage in the Late Middle Ages.

28. This does not mean that all actions are true to the soul; on the contrary, faked virtues through habits (or pretended good habits) are a common concern in the Late Middle Ages.

Furthermore, virtue and behaviour are both essential in the construction of Lucretia's image. This is emphasized by Tarquinius' voice every time he recalls her image.

- (7) Conceived hath her beautee and her chere,
Her yelow heer, her shap, and her manere,
Her hew, her wordes that she hath compleyned,
And by no crafte her beautee nas nat feyned (vv. 1746–1749)

'[Tarquinius] had observed her beauty and her attitude,
her yellow hair, her shape, her manners,
her hue, her words of her complaint,
and her beauty was not feigned with any trick.'

This idea is repeated in the following lines.

- (8) Thus lay her heer, and thus fresh was her hewe;
Thus sat, thus spak, thus span; this was her chere,
Thus fair she was, and this was her manere. (vv. 1761–1763)

'Thus lay her hair, and thus her hue was fresh,
thus she sat, thus she spoke, thus she span; this was her attitude,
thus fair she was, and this was her manner.'

In Lucretia's portrait, her virtuous manners (named as *chere* and *manere*) and her natural beauty express internal goodness. This honest image fuels Tarquinius' mad desire and, ultimately, Lucretia's rape. The second scene of the *exemplum* narrates this assault and the mode of representation enhances the visibility of this episode, using action verbs referring both to Tarquinius and Lucretia. Both characters display excessive actions that fit with the matter of representation: Tarquinius' gestures are all violent while Lucretia's are defensive or even passive. The scene is constructed as a dialogue made of words and gestures, in which the characters alternate their turns. First, Tarquinius enters the bedroom in the dark with a drawn sword. Lucretia perceives his presence through his weight, an attribute that underlies the physical superiority of the man. Thus, when Tarquinius comes into the room, she is lying down on the bed, she wakes up, she feels her bed pressed and she speaks and asks, "what beast is this?" (v.1787). All these actions show the inferiority and passivity of the woman, and ultimately the scene strengthens Lucretia's vulnerability before the violence and physical superiority of her rapist. At this point, Tarquinius declares his intention and his discourse is accompanied by violent actions: he seizes Lucretia's throat and puts his weapon against her heart (vv. 1794–5). The violence on Tarquinius' side increases while Lucretia gradually becomes silent and motionless.

In the scene, Lucretia is depicted inactive because the narrator seeks to exonerate her.²⁹ In addition to her lack of gestures and words, her weak and helpless body is defined by opposition to Tarquinius' portrait as a physically superior human being, on the one hand, and by the narrator's voice, on the other.

- (9) Right as a wolf that fynt a lomb aloon,
To whom shal she compleyne, or make moon? (v. 1798–1799)

'Right as a wolf that finds a lamb alone,
to whom shall she complain or make moan?'

It is very important for the meaning of the *exemplum* to reduce Lucretia's active role and present her as a victim, even compared to a lamb, so the reader does not condemn her for consenting to the rape, although it is the result of an intimidating threat. Tarquinius threatens to kill her along with a servant and to slander her name by declaring that she committed adultery. This constitutes Tarquinius' final attack in the scene. Lucretia reacts with an accumulation of emotion (maybe fear or stress) that causes a sudden faint. Following the pattern of growing violence and passiveness in the scene, the threat is depicted as the most aggressive act performed by Tarquinius and, in parallel, Lucretia's fainting is the epitome of stillness, until that moment. In addition, thanks to the lack of movement, sex is removed from the scene. Instead, the narrator addresses Tarquinius and blames him for his attack.

Just after the rape, the third and last scene starts. As a result of the assault, Lucretia creates a new self, embodied in a new image. In contrast to Lucretia's private appearance, this new image is a social one, presented in public before her family and friends. Paradoxically, this image is very similar to the previous one, for her hair is down, she sits, and she cries, just as the men had discovered her at home a few days earlier. At that moment, they spied on her looking for a deed that could prove her virtue and, in this case, the dialogue between both scenes leads the reader to the conclusion that now Lucretia will also show her virtue through her deeds. However, her clothing and hair refer to a well-known social situation: she is wearing a tunic and untidy hair, an appearance that is reminiscent of mourning women and burial ceremonies. Therefore, the resulting image is hyperbolic and seeks to have an impact both on the audience of characters and on the reading public.

Lucretia's attitude is the product of extreme sorrow expressed through an appearance which is not adequate for the context until the end, when she kills herself. Nevertheless, the *gesticulatio* at this point shows a virtuous soul.

29. Dinshaw (1989) compares the inert body of Lucretia in Chaucer's version to Livy's version, in which Lucretia accedes to Tarquinius' request.

In the construction of the final scene, the narrator activates rhetorical elements very similar to those in the story of Thisbe. The goal is to reach the reader through visuality and emotion, to move the audience thanks to the emotional scene displayed before them. With this end in mind, the poet creates a *sorweful sighte* (v. 1832, ‘sorrowful sight’) in the text thanks to embodied emotions: Lucretia sits weeping, and the great woe in the room caused her friends’ moan (vv. 1834–41). Just as this sight moved Lucretia’s friends, who function as internal spectators, the text is intended to move the audience of the book or external spectators of Lucretia’s actions, which become a performance before the readers’ eyes.

Lucretia’s performance, then, affects her friends and family in the first place and the way this effect is depicted provides clues about the reaction that is expected from readers. They share her sorrow and grieve, thereby enhancing the anguish in the text. The narrator is putting *ante oculos* the emotion, therefore both the characters and the readers can understand more clearly what is happening in the fiction. The narrative strategy serves an emotional intention, so the readers can be moved and hence more easily convinced by the discourse. This theatrical scene is accomplished by the repeated presence of narrated gestures, the predominance of the emotion and the depiction of ceremonial actions. Readers and characters are expected to be moved by this vision, but also to acknowledge Lucretia’s heart “so wifely and so true” (v. 1843).

By means of this performance, the narrator seeks to put the audience in a state of pity and empathy that facilitates the impact of the final action. The tension of the scene increases towards the end, until Lucretia commits suicide. The narration of the action is very succinct, in contrast to the scene of Thisbe’s suicide:

- (10) But prively she caughte forth a knyf,
 and therwith-al she rafte her-self her lyf
 And as she fel adoun, she caste her look,
 And of her clothes yit she hede took;
 For in her falling yit she hadde care
 Lest that her feet or swiche thing lay bare;
 So wel she loved clenness and eek trouthe. (vv. 1854–1860)

‘But secretly she caught a knife
 and therewith she deprived herself of live,
 and as she fell down she dropped her gaze
 and she took heed of her clothes yet,
 for in her falling she had care
 lest her feet or such thing lay bare,
 so well she loved chastity and honesty.’

Again, the story shows a revelation of Lucretia's virtue through her gestures, in this case while she falls dead. Lucretia's actions manifest her virtue until the end. The privacy of her home invited the readers to consider that they were before a truly virtuous woman, and now they confirm her exemplary moral condition when she falls dead and nevertheless covers her body. These three scenes show Lucretia's virtue in different ways. While the reader can extract a literal meaning from Lucretia's actions at her home, her attitude during the rape and her suicide are portrayed by means of extremely emotional strategies in order to have an impact on the reader.

6. Conclusions: Unrestrained gestures as norms of behaviour

An interpretative reading is required in order to understand the deeds shown in these stories as exemplary conducts. The despicable and unrestrained actions of both characters share some features. Sexual desire is a subject of the stories and an important factor that triggers a large part of the action. It hovers over different scenes of the story and is explicit enough to catch the readers' attention even if sexual intercourse is never portrayed. It is Thisbe and Pyramus' desire which motivates their escape. In the final scene, when the couple finally meet, Pyramus is dying. Thisbe touches him and kisses him on the lips, but the stillness of Pyramus' body becomes evident when she kisses his cold body just before his eyes close with his last breath. Thisbe's active role in this action is transgressive, but the cold kisses lessen the eroticism of her burning desire. Moreover, at that moment, Pyramus had already killed himself with his sword, expressing his regret for having caused Thisbe's escape and death, and this action redeems the feelings of the couple. In fact, the narrator does not include Pyramus in the group of men who love untruthfully in his final remarks on the exemplum. Therefore, Thisbe's active attitude is no longer associated with sexuality and her kisses can be read as caregiving behaviour or as evidence of her fidelity, which are perfectly desirable habits and virtues for medieval women.

Tarquinius' desire triggers Lucretia's rape and suicide. In this case, the sexual intercourse does take place, but again the passiveness of her body reduces the erotic content that could be read into the rape scene. Here, Lucretia's body remains motionless before any stimuli, either good or bad, as a result of the violence and the prospect of rape and consequent loss of virtue. Sex is used negatively: during the rape Lucretia is unconscious, and when she falls dead, she covers her body with her clothes. These extreme gestures conform to an accepted attitude for medieval women, framed in the sphere of chastity. In both stories, sensual elements provide the foundation for female-gendered behaviour associated with caregiving, fidelity and chastity.

In the same way death, danger and violence contribute to the story climax. In the legend of Thisbe, when confronted with the danger represented by the lioness, she acts with fear, an attitude marked as feminine in the Middle Ages. Her first reaction contrasts with the final scene, where she loses her feminine fear and acts in a virile manner: just as Pyramus did before, she holds a sword and stabs herself. This gesture embodies the virtue *fortitudo*, in its physical facet, which is not very common in the depiction of female characters. Thus, the transgression is doubled: she kills herself and she acts in a manly manner. Lucretia's reaction to violence represents the internal side of *fortitudo*. She bears the violence of rape in order to avoid a worse consequence, dishonouring her family, and with the same purpose, she commits suicide. In contrast to Thisbe's scene, the text does not stress her boldness, rather this action is a part of her sacrifice. The setting of the scenes reinforces this reading: Thisbe acts in a wild environment, far from the city, while Lucretia's performance happens in the preferred feminine space of the domestic home.

In these *exempla*, unrestrained gestures or *gesticulationes* serve the emotional dimension of the narrative, but *páthos* is not only a means to entertain the audience in the context of these stories, which were largely used as models of good behaviour. Rather, these gestures serve to move and thus convince the reader of a moral lesson. In the *Legend*, as Dinshaw noted "the 'moralitee' of each fable is a truism" (Dinshaw 1989: 87). The moral lessons are part of the tradition Chaucer follows, and it is certainly difficult to find innovation in this matter. However, even if considered a literary game, the careful depiction of the characters' despicable actions serves the educational objectives of the *exempla*. The poetics of the despicable gestures analysed above have an impact on the readers. The narrator focuses on the stylization of actions rather than on innovative moral lessons, and thus the *exempla* achieve their exemplary dimension.

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Blunders and (un)intentional offence in Shakespeare

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Neither literary nor linguistic investigations seem to offer a clear pragmatic description of blunder. Blunders in social communication are popularly associated with gaffes, which are incidental offences that could have been avoided if the speaker had foreseen their offensive or perplexing consequences. It has been claimed (Wierzbicka 2003) that errors and blunders are mostly committed when speakers venture into “unsafe territory” (2003: 283), which makes it easier to make a serious mistake or to embarrass the interlocutor by not taking enough care or not thinking enough. Blunders in Early Modern literature, however, have never been pragmatically analysed even though they form a distinctive linguistic feature of some Shakespearean characters’ speech. This chapter analyses the linguistic behaviour of two comedy characters from Shakespeare’s plays, Mistress Quickly and Falstaff, with special emphasis on the effects of their blunders and how blunders affect both the speaker and the hearer. The aim of the chapter is twofold. First, I try to provide a pragmatic definition of blunder in relation to speech act theory and intentionality and explain how blunders are pragmatically different from gaffes. Next, I describe the perlocutionary effects of blunders based on the examples of Shakespeare characters’ speech and demonstrate how blunders can be employed as a means of literary characterisation.

Keywords: blunder, impoliteness, face-threatening acts, banter, intentionality, embarrassability, humour, comedy, William Shakespeare

1. Introduction

Despite their widespread occurrence in social life and literature, blunders do not seem to have a clear pragmatic description. Speakers normally associate blunders with gaffes and incidents of faux pas, which are understood as unwitting offences that could have been avoided had the speaker foreseen their face-threatening consequences (Goffman 2005: 14). The forms “gaffe” and “faux pas” do not specify

whether it is the speaker's or the hearer's face that is threatened; what we do know, however, is that embarrassment is their main effect in social interactions. This chapter offers a pragma-stylistic analysis of blunders as unintended deviations from the rules of politeness in Early Modern literature. It looks at blunders as illocutionary acts with some non-intentional perlocutionary effects, such as face threatening, embarrassment, and humour. This chapter also demonstrates how blunders can be used as a mode of characterisation in literature, that is, how well they can reflect the character's personality. It points at the differences between blunders and their effects in the case of Mistress Quickly and Falstaff, and analyses their blunders as part of individual and interactive behaviour, proving their context-sensitive nature.

2. Blunders: Pragmatic description and their effects

The most common definition of the term "blunder" can be found in *The Oxford English Dictionary* and says "a stupid or careless mistake", hinting at the same time at the unintentional nature of blunders. As mentioned above, unwitting offences are also referred to as "faux pas, gaffes, boners, or bricks" (Goffman 2005: 14) and are perceived as "a threat to face" (Goffman 2005: 14). Goffman talks about three (sic!) levels of responsibility for a person's actions which threaten an individual's face; however, he does not specify whose face is being threatened in the case of gaffes (or blunders for that matter) – the speaker's face or the face of the hearer(s). He says that for "incidental offenses" which arise as "an unplanned but sometimes anticipated by-product of action" we can distinguish the following types of threat: "[1] introduced by the participant himself against his own face, [2] by himself against the face of the others, [3] by the others against their own face, or [4] by the others against himself" (Goffman 2005: 15). Goffman simply points out the fact that speakers committing gaffes may find themselves in many different relations to a face threat. I want to argue that blunders should be pragmatically described as speakers' unwitting face-threatening acts (FTAs), which lead to some non-intentional perlocutionary effects: a threat to face (e.g. offence), embarrassment, and humour. Importantly, the perlocutionary effects of blunders can affect the speaker's and/or the hearer's face. What distinguishes blunders from impoliteness is intentionality, or to be more precise, the speaker's lack of intention to offend the other. Bousfield notes that there is a difference between the intended vs. perceived face threat, which depends on the context and on the hearer, e.g. their (hyper)sensitivity and expectations, their social and cultural background, etc. (Bousfield 2008: 73). Based on my analysis of Shakespeare's characters' speech (Section 3), I want to claim that blunders are accidental mistakes which can be

construed as intentional or unintentional by the hearer, thus provoking the hearer's adequate response. Hence, blunders may border on impoliteness when the speaker's lack of intention to offend will be recognised by the hearer as precisely the intention to offend.

Blunders, in my opinion, should not be treated synonymously with "faux pas" or "gaffes", because blunders can happen in a greater number of communicative contexts. According to *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Cambridge English Dictionary*, "faux pas" and "gaffes", treated synonymously, involve some act or remark that is "a social mistake" because it deviates from the norms of politeness and is considered tactless or embarrassing in a social situation. Blunders are mistakes resulting from the speaker's careless thinking or behaviour, occurring in any situational context and involving a wider scope of perlocutionary effects in comparison with "faux pas", whose main effect is embarrassment.¹

2.1 Blunders as FTAs

Blunders cannot be discussed outside of face-work. Goffman defines face-work as "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face" and claims that it "counteract[s] 'incidents' – that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten face" (Goffman 2005: 12). The sociological notion of face understood as "the image of self" (Goffman 2005: 5) was introduced into the field of linguistics by Brown and Levinson, who defined it as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown & Levinson 1987: 61), which is still a key concept in the theory of politeness. "Politeness means putting things in such a way as to take account of the feelings of the hearer", say Brown and Gilman (1989: 161) in their pragmatic analysis of Shakespeare's tragedies. These "feelings" are closely connected with Brown and Levinson's definitions of "positive" and "negative" face. Positive face is synonymous with "the positive consistent self-image" and a person's desire that this self-image is appreciated and approved of by others. Negative face is "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction", or in other words the desire to be free and unimpeded in one's actions (Brown & Levinson 1987: 61–62). Next, Brown and Levinson differentiate between positive and negative politeness and enumerate sets of strategies for maintaining the positive and negative face of the hearer. The problem of politeness (or the lack of it) appears when there is a speech act to be performed, which is, however, intrinsically face-threatening (known as a face-threatening act or FTA).

1. Roberts and Sylvester in their article on the attitude to errors and mistakes in the history of English writing classify "faux pas" (1676), "mis-step" (1854), "gaffe" (1909) and "bloop" (1947) as embarrassing errors (Roberts and Sylvester 2017: 29).

For example, requests or orders can be classified as negative FTAs, because they limit the freedom of the hearer, whereas criticism or insults are positive FTAs, because they show the speaker's lack of appreciation or their disapproval of the hearer (Brown & Gilman 1989: 162). Brown and Levinson's politeness framework lists five major (super)strategies for doing FTAs: (1) Doing an act on record, with a clear communicative intention; (2) doing an act off record, when there is more than one unambiguously attributable intention expressed by the speaker; (3) positive politeness, which is oriented towards the hearer's positive face (speaker indicates that they want the hearer's wants); (4) negative politeness, which is oriented towards maintaining the hearer's negative face (speaker indicates that they will not interfere with the hearer's freedom of action); (5) don't do the FTA (Brown & Levinson 1987: 68–70).

Blunders as unwitting FTAs seem to have the same potential to threaten face as intrinsic FTAs. Intrinsic FTAs by nature run contrary to the face wants of the hearer or the speaker. Brown and Levinson distinguish acts that primarily threaten the negative or positive face of the speaker and the hearer. Among the acts threatening the hearer's negative face we can distinguish, for example, a speaker's orders and requests, suggestions, threats, offers, promises; and the acts threatening the hearer's positive face include the speaker's expressions of disapproval or criticism, expressions of violent emotions, the mention of taboo topics, use of address terms and other status-marked identifications in initial encounters, etc. The acts threatening primarily the speaker's negative face are, among others, the speaker's expressing thanks, accepting the hearer's thanks or apology, excuses, acceptance of offers, responses to the hearer's faux pas, unwilling promises; and the acts threatening the speaker's positive face are the speaker's apologies, acceptance of compliments, confessions, admissions of guilt or responsibility, lack of control of laughter or tears, etc. (Brown & Levinson 1987: 65–68). The similarity between blunders and intrinsic FTAs is that both manifest a face-threatening potential and do so in an "unwitting" manner: intrinsic FTAs have face threat inherent in them (regardless of the intentions of the speaker), and blunders display a capacity for producing a face-threat as part of their perlocutionary intent, which was unrecognised or misinterpreted by the hearer.

2.2 Blunders, intentionality and impoliteness

When speaking, speakers utter words with a certain intentionality. Searle claims that intentionality is the "capacity of the mind" which is "directed at [...] objects and states of affairs in the world", and that collective human behaviour is "a manifestation of collective intentionality" (Searle 2010: 25–26). In the case of blunders, the speaker has a certain intention which they wish to express through

their words, but the result is just the opposite; their intention is not understood by the interlocutors. Based on Falstaff, I will demonstrate in the analytical section (3.2) how the lack of recognition of the speaker's intention in blunders can lead to the audience's on-record impoliteness. Impoliteness used to be and still is discussed in opposition to politeness, and can be understood as the lack of a polite attitude or as failed politeness, e.g. the speaker's failure to redress or adequately redress an FTA (see Eelen 2001: 98–104; Culpeper 2011: 424–425). In his study "Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness" (1996), Culpeper admitted that his impoliteness framework heavily relied on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies and face concerns, saying that "impoliteness is very much the parasite of politeness" (Culpeper 1996: 355). Impoliteness is aimed at disturbing the "social equilibrium" and "friendly relations" in communication; impolite speakers usually do not redress their FTAs, but intentionally attack the face of the other (Culpeper 1996: 350). According to Culpeper (1996: 354–355), impoliteness occurs mostly when there is an imbalance of power between the communicators and a more powerful participant usually has more freedom to manifest their impolite attitude towards a less powerful interlocutor.

The (super)strategies for doing impoliteness are a mirror reflection of Brown and Levinson's politeness (super)strategies, but instead of enhancing the other's face, they are used to purposefully attack it. For example, bald on-record impoliteness is when the FTA is performed clearly and unambiguously, in circumstances when face is not irrelevant. This stands in opposition to Brown and Levinson's bald on-record, which is performed only when the threat to the other's face is very small, as in polite orders ("Do sit down"). The same bald on-record strategy used by impolite speakers indicates the speaker's clear intention to attack the hearer's face, often in the context when the offence will seem most harmful and serious to the other, e.g. public encounters, or official situations. Next, positive impoliteness is designed to intentionally attack the hearer's positive face, i.e. show them lack of appreciation, belittle their achievements, disassociate from them, etc. Negative impoliteness is intended to destroy the hearer's negative face in conversation and involves the use of strategies which impinge on their freedom, i.e. invade the other's space, frighten or threaten the other, etc. Sarcasm or "mock politeness" occurs when the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies which are obviously insincere. Here politeness is only a surface realization, which is strategically employed for social disharmony (Bousfield 2008: 87). Finally, the "withhold politeness" strategy corresponds with Brown and Levinson's "don't do the FTA", and it stands for the absence of polite behaviour where it would be expected (sometimes, a deliberate lack of politeness is perceived as impoliteness). The view on impoliteness adopted in this chapter is the so-called third wave of impoliteness research, a combination of relational approaches (e.g. Spencer-Oatey 2008;

Terkourafi 2009) and interactional approaches (e.g. Bousfield 2008; Haugh 2007), which takes into consideration both the speaker's and the hearer's perspectives, pays attention to the context of the utterance, but still relies on the more stable meanings stemming from linguistic forms, strategies and formulae (see Culpeper & Hardaker 2017: 208; Taavitsainen & Jucker in this volume).

2.3 Blunders as speech acts: Illocutionary force and unintentional perlocutionary effects

The speech event is the main form of interaction in drama. Dramatic dialogue does not simply refer deictically to the dramatic action but directly constitutes it. In other words, the action dynamic of the play is moved along by the force of the characters' discourse. Dramatic discourse is often described in terms of Austin's speech act theory (1962) viewing speech as action since dialogues in drama directly "enact" the events that make up the drama (Elam 1980: 157). Austin classifies all utterances into constatives (the proposition-bearing statements) and performatives (utterances which are not subject to truth-false considerations, as they *do* rather than *say* things). The original constative/performative distinction is later replaced by the view that all sentences have some "executive" force, with the three types of acts distinguished: a locutionary act (producing a meaningful utterance according to the rules of phonetics and grammar); an illocutionary act (the act performed *in* saying something, e.g. asking a question); a perlocutionary act (the act performed *by means of* saying something, e.g. warning, convincing, irritating the interlocutor). The illocutionary force as the action force of every illocutionary act, also viewed as the speech act proper (see Levinson 2015: 200), is not part of truth-conditional semantics, but of the theory of action (Levinson 1983: 246). The perlocutionary force of an utterance is viewed as the speech act's further consequences, which are context-specific, e.g. by asking a person's advice I flatter them (Levinson 2015: 200). In short, dramatic discourse due to its performative nature is "a network of complementary and conflicting illocutions and perlocutions ... [it is a] linguistic *interaction*, not so much descriptive as performative" (Elam 1980: 159).

To follow Austin, it is important to remember that illocutionary acts do not *produce* (perlocutionary) effects – they rather *involve* effects. Austin claims that most illocutionary acts invite a certain response, for example an order invites obedience, a promise invites fulfilment, etc.; the response can be "one-way" or "two-way", namely, the act either does not involve the return action by the participant (e.g. orders, suggestions) or it does elicit a response from the recipient (e.g. offers, asking whether you will) (Austin 1976: 117). It is also noteworthy that for an illocutionary act to take effect and evoke a response one more condition has to

be met – the securing of uptake (Austin 1976: 118) or “the ratified receipt and recognition by a recipient” (Levinson 2015: 201). In other words, for a speech act to be successful, the illocutionary force and the propositional content of the utterance have to be understood by the hearer (Levinson 1983: 237). In the case of blunders, on the one hand, the hearer responds to the illocutionary force of the utterance, e.g. s/he answers a question, comments on the speaker’s remark, etc., but on the other hand, the hearer misinterprets the perlocutionary intent of the speaker, which may lead to embarrassment or a face threat of either the speaker or the hearer, or both of them. My core argument is that the most distinctive pragmatic characteristic of blunders is that they invite the hearer’s response and take effect, but because of the lack of uptake (or insufficient uptake) of either the propositional content or the perlocutionary intention of the speaker by the hearer, the utterance produces specific unintentional perlocutionary effects: face threat (e.g. offence), embarrassment, or humour.

I would like to illustrate my point with an example of a conversation involving a high ranking male member of the Lancaster University senate (S1) and a female member of staff (S2). It can be classified as a common type of blunder which causes face threat and is provided by Bousfield (2008: 70):

S1: <Sincerely> Oh, when is it due?

S2: <Pause> I’m not pregnant.

S1 has drawn attention to S2 looking overweight, but it was not his intention. The illocutionary act of questioning “When is it due?” spoken by a male member of the senate misses its perlocutionary intent of showing care or interest towards a female colleague who looks pregnant. Instead, this speech act causes a minor offence by implying that the female colleague is obese. The illocutionary act takes effect – the recipient may feel offended or even angry, judging by her curt and formal reply “I’m not pregnant”, but it is an opposite perlocutionary effect to the one intended. Blunders are complex pragmatic phenomena, heavily dependent on the context of the utterance and on the hearer’s (non)-securing of uptake. Additionally, they are culture-specific, since Bousfield notes that this kind of remark is likely to be understood as “face-threatening” within the context of Western culture (Bousfield 2008: 70), but the fact is that the same question may not be construed as offensive in another culture.

2.3.1 *Embarrassment and embarrassability*

There are many reasons why the perlocutionary intent of the speaker’s blunder may not be recognised by the hearer: the speaker’s carelessness in thinking or acting, lack of recognition of the context, lack of education, etc. Errors and blunders are mostly committed when the speaker ventures into “unsafe territory” (Wierzbicka

2003: 283), which makes it easier to commit a serious mistake or embarrass the hearer by not taking enough care or not thinking enough. Additionally, blunders can be accompanied by various emotions displayed by speakers and hearers, the most common being embarrassment. We learn embarrassment (we are not born with it) throughout our lives as a result of everyday situations and commonplace mishaps. Our feeling embarrassed depends on “the existence of public self-consciousness, the ability to think about and be concerned with what other people are thinking about us” (Miller 1996: 1). Speaking of embarrassment in pragmatic terms, we can say that it is connected with the speaker’s positive face, the want to be appreciated and approved of by other people. Every embarrassing situation undermines the speaker’s positive image of themselves, especially when they have recognised their mistake. Miller claims that the social function of embarrassment is to teach us something, to help us improve, or to make up for the wrong we have caused somebody else (Miller 1996: 1). Embarrassment is a common non-intentional perlocutionary effect of blunders, often affecting both the speaker and the hearer. Another possibility is that the speaker who makes a blunder may not always be conscious of the embarrassment they have caused, and they do not seem to be embarrassed at all (the Mrs. Quickly examples). According to Goffman, the most typical symptoms of embarrassment we see in ourselves and others are the so-called “objective signs of emotional disturbance”, for example, “blushing, fumbling, stuttering, an unusually low- or high-pitched voice, ... [and] absent-mindedness” (Goffman 2005: 97). Additionally, embarrassment “involves feeling self-conscious, awkward, discomfited, or exposed because of the nature of the situation” (Miller 1996: 94). Still, some speakers, lacking embarrassability, may not experience any signs of emotional disturbance; it is rather their hearers who have recognised a blunder and become agitated or feel discomfited (Evans’s emotional reaction to Mrs Quickly’s blunders).

It is important to remember Goffman’s definition of embarrassment as “a disruption of the normal process of social interaction” (Goffman 1956: 264–271; Miller 1996: 46). According to Miller, the feeling of embarrassment results from both “individual” (1996: 51) and “interactive” (1996: 61) behaviour. The most typical cases of individual embarrassment involve the embarrassed person’s own conduct that causes dismay and violates “shared standards of deportment, civility, control or grace, so that there are obvious shortcomings in the person’s actions” (Miller 1996: 51), such as physical pratfalls and clumsiness (tripping, spilling a drink, belching in public, etc.), or cognitive mistakes (forgetting someone’s name, temporary stupidity, etc). These may also include the “loss of control” (Miller 1996: 55–56) over one’s body or emotions (a growling stomach, hiccups, bursting into tears or bursting out with laughter), and “unintended harmdoing” (Miller 1996: 58), as in inconveniencing or offending others (“That was my wife you’re

talking about”). The most representative cases of interactive behaviour resulting in embarrassment include “awkward interaction” (Miller 1996: 61) such as the speaker’s loss of the script and inconvenient silence after telling a stupid joke, or the “partner’s sensitivity” (Miller 1996: 63) – here the source of chagrin is not necessarily the speaker, but the hearer, who displays excessively sensitive reactions (touchiness). The last type of behaviour causing the feeling of embarrassment is “audience provocation” (Miller 1996: 64), which may include the element of “personal transgression” (Miller 1996: 64–65), both intentional and unintentional (e.g. unwanted attention is thrust upon us by the other participant’s drawing the audience’s attention to our shortcomings, revealing our secret in public, as a result of both deliberate and unwitting action).

2.3.2 *Humour*

Another perlocutionary effect of blunders is humour. The very first example of a blunder quoted in this chapter: “When is it due? ... I’m not pregnant” shows, first of all, that blunders can function as FTAs (the illocutionary act misses its purpose and instead of showing friendship and care it causes a minor offence to the addressee). Additionally, this example demonstrates that blunders can lead to humour, in particular when third parties are involved.² The awkward exchange between the Lancaster University professors was embarrassing for both participants (surely for the speaker) and served as an FTA for the hearer; but it also may have been amusing for potential audiences (eavesdroppers, bystanders, etc.). Humour, similarly to blunders, does not operate outside of the context, and according to Attardo “all humour has a pragmatic component” (Attardo 2003: 1290). Studies on humour research show that humour (pragmatically speaking) can be a result of the violation of the CP, and thus humour is an outcome of “infelicitous” speech acts (see Yus 2003; Attardo 1990, 1993; Raskin 1985), but it is not a speech act in itself. There are several functions of humour – to amuse, to maintain solidarity within a group or in a workplace, or to hedge FTAs such as criticisms, insults and directives (Kotthoff 1996; Holmes 2006). In the case of blunders, humour is another “side effect” of the perlocutionary intent going wrong. I believe humour in

2. This analysis offers a discussion on humour rather than laughter as an *effect* of blunders. From a pragmatic point of view, there is a difference between humour and laughter: laughter is not necessarily a reaction to humour, although very often it is used by speakers to indicate their humorous intention. Laughter, as Attardo rightly says, can be caused by numerous non-humorous stimuli, such as tickling, watching other people laugh, laughing gas, etc. In other words, we have to assume that “there exists both laughter without humour and humour without laughter” (Attardo 2003: 1288). Therefore, claiming that blunders may lead to humour is more specific than saying that their effect is laughter. Laughter can be an immediate effect of, among others, the speaker’s and hearer’s amusement and their reaction to humorous situations.

blunders has two key functions: (a) it is a source of entertainment for the audience; (b) it helps the speaker save face and somehow deal with the embarrassment or offence they have caused by their unwitting mistake. It is potential audiences and third parties to the conversation who are more likely to find blunders funny and entertaining, not the speaker(s).

The type of humour observed in Shakespeare's characters' speech can be classified as conversational humour. Conversational humour serves as an "umbrella term" for various semantic and pragmatic types of humour, which are present in interpersonal communication, both real-life (e.g. everyday conversations, TV shows) and fictional (film and book dialogues). It includes, for example, allusions, puns, witticisms, etc. (Dynel 2009: 1284). One form of conversational humour displayed by Shakespeare's characters is punning, which can be defined as "a humorous verbalisation that has (prototypically) two interpretations couched in purposeful ambiguity of a word or a string of words (collocations or idioms) [...] manifesting itself in one form [...] but conveying two different meanings" (Dynel 2009: 1289). For example, the pun "take life with a pinch of salt, a slice of lemon and a bottle of tequila" requires that the interpreter first observes the idiomatic meaning ('don't believe everything that happens in your life') and, next, rejects it in favour of a literal meaning ('spend your life drinking tequila with a slice of lemon and a pinch of salt') (Dynel 2009: 1290). Puns can be classified as a subcategory of witticisms, which are extensively used by Shakespeare's Falstaff. A witticism is "a clever and humorous textual unit interwoven into a conversational exchange" (Dynel 2009: 1290). Witticisms are context-dependent and spontaneously produced entities, such as comments, sayings or definitions, which are different from jokes as they may occur in non-humorous communicative contexts. Dynel highlights the fact that witticisms are "inherently clever" and stem from "witty observations", unlike some jokes, e.g. one-liners, which often "border on the absurd" and whose sole aim is to "engender humour" (Dynel 2009: 1288). A good example of a witticism in the form of a wise saying is provided by Dynel (2009: 1288): "The chance of bread falling with the buttered side down is directly proportional to the cost of the carpet". It is a clever remark rather than a joke, which serves as a comment on human nature, e.g. "the more expensive the thing, the lower the chance of human error".

3. Blunders in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *King Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*

Various pragmatic concepts and theories have been employed as tools to study characterisation in Shakespearean drama. Brown and Gilman (1989) apply politeness theory to four Shakespearean tragedies to study the language of polite speakers,

which serves as a mode of literary characterisation. They claim that politeness is not only “civilized behaviour” focused on attending to the feelings of others (Cordelia in *King Lear*), but it can also be “deliberate behaviour”, which serves a character’s selfish needs and is displayed “in the interests of greed, advancement and desire”, as exemplified by King Lear (Brown and Gilman 1989: 207). Rudanko (1993) in his book *Pragmatic Approaches to Shakespeare* applies speech act theory in his analysis of the characters of Othello, Timon of Athens and Coriolanus. Rudanko relates to Fish’s essay on speech acts in *Coriolanus*, in which Fish claims that promising is Coriolanus’ favourite speech act because he is good at making promises (Fish 1976: 992). Rudanko comes to a different conclusion and claims that Coriolanus’ promises are “prompted” (Rudanko 1993: 132) because he only makes them in specific linguistic conditions, in response to requests by other characters. Moreover, Coriolanus breaks his promises: he likes talking about the value of promises and of constancy but is portrayed as inconstant himself, says Rudanko (1993: 132). In *Timon of Athens*, he investigates how requests are turned down in the play and shows that requests as speech act verbs have an inherent face-threatening quality. He notes: “Making a request is an FTA, since it potentially encroaches upon the hearer’s freedom of action [...] it is an FTA threatening the hearer’s negative face” (1993: 171–172). In his further investigations of *Julius Caesar* and *Othello*, Rudanko (2007) discusses covert violations of Gricean maxims for deception utilised by the characters in their manipulative speech. In particular, he looks at Decius, one of the conspirators in *Julius Caesar*, who covertly violates the Maxim of Quality (be truthful) and the Maxim of Quantity (be as informative as is required) when he lies to Caesar and hides his “covert intention”, which is defined here as “an intention the speaker does not want the hearer to recognize” (Rudanko 2007: 113).

Culpeper (1996) introduces the theory of impoliteness as disruptive social behaviour “oriented towards attacking face, an emotionally sensitive concept of the self” (Culpeper 1996: 350) using the example of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. In a case study of the play, Culpeper demonstrates how impoliteness and conflict revive dramatic dialogue and contribute to the development of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as characters. He claims that the type of impoliteness strategies employed by the Macbeths is conditioned by the situation of disequilibrium caused by the murder of Duncan and the characters’ willingness to re-establish equilibrium in the banquet scene when they wish to strengthen their social position and tighten the bonds with the Lords. Culpeper analyses Lady Macbeth’s famous speech “Are you a man?” (Act 4 Scene 3), in which she challenges Macbeth’s masculinity. She expertly uses impoliteness to attack her husband’s face so as to make him “pull himself together” (1996: 365). Her strategies are based mostly on positive impoliteness and sarcasm, which turn out to be effective in the course of the play, since Macbeth transforms from a weak man with a guilty conscience into a “desensitised

murderer” (1996: 366). In my book *The Pragmatics of Early Modern Politics* (2014) I introduced the concept of “political face” (Kizelbach 2014: 258). I defined the nature of Early Modern kingship in linguistic terms based on the examples of Shakespeare’s kings and politicians (Richard II, Henry V, Henry Bolingbroke, Harry Hotspur), and pointed out specific (im)politeness strategies and ways of face-management which differentiate successful kings from ineffective kings and politicians in Shakespeare’s history plays. Blunders in their pragmatic understanding of being unwitting FTAs with unintended perlocutionary effects have not been employed so far to analyse Shakespeare’s drama, nor have they ever been discussed as characterising devices in literature.

The two Shakespearean characters whose speech is commonly associated with blunders are Mistress Quickly and Falstaff. Mistress Quickly appears in several plays by Shakespeare: she is a landlady of the tavern in Eastcheap in *1* and *2 King Henry IV*, and she also briefly reappears in *King Henry V* as Nell, who is married to Pistol, Falstaff’s comrade. However, as a full-fledged character, she appears in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where she runs an inn in Windsor and is a housekeeper to Dr Caius, a French apothecary. Mistress Quickly has a great talent for malapropisms and “linguistic vagaries” (Melchiori 2000: 123) and therefore Shakespeare most probably reintroduces her in the play for comedy reasons and to continue the plot involving Falstaff, Bardolph and Pistol.

Sir John Falstaff is a cowardly braggart-knight who appears in *1* and *2 King Henry IV* – he has a reputation of being a drunkard and a fraud. Falstaff’s historical predecessor was Sir John Fastolf, a brave knight and officer in King Henry IV’s army in the wars with France (Howard 1997: 248–249). Falstaff is a combination of a comic and a morality vice figure. He was one of the Elizabethan audience’s favourite characters (Humphreys 2007: 187); in fact, he was liked so much that, in the Epilogue to *2 King Henry IV*, Shakespeare announced Oldcastle’s³ comeback in the next play should the audience “be not too / much cloyed with fat meat” (*2 Henry IV*, Epilogue 26–27). Falstaff has a large comic part in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where he is presented as a womaniser and a fraud who wants to trick and seduce two town ladies, Mistress Page and Mistress Ford, who eventually teach him a lesson and make a public mockery out of him. The main difference between Mistress Quickly and Falstaff lies in their “impression management” or “self-presentation” (Miller 1996: 110) in communication, which has an influence on both

3. Oldcastle was the original name of Sir John Falstaff in *1 Henry IV*. Falstaff was named after Sir John Oldcastle, a Protestant martyr; however, before the play’s publication, Shakespeare changed Falstaff’s name from Oldcastle to Falstaff because of numerous protests after performances. In the Epilogue to *2 Henry IV*, Shakespeare indeed announces Falstaff’s appearance in the play to follow, and this play is *Henry V*, but Falstaff does not appear in it.

the type of their blunders and on their effects. Mistress Quickly has very poor skills in “self-presentation” – she does not care about other characters’ opinions of her, she never expresses embarrassment and displays a high level of tolerance of her own mistakes. Her blunders usually occur in the shape of malapropisms resulting from her lack of knowledge, which usually leads to conversational humour or the hearer’s discomfort. Falstaff, on the other hand, is a witty character with well-developed skills in “self-presentation”, and a much higher level of embarrassability than Mistress Quickly. His blunders stem from carelessness rather than ignorance, and they seem to have more serious effects, e.g. face threat (impoliteness, offence), for both the speaker and the hearer.

3.1 Mistress Quickly

Mistress Quickly’s blunders result mostly from her ignorance and her poor “impression management” skills. She never shows embarrassment at her own words and she never cares about other characters’ opinions of her. She mishears and misspells words, her puns are usually sexual, and her linguistic behaviour is characterised by numerous attempts at wit but manifests itself in poor understanding of both her own words and the language of others. This may be a reason why Quickly’s blunders look like unserious jokes, which are usually humorous and, occasionally, cause the hearer’s irritation. The following example shows Quickly in the role of a messenger of Mistress Ford’s; she conveys a message to Falstaff that Mistress Ford will be awaiting him alone in her house from 10 to 11. We are struck by how little she understands from what she is saying, as well as by her inability to express what she means:

Falstaff:	Good morrow, goodwife.
Mistress Quickly:	Not so, an’t please your Worship.
Falstaff:	Good maid, then.
Mistress Quickly:	That I am, I’ll be sworn – as my mother was, the first hour I was born.
Falstaff:	I do believe the swearer. What with me?
Quickly:	... There is one Mistress Ford, sir – I pray come a little nearer this ways – ...

Merry Wives (2.2.33–38, 42–43)

Falstaff greets her with a slightly condescending term of address “good wife” meaning ‘good woman’, which she refuses to accept as she probably finds it inappropriate. Falstaff then teasingly calls her “good maid”, whose literal meaning is ‘unmarried woman’ and ‘virgin’. She confirms right away saying “That I am”, which indicates her intention of confirming that she is a virgin, or in any case, that she is not anybody’s wife. What the hearer gets instead is a contradiction; she contradicts

herself by saying “I’ll be sworn – as my mother was, the first hour I was born” – her mother could not be a virgin after giving birth to a baby. According to Melchiori (2000: 180), she confuses two proverbs: “as good a maid as her mother” and “as innocent as a new-born babe”. There are other examples of her lack of understanding of the expressions she uses, as in “come a little nearer this ways” (*Merry Wives*, 2.2.47), where she mixes up the two phrases “this way” and “go thy ways” (Melchiori 2000: 180). Falstaff replies ironically to her contradiction: “I do believe the swearer”. The source of Mistress Quickly’s blunder is her lack of education and wit. If Mistress Quickly had a higher public self-consciousness, her embarrassability would be higher (see Miller 1996: 96). In this scene, her level of embarrassability is extremely low. She is not embarrassed because she simply does not recognise the fact that her remark was a contradiction, and hence this blunder only leads to humour experienced by the participant (and potential theatrical audience).

Another example of Mistress Quickly’s blundering can be classified as a malapropism. Malapropism is a type of solecism, which is “the conspicuous and unintended violation of standard diction or grammar” (Abrams 1999: 147). The speaker mistakenly uses a word in place of another word which it resembles; the effect is often comic.⁴ From a pragmatic point of view, a malapropism is a type of blunder, because it is an accidental mistake based on the speaker’s misuse of a word, which leads to unintended humour. They carry potential face threat directed mostly at the speaker’s face, which, however, goes unnoticed by this speaker. The effect of comedy in literary malapropisms is magnified by the character’s lack of recognition of their mistake, usually resulting from their low-class background, as is the case with Mistress Quickly. In the scene to follow, Falstaff is tricked into believing that Mistress Ford is inviting him to her house during her husband’s absence. He has been duped already in what is popularly known as a buck-basket scene (3.3). Mistress Ford makes him hide in a laundry basket while he is in her house on the pretext of hiding him from Mister Ford. But in fact, she wants to punish Falstaff for his lechery and asks her two servants to take the basket away and throw its contents into the river. Falstaff then is dumped into the river with the dirty laundry, which he recollects in the following conversation with Quickly:

Mistress Quickly: Marry Sir, I come to your worship from
Mistress Ford.

Falstaff: Mistress Ford! I have had ford enough; I was
thrown into the ford. I have my belly full of ford.

4. The term malapropism comes from Mrs Malaprop, a character in Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s comedy *The Rivals* (1775), who in her attempts to display a copious vocabulary misused words, for example she says “he is the very pineapple of politeness” or “as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile” (Abrams 1999: 147).

Mistress Quickly: Alas the day, good heart, that was not her fault.
She does so take on with her men: they mistook their
erection.

Falstaff: So did I mine, to build upon a foolish
woman's promise. *Merry Wives* (3.5.32–40)

“I have had ford enough ... I have my belly full of ford” – he feels betrayed and angry, and Shakespeare makes a pun on the name Ford which refers both to Mistress Ford and ‘shallow water’ (Melchiori 2000: 233). Mistress Quickly excuses Mistress Ford by saying that the servants did not understand what they were supposed to do with the laundry, and she accidentally talks dirty. She confuses the word ‘direction’ with ‘erection’, and this fact is spotted by Falstaff who plays on the sexual innuendo of her unwitting mistake: “So did I mine” [I, too, mistook Mistress Ford’s directions, I thought she wanted to have sex with me]. We can observe that Quickly’s malapropism is the result of her ignorance and muddled thinking. Were she more educated, she might recognise the comic aspect of her mistake, or she might avoid making this mistake altogether. Quickly, however, is neither aware of her mistake nor embarrassed by it, which only contributes to the comedy-like quality of the exchange. Again, the effect of her blunder is humour, which is immediately recognised by Falstaff, who makes a sexual pun at Quickly’s expense.

So far, we have seen that blunders in Shakespeare stem from the speaker’s ignorance and lack of intelligence. Their most likely symptoms are malapropisms, which result in humour and can be amusing for the hearer. Mistress Quickly’s interactive blunders, however, have one more quality – they lead to the hearer’s irritation and embarrassment. In the comic scene of the Latin class, Mistress Quickly regularly interrupts a Welsh parson, Evans, who teaches Latin to William, Mistress Page’s son. This time, Quickly’s malapropisms are the result of the speaker’s mishearing the words she overhears in a conversation:

Sir Hugh Evans: William, how many numbers is in nouns?

William: Two.

Mistress Quickly: Truly, I thought there had been one number
more, because they say “Od’s nouns”.

Sir Hugh Evans: Peace your tattlings. What is ‘fair’, William?

William: *Pulcher*.

Mistress Quickly: Polecats! There are fairer things than polecats,
sure.

Sir Hugh Evans: You are a very simplicity ’oman; I pray you,
peace. – What is *lapis*, William? *Merry Wives* (4.1.18–27)

Mistress Quickly’s intrusive comment with ‘Od’s nouns’ irritates Evans. Melchiori explains that “Ods ’ouns” is a euphemism for the strong oath “By God’s (i.e.

Christ's wounds". She equivocates on both *numbers* ("three" not "two" is an odd number) and *nouns* ("ouns" in the oath) (Melchiori 2000: 240). Her unwitting intrusion upsets and distracts Evans, who orders her to be quiet: "Peace your tattlings". Shakespeare presents Evans in a humorous light – he is an uneducated teacher whose speech abounds in blunders and grammatical mistakes. He uses the word "tattling" in the plural Welsh, meaning tittle-tattle, for which he criticises Quickly. When William answers another of Evans's questions, Mistress Quickly interrupts again, confusing the word "pulcher" (Latin for 'beautiful') with "polecats", a word to name "vermin", which was also known as an abusive term for "prostitutes" (Melchiori 2000: 240). Evans loses his patience and offends Mistress Quickly using his peculiar Welsh pronunciation and confusing a noun with an adjective: "You are a very simplicity 'oman". The rest of this conversation is characterised by Mistress Quickly's further malapropisms with no traces of her feeling any embarrassment.

Quickly unashamedly keeps eavesdropping and commenting on the lesson, again mishearing and misspelling what she hears. William's recitation of the genitive case pronouns "horum, harum, horum" (*Merry Wives*, 4.1.53) draws her attention because she understands "genitive case" as "Jenny's case", an indecent allusion to a whore's vagina (or "case"). Hence her exclamation: "Vengeance on Jenny's case!" (*Merry Wives*, 4.1.54), meaning 'a plague on' prostitutes (Melchiori 2000: 242). This remark embarrasses the teacher, who tries to correct her, without hopes of success, and so Evans goes: "For shame, 'oman" (*Merry Wives*, 4.1.56). The type of Quickly's blunders, with their perlocutionary effects, describes her character quite well. Her numerous malapropisms demonstrate only too well Mistress Quickly's ignorance and lack of understanding of the words of others as well as her own words. Because her public self-consciousness is very low, she is never embarrassed by her blunders. Her own words pose a threat to her positive face, which she never realises, but it is usually her audience who realise it, this being the main source of humour. Mistress Quickly's blunders do not entail serious effects, mostly humour (Falstaff) and embarrassment (Evans), which deepens our understanding of her as a truly comic character.

3.2 Falstaff

Falstaff's blunders are of a different nature than Mistress Quickly's and they produce different effects. His blunders do not engender humour but often lead to the hearer's offence and the speaker's embarrassment. Of course, Shakespeare's Falstaff is very aware of his comical effect on the audience: "The brain of this foolish-compounded clay, man, is not able to / invent anything that intends to laughter more than I / invent, or is invented on me; I am not only witty in myself but the cause that wit is in other men" (*2 King Henry IV*, 1.2.5–9). However, Falstaff's humorous puns

are far from the malapropisms displayed by Mistress Quickly. The examples below illustrate that Falstaff's witticisms are not blunders but clever repartees, the results of his sprightly wit and cunning nature. In the Gad's Hill robbery in *1 King Henry IV*, Falstaff, Peto, Bardolph and Prince Hal attack wealthy travellers. Hal wants to play a practical joke on Falstaff, and together with Poins they steal his horse, put on masks and buckram disguises and rob Falstaff and the other thieves of all the money they have stolen. When Falstaff meets the Prince after the failed robbery, he provides a false account of events to cover up his cowardice. Hal with premeditation interrupts Falstaff's story and encourages him to inflate his false narrative:

- Falstaff: These four came all affront and mainly thrust
at me. I made me no more ado, but took all their seven
[sword] points in my target [shield], thus.
- Prince: Seven? Why, there were but four even now [a minute ago].
- Falstaff: In buckram?
- Poins: Ay, four in buckram suits.
- Falstaff: Seven, by these hilts, or I am a villain else.
- Prince [to Poins]: Prithee, let him alone. We shall have more anon.
- Falstaff: Dost thou hear me, Hal?
- Prince: Ay, and mark thee, too, Jack.
- Falstaff: Do so, for it is worth the listening to. These
nine in buckram that I told thee of –
- Prince: So, two more already. *1 King Henry IV (2.4.193–206)*

Falstaff gives a confused narrative and multiplies the number of robbers who attacked him, and as a result, out of two disguised wrongdoers (Hal and Poins) he increases their number to four, then seven, then nine, and eventually admits he was fighting eleven men. This meets with the Prince's sarcastic remark: "O monstrous! Eleven buckram men grown out of two!" (*1 King Henry IV*, 2.4.212). Prince Hal's intention is to embarrass Falstaff by encouraging him to produce more lies, as in: "Seven? Why, there were but four even now". Miller calls it "audience provocation" (Miller 1996: 64–65); the attention is thrust upon Falstaff to make his story more public with the aim to reveal his shortcomings in public. Interestingly, when Hal gives the real account of the Gad's Hill robbery to laugh at Falstaff and humiliate him, Falstaff dexterously avoids the confrontation and his wit helps him save face:

- Poins: Come, let's hear Jack. What trick hast thou now?
- Falstaff: By the Lord, I knew ye as well as he that made
ye. Why, hear you, my masters: was it for me to kill the
heir apparent? Should I turn upon the true prince?
Why, thou knowest I am as valiant as Hercules, but

beware instinct. The lion will not touch the true prince;
 instinct is a great matter. I was now a coward on instinct.

1 King Henry IV (2.4.258–264)

Falstaff explains that he had no doubt about his robber's identity and recognised Hal in his buckram clothes, but pretended to be a coward on purpose, to spare the Prince's life. His witticism: "The lion will not touch the true prince; / instinct is a great matter" is not a blunder; it does not seem to be a careless mistake but an intelligently contrived observation. In his view, he was like a lion which always recognises royalty and refuses to attack (Kastan 2002: 222), and thus he acted like a coward "on instinct". Falstaff does not make a blunder in a pragmatic understanding, as none of the perlocutionary effects of a blunder is achieved (Falstaff skilfully avoids feeling embarrassed, laughed at or offended), and he has control over his narrative. The moment he sees that boasting may lead to a loss of face, he manipulates the story and presents himself as a chivalrous knight who did not want to kill his king, thus dismissing Hal's allegations of cowardice. Another example of Falstaff's witticisms is when he is grieving about his feeble-looking body, which was supposedly caused by his weight loss. Poins, who is witness to it, points out just the opposite: "Why, you are so fat, Sir John, that you must / needs be out of all compass" (*1 King Henry IV*, 3.3.21–22). Poins is suggesting that Falstaff has no moderation in eating and drinking, and no self-control in anything else (Kastan 2002: 269). This meets with Falstaff's curt and witty retort: "Do thou amend thy face, and I'll amend my / life" (*1 King Henry IV*, 3.3.24–25). Falstaff's witticisms are context-bound, clever and spontaneous comments of a humorous nature, which is in line with Dynel's (2009: 1287) observations.

Falstaff, however, does make actual blunders during his encounters with Prince Hal. We perceive him as a sensitive character, a foster father to Hal, who tends to forget himself and who inadvertently uses inappropriate language, which leads to face damage and embarrassment. The first example is the meeting of Falstaff with Prince Hal in the Boar's Head tavern, where they rehearse the anticipated talk of Hal with his father, the King. Hal, a boisterous and unruly prince, wants to prove to himself that he can endure the King's reproach and proposes that they act out a role-play in which Falstaff will play his father. This "metatheatrical" (Bousfield 2007: 211) scene demonstrates tight bonds and friendship between them not only during the role-play but also outside the tavern. During the scene, each speaker through impoliteness manifests their friendship and intimacy, because what they utter is not intended to be impolite or to offend the other.⁵ The

5. For an in-depth analysis of the banter scene (2.4) see Bousfield's article "Never a Truer Word Said in Jest" (2007).

following exchange is a banter between Hal and Falstaff playing King Henry IV, who is worried about his son:

Falstaff-as-Henry IV: Harry, I do not only marvel where thou spendest thy time but also how thou art accompanied ...

If then thou be son to me – here

lies the point – why, being son to me, art thou so

pointed at? Shall the blessed son of heaven prove a

micher [truant] and eat blackberries? A question not to be asked. ...

For Harry, now I do not speak to thee in

drink but in tears, not in pleasure but in passion, not in

words only but in woes also. And yet there is a virtuous

man whom I have often noted in thy company, but I

know not his name.

Hal-as-himself: What manner of man, an it like your majesty?

Falstaff-as-Henry IV: A goodly, portly man, i'faith, and a corpulent;

of a cheerful look, a pleasing eye and a most noble

carriage; and, as I think, his age some fifty, or, by'r

Lady, inclining to threescore. And now I remember me:

His name is Falstaff. If that man should be lewdly given,

he deceiveth me, for, Harry, I see virtue in his looks ...

then peremptorily I speak it: there is virtue in

that Falstaff. Him keep with, the rest banish. And tell

me now, thou naughty varlet, tell me, where hast thou

been this month?

Hal: Dost thou speak like a king? Do thou stand for

me, and I'll play my father.

1 King Henry IV (2.4.388–89, 395–400, 404–422)

In the first part of the role-play, Falstaff as King Henry IV calls Hal a “naughty varlet” [mischievous boy], but his aim is not to offend. Falstaff in the role of the “father” claims the right to order his “son” about, and the name he calls Hal, though patronizing, serves the aim of strengthening their mutual bond and Falstaff’s paternal relationship with Hal. What Kastan suggests, however, is that Falstaff’s expression “strikes a nerve” (2002: 231) because Hal immediately proposes the change of roles: “Do thou stand for / me, and I’ll play my father”. Hal as a royal heir disapproves of Falstaff’s banter, which he finds out of place. Falstaff potentially threatens Hal’s face – even if it is just a play, Hal is the Prince and Falstaff is his subject; it is a serious mistake to address the future King in this way by a com-moner. I want to argue that Falstaff’s term of address towards the Prince, “thou naughty varlet”, is a blunder, an accidental mistake whose perlocutionary effect

is very different from the one intended; instead of building a familial relationship between Falstaff and Hal, it generates a face threat and results in Hal's real, intended impoliteness. Now, when the roles are reversed, Hal calls Falstaff names, which were not meant to be part of the role-play (Bousfield 2007: 214). Hal under the cover of the theatrical play takes the chance to offend Falstaff:

Hal~as~king Henry IV: Now, Harry, whence come you?

Falstaff~as~Hal: My noble lord, from Eastcheap.

Hal~as~king Henry IV: The complaints I hear of thee are grievous.

Falstaff~as~Hal: 'Sblood, my lord, they are false.

Hal~as~king Henry IV: Swearst thou, ungracious boy? Henceforth ne'er look on me. Thou art violently carried away from grace. There is a devil haunts thee in the likeness of an old fat man; a tun of man is thy companion. Why dost thou converse with thattrunk of humours, that bolting-hutch of beastliness, that swollenparcel of dropsies, that huge bombard of sack, that stuffed cloak-bag of guts, that roasted Manningtree ox with the pudding in his belly, that reverend Vice, that grey Iniquity, that father Ruffian, that Vanity in years? Wherein is he good, but to taste sack and drink it? Wherein neat and cleanly, but to carve a capon and eat it? Wherein cunning but in craft? Wherein crafty but in villainy? Wherein villainous, but in things? Wherein worthy, but in nothing?

1 King Henry IV (2.4.428–431, 433–447)

Hal is using what Bousfield calls “impoliteness masked as banter” (2007: 211). The banter is an excuse for Hal to be offensive. He calls Falstaff names in a mock impolite manner, but he *really* means to offend: “a huge bombard of sack”, “stuffed cloakbag of guts”, “roasted Manningtree ox with a pudding in his belly”. Despite their banter-like context, all these expressions cannot be classified as banter, because they are not evidently untrue. In fact, they describe Falstaff very well, as a fat fellow who knows no moderation (Bousfield 2007: 216). Falstaff is offended, which can be read from his reaction. When Bardolph interrupts the conversation to warn Falstaff against the Sheriff approaching to arrest him for theft, Falstaff is anxious to continue with the role-play, and he now wants to address the abuses posed by Hal: “Out, ye rouge [to Bardolph]! Play out the play. I have / much to say in the behalf of that Falstaff” (*1 King Henry IV*, 2.4.471–472). Falstaff's banter was out of line and a result of his carelessness; its playful nature was misinterpreted by

the young Prince, thus leading to an on-record impoliteness directed at Falstaff. He experiences a loss of positive face and wants to protect his good name.

Another blunder illustrating Falstaff's careless attitude takes place at Hal's coronation in *2 King Henry IV*. He learns a bitter lesson when, again, he forgets himself and addresses the (now) King using terms of endearment instead of an official title, e.g. "your majesty":

- Falstaff: God save thy grace, King Hal, my royal Hal!
 Pistol: The heavens thee guard and keep, most royal imp
 of fame!
 Falstaff: God save thee my sweet boy!
 Henry V: My Lord Chief Justice, speak to that vain man.
 Chief Justice: Have you your wits? Know you what 'tis you
 speak?
 Falstaff: My King! My Jove! I speak to thee, my heart!
 Henry V: I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers.
 How ill white hairs become a fool and jester! ...
 Falstaff: Master Shallow, I owe you a thousand pound.

2 Henry IV (5.5.41–48, 73)

Falstaff's blunder is unwitting, but very serious in effect because it leads to his public humiliation by the King.⁶ Encouraged by their fraternal conversations and merry-making in the taverns, Falstaff carelessly addresses the King with an inappropriate address term ("God save thee my sweet boy!"), which is viewed as offensive by the audience. At first, Henry V asks the Chief Justice to rebuke Falstaff, since it is not the King's duty to correct commoners. After the Chief Justice's reproach, Falstaff, however, addresses the King again. In response, Henry attacks Falstaff with bald on-record impoliteness. Falstaff's positive face is particularly vulnerable to the attack: at this moment his status as a friend and foster father to the King is ruined. The King does not seem to recognise Falstaff's blunder but retaliates with impoliteness as a way of saving his own face from public humiliation. Henry misinterprets Falstaff's intention to show love and friendship towards the new king and uses impoliteness to demonstrate his power over Falstaff (see Section 2.2).

6. This rejection happened long ago. Henry V's disassociation from Falstaff in this scene is an effect of his former plan to "be more [him]self" (*1 King Henry IV*, 3.2.93), which he promised his father as Prince Hal. When King Henry IV was chastising him for carousing with Falstaff and drinking in taverns, Hal made a promise to reform and behave following his royal birth and position. Later, as the King, he declared to Falstaff that this transformation took place the moment he became the King and that from that time on he required respect and reverence from his former friend: "Presume not that I am the thing I was; / For God doth know, so shall the world perceive, / That I have turned away my former self" (*2 King Henry IV*, 5.5.56–58).

The King employs positive impoliteness in a direct, on-record manner: “ignore, snub the other” (Henry fails to acknowledge Falstaff’s presence), and “disassociate from the other” (Henry denies association or common ground with Falstaff) (Culpeper 1996: 357). The King pretends he does not know him: “I know thee not, old man”. Critics argue about the manner of expression of Falstaff’s words that follow: “Master Shallow, I owe you a thousand pound” (2 *Henry IV*, 5.5.73) – they say regretful, business-like, humiliated, stoical, or resilient (Humphreys 2007: 183).⁷ The coronation scene demonstrates that the speaker’s blunder can lead to the addressee’s on-record impoliteness in return, the royal context contributing significantly to our understanding and interpretation of Falstaff’s “rejection” (Humphreys 2007: lviii) by Henry V.

Falstaff’s blunders have much more serious consequences and produce different perlocutionary effects than Quickly’s. As a more cunning and witty character, he escapes blunders stemming from ignorance (including malapropisms), but his blunders occur when he is careless (i.e. role-play) or when he does not recognise the context of the situation (i.e. the coronation scene). Falstaff can see his mistakes thanks to his intelligence, and therefore, unlike Mistress Quickly, he experiences embarrassment or face threat in conversation, e.g. he wants to protect his positive face when offended by Hal in the role-play. Importantly, Falstaff’s blunders do not generate humorous effects; they lead to the embarrassment of the speaker, and offence experienced by both the speaker and his hearer.

4. Concluding remarks

The pragma-stylistic analysis of Mistress Quickly’s and Falstaff’s speech has shown that humour exemplified by comic characters is not necessarily linked to the blunders they make. Mistress Quickly’s blunders, among them her numerous malapropisms, present her as a typically comic character whose low public self-consciousness and poor education prevent her from understanding her own words and recognising her linguistic mistakes. In effect, she poses an unintentional threat to herself (her positive face) without even knowing about it. Her attempts at displaying wit end in sexual puns and malapropisms which lead to humour and, occasionally, to the hearer’s embarrassment or irritation (i.e. Evans). Falstaff is different in this respect. His speech is free from malapropisms although he is a comedy-like

7. *Chimes at Midnight* (1965) by Orson Welles offers an interesting interpretation of the coronation scene. We can see Welles’s Falstaff as he goes down on his knees and stares bluntly at the figure of the King, who is walking away in the direction of the throne. Falstaff is disappointed and heartbroken but aware of his mistake.

character, too. Additionally, Falstaff's blunders have more serious perlocutionary effects than Mistress Quickly's; they can pose a serious face threat to the hearer, who retaliates with on-record impoliteness, leading to Falstaff's own face loss in public (i.e. Henry V in the coronation scene). In short, Falstaff's blunders are a result of his spontaneity, carelessness, and lack of moderation. They encourage an analyst to give thought to the tragic rather than the comic side of his nature.

Blunders can be employed as a useful analytical tool in literary characterisation because they considerably reflect the personality of dramatic figures such as Falstaff and Mistress Quickly in Shakespeare. From a pragmatic standpoint, blunders cannot be equated with gaffes and instances of faux pas because they occur in a larger number of communicative contexts and produce more perlocutionary effects. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, gaffes or faux pas are "social mistakes" which are considered tactless and embarrassing in a social situation. Blunders are unwitting transgressions against the rules of politeness which can happen in any context and result from the speaker's ignorance, lack of embarrassability or moderation, carelessness, etc. Blunders produce unintentional perlocutionary effects which can affect both the hearer and the speaker. They may engender humour or the hearer's embarrassment, but they can also cause mutual offence resulting from e.g. the speaker's lack of recognition of the context and the hearer's misrecognition of the speaker's intention, as demonstrated in the analytical section. Blunders are still an unexplored pragmatic territory where speech acts, (im)politeness, humour and intention find common ground. I hope that my chapter will be a stimulus to further discussion on the nature of blunders and their pragmatic function in both real-life and fictional (con)texts.

Acknowledgements

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The discourse of manners and politeness in Restoration and eighteenth-century drama

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The eighteenth century is often referred to as the age of politeness, and the term *politeness* has been argued to be a key term in a variety of settings at this time. This paper sets out to investigate the discourse of politeness and, more generally, the discourse of manners during this period and the period leading up to it (1660 to 1790). It focuses on the vocabulary used in talking about manners and politeness and on the way this vocabulary is used in actual interactions. In a first step, it investigates several large corpora and what they can tell us about the development of the vocabulary of manners and politeness before it zooms in, in a second step, on a more detailed investigation of three comedies of the period: Aphra Behn's *The Town-Fop: or Sir Timothy Tawdrey* (1676), Sir Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), and Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer, or The Mistakes of a Night* (1773). A close reading and a careful analysis of the discourse of manners and politeness, and crucially the discourse of violations of manners and politeness, in these three plays reveals a significant shift from a preoccupation with honour and reputation in the Restoration period to the politeness of a good character in the early eighteenth century and finally to a concern for polished and somewhat superficial manners in the late eighteenth century. The three comedies thus mirror in a detailed and nuanced way what the development of the vocabulary of manners and politeness suggests in a broad-brush perspective on a much larger scale.

Keywords: manners, politeness, Restoration drama, eighteenth-century drama, Aphra Behn, Richard Steele, Oliver Goldsmith

1. Introduction

Manners and politeness are very elusive concepts that defy any easy classification or definition, but they are clearly intimately related. In fact, the *Oxford English Dictionary* uses the term “politeness” in its definition of “manners” and the term

“manners” in its definition of “politeness”. It defines “manners” as “A person’s social behaviour or habits, judged according to the degree of politeness or the degree of conformity to accepted standards of behaviour or propriety” and as “Polite or refined social behaviour or habits” (OED, Third Edition, “manner”, n., sense 6a and 6b, in plural); and it defines “politeness” as “Courtesy, good manners, behaviour that is respectful or considerate of others” (OED, Third Edition, “politeness”, n., sense 3a). But beyond this somewhat deceptive equation of politeness with good manners things get more complex, and it is difficult to establish a common denominator of what a speech community considers to be good manners or polite, especially if we are interested in a historical speech community.

This article sets out to explore this question at a period in the history of English that is particularly relevant for issues of good manners and politeness, i.e. the eighteenth century, which has been described as the age of politeness. Klein (1994: 3) considers the term “politeness” to be a key word for the eighteenth century.

In later seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England, the term “politeness” came into particular prominence as a key word, used in a variety of settings, with a wide range of meanings. From the first, politeness was associated with and often identified with gentlemanliness since it applied to the social world of gentlemen and ladies. (...) Not all gentlemen were polite since “politeness” was a criterion of *proper* behavior. The kernel of “politeness” could be conveyed in the simple expression, “the art of pleasing in company,” or, in a contemporary definition, “a dextrous management of our Words and Actions, whereby we make other People have better Opinions of us and themselves.” (Klein 1994: 3, 4)

Klein’s definition already highlights some important aspects of the term “politeness” in the eighteenth century. There seems to be a strong social component because of the term’s association with gentlemanliness. The term also had a moral dimension pertaining to proper (moral) behaviour, and it had a dimension of pleasing actions that would hide less pleasing underlying motives. They would make other people have better opinions than would otherwise be warranted.

It is the aim of this paper to explore the linguistic evidence that can be found for these dimensions. The focus will here be on the period from 1660 to 1790, beginning with the Restoration of the English monarchy and ending with the French Revolution. Thus, it covers most of the eighteenth century, in which manners and politeness had such a special place in English society, as well as the decades leading up to it. And it ends with the beginning of what literary theorists call the Romantic period (see Baines 2004).

In a first step, my investigation will focus on the vocabulary of good manners and politeness. I want to find out how the repertoire of politeness terms developed throughout this period. Which terms were particularly frequent, and which were

less so? It turns out that the term “politeness”, in spite of its undoubted significance for the period, was not a particularly frequent term. And in a second step I zoom in on small-scale case studies of three comedies first performed in London during the period under investigation. These are Aphra Behn’s *The Town Fop* from the Restoration period, Sir Richard Steele’s *Conscious Lovers* from the first half of the eighteenth century and Oliver Goldsmith’s *She Stoops to Conquer* from the second half. In these case studies, I explore the different ways in which the characters talk about manners and politeness and about deviations from manners and politeness, and I am particularly interested in the way in which these discourses changed from one play to the next.

2. The vocabulary of manners and politeness

Figure 1 provides a first bird’s-eye view of some of the relevant vocabulary from the eighteenth century until today. *GoogleBooks Ngram Viewer* is an interesting tool because of its vast dimension of 361 billion words of text from the 1500s to 2000 (see Michel et al. 2010). However, the view is also blurry because it is not possible to eliminate false positives or to access the context of individual hits, since the database does not consist of the original running texts but of indexed ngrams of up to five running words.

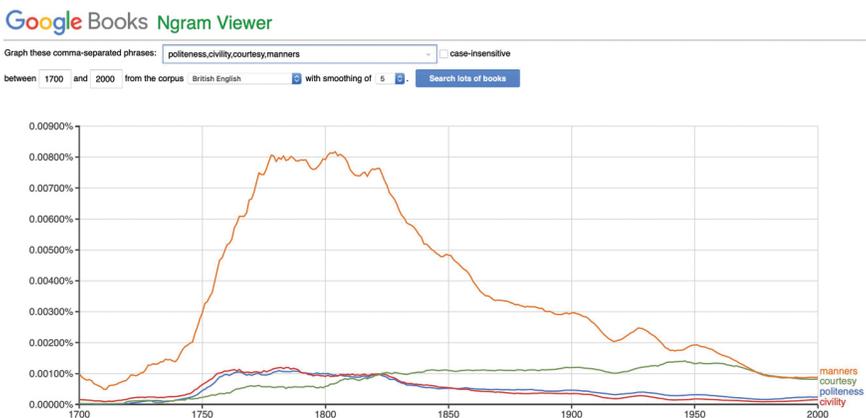


Figure 1. Frequency of the terms *manners*, *courtesy*, *politeness* and *civility* from 1700 to 2000 (GoogleBooks Ngram Viewer)

Figure 1 is dominated by the term *manners* because at its maximum it is about eight times more frequent than the other terms. It shows a very marked increase during the eighteenth century from about 0.001 to 0.008 per cent (i.e. from about 10 to 80 instances per million words). But a careful look at Figure 1 reveals that the

terms *politeness* and *civility* show a very similar increase in the middle of the eighteenth century, albeit on a lower level. They increase from less than two to about 10 per million words. The term *courtesy* also shows an increase but somewhat later. It continues to increase gradually until about 1950, while the other three terms start to decline in the first half of the nineteenth century. From this first wide-angle perspective, it appears that something must have happened at around the middle of the eighteenth century to give these terms an increased prominence.

Figure 2 is based on *ARCHER, A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers*, a multi-genre corpus which covers four centuries from 1600 to 1999 and contains about 3.5 million words. For this figure the same four terms served as a starting point, except that in this case, the search was extended to include closely related forms (i.e. the terms *civil*, *polite* and *courteous* in Figure 2 also include *civility* and *civilities*, *politeness* and *politely*, and *courtesy* and *courteously*). Their frequencies per 10,000 words are shown for the eight half centuries from 1600 to 1999.

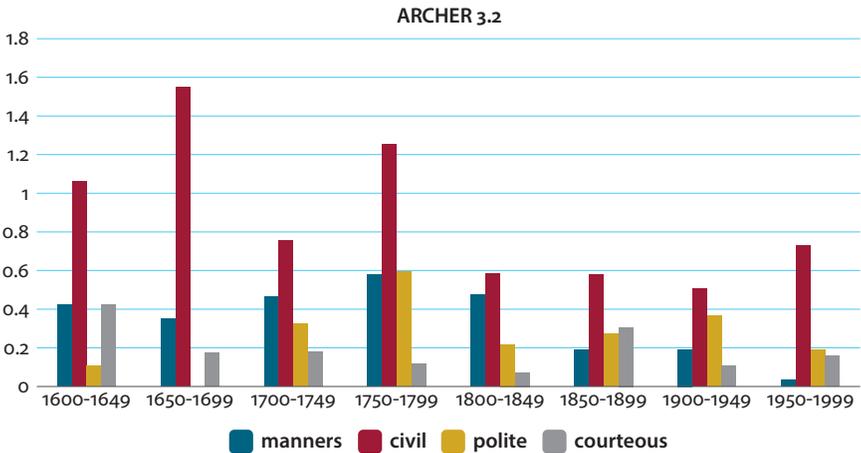


Figure 2. Frequency of sets of politeness terms (per 10,000 words) across eight half centuries from 1600 to 1999 (ARCHER 3.2)

There are some striking similarities and differences to Figure 1 above. First of all, the term *manners* does not stand out as more frequent than the other terms. It is the term *civil* and its related forms that stand out as more frequent. It appears that in the genres represented in ARCHER, *civil* seems to be a relatively important term in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The term *polite* and its associated forms show a similar increase throughout the eighteenth century as in Figure 1 above. They start from just a few instances in the entire seventeenth century to about 0.3 per 10,000 words in the first half and 0.6 in the second half of the eighteenth century. The overall developments of the *civil* set and the *courteous* set do not show very clear trends.

Figure 3 is taken from a study by Nevala and Sairio (2017), which is an extension of Nevalainen and Tissari (2010). They focus on the eighteenth century and use a more coherent single-genre corpus, i.e. the eighteenth-century Extension of the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (CEEC), which contains a little more than two million words. They investigate not only politeness terms, such as *civility*, *politeness* and *respectability* but also terms of discord, such as *disgrace*, *mortification* and *shame*. The figure plots not only the nouns, such as *civility* or *shame* but also the related adjectives and adverbs, i.e. *civil*, *civilly*, *ashamed* and *shameful(ly)*, etc.

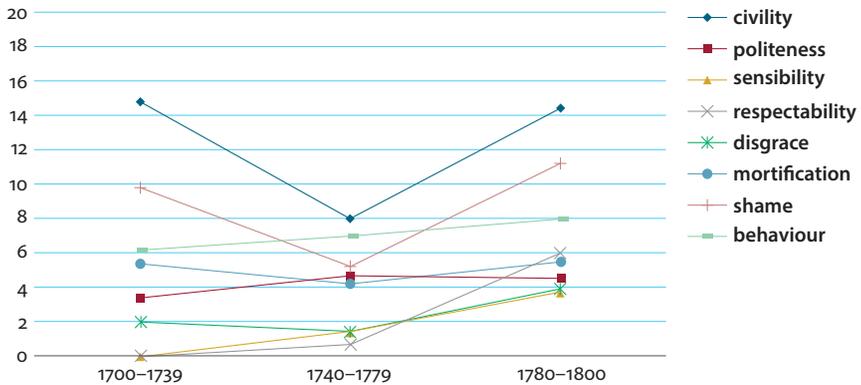


Figure 3. Relative frequencies of politeness and discord words in CEECE (per 100,000 words) (Nevala and Sairio 2017: 116).

Figure 3 plots the relative frequency of the eight sets of politeness and discord terms in three periods of the eighteenth century. The *civility* set is clearly the most frequent in all three periods. It appears to be between two and three times as frequent as the *politeness* set, which corresponds roughly to their relative difference in Figure 2 above, even though the diachronic development cannot be compared easily across the two figures because they use different subperiods. The most prominent set ranking below *civility* is one of the discord words, i.e. *shame* and its related forms. This clearly makes the point that people concerned with civility and politeness also had to talk about the opposite and the negative effects of a lack of civility and politeness.

Figure 4 is based on the data in the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts* (CLMET 3.0), which comprises a total of about 34 million words of running text ranging from 1710 to 1924. It is about ten times as large as ARCHER, but it covers a shorter period of only three centuries, from 1710 to 1999. For this figure the texts have been put into quarter centuries according to the meta-information provided for each text (see Diller, de Smet & Tyrkkö 2010). The data for the years before 1725 is not included because there are only four files and less than 150,000 words for this subperiod.

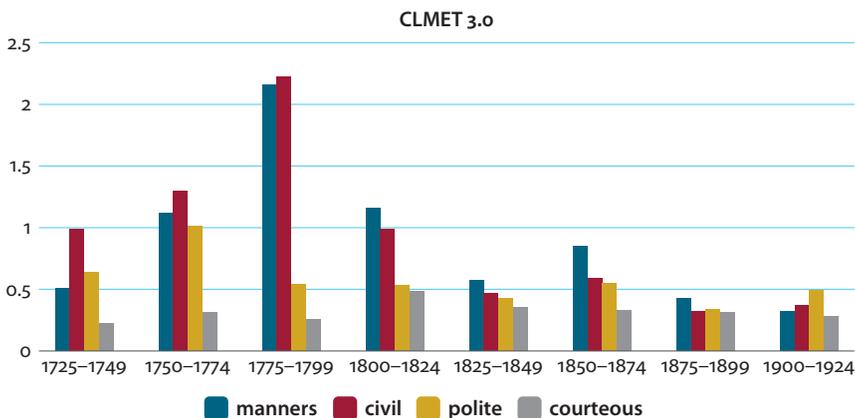


Figure 4. Frequency of sets of politeness terms (per 10,000 words) across eight quarter centuries from 1725 to 1924 (CLMET 3.0)

The frequency figures for the terms *civil*, *polite* and *courteous* in Figure 4 again include relevant morphological variations of each term. This may partly explain why the large difference between the frequency of *manners* and the other three terms that could be observed in Figure 1 is not in evidence in Figure 4. The development here is much smoother than in Figure 2 (ARCHER). The term *manners* and the *civil* set increase in use throughout the eighteenth century and decline in the following two centuries, while the *polite* set peaks somewhat earlier, in the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

It is, of course, possible that the clearer lines of development are due to the larger size of CLMET 3.0. All the terms included here show relatively low frequencies. For ARCHER this means that there are often no more than a handful of attestations per time period, especially in the first three half centuries, i.e. from 1600 to 1749. In this situation, a few texts with idiosyncratic vocabulary usages can seriously distort the overall picture. In CLMET 3.0, this is less of a problem with three or more million words per time period.

Figure 5, finally, focuses in on a very small convenience sample of English plays. Here, too, single texts can potentially distort the picture, but this corpus has the advantage that it is more coherent because all texts are plays, and they are split into time periods that make sense from a literary point of view. Table 1 lists the plays according to the date of their first performance into the three periods: Restoration, Early and Late Eighteenth Century. The dividing line between the early and the late plays is 1737, i.e. the date of the Licencing Act of 1737, which brought in much stricter government control and censorship on theatres in the United Kingdom.

In spite of the small size and the convenience nature of this sample corpus, the results confirm and reinforce the developments gleaned from the previous

Table 1. The composition and size of the sample corpus.^a

Date	Author	Title	No of words
1667	Behn	Plays	150,166
1675	Wycherley	Plays	326,878
1676	Etherege	<i>Man of Mode</i>	28,495
Total	Restoration		505,539
1700	Centlivre	<i>Perjured Husband</i>	14,973
1703	Centlivre	<i>Stolen Heiress</i>	17,592
1709	Centlivre	<i>Busie Body</i>	23,878
1722	Steele	Plays	143,462
Total	Early 18th century		199,905
1770	Foote	<i>Lame Lover</i>	14,157
1772	Goldsmith	<i>She Stoops to Conquer</i>	22,953
1775	Sheridan	<i>Rivals</i>	27,997
1777	Sheridan	<i>School for Scandal</i>	30,457
1781	Macklin	<i>Man of the World</i>	23,949
Total	Late 18th century		119,513
			824,957

a. The editions used for this sample corpus were all taken from Project Gutenberg. The designation “Plays” indicates that an entire collection of plays was included for a particular author.

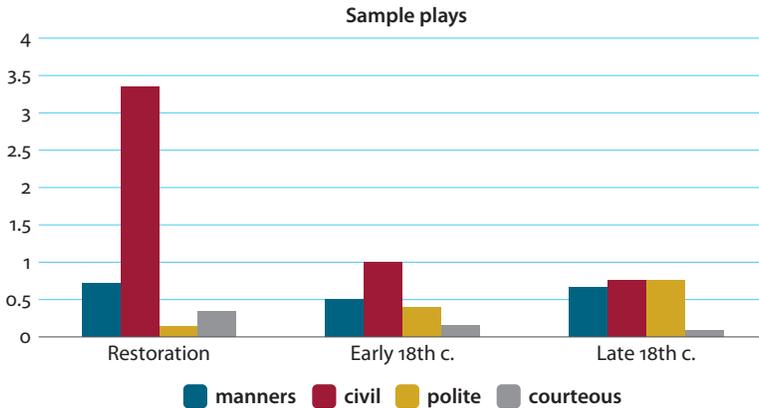


Figure 5. Frequency of sets of politeness terms (per 10,000 words) across three literary periods from 1660 to 1790 in a convenience sample of plays

figures. The *civil* set stands out as far more frequent than the others, at least in the Restoration period. The *politeness* set shows again a distinct increase over the three periods in spite of the fact that it does not appear to be very frequent overall. The

courteous set decreases somewhat, and the term *manners* does not show a clear line of development.

The above look at several different corpora covering the period under investigation has made it evident that it may be misleading to consult just one corpus. The corpora differ in terms of size and composition, and they offer different time spans to capture the development of the frequency of individual lexical sets. The terms under investigation here turn out to be not particularly frequent. This may be surprising given the comments by cultural and social historians, who have pointed out, for instance, the importance of the term *politeness* for the eighteenth century. But there is considerable evidence that the frequency of the term *polite* and its related forms increase very noticeably throughout the eighteenth century. In the next section, therefore, I want to change the focus of the investigation to a close-up of three selected plays and the interactions of their characters.

3. The discourse of manners and politeness

The plays chosen for these case studies are not only a product of their times but also very individual works of art by three very different authors. However, they also have some striking similarities. They are all comedies, and they all deal with similar social problems: the socio-economic significance of marriage and the parental interventions in young people's desires to marry according to their hearts. They are Aphra Behn's *The Town-Fop; Or, Sir Timothy Tawdrey*; Sir Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*; and Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer, or The Mistakes of a Night*. All three plays were first performed in London, *The Town-Fop* in 1676, *The Conscious Lovers* in 1722, and *She Stoops to Conquer* in 1773. In all three plays, the male hero and his best friend are intent on marrying young ladies of their choice but there are complications. The older generation, represented by father, mother or uncle, have different marriage plans for the younger generation. In each case there is also a third young gentleman who, with the support of the older generation, wants to or is contracted to marry one of the two young ladies. The proposed and desired marriages have important financial implications in the form of dowries whose sizes depend on the choice of the marriage partner and the older generation's approval or disapproval of the intended nuptial ties. After a series of tribulations, involving various conflicts, ranging from verbal disputes to brawls and even duels, between the two friends on the one hand and the third man on the other, all the entanglements are resolved. The young lovers get their desired wives, the older generation recognises their errors of judgement and is delighted to give their consent, and the third gentleman is happy to marry another wife (Sir Timothy in *The Town-Fop*) or to escape unscathed either because the

dowry turned out to be smaller than anticipated (the coxcomb Cimberton in *The Conscious Lovers*) or because he never wanted to marry the bride intended for him in the first place (Tony Limpkin in *She Stoops to Conquer*).

In spite of the similarities of the basic constellation, the unfolding events and the cast of supporting characters in the three plays differ considerably. Aphra Behn's *Town-Fop* is a Restoration comedy, which includes a prostitute as one of the main characters. One of the central scenes of the play even takes place in a brothel. Richard Steele's *Conscious Lovers* is designed to provide a contrast to the licentiousness of Restoration comedy and to set a good example of honourable behaviour. And Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, written almost exactly one hundred years after *The Town-Fop*, is a comedy of manners. It shifts its scene away from London and into the country. But all three plays – in one way or another – thematise manners and the propriety of behaviours. They distinguish between proper behaviour and behaviour that is the object of scorn, ridicule and censure. This cannot only be seen in how the characters behave but also in the way they talk about manners and the propriety of behaviour, and such talk is not restricted to the main characters or the characters of higher social classes but even the servants seem to be preoccupied with such questions. As Lindsay (1993: xxiv) puts it for Richardson's *Conscious Lovers*, “even the back-chat among the servants is governed by notions of loyalty and propriety”.

Aphra Behn's *Town-Fop* opens with a scene in which Sir Timothy Tawdrey, the eponymous town-fop of the play and third gentleman in the basic constellation of characters outlined above, declares his intent to marry Celinda Dresswell and in the process disparages her brother.

- (1) SIR TIMOTHY Hereabouts is the House wherein dwells, the Mistriss of my heart; For she has money Boyes, mind me, money in abundance, or she were not for me – the Wench her self is good natur'd, and inclin'd to be civil, but a Pox on't – She has a Brother a conceited Fellow, whom the world mistakes for a fine Gentleman, for he has Travell'd, talks Languages, bows with a *bone meine*, and the rest, but by fortune he shall entertain you with nothing but words —

SHAM Nothing else? —

SIR TIMOTHY No — He's no Countrey Squire Gentlemen, will not Game, Whore, nay, in my Conscience you will hardly get your selves Drunk in his Company – He Treats A-la-mode, half Wine, half Water, and the rest – But to the business, this Fellow loves his Sister dearly, and will not trust her in this lewd Town, as he calls it, without him, and hither he has brought her to marry me. (*Town-Fop*, 1.1.1–14)

He describes Celinda's brother, called Friendlove, in terms that establish a contrast between his own assessment and that of the world. The world apparently approves of Friendlove's character because he has travelled and knows languages, but Sir Timothy disapproves of him because he does not engage in what are presumably Sir Timothy's own favourite pastimes; gaming, drinking and using the services of prostitutes. Thus, in this opening scene, Sir Timothy characterises not only Friendlove but also himself. He uses two French phrases in his remonstrations, "*bone meine*" and "A-la-mode", which further characterise him because "using French unnecessarily was a sign of a coxcomb" (notes to line 1.1.152).

In the second scene of the first act, Sir Timothy unabashedly woos Celinda, who, however, is in love with Bellmour. He even produces a letter written by her father, who wants him and Celinda to be married the next day. Bellmour, who is also present, is enraged and turns against Sir Timothy, and Sir Timothy mocks Bellmour in terms that again blatantly clash with more standard evaluations of good behaviour.

- (2) SIR TIMOTHY Oh I had forgot, thou art a modest Rogue, and to thy eternal shame, hadst never the Reputation of a Mistriss — Lord, Lord, that I could see thee address thy self to a Lady — I fancy thee a very ridiculous Figure, in that posture, by Fortune.
- BELLMOUR Why Sir — I can Court a Lady —
- SIR TIMOTHY No, no, thou'rt modest; that is to say, a Countrey Gentleman; that is to say, Ill-bred; that is to say, a Fool by Fortune, as the World goes. (*Town-Fop*, 1.2.231–238)

Sir Timothy, the town-fop, clearly turns the normal evaluations upside down, but his characterisations or rather "accusations" nevertheless reveal what must have been important criteria of character evaluation of the time, with gaming, drinking and prostitution as key elements. And in fact, in act four, when Bellmour has been forced against his own wishes and vows to marry Diana, he sets off together with Sir Timothy to a brothel in order to drink, play cards and meet prostitutes. His uncle's insistence on his marriage to a woman he does not love drives him to the extremes of the wrong kind of behaviour.

In this play, the discourse of proper behaviour is mainly concerned with such features of character, and, in fact, the terms *manners*, *politeness* and *courtesy* do not occur at all. Instead it is the terms *honour* and *reputation* that stand out with frequent occurrences (24 and 11, respectively). Extracts (3) and (4) are relevant examples.

- (3) BELLMOUR My Honour! And my Reputation, now!
They both were forfeit, when I broke my Vow.

Nor cou'd my **Honour** with thy Fame decline,
 Who e're prophanes thee, injures nought of mine.
 This night upon the Couch my self I'll lay,
 And, like Franciscans, let th' ensuing day
 Take care for all the toils it brings with it,
 Whatever Fate arrives, I can submit.

(*Town-Fop*, Act 3, Scene 2, lines 321–328, emphasis added)

In Extract (3), Bellmour bewails his own misery. He has been forced by his uncle to marry Diana in spite of the fact that he had already exchanged vows with the woman he loves, Celinda. On their wedding night, he confesses to Diana that he cannot love her because he already loves another, and the scene finishes with this heart-breaking appeal. Breaking the vows has ruined both his honour and his reputation. He leaves the scene to team up with Sir Timothy to visit a brothel.

The terms *honour* and *reputation* are not only used by the main characters of the play. Sir Timothy, the town-fop, keeps Betty Flauntit, a prostitute, as his mistress, and Flauntit, too, appears to be concerned about her reputation and honour. In Extract (4), taken from the brothel scene in act 4, Mrs Driver, the bawd, announces new customers who are Bellmour and Sir Timothy in disguise. Flauntit demurely appeals to her reputation and honour in spite of the fact that she “recreates herself a little sometimes” as she prudishly puts it.

(4) DRIVER Truly Mrs, *Flauntit*, this young Squire that you were sent to for, has two or three persons more with him that must be accommodated too.

FLAUNTIT *Driver*, tho' I do recreate my self a little sometimes, yet you know I value my **Reputation** and **Honour**.

(*Town-Fop*, Act 4, Scene 2, lines 244–248, emphasis added)

In the end everything is resolved. The unhappy marriage contract between Bellmour and Diana is revoked. Bellmour is allowed to marry his beloved Celinda, and Diana is married to Celinda's brother Friendlove. Even Sir Timothy, the town-fop, gets a wife, Bellmour's sister Phillis, and a suitable dowry to make him happy.

Richard Steele's *Conscious Lovers* has been classified as a sentimental comedy (Novak 1979; Hynes 2004). It was designed to set a good example to the audience by presenting exemplary characters and by avoiding the licentiousness, debauchery and immorality of Restoration comedy. Steele's aim was to improve the theatre, and in his preface to the play, he expresses his hopes that “it may have some effect upon the Goths and Vandals that frequent the theatres, or a more polite audience may supply their absence”; he does not aim for the laughter of his audience but for “a Joy too exquisite for Laughter” (Steele 1993: 68). In this play, the two lovers are Bevil Jr. and his friend Myrtle. They are in love with Indiana and Lucinda

respectively, but Bevil's father, Sir John Bevil, wants his son to marry Lucinda, the daughter of the rich merchant, Mr Sealand. Mrs Sealand, at the same time, wants her daughter Lucinda to marry Cimberton, a coxcomb (see also Jucker 2016, 2020).

The play opens with a scene in which Sir John Bevil talks to his servant Humphrey about the marriage that he has arranged for his son and Lucinda, and in the course of their conversation they also talk about manners and appropriate behaviour.

- (5) SIR J. BEVIL Let me see, Humphrey; I think it is now full forty years
since I first took thee to be about myself.
- HUMPHREY I thank you, sir, it has been an easy forty years; and I have
pass'd 'em without much sickness, care, or labour.
- SIR J. BEVIL Thou hast a brave constitution; you are a year or two older
than I am, Sirrah.
- HUMPHREY You have ever been of that mind, Sir.
- SIR J. BEVIL You knave, you know it; I took thee for thy gravity and
sobriety, in my wild years.
- HUMPHREY Ah, sir! our manners were form'd from our different
fortunes, not our different age. Wealth gave a loose to your
youth, and poverty put a restraint upon mine.

(Conscious Lovers, 1.1, p. 75)

Sir John Bevil wants to share his personal fears about the planned marriage with his servant and, therefore, stresses the long acquaintance they have had with each other. Humphrey has been in Bevil's service for four decades, but it seems that their perspectives on these years differ somewhat. Humphrey does not contradict his master on the issue of their respective ages but diplomatically concedes to his master's opinion on the matter. However, when Bevil mentions Humphrey's "gravity and sobriety" at a time when he himself still was "wild", Humphrey implicitly disagrees with reference to their different manners. Manners, it turns out, are a matter of wealth. Where Sir John Bevil could afford to be wild, Humphrey had no choice but to put up with soberness and moderation. For Humphrey manners are very much class-based. They are not a matter of free choice but a matter of economic opportunity.

The next extract is taken from act 3. Mrs Sealand has plans for her daughter that differ not only from her daughter's but also from her own husband's. She wants to marry her to the coxcomb Cimberton because of his considerable wealth. For Cimberton, the marriage is above all a business deal that he negotiates with Lucinda's mother, and Lucinda herself is no more than an inconvenient commodity that is part of the deal. Enraged, Lucinda storms off, but Cimberton is not perturbed.

- (6) CIMBERTON No harm done – you know, Madam, the better sort of people, as I observ'd to you, treat by their lawyers of weddings (*adjusting himself at the glass*) and the woman in the bargain, like the mansion house in the sale of the estate, is thrown in, and what that is, whether good or bad, is not at all consider'd.
- MRS SEALAND I grant it, and therefore make no demand for her youth, and beauty, and every other accomplishment, as the common world think 'em, because she is not polite.
- CIMBERTON Madam, I know, your exalted understanding, abstracted, as it is, from vulgar prejudices, will not be offended, when I declare to you, I marry to have an heir to my estate, and not to beget a colony, or a plantation. This young woman's beauty, and constitution, will demand provision for a tenth child at least. (*Conscious Lovers*, 3.1, p. 113)

Mrs Sealand concedes Cimberton's point that the bride is no more than a mansion house in the transaction of an estate, and in this context, she adds as an excuse for the lack of accomplishments of her daughter that she is "not polite". From this description it becomes clear that politeness here is not a feature of a specific action on a specific occasion, but it is a persistent feature of a person, a feature that makes all the difference between a person that Mrs Sealand and Cimberton would be prepared to accept as their equal and one who is merely a slightly inconvenient commodity in a wedding contract. Even her beauty is something that Cimberton uses against her. It will be responsible for a larger number of children than he actually needs, and, therefore, it stands to reason that the dowry needs to take that into account even if his bride is not "polite".

In Extract (7), it is the fathers who discuss a marriage contract. Sir John Bevil desires to sign the contract as soon as possible to marry his son off to Mr Sealand's daughter, Lucinda, but Mr Sealand suspects (correctly, as it happens) that Bevil Junior is romantically involved with a different lady, and he is not taken in by Sir John Bevil's protestations about his son's impeccable character. He is not convinced that Bevil Junior will mend his ways from what he perceives as his current less-than-virtuous life. Bevil Junior has been seen in public to talk in a somewhat familiar way to another lady, and this is sufficiently suspicious. What is more significant in this passage, however, is how Mr Sealand, a rich merchant, compares Sir John Bevil's social class to his own. The merchants have grown in importance only recently, and according to Mr Sealand they are as honourable as the gentry, "as you landed folks", and ironically he adds that they are "almost as useful". The gentry are brought up "to be lazy". They do not trade except in some trifling

matters, such as some hay or an ox. This contrasts with the industriousness of the merchants, and, therefore, he concludes industry must be dishonourable.

- (7) SIR J. BEVIL My son, Sir, is a discreet and sober gentleman –
 MR SEALAND Sir, I never saw a man that wench'd soberly and discreetly, that ever left it off – the decency observ'd in the practice, hides, even from the sinner, the iniquity of it. They pursue it, not that their appetites hurry 'em away, but, I warrant you, because 'tis their opinion, they may do it.
- SIR J. BEVIL Were what you suspect a truth – do you design to keep your daughter a virgin 'till you find a man unblemish'd that way?
- MR SEALAND Sir, as much a cit as you take me for – I know the town, and the world – and give me leave to say, that we merchants are a species of gentry, that have grown into the world this last century, and are as honourable, and almost as useful, as you landed folks, that have always thought your selves so much above us; For your trading, forsooth! is extended no farther, than a load of hay, or a fat ox – You are pleasant people, indeed; because you are generally bred up to be lazy, therefore, I warrant you, industry is dishonourable.
- SIR J. BEVIL Be not offended, sir; let us go back to our point.

(*Conscious Lovers* 4.2, p. 124)

Sir John Bevil's answer makes it clear how Mr Sealand's utterance is to be understood. Mr Sealand is offended by the offer of a son-in-law whose social virtues are questionable, especially because the offer comes from a member of the gentry who think they are much more honourable than the hard-working merchants.

Oliver Goldsmith's comedy of manners, *She Stoops to Conquer*, finally adopts quite a different perspective. The integrity of the characters is no longer a major issue. It is the way they behave in public, their manners, which matters. The main character, Young Marlow, suffers from a split personality. In the presence of ladies of his own standing he is bashful, shy and timid, and does not manage to engage in any meaningful conversation. With women of a lower social standing, however, he is entirely transformed and does not hesitate to converse with them or even pursue them.

At the opening of the play, Marlow and his best friend Hastings are on their way to visit Mr Hardcastle, whose plan is for his daughter Kate to marry Marlow. However, Tony Limpkin, the third man, plays a practical joke on Marlow and Hastings so that they get lost on the way. They arrive at Hardcastle's house, but they are led to believe that it is an inn, and, therefore, they take Hardcastle to be

the inn-keeper rather than the owner of the house and the father of the intended bride. It is this basic misunderstanding about the identity and social status of the interactants that leads to clashes about manners. What would be normal behaviour for a host seems very rude if done by an inn-keeper. In Extract (8), Marlow expresses his exasperation to his friend Hastings about the inappropriate behaviour of the “inn-keeper”.

- (8) MARLOW The assiduities of these good people teize me beyond bearing. My host seems to think it ill manners to leave me alone, and so he claps not only himself, but his old-fashioned wife, on my back. They talk of coming to sup with us too; and then, I suppose, we are to run the gantlet thro' all the rest of the family.
(*She Stoops to Conquer*, Act 2, p. 353)

The passage states clearly what kind of behaviour Marlow expects from an inn-keeper. The host and his wife apparently follow him around and they even suggest joining their guests for dinner. This, in his view, is clearly not good manners on behalf of an inn-keeper. He wants to be left alone and to his own devices. Servants are not to intrude and impose themselves on him. In the previous scene, the exasperation was mutual. Marlow demanded to be informed of the menu for dinner, expressed his unhappiness about the choices on offer and enquired about the suitability of his room. He even asked his servant to liberally drink beer in an attempt to provide some additional business for the assumed inn-keeper.

Hardcastle's frequent asides in the scene make it clear that he finds Marlow's behaviour deeply insulting. The problem is a clash of manners, and they clash because of the mistaken identities. From passages such as this it can be deduced that here manners are a code of behaviour in the sense of etiquette, and these manners have to be adjusted carefully to the social role of the addressee and the relationship between the speaker and the addressee.

In Extract (9), Mrs Hardcastle talks to Hastings. Mrs Hardcastle has already been portrayed as being interested in the latest fashion from London in contrast to her husband, who much prefers the quiet life in the country. When she has a chance to talk to one of the visitors from London, she seizes the opportunity to bring up the topic of London.

- (9) MRS HARDCASTLE Well! I vow, Mr Hastings, you are very entertaining. There's nothing in the world I love to talk of so much as London, and the fashions, though I was never there myself.
HASTINGS Never there! You amaze me! From your air and manner, I concluded you had been bred all your life either at Ranelagh, St. James's, or Tower Wharf.

- MISS HARDCASTLE Dear me! dear me! I'm sure there's nothing in my *behaviour* to put me on a level with one of that stamp.
- MARLOW Nothing, my dear, nothing. But I was in for a list of blunders, and could not help making you a subscriber. My stupidity saw everything the wrong way. I mistook your assiduity for assurance, and your simplicity for allurements. But its over – This house I no more shew *my* face in.
- MISS HARDCASTLE I hope, Sir, I have done nothing to disoblige you. I'm sure I should be sorry to affront any gentleman who has been so polite, and said so many civil things to me. I'm sure I should be sorry (*pretending to cry*) if he left the family upon my account. I'm sure I should be sorry people said anything amiss, since I have no fortune but my character.
(*She Stoops to Conquer*, Act 4, p. 378, italics original)

At this crucial point, Kate Hardcastle must try to keep her potential husband from running away from his own shame and embarrassment about the perpetrated blunders. He had blundered – in his own eyes – because he behaved towards social equals, his intended bride and his intended father-in-law, as if they had been servants, a bar maid and an inn-keeper. Kate played the role of the bar-maid to let him overcome his inhibition with women of his own social status. She had to stoop in order to conquer, as the title of the play suggests. But she has to keep his interest in her in spite of the fact that he now knows who she is. And again, it becomes clear how much depends on the appearances of the outward behaviour. Marlow misinterpreted her behaviour because he thought she was a bar-maid. She refers to his “politeness” and the “civil things” he said to her. The reference is ambiguous. It can refer to what he said to her when he addressed her as a lady, which was very little. Or it can refer to what he said to her when he thought she was a barmaid and tried to seduce her. But in either case, what she says about “politeness” and “civil things” seems to have more than just a touch of irony to it. She is playing a game at this point, and even the distress that she expresses at his imminent departure is mainly displayed for effect, as the stage direction, “pretending to cry”, suggests.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The results of the previous two sections complement each other in interesting ways to provide a more comprehensive and more nuanced picture of the notions of

manners and politeness and how they developed from the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth century. The various corpora consulted for the vocabulary study were unanimous in highlighting the eighteenth century as an important period for the development of the key terms *manners*, *civil*, *polite*, *courteous* and their derivatives, not because of their overall frequency, which appears to be relatively modest, but because of their remarkable increase leading to a peak in the late eighteenth century.

The three plays of the case studies are too short to allow for a valid comparison of the frequencies of the relevant politeness vocabulary but even they provide some indication that these frequencies changed throughout the period under investigation. While the expressions *honour* and *reputation* characterise *The Town-Fop* and to a lesser extent *The Conscious Lovers*, it is the expression *manners* which increases its frequency. *Civil* and *polite* also increase, even though there are no more than a few instances even in *She Stoops to Conquer*. Table 2 provides an overview.

Table 2. Frequency of politeness terms (including morphological variants; per 10,000 words) in the three plays under investigation.

	<i>manners</i>	<i>civil</i>	<i>polite</i>	<i>courtesy</i>	<i>honour</i>	<i>reputation</i>
<i>Town-Fop</i>	0.00	0.41	0.00	0.00	9.93	4.55
<i>Conscious Lovers</i>	0.39	0.39	0.78	0.00	9.33	0.78
<i>She Stoops</i>	1.75	0.88	1.31	0.00	5.70	0.88

These values should not be overrated because they are based on relatively few actual hits, but they show a clear increase of the term *manners* and the term *polite* with its derivatives. *Civil* and its derivatives increase slightly while the term *honour*, which is altogether much more frequent than the others, clearly decreases, as does the term *reputation*.

Such a quantitative perspective on lexical items is based on the assumption that the frequency of use of a particular term somehow reflects the importance of the designated concept in the text or texts that are included in the corpus searches, but it does not tell us in any detail how these concepts were evaluated and how they were used. In order to find out how people used these terms, a more detailed look is required in the form of a macro-lens case studies.

A close reading of selected passages from these three comedies provides a more nuanced understanding of the developing conceptualisation of the essentials of proper behaviour and the significance of manners. Aphra Behn's *Town-Fop* is a product of the Restoration period, when the theatres had only recently opened again. The play foregrounds concerns for good characters, honour and reputation. Gambling, drinking and prostitution are depicted as the main evils,

but even Betty Flauntit, the title character's mistress and prostitute, is concerned about her own reputation and honour, while the terms *manners* and *polite* do not even occur in this comedy.

This forms the backdrop to the eighteenth century's concern for politeness and good behaviour or good manners. Richard Steele's *Conscious Lovers* was explicitly designed to set a good example against the licentiousness of Restoration comedy. His characters are concerned with manners and politeness, but these are understood to be part of the personality.

In Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, finally, the concept of manners takes centre stage leading to the qualification of the play as a comedy of manners. Manners are not so much part of the personality any more but a set of outward behaviours that have to be adjusted carefully to the situation and the addressee. The manners that are appropriate in addressing an inn-keeper are entirely different from the manners that have to be shown towards the private host and father of the main character's bride-to-be. At this point we can see a clear dissociation of manners from morality. They have turned into an etiquette, a code of behaviour prescribed, for instance, by a conduct book.

The two complementary approaches outlined above also bring together different sets of theoretical assumptions. On the one hand, a focus on the quantitative development of vocabulary items presupposes that these items have some inherent core meanings, which allows a comparison across different contexts and time periods. A focus on specific uses of these items in specific scenes of specific plays, on the other hand, highlights their discursive nature. The terms get their meaning – at least to some extent – from how they are used by whom and to whom, and how the addressee reacts. The analysis has shown that a reliance on inherent politeness values of specific linguistic expressions is not sufficient. It needs to be supplemented by a careful analysis of the discursive negotiations of politeness values in actual contexts.

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“This Demon Anger”

Politeness, conversation and control in eighteenth-century conduct books for young women¹

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This chapter examines the representation and correction of anger in conduct books written for young women in eighteenth-century Britain. An introductory section places the admonition against anger in the context of John Locke’s and Lord Shaftesbury’s discussions of, respectively, rational conduct and polite sociability. Then, I succinctly identify ideal womanly conduct as emanating from three main sources: self-control in body and mind, obedience coupled with rationality, and a consciousness of the world that produces self-consciousness and an attendant desire to conform to social rules. Anger is then shown to break with all three of these: an angry woman no longer controls her body and her mind; she is both disobedient and irrational; and she disregards the constant and critical gaze of society, thus risking loss of reputation. Ultimately, anger hinders young women in what was their main objective, attracting the best possible husband.

Keywords: conduct of life, anger, politeness, conduct books, young women, eighteenth century

1. Introduction

Was this not very dreadful! ...I was quite frighten’d! ---And this fearful Menace, and her fiery Eyes, and rageful Countenance, made me lose all my Courage. ... She gave me a Slap on the Hand, and reached to box my Ear...she was like a person beside herself. (Richardson 1740: *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, 394–95)

Towards the end of Samuel Richardson’s first novel, *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), the eponymous heroine’s sister in law, Lady Davers, incensed at her

1. D’Ancourt 1743: *The Lady’s Preceptor*, 44

brother's marriage to his maidservant, blunders into anger on a number of occasions. First, towards her supposed hierarchical inferior, Pamela, whom she refuses to believe is legitimately married to her brother. Then, towards her brother, who initially tries to control his reaction to his fuming sister, but soon succumbs to passion and gives as good (or almost) as he gets. Richardson planned and executed his novel with a didactic project in mind: to reform the youth of both sexes, inculcating in readers values of the emergent middle-class, such as prudence and virtue. Anger, a vice and a passion, was blatantly opposed to both virtue and prudence. In the novel, we are informed that the faulty education of the rich makes them incapable of exercising the control needed to avoid anger; this is exemplified by Mr B and Lady Davers, and the correct example is given by Pamela, who, despite her many reasons to be angry, remains calm and in control of her passions throughout the novel.

Pamela's focus on didacticism, especially in the sequel, has led people to brand it a conduct novel. The lesson that it proclaims on anger is indeed one that it shares with contemporaneous conduct books addressed to young ladies. However, the lesson on anger is not only related to the seemingly trivial matter of the correct conduct of young women but can also be extended to a concern that gained epistemic proportions during the eighteenth century, that of the right conduct of life towards rational goals. This was an important tenet of liberal individualism as it was being developed in philosophical and political discourse at the turn of the eighteenth century, and it trickled down into conduct discourse. The denunciation of young women's anger, in conduct books and in various other literary and non-literary texts, can be seen as paradigmatic of this new orientation of the self towards itself, a self that was prudent and virtuous, was concerned with its future outcomes, and that strove to gain the approval of its peers through polite and horizontal social exchange. Key to the injunction against anger was one of the central elements of social etiquette: self-control. The deviation from politeness that anger represented precluded the development of a successful liberal and individualistic orientation towards life; for most young women this was particularly serious, as it prevented them from achieving their life goal: a successful and happy marriage.

I will examine this claim by analysing the representation and condemnation of anger in conduct books for young ladies published in the mid decades of the eighteenth century. I begin by briefly addressing the notion of self as it was promulgated in John Locke's writings, as well as the horizontal exchange that subtends Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Lord Shaftesbury's theories on politeness. My main focus will be the descriptions of anger in a handful of conduct books, as well as the ways in which the conduct books strive to correct and avert the potential anger of their readers. The eighteenth century saw a proliferation of advice manuals for young women, which were aimed at producing a homogeneous ideal-type

of womanly behaviour that was levelled towards the middle class. Aristocratic women were instructed that they too needed to adopt the virtuous and submissive, yet determined and agential, attitude towards life that the conduct manuals represented as emanating from the middling sorts, whereas women of the labouring classes were offered the possibility of social ascension through a similar move. The perfect young lady was thus not so much marked by her rank as by her gender. The performance of ideal womanhood was portrayed as being within the reach of all who complied with polite behaviour.

2. Self-control and individualism: The link with conduct

The meaning of "conduct" that interests me here is the "[m]anner of conducting oneself or one's life; behaviour; usually with more or less reference to its moral quality (good or bad)," which came into the English language in 1673 (OED). Earlier uses, broadly meaning 'to lead' and 'to manage', all concerned objects separated from the human agents who were doing the conducting, whether those objects were armies or implements. This notion of conduct "of oneself or one's life" is broadly congruent, and certainly contemporary with the concept of rational and responsible human agency that Locke developed in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689). In *Sources of the Self* (1989), Charles Taylor contends that the move towards disengagement by Locke's "person," a "moral agent who takes responsibility for his acts," provides one of the mainstays of the modern culture of discipline, in which there is a link between "the rise of institutional discipline" and the "tremendous force of a disengaged, disciplinary stance to self" (Taylor 1989: 173). Anger, a passion and thus a state of passivity, makes that stance impossible.

Taylor situates his reading of Locke's thought on human agency within a trend of intellectual development beginning in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries under the broad title of neo-Stoicism, a philosophy that laid considerable stress on self-mastery (Taylor 1989: 159). Taylor describes a new ideal agent whose "methodical and disciplined" intervention in their own life enables work on "properties, desires, inclinations, tendencies, habits of thought and feeling" in order to achieve a preferred goal (1989: 159–160). The discourse of conduct proposes just such a project of self-adjustment. This ideal human agent is delineated in Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and has the possibility to form his or her mind to ensure "the right direction of ... conduct to true happiness" in an instrumental model of action (Locke 1997: 246). Indeed, one main delimitation of the *Essay* is provided by the notion of conduct: "Our business here is not to know all things, but those which concern our conduct" (Locke 1997: 58). In *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England, 1680–1780*, Margaret

Hunt identifies the idea of control as a central trope of middling culture. In a more secular environment, where divine providence was declining as an explanatory model in favour of more rational explanations, the domains of commercial and private finance, the family, and sexuality were increasingly subject to an exercise in human agency (Hunt 1996: 37). Hunt's analysis of the eighteenth-century middling mind-set suggests a trickle-down effect from Locke's philosophical explanations for the workings of the mind to the ways in which historical individuals lived their lives, including those most lowly members of society, unmarried young women. The importance of personal responsibility in the prosecution of individual existences emphasized the importance of right conduct in one's life. A carefully led existence, one in which the tenets of prudence and control were held as central to success, relied on self-improvement through self-knowledge and self-control. If one were to give in to anger, one would forgo this salutary process.

Self-control is closely allied with deferred action. Locke expresses this as the rational examination of all possibilities when faced with choice: the "steady prosecution of true felicity" depends on having the freedom to "*suspend* this prosecution in particular cases, till they [free agents] have looked before them, and informed themselves, whether that particular thing, which is then proposed or desired, lies in the way to their main end" (Locke 1997: 244, 245). The space opened up by rational examination permits the conduct of life towards an abstract goal of happiness. Desire, as the impetus to action, is one of its essential components. However, limiting its power over action choices is basic to rational existence, as love or anger, "or any other violent passion," may "run[] away with us," and elide that space of liberty and consideration on which an ordered, goal-oriented existence depends.

But the forbearance of a too hasty compliance with our desires, the moderation and restraint of our passions, so that our understandings may be *free* to examine, and reason unbiased to give its judgement, being that whereon a right direction of our conduct to true happiness depends: tis in this that we should employ our chief care and endeavours. (Locke 1997: 246)

As we will see further on, anger usually is a "too hasty compliance with...desires", it is the result of a lack of "moderation and restraint", and it is often equated with lack of reason or even madness. Anger, the conduct books claim, never results in happiness; indeed, its main outcome is social condemnation, as the angry young woman becomes the object of ridicule or is even banished from polite society.

Such banishment would be deleterious to the young woman's social trajectory, since it would prevent her from finding a suitable husband. Inclusion in polite society depended on knowing how to participate in the conversational exchanges that were both its method and result. The generative discipline that brought forth

politeness was developed by Lord Shaftesbury in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711). Politeness was produced in public, in order to render oneself pleasing to others. Its principal expression was in conversation, a domain of horizontal and tacitly regulated exchange, in which turn-taking was unobtrusive and natural. All this required both the utmost vigilance and a lack of affectation; no taciturnity or prominent silence, but no volubility or exacerbated sociableness either (Klein 1994: 4, 5). Polite participation in conversation was a balancing act for young ladies, especially since the injunction for women to be entirely silent, a mainstay of classical, medieval and early Renaissance notions of female comportment, was being challenged in the eighteenth century (Dahmer 2016: n.p.). It may have been easier for young women to be entirely silent during public assemblies, but increasingly they were being enjoined to participate in certain conversational settings, and thus had "to determine whether it would be appropriate to be silent... [and] correctly apply all the specific rules for different places, 'cases,' and interlocutors" (Dahmer 2016: n.p.). Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, marriageable young women of the growing middle echelons of society were envisaged as proponents of the conduct that Shaftesbury had attached to the refined sociability of gentlemen. Lawrence Klein suggests that "the spread of 'politeness' from discourse to discourse reflects the appropriation of the world of social, intellectual and literary creation by gentlemen: it witnessed the remaking of the world in a gentlemanly image" (Klein 1994: 7). By the mid-decades of the eighteenth century, young women too were expected to partake in this "gentlemanly" world. An angry young woman would never be able to do so. Suddenly renouncing self-control, passively submitting to the urge of passionate expression, breaking with fracas the regulations governing the deployment of speech and silence, drawing the aghast and critical attention of the company: all these aspects of anger broke the restraint and reciprocity that characterized polite conversation, and denoted the young woman as violating the reciprocal norms of good behaviour.

3. The discourse of conduct: Readers, writers, and ideals

The historical readers of conduct books are by and large unknown to us; however, we can deduce that the books were viable publishing enterprises, given their substantial number over the course of the century. Some of the titles were frequently reissued, such as George Savile, the Marquis of Halifax's *A Lady's New Years Gift*, which was reprinted twenty-nine times between its first edition in 1688 and 1791.²

2. This and subsequent statistics regarding numbers of editions are taken from *The English Short Title Catalogue*.

Although this writer was an aristocrat, the advice that he offered his daughter was in many ways similar to that offered nearly a century later by Dr. John Gregory to his daughters, in a popular title, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774); it ran to fifty-nine editions before the end of the century.³ That the English aristocrat and the Scottish physician shared various thoughts on the proper conduct of young women is testament to the levelling tendency that the genre had towards ideal femininity, a characteristic that Nancy Armstrong notes in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (Armstrong 1987: 69, 78). With the notable exception of Savile, most eighteenth-century conduct books were written by men and women who hailed from the large middle swathe of the population. Some authors are relatively well known, such as the bluestocking and woman of letters Hester Chapone, who wrote *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* for her niece in 1773; others are more obscure, such as Irish clergyman Wetenhall Wilkes, who published *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady*, also for his niece, in 1741. The occupations of the authors of conduct books are various: John Essex, who published *The Young Ladies Conduct, or Rules for Education* in 1722 was of obscure origins. He was a professional dancer and a dancing master who wrote and taught music and was best known for his publications on dance (Goff 2008). I have already mentioned John Gregory, who was an eminent physician, but who would probably have been lost to posterity had he not published one of the most popular conduct books of the eighteenth century. Women, to whom most professions were closed, could however write, and some of them turned to conduct books, such as Lady Sarah Pennington, a woman of obscure birth married to a Yorkshire baronet, who was banished by her husband for a transgression that has remained unidentified; *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters* was published in 1786. Eliza Haywood, one of the most prolific and diverse authors of the first half of the century, also turned her hand to advice manuals. A somewhat scandalous author who made her reputation by writing vaguely erotic fiction, Haywood adapted her output to the moralizing tendency that followed the publication of *Pamela* in 1740, penning *A Present for a Serving Maid* in 1743, and *The Wife* in 1756. Sometimes, men masqueraded as women, such as Charles Allen, author of a very conventional

3. This title was included in a handful of anthologies, such as *The Young Lady's Parental Monitor*, printed in London in 1790, and what was presumably a pirated version, *The Young Lady's Pocket Library or Parental Monitor*, printed in Dublin the same year. Gregory's title was reprinted in Dublin and Edinburgh in its initial year of publication, and in Philadelphia and New York the following year. The first French translation was published in London in 1774; thereafter, French translations were printed in Leyden, Lausanne and Neuchâtel in 1775, and in Paris in 1782, and an Italian translation in 1794. Although this was a particularly popular conduct book, its publication history is testament to the genre's overall popularity, as well as its status as a vector for European integration.

1760 conduct book, *The Polite Lady*, reissued eight times before the end of the century, which was subtitled *a course of female education. In a series of letters, from a Mother to her Daughter*. Most writers of eighteenth-century conduct books for women belonged to a broadly defined middle class; this, though, is probably their only common denominator. Notwithstanding the diversity of their precise social origins and life trajectories, they produced advice that was broadly congruent, and tended to construct the ideal young woman as a strongly gendered, but strangely classless, individual.

Although I am unable to say much about actual eighteenth-century readers of these texts, they must have existed, unless the conduct books were bought but then rarely read by their intended public. The discourse of conduct, as it is carried in these books, suggests a strongly disciplinary stance to life, in which ideal readers examine their conduct, find it wanting, and apply themselves to correcting the faults they identify, so as to align their lives with the ideals found in the discourse. In his discussion of the early modern sense of self, Christopher Braider describes "the subject's internalization of the external Law imposed by society, the culture, or the reigning discourse of the moment" (Braider 2018: 19). It is not possible to verify whether or not readers of conduct books undertook such an "orthopsychic effort" (Braider 2018: 20). But this essay aims to analyse the discourse, not instances of behaviour.

Before turning to the representation and denunciation of anger in advice literature for young women, I will briefly outline a few salient features of ideal feminine behaviour as carried by the conduct books. First, there is firm self-control, to be instituted in both the private and interior realm of thought, and in the public realm of social performance: the young woman's body and her voice – both in its tone and speed, but also in the words she utters – have to be perfectly controlled, calm, collected, upright, precisely deployed. Young ladies should never be boisterous and aggressive, never indolent or sprawling, never affected, always natural, but with a naturalness that is the product of artistry. John Essex enjoins his readers to "Walk with proper Air and Action," that is, "with such a decent Grace and Freedom as scorns all Affectation" but this freedom and grace are to be achieved by detailed attention to the body: "the fine Turn of the Head and Neck, the Uprightness of the Body, and the Decorum of the Feet" (Essex 1722: 81). This is truly "the art of the natural," as Klein describes Shaftesbury's vision of ideal culture (Klein 1994: 204). A young woman must ensure that her voice's "accent [...] be low, smooth, and gentle, an emblem of the inward softness and delicacy of her mind" (Allen 1760: 214). Body and voice must be deployed with care and harmony, as they are the outward expression of inner qualities.

A second element is obedience and submissiveness to people and rules. The young woman must first obey her mother and father, then her husband, as well

as elders and hierarchical superiors at all stages in her life; as John Essex writes in *The Young Ladies Conduct*, “the greatest Advantage they can have, is to live under the Direction of a Superior,” (Essex 1722: 9). But accommodated to this submissiveness, the young lady must also display a degree of autonomy and agency, a rational attitude to a life in which choices and decisions continually have to be taken. Wetenhall Wilkes and Hester Chapone both write their advice manuals in the form of letters to their nieces, and they value their addressees’ capacity for reason and action. Wilkes instructs his niece that her “Soul [is] [...] invested with a Capacity of forming just Ideas of [herself] and [her] own Nature, of regulating [her] Desires to the proper Value of their Objects, and of subjecting [her] Passions to the Government of Reason” (Wilkes 1741: 31). Chapone tells her niece: “You must *form* and *govern* your *temper* and *manners*, according to the laws of benevolence and Justice; and qualify yourself, by all means in your power, for a *useful* and *agreeable* member of society. -- All this you see is no light business, nor can it be performed without a sincere and earnest application of the mind” (Chapone 1773 2: 8). Both authors assume that young women, rather than blindly obeying, need to use their minds in order to become useful members of society. The opposition between passion and reason was an important regulatory distinction in the eighteenth-century mental landscape, as it had been since the Ancients. Indeed, as Jonathan Haidt states, “Western philosophy has been worshipping reason and distrusting the passions for thousands of years” (Haidt 2013: 34). Haidt discusses how David Hume challenged this notion in his 1739 *Treatise of Human Nature*: “reason is and ought only be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them” (Hume in Haidt 2013: 29). However, the conduct books directed at young women are not in the business of giving nuanced philosophical discussions, rather they deal in such easy-to-follow instructions as enable readers to navigate the treacherous shoals of urban existence. Deploying reason will allow the young woman to maintain her balance on the tightrope of social existence, and to make snappy and correct conduct decisions. Chapone writes: “To be perfectly polite, one must have great *presence of mind*, with a delicate and quick *sense of propriety* – or, in other words, one should be able to form instantaneous judgment of what is fittest to be said or done, on every occasion as it offers” (Chapone 1773 2: 96). The simultaneous injunctions to obedience and to agency typify the careful balance that would be destroyed by anger.

A third element of conduct-book ideology is a thorough consciousness of the social world: the young lady, whilst she is enjoined to prefer the private to the public, must participate in the polite and public events of her social circle. A fictional representation of this conundrum is given in Frances Burney’s *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady’s Entrance into the World* (1778), in which the heroine comes to London after a sheltered childhood in the countryside, and makes a

series of social *faux pas* that come very close to causing her to lose her reputation. Like Evelina's, the generic young lady's body, her gestures, her words, her dress, her opinions, are all produced in public, and constitute an outward surface of signification. She needs to be aware that the world is constantly watching her, interpreting her, evaluating her, judging her. "Life is a continual Series of Operations of both Body and Mind," states *The Lady's Preceptor*, "which ought to be regulated and performed with the utmost Care, and of which the Success frequently depends on those with whom we live and converse, who put a good or bad Construction on them" (D'Ancourt 1743: 8). He continues, "Wherever you are, imagine that you are observed, and your Behaviour scanned by others all the while, and this will oblige you to observe yourself, and be constantly on your guard" (D'Ancourt 1743: 11). Consciousness of the world is taken to ridiculous lengths when he states: "There are Rules for all our Actions, even down to Sleeping with Good Grace" (D'Ancourt 1743: 8). Consciousness of the gaze of others as carried by the conduct books indicates a strongly disciplinarian discourse, which attempts to institute a Foucauldian system of self-surveillance, with society acting as a virtual panopticon.

As Paul Goring writes, the eighteenth-century body was a text, a place where politeness was worked out and displayed. Indeed, he links the "elocutionary" potential of the body to the advent of polite society: "the body served as a [...] textual space for the symbolic inscription of politeness" (Goring 2005: 6). Klein remarks that for Shaftesbury the self is social: "the social self gave itself over to the eye of a beholder, rendering itself an object of spectatorship" (Klein 1994: 76). There is clearly a semiotics of the body, one that the conduct books attempt to inculcate in their readers, and which converts into a rulebook of correct sociability. It was essential for the young woman to know its limits and articulations.

4. Conduct books and the display of anger

It is abundantly clear that anger deteriorated the self-controlled, obedient, and self-conscious ideal young lady I have described in many different ways. First, the angry woman's thoughts become uncontrolled, unreasonable, passionate. These thoughts, under the impulse of passion, overflow into public manifestations: her body becomes distorted, her face ugly; her voice becomes strident, urgent; her words become hurtful, thoughtless. Second, she is no longer obedient to the people to whom she owes obedience, nor to the rules that she must follow. Third, the angry young lady loses her consciousness of the world's inquisitorial gaze. Anger is a social passion, one that occurs in public and is directed at others, and it is public anger that must strenuously be avoided in order to preserve one's reputation in the eyes of the world. In her angry state, the young woman forgets that the

world judges her, that it will read into her anger a range of unacceptable traits: lack of self-control and self-direction, disregard for social judgment, all of which show imprudence and recklessness. Indeed, anger signals an overflowing, an inability to keep things within their boundaries; by transference this could attach to other domains – sexual incontinence and over-consumption. However, the main problem with anger is the way in which it deteriorates the delicate balance of polite sociability: by giving vent to anger, the young woman lays waste to the social world's fruitful and salutary equilibrium.

In what follows, I discuss some examples of anger, as it is represented in the conduct books. I begin, though, with a rather interesting document, Aaron Hill's *Essay on the Art of Acting* (1753), in which he gives instructions to actors on how best to represent various passions and emotions on the stage, including how to perform anger. He describes its expression as "a fierce and unrestrained effusion of reproach and insult," adding that "[i]t must therefore be expressed impatiently, by a firey propension in the eye, with a disturbed and threatenng air, and with voice strong, swift, and often interrupted by high swells of choaking indignation" [*sic*] (Hill 1779: 22). It strikes me as appropriate to begin with this instruction for actors, given that the young lady, although she was enjoined to prefer the private, was mostly to be seen in public. Klein describes the "scene of refined sociability," both a real place and a discursive place, in which the agents of polite conversation are placed as active, reactive, and controlled participants (Klein 1994: 8); unmarried young women were expected to partake in this scene, and part of the function of conduct books was to promote their readers' correct and easeful participation in eighteenth-century urban leisure activities. The idea that passions could be produced on stage, performed with such precision that they would persuade spectators of their authenticity, fits nicely with the self-fashioning and artistry that conduct books assume.

John Essex, in *The Ladies Conduct* (1722), tells his readers to "avoid one of the greatest Blemishes of your Fair Sex, I mean *Anger*, which ... is a profess'd Enemy to Reason, Prudence, and Advice" (Essex 1722: 11).⁴ Anger manifests itself in the body, more precisely the face: "It gives an ill-natur'd Cast to the Eye, and a disagreeable Sourness to the whole Countenance; it makes the Lines too strong, and flushes the Face worse than Brandy; I have seen it overspread with heat Spots [...] and indeed never knew any Angry Woman preserve her Beauty long" (Essex 1722: 12). Such appeals to the young woman's vanity are not rare. The comparison with the effects of alcohol works to encourage avoidance of both alcohol and anger. Anger is expressed by means of the voice. The young woman is therefore

4. A late use of "advice" to mean "wisdom, prudence, forethought" (OED. 5.b). The last example given is 1669.

told to “Bridle the Tongue, and Seal up [her] Lips; [...] In publick Company avoid *much* Talk, *few* Words are best, too much Discourse blows up the Flame, which put in Motion, rages with too great violence” (Essex 1722: 13). Essex does not enter into a nuanced discussion of appropriate speaking and silence, yet implicitly concedes that some words should be spoken. Nevertheless, keeping speaking in company to a minimum helps to avoid falling into anger, denoted by heated and violent speech. As Essex continues, we get an intimation of the way in which anger removes agency, as the angry woman’s mind is “ensnared and captivated before [she] is aware” (Essex 1722: 13). Finally, we see how the display of anger in public is regrettable and regretted: “How often must you have found Reason to wish you had not been in Company, or that you had spoken little when you were there?” (Essex 1722: 13). Anger mars beauty and reason, so acts both on the exterior and the interior; it is expressed in public by violent and heated words and denotes a culpable lack of self-control.

In his *Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice* (1741), Wetenhall Wilkes passes swiftly over external effects, focusing on the intellectually and morally demeaning vocation of anger:

Never let the Passion of Anger get the better of your Reason; for by it the external parts are not only deform’d, but the whole Frame of the internal Constitution is disorder’d. It is not only a bare Resemblance of Madness, but is often a miserable Transition into the thing itself. It is not the Effect of Reason, but Infirmity; neither sensible of Infamy or Glory, nor affected with Modesty or Fear. It is a Vice that carries with it neither Pleasure, Profit, Honour or Security; but they who are subject to its Domination, are so far from being great, that they are not so much as free. The way to prevent our falling into the whimsical Extravagancies of this Passion, would be to consult our Reason in the Intervals, upon the Danger, Deformities, and Unreasonableness of it. (Wilkes 1741: 97)

Here we see a few of the elements mentioned earlier. First, the lack of agency that anger causes: people who are angry are “subject to [the] Domination” of “a Vice” to such an extent that “they are not so much as free.” This lack of freedom precludes salutary agency and the reasonable direction of one’s life. Once again, anger is shown to act both on the “external parts” and on “the whole Frame of the internal Constitution.” The passage draws attention to the productive link between anger and madness and proposes an antidote: “to consult our Reason.” Indeed, Wilkes’s conduct book is particularly high-minded and assumes a young woman reader who can understand elements of theology, politics, astronomy and literature; it is not surprising that he focuses on anger’s effect on processes of reason, and on reason as a bastion against anger’s “whimsical Extravagancies.”

The Lady's Preceptor (1743) is very different; a short and programmatic conduct book, it trundles out most of the elements touched upon. First, it advocates control, in the form of "Reason" and "Moderation" to combat anger (D'Ancourt 1743: 43). Then, it focuses on the loss of agency, comparing the person who is angry to she who is not:

Man, by the Excellency of his intellectual Faculties, approaches to what is most sublime in the Nature of Angels; but one half Quarter of an Hour of Anger tumbles him down from that Height, and places him below a Brute, where he often repents, when it is too late, that he gave himself up a Prey to such a hideous and disreputable Passion. (D'Ancourt 1743: 44)⁵

Anger is a vice, a sin that causes a fall, and although the author does not exactly mirror the original Fall, there is still an Edenic quality here, with angels and brutes and tumbling, followed by repentance. The loss of agency is clear, but strangely it is an act of willing abdication – "gave himself up" – that precipitates the loss. The *Preceptor* continues with a textbook description of anger and its effects:

Under the Power of this Demon Anger, the highest Beauty becomes Deformity; the Face pale, the Lips livid, the Eyes flaming out in Revenge, the Voice loud and boisterous, the Joints trembling with the tumultuous Motion of the Spirits, whilst Reason is dethroned, and lawless Fury usurps her Empire; and when the course of Nature is thus set on fire, the Tongue, that unruly Member, will be sure to put in for its Share of Extravagancy, and speak proud and foolish things: and thus with a blind and undistinguishing Courage, our Passion falls foul upon every thing that comes in its way, confounding all Distinctions of Times, Persons and Circumstances, forgetting all Obligations, and neither *fearing God nor regarding Man*. In short, this Passion, when it is not under the Check of Reason, is a most accomplish'd Madness, and does more expose and lessen us in the Judgment of wise Men, than the Malice of the greatest Enemy could possibly do.

(D'Ancourt 1743: 44–45)

First, we get a description of the body as anger deteriorates beauty, and the face is described in detail; we get something approaching a kinetic description, with trembling joints and the tumultuous motion of the spirits. The voice is described in particularly unfeminine terms as "loud and boisterous". Next, the language used to show loss of agency uses a political lexis, a sort of Hobbesian view of the body as a polity, and a more Lockean vocabulary of illegitimate rule, with words such as

5. Although D'Ancourt describes "Man", the context makes clear that this is in the sense of "human", i.e. an instance of the masculine being used as gender neutral. His proper object here and elsewhere includes women, especially the young women he attempts to instruct through his didactic manual. His later use of "our" can be read as an inclusive rhetorical tactic that flatters young women into following the rules laid down.

“lawless”, “usurps”, or “empire”; there is even the implication of parliamentary politics gone awry, with the tongue an “unruly Member”. Then we get the breakdown of polite sociability or rather total social breakdown, with the “confounding of all Distinctions of Times, Persons and Circumstances, forgetting all Obligations, and neither *fearing God nor regarding Man*.” The text makes a metaphoric link between angry women and the revolutionary upheavals of the mid-seventeenth century; this is a particularly strong indictment of female anger. This text also links anger to madness and, finally, the young woman’s status as an object of spectatorship and interpretation is touched on with the way in which anger lessens her in the “Judgment of wise Men”.

The Polite Lady (1760) is written in a series of letters from a mother to her absent daughter. The real author is Charles Allen, and I believe that he took this narratorial stance so as to deploy the force of familial affection in order to maximize the rhetorical effect of his conduct instructions (Kukorelly 2014). In it we find a focus on anger as the opposite of good nature and on good nature as the antidote to anger. First, the text links polite femininity and control of anger: “as you would wish to acquire and preserve the character of a polite lady, you must take care to check and restrain your propensity to anger, and never allow it to break forth into those sudden and violent transports, which are, at once, so shocking and ridiculous” (Allen 1760: 254). We see how the conduct books encourage work on the self, how the titular “polite lady” is the result of self-fashioning. Then, the opposite of anger is stated to be “humanity and good-nature, a certain meekness of temper and gentleness of disposition.” This is linked to polite sociability in the sense that it “prompts us to communicate happiness to all around us.” Even if this “temper of mind [...] is rather the gift of nature, than the attainment of art” (Allen 1760: 255), “good-nature may, in some measure, be acquired by every one who will apply herself to the study of it with care and diligence” (Allen 1760: 256). If one is careful to “maintain a constant cheerfulness [*sic*] and alacrity in every part of [one’s] behaviour,” which is the “outward garb and expression of good nature,” then one will experience how

‘tis almost impossible for any one to personate a character thro’ her whole life, without imbibing, in some degree, the true spirit of the character which she represents. Thus, by a kind of innocent deceit you may not only cheat the world into an opinion of your good-nature; but, what is more, you may even cheat yourself into the actual possession of this amiable character. (Allen 1760: 256)

Once you have “cheat[ed]” yourself into good nature, you will be “happy in yourself [and][...] agreeable to your companions” (Allen 1760: 257). The text passes from self-interest to altruism. The good-natured woman “possesses within herself a never-failing source of joy and pleasure,” and this good nature is “the most effectual means of recommending [her] to the love and affection of [her]

fellow-creatures” whilst enabling her “to oblige the company” (Allen 1760: 259), as altruism and self-interest coincide once again. Good nature is “the foundation and ground-work of many other virtues: such as pity, compassion, charity, benevolence, politeness and good-manners” (Allen 1760: 260). By setting anger up as the opposite of good nature and describing good nature as the lubricant of polite sociability, *The Polite Lady* implies that anger precludes conversational exchange and the social balance that such reciprocity denotes. Like other texts, *The Polite Lady* specifies that habitual anger not only causes repeated loss of agency, but that it puts the angry woman at the mercy of others. The mother warns her daughter that

every person who has a mind to tease and torment you, will take the advantage of your hot and fiery disposition, to inflame your anger, and put you in a passion [...] they will stand by, laughing at your folly [...] And what a mean, what a wretched, what a pitiful condition is this, to lie at the mercy of every one that can say an ill-natured thing, or do an ill-bred action? this is to put your happiness entirely in the power of others. (Allen 1760: 251)

In order to preserve autonomy and agency, in order to be free, in a sense that approaches Shaftesbury’s idea of liberty as “a healthy interactive situation,” the young woman must be free from anger (Klein 1994: 211).

I have limited my discussion of anger in eighteenth-century conduct books for young ladies to a handful of publications which date from 1722 to 1773. They are not particularly original, conforming as they do to a general tendency in Western thought about proper behaviour that can be traced back to the Ancients. During these decades, the representations of anger, as well as the reasons given for avoiding it, are remarkably similar. Anger provides an excellent testing ground for exploring the discursive construction of an ideal type of womanly behaviour: this ideal is rational and active yet obedient, she is public and self-conscious yet inwards looking; in sum, she is everything that the angry young woman is not.

5. Avoiding anger

I shall now briefly analyse of some of the rhetorical strategies that the conduct books use in order to do their work of preventing anger in young women. Most proceed in a similar fashion: they represent anger, and then instruct their readers to avoid it. Advice manuals are a very practical genre, their function is to improve and correct readers, and they all use strategies and schemes that are meant to further this function. These strategies and schemes are sorts of technologies of effect: stylistic, rhetorical, typographic, and paratextual elements that are intended to make the text take effect in the lives of actual readers. I do not suggest that such

effects invariably worked, but it is nonetheless interesting, from a reader-reception perspective, to see what the writers, booksellers and printers thought would work. Not all forms of behaviour, bad or good, are denounced or promoted in the same way. Different rhetorical strategies are put into place, and even if some of them are common to many behavioural criteria, others are more limited in their application. As far as anger is concerned, I have identified five main strategies that the books use in order to correct readers' behaviour: visuality, the example of badly-behaved individuals, punishment and reward, dichotomy, and testing.

Visuality is not unique to discussions of anger, but it is particularly useful in the context given to the bodily inscription of anger, and the way in which it is portrayed as deteriorating beauty. There are a couple of descriptions of the angry woman, for example that found in *The Preceptor* (see Section 3 above). Aesthetic and rhetorical theories of the later eighteenth century, notably those of Hugh Blair and Henry Home, Lord Kames, specify that visual description, or hypotyposis, is useful in producing emotions that lead to didactic effect (Kukorelly 2017). As the *Preceptor* concludes: “I have laid this Portrait before you, Madam, in order to give you an Abhorrence of what it represents” (D’Ancourt 1743: 45). Here, the text mobilizes the specular agency of the “mirror” genre,⁶ in which good and bad behaviour are held up for the reader to admire or deplore; in the latter case the intention is for the reader to modify her behaviour and change the reflection in the mirror. In more high-brow conduct books, there is no need to describe the angry woman, but simply state, as Hester Chapone does in *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, that “an enraged woman is one of the most disgusting sights in nature” (Chapone 1773 2: 12).

The second strategy, the example of badly-behaved others (which sometimes mobilises the didactic force of hypotyposis) is a way to involve the reader in such a way as to keep her out of the bad behaviour that is being denounced. In *The Polite Lady*, the writer uses two distinct example-strategies, one from upper-class society, and one from street life. First, the writer tells us about “Mrs. M---, who is of [a] cholerick complexion” (Allen 1760: 252). She is one of “your passionate people [who] are always proud and conceited: their passion makes them fall into errors, and their pride will not allow them to be undeceived” (Allen 1760: 253). She is compared to a “lunatic in Bedlam” (Allen 1760: 253). The second example, which suggests that the reader should go out and look around her, are lower-class

6. During the Renaissance and into the eighteenth century, courtesy books and conduct books presented themselves as mirrors held up to their readers; especially popular and widespread were mirrors for princes, such as Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1532) or Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), but by the eighteenth century the genre had been extended to women: *The Ladies Mirror, or Mental Companion* (1788).

street-vending women: “were you to behold the oyster-women in Billingsgate, or the orange-wenches in Covent-Garden scolding and bawling, in their violent transports of passion, you would, I dare say, conceive such an utter hatred and abhorrence of anger, as would effectually prevent you from ever giving way to it in the future” (Allen 1760: 253–254). By presenting the reader with two examples, neither of which she is presumed to resemble (Mrs. M--- is too old, the street-vendors too common; both are too angry), the text beckons the reader on to continued good behaviour rather than enjoining her to modify bad behaviour.

Two typical rhetorical strategies used in conduct books are dichotomies, and punishment and reward; at times they are used in concert, as in *The Young Ladies Conduct*:

The Moment you cherish in your Breast any immoderate or irregular Desires, as Pride, Vanity, Anger and the like; at the same time you will feel Storms and Tempests rising in your Soul, and discomposing all your Faculties, while Modesty, Humility and Content, will bring you into a Calm; for Peace of Mind is never to be had by gratifying our Appetites, but by obeying of our Reason. (Essex 1722: 11)

We have a succession of dichotomies: immoderate or irregular desires such as pride, vanity, anger versus modesty, humility and content; storms and tempers rising in the soul and discomposing all the faculties versus calm and peace of mind; then gratifying appetites versus obeying reason. The things on the bad side result in punishment: storms and tempests, discomposing faculties, whereas the things on the good side result in reward: calm, peace of mind. This is a simple rhetorical scheme, which requires little interpretation on the part of the reader; however, its discursive power is not negligible. In *L'Ordre du Discours* (1971), Michel Foucault suggests that discourse is something which, rather than describing, prescribes; and that it contains in it a “will to truth” that is both based on and constructs a system of exclusion (Foucault 1971: 19, my translation). Conduct books use discourse in this manner, as they bring the full force of moral and social authority to bear on their readers, banishing from the warm glow of social acceptance all those who refuse to submit to the texts’ corrective sway.

The final scheme, which I only found in *The Polite Lady*, is the idea of testing one’s conduct acquisition. This is less of a rhetorical strategy than an injunction to take the effects of reading out into the real world and put them to use. The young lady who has “cheat[ed]” herself into controlling her anger is told (Allen 1760: 256):

after you have acquired a tolerable stock of good-nature, perhaps it will not be amiss to put it to the trial, by keeping company sometimes with the peevish and ill-natured, in order to learn whether you can bear injuries or affronts without falling into a passion. For she, whose good nature is never brought to the test, cannot possibly know whether she is really possessed of it or not. If you can stand

the trial, you may safely conclude that you have made considerable progress in the acquisition of this virtue; but, if you cannot, you have then just reason to suspect that your share of it (if indeed you have any share at all) is very scanty and inconsiderable. But this is an experiment, which you ought not make too soon or too frequently: otherwise, instead of being a test to try the strength and reality of your good-nature, it may prove the cause of its ruin and destruction. (Allen 1760: 258)

This is a remarkable instance of the way in which the conduct books try to bridge the gap between reading and life, between the book and the world. It is through immersion in the social world that readers are asked to test their resilience, by exposing themselves to affronts of a particularly injurious nature. Politeness, as denoted in this case by the absence of anger, needs to be tested by keeping company with society that is anything but polite. The young woman who has mastered her tendency to anger becomes a paragon of sociability. In sum, she has taken her mother’s rules to heart, she has exercised self-control in an adverse conversational situation and has used her agency and self-mastery to produce herself in the all-important eyes of the world as a marriageable young woman.

6. Conclusion

When Pamela comments that her sister-in-law is “like a person beside herself,” she not only indulges in one of the many clichés that construct her character as a convincingly authentic serving girl but also shows that she understands the modern need for an indivisible, unified self (Richardson 2008: 395). In her anger, Lady Davers is not a reasonable, conversable, sociable, or polite woman. She has made a successful, hypergamous marriage, but the very institution of marriage is undermined by her assumption of the upper hand *vis-à-vis* Lord Davers, and indeed this disturbing hierarchical reversal is enacted in her regular angry outbursts towards her husband (Richardson 2008: 412). The responsibility for her unbridled behaviour is squarely laid upon her mother, whose faulty education of both her children is to blame. Mr B tells Pamela that the education of “such as are born to large Expectations,” usually makes them “so headstrong, so violent in [their] Wills, that [they] very little bear Controul [*sic*]” (Richardson 2008: 443). Pamela’s lowly but middle-class education better prepares her for a life in sociable conversation. It is notable that immediately after the scene with which I began this essay, Pamela attends her first gathering of the local gentry as wife of Mr B. She carries it off with aplomb, and is good both at turn-taking in general, and specifically at telling the story of her sequestration by Lady Davers with perfectly calibrated detail, appropriate modesty, and self-deprecating humour. She is an excellent participant in polite conversation. Pamela is an ideal: born poor but to literate and pious parents,

she acquires from them a resolutely active and disciplined stance to life; once she has been kidnapped by her master, she refuses to resign herself passively to his lustful desires, yet she never descends into uncontrolled anger, even when faced with inordinate provocation in this most trying of *Prüfungsroman*. Her lack of anger is a factor in her survival and announces her – despite her parents' poverty – as an eminently marriageable young lady.

Pamela demonstrates how achievable a successful liberal and individualistic orientation towards life was. She also offers a model of anger-free comportment and her marriage becomes representative of the rewards available to women who followed the advice provided in the various forms of conduct literature I have surveyed. As I have demonstrated, the authors suggest that anger was seen as a poison capable of harming a woman's reputation, her reason and her physical beauty. In these texts, anger is shown to preclude conversation and exchange, being akin to madness. In sum, the angry young woman loses control of her thoughts, her body and her voice; she disobeys people and rules; and disregards the judgmental gaze of the world. She shows herself unable to navigate the shoals of polite sociability, she shows herself as un-conversable, and ultimately unmarriageable. The conduct books prescribe ideal conduct as being anger-free, and even recommend that women subject themselves to inflammatory company in order to test the extent to which the lessons of these books had been absorbed. The obsessive emphasis placed on female anger in both fictional and non-fiction texts arguably demonstrates just how under threat patriarchy felt at a time when female passivity was being replaced by increasing female involvement in polite conversational settings. As women were staking the claim to participation in frequently un-chaperoned leisure activities, it was vital that their behaviour be regulated. Anger seems to have been an appropriate emotional domain for disciplinary discursive intervention.

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A medical debate of “heated pamphleteering” in the early eighteenth century

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This chapter probes into the controversy of smallpox inoculation that followed soon after the novel method was introduced into England and culminated in the second decade of the eighteenth century. Polemical argumentation displays verbal aggression, and irony and sarcasm take the upper hand in interpersonal language use that bursts into personal insults in a pamphlet that serves as data for the empirical part. The method of analysis is qualitative discourse analysis in a multi-layered contextual frame in accordance with the historical pragmatic approach. The analysis shows how transgressions of the prevailing norms are exploited and presents a far cry from the recommended Royal Society style of writing science as well as from the more rhetorical way of argumentation favoured in contemporary polite society; even an old pattern of scholastic argumentation is revived to poke fun at the target.

Keywords: polite society, argumentation, inoculation controversy, verbal aggression, insults, discourse analysis, sarcasm, styles of writing

1. Conflict discourse in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

Dynamic exchanges *pro* and *con* of polemical issues have been common in the history of science. Controversies were often conducted in the written medium of pamphlets, the eighteenth century belonging to their golden age. Here we witness clusters of typical speech acts and text strategies displaying the communicative principles of the time (Fritz 2010: 461), with irony and witty sarcasm flourishing as weapons. Biting criticism is expressed in offensive language, often veiled in formal politeness but with meaning reversals, and direct bold-on-face attacks are also present in some texts (cf. also Culpeper 2011). Verbal aggression becomes even more striking when seen against the rising politeness culture that prevailed in the

discourse community of gentlemen scientists.¹ Transgressions of norms disrupt the harmony of accepted behaviour with comments that can be taken as personal insults, although the perlocutionary effects on the target are not retrievable. The inoculation conflict that surrounded this novel method provides an intriguing case in point with verbal aggression that transgresses the contemporary norms in several respects. The data of this study show fierce contention in the early 1720s, although the texts are anonymous or attributed to different people and much is lost, so that the exact turns of the debate are not retrievable. Instead of relying on the logocentric mode of argumentation, its spearhead protagonist advanced the new method by statistical counting and probabilistic reasoning. The conflict involves a broad array of writings from cutting-edge medical treatises to newspaper writings and, as in other controversies, the issues were discussed in terms of religious and moral concerns. This confirms the paradox at the heart of the new science, i.e. the contrast on the one hand between the natural sciences with objective matters of fact based on observations and on the other the everyday world with its subjective passions and interests. This paradox proved a valuable tool for moral and religious actions by the Church and the State (Shapin 1996: 164). The exploitation of manipulative strategies was especially pronounced in the overseas extension of the conflict in Boston. Here Puritan Ministers became involved against a cultural backcloth in which the Devil and superstition lent their colouring to the conflict. By contrast, professional texts in Britain focused on attacking the addressee by means of personal insults and disparaging remarks that exhibited the skilful and agile use of verbal aggression.

2. Data, research questions and methods

As pamphlets were usually fairly concise and often took the form of written dialogues, they were a particularly suitable medium for verbal duelling. Attention has previously been paid to religious and political texts (Claridge 2000), and those connected with tobacco and witchcraft have been studied in great detail (Ratia 2011 and Suhr 2011, respectively). Entire pamphlets could serve as communicative turns in written controversies, with a new text in dialogue with a previous one; this structure is typical of written conflicts where the author comments on each predication of a base text with critical remarks (Fritz 2010: 453–454).² According to convention, each subsequent document grew in length and new topics were

1. The term “gentlemen scientists” refers to financially independent scholars who studied scientific phenomena as a hobby in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

2. His focus is on German religious pamphlets connected with the rise of Protestantism.

seldom introduced in the course of the exchange (Fritz 2010: 426; Raymond 2003: 7–28). In English pamphlet writing, the target audiences were often small and well defined and argumentation to influence opinions was the main text type (Claridge 2000: 28).³

The core of the present data is, however, different: the topic was strictly scientific and whirled around a cutting-edge novel practice. My empirical study assesses a polemical pamphlet written in letter form, attributed to John Arbuthnot (see below), whose language repertoire ranges wide from professional medical discourse to the literary mode of satire. Norms and institutional guidelines on scientific writing had already been established in the Royal Society, founded in 1662, and polite society norms had developed their own etiquette of language practice during the ensuing decades. In addition, a subtle use of irony built on the earlier style of scholastic writing that was still in use but declining (see Taavitsainen & Schneider 2019).

My research questions deal with the transgressions of norms and the kind of polemical style adopted. What are the violations like and what norms did they offend? What strategies did the author employ to reach his goals in attacking and ridiculing his adversary in an attempt to win supporters to his side? How were meanings negotiated and how bold-on-face could verbal aggression become? By tackling these questions my aim is to provide an analytical assessment of violent language use in this context.

The method of study is qualitative discourse analysis focusing on the dynamic negotiation of meaning in unfolding communication (see Włodarczyk & Taavitsainen 2017; Culpeper & Demmen 2011). The approach is in accordance with the current trend of historical pragmatics that focuses on politeness-related concerns and their cultural constraints. The culture of the period provides the background against which language use needs to be projected, but the discourse context as well as the narrow cotext also have to be taken into account.

3. The pragmatic space of aggressive language use

As a useful tool for analysing verbal aggression I shall apply the notion of pragmatic space which was introduced in an earlier article on insults; the dimension of speaker attitude is particularly relevant here, ranging from ludic to aggressive, from intentional to unintentional and from ironic to sincere (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2000: 74). Since then, slurs and slanders have received more attention

3. For text types, see Werlich 1982. Instruction is present in self-help texts on inoculation and widely circulated popular narrative anecdotes (see Taavitsainen 2019b).

and the opposite end of the scale with positive speech acts have also been outlined (Archer 2015, Taavitsainen & Jucker 2010, Jucker & Taavitsainen 2008). This theory provides a model of analysis applicable to the data in the empirical part. Negotiation of meaning is particularly striking in ironic and sarcastic texts with meaning reversals that involve a contradiction between inner thought and external expression (Williams 2010: 173).⁴

One of the labels given to the eighteenth century calls it an “Age of Insults”, with Samuel Johnson, Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope and others writing in an ironic and satirical vein with various kinds of insults described as “fast and furious” (Lynch 2004: 1). But the central question to be asked first before probing into the issue more closely is what counts as an insult. A valid definition of insults that applies to all cases seems difficult to attain, and in some attempts, it is the perlocutionary effect that determines whether an utterance can be classified as an insult (see Jucker & Taavitsainen 2000: 72). This is, however, not possible with historical data, as the target’s reactions are seldom recorded or overtly expressed, except sometimes in fiction and drama. Yet insults are a popular topic, and e.g. components of Shakespearean insults, such as name-calling, abuse, knavery, villainy and expletives, have received attention; utterances containing them are regarded as insults whatever the perlocutionary effect of the target (Hill & Öttchen 1991). Doubtless more subtle insults are also abundant in the Shakespearean corpus, but they are more difficult to recognize, and their analysis requires greater expertise in a fine-tuned cultural and situational frame (cf. Kizelbach in this volume). The above-listed ways of performing insults are not prominent in the present data, which features other types of verbal abuse. What one primarily finds in my data, however, is the use of disparaging comments to humiliate the target with pejorative predications about his⁵ mental abilities and attitudes, professional actions and writings. These kinds of insults are in the forefront of the analysis that follows, though I shall also be looking at other rhetorical devices.

In an earlier article (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2000), we adopted the prototype approach to insults. Our point of departure was speech act theory with its locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts (Austin 1962: 98–117; see also Searle 1979), and insults were considered in the pragmatic space of verbal aggression with other related speech acts. Three main components stood out, the most important being a predication about the target. This predication is a compulsory element and may consist of demeaning comments about social identity, profession,

4. The mechanisms that pertain to the dimensions Irony (vs. Sincerity) have not received much attention to date, whereas sincerity in politeness has been discussed in more depth (see also Fitzmaurice 2016 and Williams 2018).

5. All people involved in this controversy are men.

looks, family and relations and so on, and it is necessarily something that the target feels part of. Locutionary acts are records of the verbal expressions and may be given word by word as in drama, fiction and other narrative texts in direct quotes, or they may be summarized or just referred to.⁶ The language of locutionary acts can be analysed according to the semantic groups of adjectives, e.g. pejorative and disparaging, or nasty comments and contemptuous remarks that are thrown at the target. Speaker illocutions are also essential, but they are more elusive and must be gleaned from the situational context, as for instance the mode of the utterance may be given in textual clues. The third aspect, the perlocutionary effect on the target is more difficult to construe and must often be left to mere guesswork.

Our earlier model serves as the basis of my present analysis, but the present data builds mainly on ironic meaning reversals, and the overall plan of the conflict does not fit normal everyday language use, nor is it in accordance with scientific controversies as such. The analytical model that suits my data is Leech’s (2014: 200) conversational irony as a second-order strategy that exploits the politeness principle for contrasting purposes and effects. Tearing the adversary to pieces takes place by propositions that twist the meanings, and my empirical study proves this to be the main strategy in the pamphlet under scrutiny.

4. A brief history of smallpox literature

Smallpox aroused fear and anxiety for centuries, as it was one of the main causes of death in late modern Europe, being responsible for ten per cent of deaths across the continent. Major epidemics had occurred already in the seventeenth century (see Viets 1937: xxvi–xxxix), and smallpox had become the most common cause of death in Britain and much of Europe in the late seventeenth century, surpassing bubonic plague, leprosy and syphilis (see Ratia 2019; Shuttleton 2007: 1). Regular outbreaks and at times large epidemics were promoted by the increasing mobility of the population, the expansion of villages, towns and cities and the growth of trade across the country, which all contributed to the spread of the disease across Britain. Even those who survived often carried the marks of the disease for life.⁷

Inoculation against disease was invented in India or China and was practised, among other places, in Turkey, from where it was brought to England (see

6. A good example can be found in a Paston Letter from 1448, where the situation with “flying” insults is related in detail and some name-calling repeated but the rest is covered by an overall reference to “meche large langage” (see Jucker & Taavitsainen 2000: 83).

7. Hence the name “speckled monster”, the title of Jennifer Lee Carrell’s (2004) dramatic account of early eighteenth-century smallpox in Boston.

Shuttleton 2007: 128–133).⁸ This new method of seeking protection against the disease was one of the main polemical topics in the early decades of eighteenth-century England. The focus of the conflict was on the medical issue whether the method should be supported and adopted or discarded as dangerous. The “fierce pamphlet war among the doctors” (ODNB 2004; Angus Ross s.v. ‘John Arbuthnot’) under scrutiny focuses on the years 1721–1722, and the 1720s provide a peak in other respects as well. Professional medical doctors wrote for their peers, university-educated physicians of the Royal Societies of London and Edinburgh, and the main target group also included surgeons, apothecaries and other professional practitioners. The most pioneering texts were based on facts and built on probabilities using numerical evidence. This was a novel way of dealing with medical issues and statistical facts and has formed a valid base for decisions in medical treatment even today. James Jurin (1684–1750), an advocator of the practice of calculations, was thoroughly in favour of the new method. His seminal work appeared in 1724, and his side won the battle. Little by little inoculation became an established practice, but remained a polemical issue throughout the century. Ultimately, the method was refined by Edward Jenner (1798), and vaccination marks a new era in the story (Figure 1, page 159).⁹

Texts in the 1720s centre round the core question whether the practice was advantageous and whether it should be supported or not. Alongside of the factual way of dealing with the issue, arguments ranged far and wide, extending to religion mixed with superstition and patriotism coloured by xenophobic overtones; these causes had little to do with the original medical issue. The styles of writing vary; some are neutral, but professional medical men burst into aggressive language use in certain cases and evoke prejudice with sharp contrasts between *us* and *them*. The controversy employed several kinds of writing, and the debate also spilled over to newspapers and magazines with contributions from the floor by lay

8. The OED explains that the term *inoculation* was originally applied to the intentional introduction of smallpox virus to induce a mild local attack of the disease, and render the subject immune from future contagion while *vaccination* given as the action or practice of inoculating with vaccine matter as a preventative of smallpox; the first entry of this term is from 1800. In the nineteenth century its scope was enlarged to similar treatment of other infectious or contagious diseases.

9. Thanks to the new method, smallpox was reduced to a minor cause of death in mid-nineteenth century and was officially described as eradicated in 1980 (Davenport et al. 2018: 75).

readership.¹⁰ By the 1720s there was already a lively tradition of smallpox writing that continued throughout the eighteenth century (Viets 1937).¹¹

5. Main protagonists and what they wrote

The main problem with the data is that only a few of the extant texts are readily available. Ascriptions to authors seem haphazard and unreliable and the practice of writing under pseudonyms was another cultural manifestation of the period.¹²

The controversy found expression simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic. The earliest contribution (1721) comes from the other side by “a Minister in Boston” and is entitled *A Letter to a Friend in the Country, Attempting a Solution of the Scruples & Objections of a Conscientious or Religious Nature, commonly made against the New Way of receiving the Small Pox* (A Letter hereafter).¹³ The disease raged in Boston at the time with a high mortality rate that caused a great deal of anxiety, and introduced religious and superstitious issues. The ECCO facsimile has the ascription “By Rev. William Cooper” written by hand, but there is no other evidence of the authorship. Another pamphlet from Boston was published a year later (1722) and is called “*A Vindication of the Ministers of Boston, from the Abuses & Scandals, lately cast upon them, in Diverse Printed Papers by Some of their People*”. It relates the conflict and specifies that the local Ministers had been the target of “Contempt and Ridicule”, attributing this state to “[a] finish’d Stratagem of the Devil!” (1722: A2). “[T]he principal Instrument” of

10. The style of these Letters to the Editor is more colloquial in accordance with polite society styles, as in the following, called “Of inoculating the Small-Pox occasioned by its now raging in several large Towns. ALL Mankind (very few excepted) being once in Life liable to the Small-Pox, the Fear thereof is to many a one a great Uneasiness, and even that Fear alone so very disturbing, that a Remedy thereof must needs be very acceptable. ... It seizes the Beauty, the pregnant, the young, the Adult, and the Aged; Travellers also, when abroad, in dangerous Times and Circumstances; who then (and Reason good) think their Non-inoculation an Omission, and wish it had been duly done” (*The Gentleman’s Magazine* 1737: 561).

11. In addition to non-literary writings, major diseases had fictional repercussions (see also note 6).

12. E.g. “an ingenious gentleman” occurs frequently in the Royal Society *Philosophical Transactions* (1665–; Valle 1999: 45).

13. *A Letter to a Friend* seems to provide a response to a previous irretrievable turn in the conflict. According to a WorldCat webpage, several more should be found in ECCO TCP, but they could not be retrieved in spite of several attempts. Thus, there are gaps and it is impossible to construe the pamphlet debate turn by turn.

the campaign on the American side was Cotton Mather (1663–1728) in Boston, with “many foolish pamphlets that are pointed at him” (1722: 7).¹⁴ His character is described as “controversial and credulous”, and it is also mentioned that his “every action spurred hostility”, the inoculation campaign being a case in point. His later experiments confirmed his cautiously favourable attitude as they gave first-hand evidence of the positive effects of inoculation (ODNB 2004; Michael G. Hall, s.v. ‘Cotton Mather’).

Pamphlets on the topic were abundant in Britain. One of the first was by Charles Maitland, a Scottish surgeon of high rank, who performed the first professional inoculation tests in 1721 in England. He had a Royal Licence to apply the method at Newgate Prison on six prisoners. His report was published in 1722 and is entitled *Mr. Maitland’s account of inoculating the small pox, vindicated, from Dr. Wagstaffe’s misrepresentations of that practice; with some remarks on Mr. Massey’s sermon* (ECCO).¹⁵ The text narrates his empirical experiment at Newgate in the first person singular (“I performed...”) and it also contains several case narratives of Newgate prisoners in line with those that provided the data for Jurin’s collected statistical treatment. Somewhat strangely, this and another pamphlet from the same year are ascribed to John Arbuthnot in ECCO. The ascriptions present an unexpected problem: it is difficult to know exactly who wrote what in this controversy. The contents of the first pamphlet, however, give evidence of Maitland’s authorship, and the text is in accordance with the norms of medical writing in experimental reports and case narratives. In contrast, the ascription of the second pamphlet to John Arbuthnot seems feasible and by text-internal criteria even highly likely. Arbuthnot was a medical professional who moved at the interface between language and literature and whose authorship was sometimes inseparable from his more famous literary fellow-authors’ production (see below). The second is very different from the first and is clearly written in response to previous arguments that took a polemical part in the debate. It provides plenty of data for analysing aggressive and insulting language use in the ironic and sarcastic mode, which was Arbuthnot’s speciality. A brief biography of this high-ranking medical doctor and famous satirist illuminates the problem of authorship attribution that seems to apply to his writings more broadly and shows how entangled his contributions are with the literary productions of his even more famous friends, Jonathan Swift

14. Mather was a Puritan who played a significant role in the Salem witchcraft controversy in 1692. Importantly for the present topic, he was interested in science, had a wide European correspondence and became a member of the Royal Society in 1713. Conclusive evidence of his authorship of specific pamphlets is, however, lacking.

15. William Wagstaffe was a physician at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, and a Fellow of the College of Physicians and the Royal Society. Mr. Massey was a Minister.

(1667–1754) and Alexander Pope (1688–1744).¹⁶ John Arbuthnot (1667–1735) was originally from Scotland, had Oxford connections, and was a member of the Royal Societies of London and Edinburgh.¹⁷ He was connected to leading scientists like Newton.¹⁸ He settled down in London, where he achieved a position of highest rank as Physician to Queen Anne and Prince George (later George I). He was a successful political pamphleteer,¹⁹ well known in literary circles, and a close friend to Swift, who also moved to London in 1710. These two satirists became such intimate collaborators that it is often impossible to distinguish their contributions. Sampson writes that Arbuthnot “was a source of ‘hints’ but cared little for the ‘ownership’ of ideas” and “took no pains to separate his works from joint enterprises” (1970: 392). Pamphlets, poems, and squibs attributed to Swift or Arbuthnot “often have a communal origin” (see ODNB 2004; Angus Ross, s.v. ‘John Arbuthnot’). Both were members of the Scriblerus Club, a group that met frequently and wrote together.²⁰ The problem of assigning authorship also applies to their literary production: “Arbuthnot’s input to joint endeavors was innovative and creative, as Swift’s letter to him reveals ‘you every day give better hints than all of us together could do in a twelvemonth ... all that relates to sciences must come from you’” (ODNB 2004; Angus Ross, s.v. ‘John Arbuthnot’).

6. Norms of medical writing in the eighteenth century

Deviations and transgressions can be detected only if the norms and standards are known, and therefore it is pertinent to describe the recommended and commonly employed styles of writing before the empirical part. The two norms of the period under scrutiny are the Royal Society (RS) style (Norm 1) and the rhetorical eloquence of polite society that also spread to scientific writing (Norm 2). They are both found in the present data. Interestingly, and perhaps counter to expectations,

16. The tradition of anonymity was especially strong with polemical pamphlets in the satirical vein, which was vigorous at the time. It is less known that the trend extended to spearhead scientific writing.

17. LMEMT includes two texts by him: *Practical rules of diet in the various constitutions and diseases of human bodies* (1732) and a satire called *An essay for abridging the study of physick* (1735).

18. Arbuthnot is described as Newton’s “cat’s paw” in a time-consuming struggle that had to do with an astronomical publication (ODNB 2004; Angus Ross, s.v. ‘John Arbuthnot’).

19. His best known pieces are the five John Bull pamphlets (1712) connected with Swift’s *The Conduct of Allies*.

20. Other members included Alexander Pope. The group was involved in politics.

the old scholastic style appears, too (Norm 3). It was established in the late medieval period, but its afterlife continued for centuries and apparently not only in popular writings, as discussed in the earlier literature,²¹ but also in spearhead medical texts, albeit in different ways. Its use is not, however, sincere, but ironic, and illuminates the pertinent dimension and how it can be activated in our insults model of analysis (see below).

6.1 Norm 1: Royal Society “plain” style

This style was declared in a programmatic way in the Royal Society guidelines: “[E]loquence ought to be banish’d out of all civil Societies”, which rejected rhetorical devices and advised going “back to primitive purity, and shortness” (Sprat 2003 [1667]: 111). As a result, some of its founding members developed a dialogic style of argumentation with imagined objections that were explicitly numbered as Object[ion] 1. Object[ion] 2. and so on; e.g. Henry Power (1664) used the pattern of enumerated objections in his argumentation, based on collaborative dialogue in the first-person singular between himself and those who were supposed to refute his statements. This style continues in eighteenth-century cutting-edge texts by the professional elite. In this conflict, James Jurin (d. 1750), Royal Society secretary (1721–1727) and editor of the *Philosophical Transactions*, wrote in accordance with the discourse pattern of the Royal Society new science, basing his statements on “the Facts here laid down” (Jurin 1724: 9). The hazards of inoculation received attention, providing arguments both *pro* and *con*. The latter are presented in a regular pattern of the third-person plural *they* and the speech act verbs that follow include *maintain*, *object*, and *plead*, among others. After this dialogue, a summary follows, and the responsibility is thrown to the reader, who is addressed with the modification “every” and the flattering epithet “intelligent”; this combination serves as a powerful appeal to belong to this group and accept the argument.

- (1) How far these several Objections are of Weight, is submitted to the Determination of those, who must and will judge for themselves, that is, to **every intelligent Reader**, who being thus appriz’d of the Facts, may easily, ..., form to himself a Judgment of the Hazard of Life in this Operation: ...
(LMEMT; Jurin, *Inoculating The Small Pox* 1724: 37–39; emphasis in all examples mine)

²¹ The characteristics of scholastic writing include argumentation patterns, references to ancient authorities and reliance on absolute certainty in the logocentric mode of knowing (Taavitsainen & Pahta 1998; Taavitsainen 2018; Taavitsainen and Schneider 2019), and these features gained special applications in popular layers of writing (see Taavitsainen 2009, 2017).

6.2 Norm 2: Rhetorical eloquence

Polite society members including medical physicians had received education in classical oratory and appreciated eloquence with rhetorical devices. McIntosh (1998: vii) states that the more consciously eloquent style increases in the course of the eighteenth century so that the last quarter is more polite and more “gentrified” than the early decades.²² His data is mostly literary, but his statement holds true for medical writing as well (see Taavitsainen 2019a). Rhetorical diction is found both in the early and late decades of the century, as a passage from the end of the Preface to a recipe collection shows. It was written in 1721, in the same year as the first pamphlet of the present data.

- (2) Thus, **candid Reader**, we take leave; wishing your Endeavours, in the use hereof, may concur with ours for a **Common Good**, and the **Publick Health**, which is the sole End we have had Regard to this Work ...

(LMEMT; John Quincy, *The Dispensatory of the Royal College of Physicians in London*, 1721: unnumbered)

The reader is addressed with the epithet *candid* that had the meaning of ‘illustrious, courteous, impartial and sincere’ at this time (OED, s.v. ‘candid’). The quote comes from the end of the Preface²³ and leave-taking is accompanied by benevolent wishes assuring the good intentions of the author in a face-enhancing way. Interestingly, the predominant themes of common good and public health, prevalent in the latter half of the century, are already present (see Lehto 2019). The text shows that the trend of rhetorical writing is attested in the early years, but becomes even more prominent e.g. with elaborated rhetorical schemes towards the end of the century.²⁴ Classical rhetoric with eloquent and polite language use was employed in order to persuade readers; this style is also common in the eighteenth-century non-literary writing of science and medicine (see Taavitsainen 2019a; McIntosh 1998). A further development emphasizes pleasant interaction and employs narratives to promote harmony and entertain the readers. An example can be found in a popular narrative on the origins of inoculation: Lady Wortley Montague, who was the Ambassador’s wife in Turkey, had her baby daughter

22. By this term McIntosh refers to middle-class strands that had multiplied so that writing styles became “more polite, precise, correct and less vernacular” than before (1998: 3).

23. Prefaces became more ornamental and contain formulaic phrases in the early modern period; their development reflects codes of polite communication (Taavitsainen 2002: 299, 301).

24. E.g. John Anderson’s sea-bathing treatise *A preliminary introduction to the act of sea-bathing* (LMEMT; 1795) displays an architectural structure with rhetorical figures, with each section culminating in a citation from a past or contemporary medical or literary authority.

inoculated, thus setting an example to others and introducing the new method to England. The fairytale-like story allegedly “written by the famous *M. Voltaire*”, was published in newspapers and reprinted in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1750.²⁵

6.3 Norm 3: Scholastic argumentation with moral concerns

The third norm is connected with the learned argumentation pattern ultimately derived from Antiquity. Its more immediate source can be found in the teaching methods at medieval and early modern universities with classical dialectics and formal disputations that belonged to academic education and continued well into the nineteenth century (Fritz 2010: 453, 461). The pattern was well established in early modern medical writing (see Taavitsainen 1999) and its modification in the Question–Answer pattern continues to the present day in health columns in popular magazines. The following passage comes from the inoculation data and bears witness to the validity of the old tradition even in the eighteenth century. It is expressed in a somewhat old-fashioned diction with an enumerative text strategy (*three things*) in accordance with formal scholasticism.

- (3) **Now here a Question ariseth**, Whether an honest Man can do that which the Devil has done? **I answer in the Affirmative**; there are **three things mention’d**; of the Devil’s Assembling himself (as in this Place) with the Sons of God; Believing, and Quoting of Scripture. (Arbuthnot (attrib.), 1722: 42)

The basis for argumentation is on religious grounds, distanced from the protagonists. Instead of people being involved, the issues themselves are contrasted. The use of the first person in the phrase “I answer” is formulaic rather than personal. But the analysis of the above example may be taken even further within the context of this satirical pamphlet. It is likely that the author exploits an outdated model in order to cast an ironic tone over the issue. His primary aim would seem to be to ridicule the base text (see below).

7. Exploiting the norms with meaning reversals

The following analysis will focus on the negotiation of meaning by violating the norms of contemporary scientific writing. In some cases, the reverse is implied,

25. *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (1750: 256) reproduced “a short History of Inoculation” from Mr. Bavius’s weekly news-sheet *The Grub Street Journal*. The editorial policy of the new medium declared that it aimed at providing edification and entertainment to its readers (inaugural issue in 1731), and anecdotes clearly fall into the latter category.

but the strategy of twisting words to point to something other than was originally intended, even implying the opposite, is not uncommon. The line between a positive and a negative interpretation of an ironic comment is often very subtle and left to the reader, who might be misled and take the propositions at their face value.

7.1 Setting the scene

The earliest text in the present data is the transatlantic pamphlet *A Letter*, which claims that the practice of inoculation is “originally from the Devil” (*A Letter* 1721: 11). This statement is further elaborated by Arbuthnot.

- (4) But there is still a stronger Objection against this Practice; That it is unlawful, and first introduc'd by **the Devil**, who Ingrafted **Job** of the Confluent Sort of Small Pox. (Arbuthnot (attrib.), 1722: 41)

The quote alludes to the Devil²⁶ and makes use of the negative vocabulary of imaginary objections with a calculated strategy by referring to the Bible, the ultimate authority of the Christian world, with Job as the icon of human suffering inflicted by a disease. The purpose is to invoke religious prohibitions against the practice and thus secure the felicitous fulfilment of speaker intentions, i.e. rejecting inoculation. The quotation becomes even more striking when bearing Example (3) in mind. It is likely that Arbuthnot twisted this passage into the old scholastic mode, purposefully using a very formal tone of voice in order to poke fun at inoculation.²⁷ Such an ironical modification works as a demeaning insult targeted at previous authors who used the Devil and the Bible to back up their arguments with sincere conviction.

7.2 From general to personal accusations

The politeness norm of maintaining distance with an appropriate address is present as surface civility in Example (5) below. “This Reverend Divine” refers to the Minister who wrote the previous turn. It is a deference device, but when repeated with another, secular noun “this Reverend Gentleman” the polite interpretation may become infelicitous in the context of a face-threatening accusation. Instead, the use of address terms can be read as mock politeness, calculated to imply negative evaluation at a deeper level (Leech 2014: 100–101). The context is essential

26. Cf. arguments about tobacco 1602: “[T]he first author and finder hereof was **the Diuell**, and the first practisers of the same were **the Diuells Priests**, and therefore **not to be vsed of vs Christians.**” (Philaretus 1602: f.Biv; for the tobacco controversy, see Ratia 2011).

27. This seems to be a carefully premeditated strategy (cf. the intentional vs unintentional dimension of speaker attitudes of our insults model).

as it makes the intentions clear and shows that the utterance should not be taken seriously at face value. Irony rather than sincerity is evoked.

- (5) I readily agree with **this Reverend Divine**, that if Inoculating the Small Pox be an unlawful Action, it cannot be justify'd by the Good which may ensue from it; but that it is unlawful, must be prov'd, either by some natural or positive Law: That **this Reverend Gentleman** has brought **no such Proof**, either from natural or reveal'd Religion, will appear plain.

(Arbuthnot (attrib.), 1722: 12)

The argumentation of the following Example (6) continues the negotiation of meaning and at certain places religious and ironic concerns override the medical issues.

- (6) He says he will **attempt** to prove, That Diseases are utterly unlawful to be inflicted by any who profess themselves Christians: He **terms it very right**; for it is an **Attempt** to Prove, and no more. By restraining the Prohibition to Christians, one would think, there was some **positive Command in the Gospel against it**; but he has brought none, ... I know of no Immorality that is forbid to a Christian, the Practice of which is allow'd to an Infidel.

(Arbuthnot (attrib.), 1722: 13)

Negotiation of meaning takes place by breaking the norms of civilized argumentation. Instead, transgressions at the personal level using sarcasm prevail. The use of the polite phrase “he terms it very right” contains praise at the surface level, but it soon turns out that the author refers to the choice of words, not to the statement itself. This reversal twists the meaning, and both the verb and the noun *attempt* convey a disparaging implicature that the act is not successful and fails to achieve its goal. Surface politeness is maintained by writing in the third person, which is more distanced than writing with direct second-person address *you* (which would be rude in its directness and does not occur here). Nevertheless, the wording receives an ironic colouring by the subjective stance expressed in the third person: *one would think*. It implies a contrast and conveys a critical attitude as part of its semantic prosody. Such “a veiled reference to the author” is typical of the impersonal style of academic prose, where the reader is expressed in the third person (Biber et al. 1999: 354). The general arguments with twisted word meanings become personal attacks with disparaging remarks.

7.3 Demeaning professional skills and experience

The personal insult of Example (7) is expressed in an accusation and an ironic statement targeted at the author of the previous turn. Again, surface politeness is

maintained by giving credit to the target’s professional skills in his own field, but it is twisted into an assault that questions his skills in science and his mental ability in general. Several negative nouns are employed: *narrowness*, *credulity*, and *incredulity* (cf. the ODNB quote of Mather above) and *prejudice*. The use of the highly positive adjective *excellent* continues as a prototypically ironic meaning reversal.

- (7) ... allowing the Doctor’s **Abilities** to be as great as possible in his own Profession, he seems not quite so well qualify’d to write upon this Subject; because of the **Narrowness** of his Experience ... and his partial **Credulity**, or **Incredulity** in Matters of Fact, which he takes from others; and lastly, because of strong **Prejudices**, which impose upon **his most excellent Understanding**; ... All these, I believe, will appear very plain to any **Impartial Reader**, ... (Arbuthnot (attrib.), 1722: 2–3)

The last sentence makes a skilful appeal to the pamphlet’s readers to judge for themselves. Responsibility is thrust on the readers, who are invited to act as the ultimate judges. The preceding manipulation is guaranteed to give support to the ironic author and not to the target of the attack. The author is thus claiming universal acceptance of his disparaging comments.

Twisting the meanings continues with the eloquent use of rhetorical questions. The use of the verb *pretend* continues the series of implicatures opened by the earlier use of *attempt*, meaning ‘not really making it’. Criticism continues in a nasty tone, twisting positive words into personal insults. Their cumulative effect combined with face-demeaning attacks of irony and sarcasm represent the target’s actions as ridiculous and he is presented as an imposter. Occasionally direct address is used in imitation of speech. *Pray, Sir*, has another implication, as in a hierarchical society it could be said by a servant to the master. Such devices make the style more vivid and increase reader involvement.

- (8) The Letter **pretends** to be an Admonition to Physicians not to meddle in this Practice of Inoculation, ‘till they are better ascertain’d, by Experience, of the Success of it: At the same Time, it is a most warm Dissuasive, not only to Physicians, but to all Sorts of People, not to practise it at all; and consequently, to deprive them of all Possibility of coming by Experience. **Would it not sound somewhat absurd, if any one should say to a young Physician, Pray, Sir, don’t Practise ‘till you have Experience?** But it is still more so in this Case, because in a Practice that is entirely to be laid aside, you can neither have the Benefit of your own, nor other Peoples Experience ... (Arbuthnot (attrib.), 1722: 2)

7.4 Language issues

At places the author assumes a veil of false modesty, which, however, enhances the ironic tone with the speaker intention of exhibiting his own sharp wit in piercing the surface politeness.

- (9) It may proceed from **my Ignorance, or Dulness**, but, **I confess, I do not easily apprehend the Meaning of this Sentence**; Whether ... he means...; or whether ..., is not obvious from the Construction of the Sentence ...
(Arbuthnot (attrib.), 1722: 6)

The criticism of the previous author's language use continues with an analysis sentence by sentence as indicated by typographical devices (italics) on the page.²⁸ This criticism reads like a review of the base text.

- (10) The Doctor says ...
Here is **an odd Jumble of the Words** *always, scarce ever*: Suppose for *scarce ever* one put *seldom*, then the Sentence runs thus; ... What happens but seldom, happens sometimes; and to observe always That not to happen, which happens sometimes, is **odd, or oddly express'd**.
(Arbuthnot (attrib.), 1722: 9–10)

7.5 Modification of a classical argumentation pattern

The following passage employs the deductive reasoning typical of scholasticism and favours phrases with absolute reliance like *must needs*. Again, the disparaging remarks become personal. Accusations of ignorance and stupidity apply to the previous author, and mock politeness is maintained by the hedge *I am afraid*, followed by a highly critical and even sarcastic statement.

- (11) One would imagine, that **the natural Inference** from this, would **be to the Advantage of Inoculation**; For if there are terrible Symptoms, which arise from Want of a sufficient Discharge of the purulent Matter in the Small Pox; Inoculation, which provides for such a Discharge, by artificial Out-lets, **must needs be useful...**
I am afraid the Case is quite different from what the Doctor represents; ...
(Arbuthnot (attrib.), 1722: 8–9)

A classical pattern of argumentation in the scholastic vein builds on a pattern of inference called *modus ponens*, a form of reasoning about propositions with a

²⁸ The quotes from the base text are printed in italics, but they are not from *A Letter to a Friend*. The source remains unknown.

classical formula that makes the protagonist seem committed to the truth value.²⁹ The following passage twists this pattern *ad absurdum* and the reasoning becomes nonsensical. The author exaggerates to make the reader believe that the target’s text is unconvincing and deficient. Example (12) below contains a grave insult by the use of disparaging remarks, pointing to the adversary’s circular argumentation in order to make it sound ridiculous. The passage ends in other personal comments with negative word meanings.

- (12) If his Arguments so far prevail, as to hinder any future Inoculation, he **must** for ever continue in his Mistake; If the Patient recovers, **then** it was only something like the Small Pox; If any one dies, **then** to be sure it was the Small Pox catch’d by Inoculation, and of the worst Sort. In this Paragraph it is no Small Pox; by and by, it is a Small Pox so bad, that it is capable of spreading the Small Pox through a whole City; and an artificial Way of depopulating a whole Country. This Way of Arguing is a very plain Proof of the **strong Prejudices** the Doctor lyes under; and that ... he is resolv’d to defend it **obstinately**.
(Arbuthnot (attrib.), 1722: 10-11)

7.6 National feelings: Us versus them

A common strategy in political writing relies on the contrast between ingroups and outgroups, *us* and *them* (see e.g. van Dijk 1995); here it is applied to Christians (*us*) and Muslims (*them*), and further to “we” English and to the rest of the world (“them”). Several disparaging adjectives (*ignorant*, *illiterate*, *unthinking*) are applied to women and foreigners (in this case Turks); the English are described in a choice of terms that to the modern reader sound like the speech act of boasting, but it may just reflect the rising patriotism of the eighteenth century. An interesting feature worth attention is the use of the Latin word *ergo* ‘therefore’ with the verb *must*, which belongs to learned academic style and logical reasoning (cf. above) and lends a scholastic tone to the passage. However, it ends with an unexpected twist that undermines the first impressions:

- (13) ... the Doctor is surpriz’d, that an Experiment, practis’d only by a few **ignorant Women**, amongst an **illiterate and unthinking People**, should on a Sudden, and upon a slender Experience, so far obtain in **one of the Politest Nations** in the World, as to be receiv’d into the Royal Palace.

29. It relies on the chain *If... then*, “by offering *p* as a reason for accepting *q*.” *If p then q*. Or *p*. Therefore *q*. (van Eemeren et al. 1997: 222–223).

The Blood of the English if we speak of it as National, is the Product of **the richest Dyet, &c.** *Ergo*, to bring 'em to a spare Dyet before they have the Small Pox, *must* be extremely dangerous and hurtful. This must be the Doctor's Conclusion: mine, I own, would be the direct contradictory.

(Arbuthnot, 1722: 7)

8. Conclusions

Written debates had already been common in the previous century of the early modern period, and they acquired norms of presentation in conventional forms that were firmly rooted in scientific writing. The inoculation controversy is purely medical in essence and, on the one hand, calculations of probabilities occur for the first time in professional medical texts that introduce a modern way of argumentation. On the other hand, religious beliefs in the Devil being involved are also expressed, especially in the transatlantic pamphlets, where the fairly recent Salem witch trials were still a living memory, mixing objective scientific issues with subjective feelings and superstitions.

Arbuthnot was a famous medical writer in the satirical vein and the present pamphlet from 1722 excels in that style. The author had a university education and was well-trained in classical scholasticism, which shows in the exploitation of its features for his own purposes of ridiculing a previous text. Ironic comments form the backbone of his critical review of the base text and take up a large part of the pamphlet. The text under scrutiny deviates and even violates both the norms set by the Royal Society authorities and the rhetorical style of polite society. The technical realization of ironical intent is often very subtle, and the author seldom reverts to straightforward meaning reversal, which is the common mechanism to cast an ironic light on a proposition. Instead, the statements of the base text are turned into ironic or sarcastic comments by more fine-tuned mechanisms. The text often assumes an openly aggressive stance, frequently erupting into biting personal insults that make disparaging remarks about the adversary's professional skills, mental abilities and language use. At a more general level, rising national feelings are exploited with the commonly employed contrast of *us* and *them* with respect to both religion and nationality.

The present data show different ways of dealing with this conflict, and three different modes of polemical argumentation can be discerned. The first is based on facts and the style of writing is neutral with the focus on influencing readers' opinions by careful weighting of *pros* and *cons*, leaving the final judgement to the reader's deliberation. This style is employed in cutting-edge scientific texts in accordance with the Royal Society plain style. A more rhetorical diction is present

in some medical texts of the period, too, but in smallpox writings it is not prominent. The two models are based on collaboration whereas the third, typical of conflicts, has to do with impoliteness, face attack and disrupting harmony. The data is, however, scarce and cannot be generalized without further study. Thus, my ultimate question is whether similar attacks are found more widely in debates or reviews of earlier literary works, whether the aggressively ironic and satirical style employed in this controversy prompted a new critical convention with biting comments that continue in book reviews evaluating and describing earlier texts. Politeness versus impoliteness with aggressive language use is so deeply integrated with the dimension of irony versus sincerity in the present data that the different strands can only be detected by close qualitative scrutiny, taking various layers of context and interpersonal negotiation into account, as is pertinent to the historical pragmatics approach.



Figure 1. Edward Jenner vaccinating patients in the Smallpox and Inoculation Hospital at St. Pancras: The patients develop features of cows. Coloured etching, 1803, after James Gillray, 1802. Credit: Wellcome Collection.

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Transgressions as a socialisation strategy in Samuel Richardson's *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* (1734)

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Conduct manuals disseminating norms of behaviour were popular in Early and Late Modern England. In this contribution I offer a close reading of an influential eighteenth-century conduct manual for newly apprenticed boys, Samuel Richardson's *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* (Richardson 2012[1734]). In my analysis of its contents I aim to identify the specific set of norms of conduct young apprentices were impelled to comply with, in an attempt to shed light on the ways in which representations of acts of transgressive behaviour in didactic advice literature were instrumental in the process of indoctrinating social novices about the norms of the dominant world order. I then examine the distinctive traits of the author's instructive language, that is to say, the specific linguistic strategies Richardson employs in order to deliver his instructions in the most efficient, unequivocal and accessible way. Finally, I argue that in Richardson's in-depth treatment of transgressive acts we find evidence of the existence of a coherent code of anti-normative behaviour.

Keywords: conduct manuals, didactic advice literature, instructional writing, eighteenth century, apprentices, transgressions, rhetorical strategies, manners and norms

1. Introduction

Conduct manuals targeting specifically young apprentices were popular in Early Modern England (Smith 1973; Pettit 2012; Lamb 2014).¹ Masters would give these “[small cheap] manuals of good advice, priced at a shilling or so” (McKillop 1943: 43) to boys and young men apprenticed to learn one of the popular trades.

1. On apprenticeship in Early and Late Modern England see Earle (1989) and Lane (1996).

Such “non-fictional books of secular improvement” (Klein 1995: 367) were concerned mainly with young people’s behaviour and their morals (Lamb 2014: 36–37). More specifically, this kind of didactic advice literature aimed to disseminate norms of everyday behaviour and, at the same time, condemn deviations and transgressions of such norms.

The period of transition from boyhood into adulthood, which typically coincided with the adolescent leaving his family to become part of his master’s household (Smith 1973), brought many challenges for the newly apprenticed boy. A seven-year apprenticeship, as Brooks reminds us, “required a young man to live celibately within a strange household, often in a strange place, and to work for little or no pay” (1994: 74). In addition to being trained in a particular trade, adolescent apprentices had to be prepared to become good adults and citizens (Calvert 2018). Their behaviour was thus constantly scrutinised by adults who saw it as their responsibility to dictate rules of conduct and exercise control over this “subordinate and potentially disruptive group” (Lamb 2014: 36). If apprenticeship could be defined “as the primary means by which the urban social structure reproduced itself” (Brooks 1994: 53), conduct manuals for apprentices partook in this process by “defining in print a set of values and standards” (Lane 1996: 188) that these young boys were expected to adhere to in order to become virtuous and valuable members of the society.²

In this contribution I offer a close reading of one of such popular eighteenth-century conduct manuals for apprentices, Samuel Richardson’s *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum* (Richardson 2012[1734]). This book is one in a series of non-fictional pieces of writing Richardson produced in an effort to offer practical advice and moral guidance to “the lower classes of people” (Richardson’s letter to Stinstra, 2 June 1753, quoted in Pettit 2012: lxx).³ The author’s main didactic concern here is with imparting moral precepts that the youth was expected to assimilate in order to become “an Ornament to [his] Profession, and a Credit to Trade in general” (36). In my analysis of the contents of *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum* I first aim to identify the specific set of norms of conduct young apprentices were impelled to comply

2. Other types of popular materials that aimed to supply the servant and apprentice class with advice on proper conduct were, for example, broadside ballads (McIlvenna 2016) and plays (Carson 1963; Wallace 1992; Jucker 2016).

3. Latimer, for instance, argues against “separat[ing] out ‘educational writing’ as a subcategory of Richardson’s work”, emphasising how “in all his writing, delight mingles with instruction” (Latimer 2017: 163). Latimer discusses *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum* together with Richardson’s letter-miscellany entitled *Letters Written to and for Particular Friends, on the Most Important Occasions* (Richardson 2012 [1741]). This second example of Richardson’s didactic writing shares a number of concerns about the socialisation of apprentices with *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum* (cf. Bannet 2005: 151–177; Hornbeak 1934: 100–116; Latimer 2017; Shvanyukova 2017).

with (Section 2). I then proceed to investigate the linguistic means Richardson employs to impart these norms in the most effective way (Section 3). In the final section of the paper, I argue that, taken together, the different violations of the norms discussed by Richardson hint at the existence of a coherent code of anti-normative behaviour. This code of anti-normative, transgressive behaviour clearly interacted with and helped to define the contemporary code of proper conduct.

2. Representation of transgressive acts in Richardson's *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum*

The Apprentice's Vade Mecum is clearly addressed at a designated group of readers, namely "the Class of Young Men who are about being apprenticed out to Trades and Business" (5).⁴ As a conduct book, it aims to "offer guidelines and precepts for living an ethical and, in most cases, Christian life" (Doty 2009: 141), in an effort to help young apprentices withstand the challenges of "the Degeneracy of the Times, and the Prophaneness and Immortality, and even the open Infidelity" (5). Conduct manuals represent a particular genre in the large and heterogeneous body of texts referred to as didactic literature (Glaisyer & Pennell 2003) or instructional writing (Peikola et al. 2009). The distinguishing trait of instructional writing is its specific communicative purpose: it is concerned with instruction (Tanskanen et al. 2009), i.e., it is explicitly framed to instruct through the material it contains (Glaisyer & Pennell 2003). *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* can be placed in the first of the four prototypical categories of instructional writing proposed by Tanskanen et al. and classified as "didactic advice literature" (2009: 5–6). This category is characterised by its explicit instructive purpose and explicit instructive language. The purpose of Richardson's conduct book is explicitly defined as instructive already on the dedication page. Here the author presents his "small treatise" to the Chamberlain of London as a work that was "written principally with a View to regulate the Behaviour, and improve the Morals of the Youth of this Kingdom, and especially of such who are put out Apprentice" (4).

In order to investigate what specific norms of behaviour Richardson intended to transmit to his young readers, I focus on the second part of *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum*. The full title of this part reads *The Young Man's Pocket-Companion. Containing Summary Rules and Directions For the Behaviour of YOUNG MEN On their Entring into APPRENTICESHIP: Which duly observ'd, Will lay a Foundation*

4. In what follows, all quotations from *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* will reference the 2012 edition of the work (Richardson 2012 [1734]), maintaining the original spelling (capitalisation included) and original emphasis.

for their present Ease and Benefit, and their future Prosperity and Happiness (Richardson 2012 [1734]: 26).⁵ This part is divided into twenty-four sections of varying length, each introduced by a heading summarising its main contents. Additional headings accompany individual paragraphs in the majority of the sections. The formal division into sections does not correspond strictly to the division of the contents into separate topics, given that a number of topics are dealt with in different sections. In what follows I discuss the main problem areas in which, according to the author, the youth's behaviour had to be regulated.

The opening paragraph of the second part of *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* offers a short, but very unflattering description of the transgressive behaviour of a newly apprenticed boy, who is characterised with highly value-laden, negative terms such as *unpolished*, *rough*, *giddy*, *precipitate*, and *rude* (27). More specifically, the young apprentice is criticised for his "unpolished Roughness of Behaviour, a giddy and precipitate Rudeness", his lack of "good Manners" (27) and for being capable to forfeit his morals (32). Moreover, young apprentices are depicted as "confident Creatures" who are "unmanageable" and "know not how to talk or how to be ashamed" (31). It is interesting to observe how Richardson's technique here is to immediately draw the reader's attention to the violations of the norms of conduct. Indeed, this technique of describing specific acts of transgressive behaviour, as I will show in this section, can be said to be Richardson's preferred method of instructing the apprentice on how (not) to behave.

The first specific act of transgressive behaviour dealt with in *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* is loitering or idleness, condemned as "that terrible Bane of Youth" (28):

- (1) You must remember, that you have no Potion of Time, during the Term of your Apprenticeship, that you can call your own; but that you are accountable for every Hour to your Master [...] You must not even by Reading, or any other Amusement, however laudable at *proper* Times, and which may become culpable at *improper*, squander away the Time appropriated to Business, or your Master's Service. (28–29)

5. The first part contains "useful Comments and Observations on the Covenants entered into between Master and Servant, by way of Indenture" (Richardson 2012 [1734]: 15–25). Here Richardson focuses on the indenture, the main legal document which defined the relationship between an apprentice and his master and regulated the young man's life during the period of apprenticeship. The third part is dedicated to "Some brief Cautions to a young Man against the Scepticism and Infidelity of the present Age" (Richardson 2012 [1734]: 44–60). Detailed information on the history of the writing and the publication of *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* is provided by McKillop (1943) and Pettit (2012: xxxix–xlvi), while Dussinger (2006) deals specifically with the third part of the work.

In urging the young man to show dedication to his master and his training by working hard and being diligent, Richardson summarises two main ideas he shared with his contemporaries about the labouring classes and idleness: “First, the poor are not entitled to leisure time: [...] any pause in work other than what is absolutely required for sleep, meals and devotion is idleness. Second, the poor have an obligation to do work that will profit the middle and upper classes” (Jordan 2014: 108) Richardson categorically excludes any kind of recreational activity, including reading (29), on the grounds that even laudable amusements interfere with the apprentice’s duties. This reprimand reflects a common anxiety of the period, according to which “diversion [had] transgressed topographical and temporal boundaries, promoting idleness in those determined for industry” (Domingo 2012: 217):

- (2) Remember there is a *Time* and a *Season* for every thing; But the Hours of Business you ought to look upon as your Master’s Due, and that so strictly, that it would be directly robbing him, to employ them otherwise than to his Benefit: It will even behove you to double your Diligence in his Absence; for no one can well have a worse Character than he that deserves the Name of an *Eye-Servant*; that is, such a one as no longer heeds his Business, than while he is under his Master’s Eye or Observation. (29)

Once idleness has been dealt with, the author swiftly moves to the discussion of another transgression, that of “Idle Prating” (30) or “Volubility of Speech” (31). Here we find traces of a continuity between Richardson’s conduct manual and the tradition of earlier courtesy manuals targeting (upper-class) young adults. These earlier texts were known to privilege speech as “the main area of prescription: voice production, articulation, vocabulary, forms and formulae of verbal and epistolary deference, and general principles of conversation [were] all covered” (Bryson 1998: 152).⁶ Being *pert*, *saucy*, *talkative*, *excessively confident* and *unabashed* are qualities classified in *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum* as despicable and, at the same time, notoriously characteristic of “the Generality of the Youth of this forward Generation” (31). To the list of conversational faults to avoid, Richardson adds the use of rude and offensive language, i.e. “obscene Words, wicked Oaths, and rash and inconsiderate, or profane Expressions” (31), together with the graceless habit of “saying any thing, even in Jest, that may discompose or shock any

6. Bryson traces this preoccupation with decency of speech back to George Puttenham and his reinterpretation of the classical myth of language in poetry as a civilising agent in primitive society, i.e., as “the means whereby ‘rude and savage people’ had been drawn ‘to a more civil and orderly life’” (Puttenham, *Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Willcock and Walker, bk. I, Chapter 3, 6, quoted in Bryson 1998: 151). Bryson lists a number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manuals (such as, for example, the *Galateo* and *The Art of Complaisance*), “concerned with the correction of all kinds of conversational faults” (Bryson 1998: 152).

one” (40). Here the young apprentice is warned not to follow the example of “the most profligate Persons” (31), as violations of norms in conversation will have dire consequences:

- (3) Let the *Sessions-Paper* and the *Dying-Speeches* of unhappy Criminals tell the rest: Let them inform the inconsiderate Youth, by the Confessions of the dying Malefactors, how naturally, as it were Step by Step, Swearing, Cursing, Profaneness, Drunkenness, Whoredom, Theft, Robbery, Murder, and the Gallows, succeed one another! (31–32)

The powerfully intimidating list of transgressive acts of behaviour is framed by an unequivocal heading of “A Chain of all the deadly Vices”: here Richardson paints a linear trajectory that connects the transgressive act of using bad language with serious criminal offences such as robbery and murder, which send the young apprentice directly to the gallows.

The seriousness of the author’s tone gives way to a satirical, mocking attitude he shows in an exceptionally vivid and elaborated description of “a modern *London*-Apprentice of the pretty Gentleman-Class” (32–33).⁷ The modern fopling is guilty of the violation labelled as “Apish Affectation and Vanity of Dress” (32). This transgression is declared to be “one of the epidemic Evils of the present Age”, a Vice that “lifts up the young Man’s Mind far above his Condition as an Apprentice” (32). We have to remember that *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum* was written in the period when simplification and informalisation of clothing (that had occurred already in the Restoration decades) resulted in “a certain flattening of stylistic variation”, which, combined with “a widening access to the concept and practice of fashion” (Klein 2002: 883), to a large extent undermined the visibility of social distinctions (Klein 1995). It appears that a significant number of young apprentices fell victim to the vice of the so called social “transvestitism”, a phenomenon already described by Daniel Defoe (Klein 1995: 374), referred to also as emulation and “upward-dressing” (Paulson 1995: 387). Indulging in vices such as extravagant spending and overdressing, some young apprentices were induced to deviate from the prototype of “good behaviour”. This prototype is identifiable, according to Nevalainen and Tissari, in the metaphor of “SOCIETY IS A STRUCTURED

7. For reasons of space, this highly entertaining description, which runs for 29 lines (with 266 words), cannot be reproduced here. Richardson admits that he may have exaggerated some traits in this description, taking care to clarify that “at most I have only added two or three pretty Fellows of this Class, to make up the Character of one; and I wish, to compete the Ridicule, and shame such Foplings into Reformation, the ingenious Mr. *Hogarth* would finish the portrait” (Richardson 2012 [1734]: 33). In 1747, William Hogarth complied with Richardson’s wish with his iconic twelve plates of *Industry and Idleness* (Paulson 1974), albeit “in a highly ambiguous manner which the author of *Pamela* probably disliked” (Wagner 1994: 53).

COMPOSITION, which implies that EVERY PERSON HAS THEIR OWN PLACE IN IT. Correspondingly, GOOD BEHAVIOUR IS STAYING IN ONE'S PLACE [OR] MAKING THE RIGHT MOVEMENTS" (Nevalainen and Tissari 2006: 110–111, original capitalisation). In fact, Richardson hastens to explain that:

- (4) This Vice has inverted all Order, and destroyed Distinction; and you shall now hardly step into any Shop, but you shall see a starched powdered Youth, that, but for his Station behind the Counter, your Fathers would have addressed to rather as the Son of a Man of Condition, than a Servant put to learn a Trade for his future Subsistence. (32)

After soliciting the young apprentice's dedication to his training and condemning the transgressive acts of improper speech and dress, Richardson addresses expectations and demands placed on the apprentice in the everyday interactions between the young man and the three distinct groups of interlocutors. These include his superiors, i.e., the master and senior apprentices, his peer apprentices and acquaintances, and, finally, junior apprentices and journeymen, who are considered to be of an inferior social standing. In the passages dedicated to the interactions with the apprentice's superiors, Richardson first launches a series of vehement attacks on young men who disobey their masters' orders or show contempt for them (40), and then proceeds to chastise young men who are capable of taking advantage of their masters' kindness (41)⁸ or "abus[ing] their Masters behind their backs" (38):

- (5) The Man is not living who is without Faults; and if a Master has ever so many, and those ever so gross, it is not a Servant's Duty to expose them, or him; but, on the contrary, a kind of Treachery and Baseness of Disposition for a Person to be guilty of, who is taken into a Family in so intimate a Relation, as that of an Apprentice, so that he must needs know the Secrets of it. The Names and Crimes of the *Spy-fault*, the *Back-biter*, the *Detractor*, the *Ungrateful*, the *Betrayer of Secrets*, become his, who is capable of so base a Part; and let a young Man judge how unfit such a one is for his Companion. (38–39)

A recurrent topic in the second part in *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* is the sensitive subject of choosing one's friends and acquaintances wisely. In the passage in (5), for instance, Richardson insists on the importance of taking such choices extremely seriously. On the one hand, he repeatedly warns the reader about "the

8. Richardson briefly touches upon the case of apprentices who happen to have severe masters, aiming to convince the young man that "Severity may perhaps be of far greater Service to you, than a milder Sort of Usage" (41), indirectly acknowledging the well-documented problem of apprentices who had been mistreated, abused, and, in extreme cases, murdered by their masters or mistresses (Smith 1973; Brooks 1994; Levene 2008).

most pernicious”, “the most terrible Consequences” (34) of mixing with bad company and imitating all kinds of “wicked Example[s] of the most profligate Persons” (31). On the other hand, he advocates a decidedly pragmatic approach to making friends by privileging “the Acquaintance of such Persons, as may *promote* him in his Business when he begins for himself” (38) instead of being guided by a romanticised vision of friendship as a “glorious Thing”, a “charming Tie”, a “silken Band of Society” (37). Richardson reiterates that, while “a young Man may be greatly benefited at his setting out in the World, by having made a discreet Choice of his *Companions*” (38), choosing unsuitable company – a mistake one can easily make in “this Libertine Age” (34) – can be avoided if the young man relies on the experience of his master or his nearest friends whose assistance will safeguard him against fatal consequences of making bad choices.

To summarise this section, depravity of manners and corruption of morals, loitering, idleness, a range of serious conversational faults, vanity of dress, disobedience and contempt are but some of the examples of specific transgressive acts portrayed and condemned by Richardson in *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum*. Before I turn to the discussion of the ways in which the author’s extensive treatment of transgressive acts hints at the existence of a coherent anti-code of behaviour, in the next section I examine the features of the didactic language Richardson employs to deliver explicit instruction on how the young apprentice was (not) to behave.

3. Instructive language in *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum*

The distinctive features of Richardson’s didactic language include, for instance, a high density of emotional and value-laden words used to describe and condemn either specific acts of transgressive behaviour or the transgressors perpetrating a given violation. The list of terms (“the *Spy-fault*, the *Back-biter*, the *Detractor*, the *Ungrateful*, the *Betrayer of Secrets*”) applied to those apprentices who “abus[ing] their Masters behind their backs” in (5) is one of the many examples of such use of emotional language in *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum*. Another important feature is represented by the use of the specific linguistic forms associated with the speech act of advice-giving in *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum*. As already explained in Section 2, Richardson’s conduct manual represents an example of instructional writing. This means that, in order to fulfil its main communicative purpose of codifying and transmitting norms of proper behaviour, the text relies on a specific repertoire of linguistic devices characteristic of this type of instructive language. In this section, I attempt to account for the different rhetorical strategies Richardson adopts with the view of creating “didactic meaning and understanding by the reader” (Doty 2009: 150).

While the history of conduct books in English, their types and contents, has been fairly well-documented,⁹ linguistic studies of conduct manuals have been scarce (cf. Peikola et al. 2009; especially Doty 2009). Specific rhetorical strategies such as “use of exhortation, maxims, admonitory language, biblical scriptures, role models, dramatic examples, and anecdotes” (Newton 1994: 10–11; cf. Doty 2009: 143) have been indicated as typical of Early Modern didactic advice literature in English. Doty’s (2009) investigation of the rhetorical structure and didactic language of two texts written by Cotton Mather (1692, 1693), conducted from a speech act perspective, has shown that commands/imperative verbs, direct address to the reader and deictics represent the three main features of explicit instructive language. To gain more insight into how explicit instructive language functions in conduct books such as *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum*, it may be fruitful to integrate the findings of the (few) diachronic linguistic studies of didactic advice literature¹⁰ with research investigating advice-seeking and advice-giving activities in contemporary print and online texts. For instance, recent research on communication in women’s magazines (Temmerman 2014) and advice columns on the Internet (Locher 2006, 2013) has dealt with examples of hierarchical, asymmetrical type of communication in which an instructor in the expert position (the magazine’s editor or the health educator) imparts advice to insecure or inexperienced interlocutors. This format of asymmetrical communication, I argue, can provide a framework for the analysis of the communicative situation in *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum*, where an adult expert in a socially superior position instructs a young novice on the technicalities of proper social conduct.¹¹

9. In the collection of studies edited by Glaisyer and Pennell (2003) conduct literature is presented as part of didactic literature, although conduct manuals are (deliberately) not discussed in the volume. Carré’s (1994) edited collection focuses on the Augustan age as the period of the great metamorphosis of conduct literature in England. Bryson (1998) discusses a number of earlier British conduct books for young people, while Hemphill (1994, 1999) focuses mainly on similar American publications.

10. In the Searlean categorisation of speech acts (Searle 1969, 1976), advising is subsumed under the category of directives, i.e. “speech acts by means of which the speaker requests the hearer(s) to do (or not to do) certain things” (Busse 2008: 88). In addition to advising, other directive speech acts include requesting, commanding, ordering, and so on. The directive speech act of requesting has received most attention in diachronic speech acts studies (cf. Jucker & Taavitsainen 2008, especially papers by Kohonen, Culpeper and Archer, Busse, and Del Lungo Camiciotti).

11. Doty, for example, makes an explicit connection between earlier and contemporary types of popular conduct literature for women, with the latter ones described as “simply a wave in the constant flow of instructional books for women from the middle ages to the present” (2009: 143). In a similar vein, Locher and Limberg comment on the “long-standing tradition of manuals on good conduct and behavior or advice columns in newspapers (print and online),

In this second phase of the investigation, I analysed linguistic forms associated with the speech act of advice-giving in *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* by making use of the combined inventory of syntactic types of advice-giving as extracted from Locher (cf. Locher 2006; Locher and Limberg 2012: 3–4; Locher 2013: 346–348), Doty (2009: 150–152) and Temmerman (2014: 169–176). This approach enabled me to identify the main linguistic patterns characterising Richardson's instructive language. I have found examples of imperative constructions in (6) and (7), which were identified in all three studies cited above as a frequent linguistic realisation of advice-giving activity. The two imperative verbs in (8) exemplify the useful distinction Locher (2006: 59–111) makes between imperatives inviting action and imperatives inviting introspection. Here “observe” is used as an imperative inviting action in combination with “think”, an imperative inviting introspection, as a way of reinforcing Richardson's message about what the young apprentice is (not) to do:

- (6) (VII. A good Use may be made of the Faults of others.) Be like the industrious Bee, which collects its Honey from the bitter as well as the sweet Flowers. (30)
- (7) Do not give up your self to idle Prating and Talkativeness, in the Times of Business [...] (30)
- (8) Observe all those who speak much, how little is said that is fit to be remembered afterwards; and think how shameful it is to be always rattling and prating of what is not fit to be *remembered* for an Hour, or even to be *repeated*, as is too generally the Case. (31)

Temmerman (2014: 169–170) identifies rhetorical questions in her data as a means of simulating a two-way conversation, or pseudo-dialogue, between the editor and the reader of the magazine. Rhetorical questions in Temmerman's data can be found in sequences where interrogatives are followed by imperatives, with the latter form used to offer a solution to the problem introduced as a question. In Richardson's text, I identified an interesting pattern in which rhetorical questions are used in combination with interrogatives inviting introspection (cf. Locher 2006: 59–111), forming longer strings of questions commenting, for example, on one specific transgressive act. Richardson's text is formally monologic, with the author, in his role of expert mentor and advisor, laying out the rules for the benefit of his inexperienced reader in a sequence of advising speech acts. This means that *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* does not adopt the prototypical question-answer pattern involving two interactants which defines the scholastic tradition of instructional dialogues (cf. Taavitsainen 2009). However, the use of question strings

which lend themselves for a historical study of how advisory practices change over time and how the affordances of the print/online publication influence the practices” (2012: 23).

introduces an interactive element in the monologic format of the text by simulating a dialogue between the author and the reader, who is prompted to react to questions directly addressed to him.

- (9) What if your Fellow-Apprentices, if you have any, should happen to be pert, saucy, or talkative? – Does not every one blame them for it, and call it by the Name it deserves? – And would you follow the worst Examples? Nature has given *Two Ears* to *one Tongue*; and what does this naturally teach, but that *all Men*, and more especially *young Men*, should *hear* twice as much as they should *speak*? (31)

While the last interrogative in (9), “Nature has given *Two Ears* to *one Tongue*; etc.”, is framed as a rhetorical question, the first two address the reader with the personal pronoun *you* and the possessive *your*. Direct address is another feature analysed in all three studies I am referring to. In Locher’s (2006: 59–111) terminology, agentive sentences are used to draw attention to the active subject, i.e. the advice-seeker. Doty has observed that in Cotton Mather’s (1692) conduct manual direct address can be substituted by phrases such as “*a virtuous maid/wife/mother/widow, she or her*”, making these passages sound more formal, “with a more distant voice speaking to a general reader” (Doty 2009: 152). In (10) and (11) we observe that Richardson employs both strategies: in (10) he again addresses his reader directly with an agentive sentence, while in (11) a generic label “a young man” is preferred to direct address.

- (10) You should therefore never give Occasion for your Master (or any Person he sets over you to instruct you in your Business, or signify to you his Mind) to tell you twice of a proper or right thing, whether it regard your Business or Behaviour. (40)
- (11) A young Man should rather *hear* than *speak*, and a *close Mouth* is generally the Sign of a *wise Head*. (31)

Moreover, as is exemplified in (12), where Richardson exhorts the young apprentice to avoid shocking jests, the shift from a generic label to direct address¹² can occur in the same sentence.

- (12) And for this end, he should determine, as much as he can, to study every one’s Temper, and carefully to avoid saying any thing, even in Jest, that may discompose or shock any one: For why should that be a *Pleasure* to *you*, which would be a *Pain* to *another*? (40)

12. There are also examples in the text where *you* is used as a generic pronoun (see (4) in Section 2), but I would argue that in the examples given in Section 3, *you* is always used as direct address, including the imperative sentences (6), (7) and (8), where it can be assumed that *you* is the omitted subject.

Another option of avoiding direct address is by using a non-agentive sentence (cf. Locher 2006: 59–111), in which the active subject, i.e. the advice-seeker, is not indicated.

- (13) [For] Pertness in Youth is almost as great a Fault, and indicates as wrong a Turn of Mind, as Negligence in Men. (30)

In addition to the linguistic forms exemplified in sentences (6) to (13), Richardson employs the conventional format of conditional sentences, often in combination with an imperative, as in (14), or, as in (15), declaratives suggesting action (cf. Locher 2006: 59–111).

- (14) If you see any bad Example from your Fellow-Servants, or others, learn to have a proper Detestation of the Action, without playing upon or abusing the Man that sets it. (30)
- (15) I will suggest but one thing more on the Head of *Friendship*, designing all possible Brevity; and that is, that the young Man at first choosing his Friends and Intimates do generally converse with his *Betters* [...] (38)

In the fifteen examples from *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* (see Section 2 for examples (1) to (5)) that exemplify the range of advice-giving strategies in Richardson's conduct manual, only one piece of advice in (15) does not contain a reference to a specific transgressive act. In the remaining examples transgressive acts are indicated in a more or less explicit way. As we have seen in Section 2, in (1) the apprentice is instructed to avoid squandering away the time that should be dedicated to business and his master's service, in (2) he is cautioned against eye-service and in (3) against "Swearing, Cursing, Profaneness, Drunkenness, Whoredom, Theft, Robbery, Murder". Other vices, such as upward-dressing, "Treachery and Baseness of Disposition", "idle Prating and Talkativeness" and "rattling and prating" are mentioned in (4), (5), (7) and (8) respectively. On the basis of these observations, I would like to argue that Richardson's consistent use of examples of transgressive acts, combined with the preference for unmitigated linguistic realisations of advice-giving (imperatives, agentive sentences, direct address), represents an efficient strategy in a text which delivers instructions on how (not) to behave addressed to a group of younger readers. In other words, by focusing on transgressions and by selecting these specific linguistic forms to deliver his instructions, Richardson endeavours to make these guidelines clear, unequivocal and accessible for his specific target audience of boys and young men who had to be socialised and indoctrinated about standards of proper behaviour.

At the same time, Richardson's explicit instructive language helps to reinforce his position of authority in the asymmetrical communicative situation that involves an interaction between an adult expert and a novice reader. In some

passages, however, this authority is downplayed when the author adopts a “carrot or stick” approach, for example, by attempting to persuade his young reader that his good manners will make him “a good Man” (42) who will be “respected and beloved” (40) and become “an Ornament to [his] Profession, and a Credit to Trade in general” (36). What Richardson is promising here is that the young apprentice will be rewarded – with a successful career and a reputable position in society – if he complies with the rules and avoids violating the norms. Should he instead decide to forfeit his morals and follow the path of transgression and vice, the consequences, he is warned, will be ruinous.

4. Concluding remarks

In Babcock’s conceptualisation of “symbolic inversion”, acts of transgressive behaviour are

broadly defined as any act of expressive behaviour which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values, and norms, be they linguistic, literary, artistic, religious, social or political. (Babcock 1978: 14)

Paradoxically, such transgressive acts “define a culture’s lineaments at the same time as they question the usefulness and the absoluteness of this ordering” (Babcock 1978: 29). It is this potential of transgressive examples to illuminate the norms of the dominant world order that makes representations of such examples a particularly suitable tool to employ in order to familiarise different groups of social novices with these norms. In reminding us that “[m]anners are only rarely referred to because once people learn these rituals they forget they ever learned them, and only tend to note them in the breach”, Hemphill (1994: 272) highlights the tension associated with such transgressive acts of behaviour. If transgressing social norms, which are yet to be internalised by a novice social actor, can be interpreted as a “natural” consequence of the lack of proper socialisation, in didactic texts it is the knowledge of and compliance with the set of rules of good manners, “which define the end-product of [successful] socialisation” (Bryson 1998: 9), to be presented as “natural”. In other words, transgressions are consistently condemned by didactic authors as “unnatural” improprieties, while acquisition of the appropriate set of social rules is presented as a “natural” objective every new member of society is required to pursue.¹³

13. In her discussion of the libertine code of conduct in Early Modern England, Bryson emphasises “the mystification involved in the ‘artificial’ production of ‘natural’ manners” by linking

Conduct manuals such as Richardson's *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* aimed to help designated groups of readers internalise standards of proper conduct by providing overt instruction on "the 'dos and don'ts' of a proper life, encoding societal expectations and values" (Doty 2009: 150). In the analysis of the examples of such "don'ts", that is to say, in the representations of acts of transgressive behaviour in *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum*, I have attempted to show how these individual acts provide evidence of the existence of a coherent code of anti-normative behaviour. This anti-model apprentice, that Richardson has set himself to attack and discredit, is notorious for his many "*little idle Habits*" (27). He does not apply himself with due dedication to his training, preferring to spend his time either doing nothing or making merry. He commits numerous conversational faults, be it by being unbecomingly talkative, pert, saucy and careless in his speech, or by saying things that shock and offend others. He swears and talks profanely, dresses extravagantly or slovenly. His excessive confidence makes him reluctant or incapable of feeling any remorse for his transgressive behaviour. He routinely conceals and disguises his wrongdoings from his master and others. He can either be exceptionally self-centred and avaricious, or extravagant in his uncontrolled spending. He is not careful in his choice of friends and thus risks to become one "of many a hopeful Youth, who would otherwise have made a prime Figure in Life" (34) but were instead ruined by bad companions. In addition to being susceptible to bad influence, he can be insubordinate, disrespectful, inconsiderate and ungrateful. In short, Richardson's anti-model apprentice embodies "the most potentially disruptive element in society" (Lane 1996: 187), whose behaviour has to be regulated and brought under control lest it disrupts the established social order. As such, *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* is clearly geared towards disseminating and imparting norms of conduct fashioned to endorse existing social hierarchies.

The image of the anti-ideal apprentice is used in *The Young Man's Pocket-Companion* to define and textually reproduce its antithesis, the ideal apprentice. The model apprentice is urged to cultivate sweetness of disposition and complaisance in self-presentation and in interactions with others. He is instructed to talk little, and only when he has something kind or informative to say, carefully avoiding flattery, hypocrisy, and lying. He will not swear or use profane expressions, as he has been made aware of the consequences of these transgressive acts. He can be praised for dressing neatly and in compliance with his station in life, having internalised the importance of the principle of social hierarchy. He is also praised for his readiness to admit and express regret for any faults he may have committed

this tension to Pierre Bourdieu's characterisation of aesthetic taste "as a matter of 'ideological strategies' which 'naturalise' cultural difference, converting 'differences in the mode of acquisition of culture into differences of nature'" (Bryson 1998: 268).

(inadvertently). To become a good tradesman, the ideal apprentice has been taught to pursue his own interests, at the same time paying attention to the needs of his friends. Socialising, that is to say, aiming to transform newly apprenticed boys into virtuous citizens by familiarising them with a set of transgressions that had to be avoided, is thus the ultimate goal of Richardson's didactic project.

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Variations from letter-writing manuals

Humble petitions signed by women in Late Modern London

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The present study analyses two sets of 25 petitions each. They were signed by different women who possibly belonged to lower social ranks, and they were addressed to the governors of the Foundling Hospital and the Bank of England. These were most probably men who occupied high positions in society. The study focuses on the comparison between the information present in the manuals and the petitions selected for this study. The petitioners had different needs and their circumstances also varied. This is reflected in the results, which show differences, and also similarities, between the two sets of petitions. Furthermore, most display some features found in the manuals, but not all of them follow the rules or recommendations faithfully. The writers, who cannot always be identified and may not have been the same as the signees, seem to have been aware of the existence of letter-writing manuals, but they may not have had first-hand contact with them.

Keywords: Late Modern English, letter-writing, instruction manuals, petitions, Foundling Hospital, Bank of England

1. Introduction

The eighteenth century was a time in which the practice of letter writing on all occasions was on the increase. This is the main reason why letter writing manuals seem to have appeared in such high numbers, in other words, they fulfilled a need in society (Fens-de Zeeuw 2008). Letter writing manuals helped people in general, as evidenced by the variety of both letter-writing manuals and types of letters found in such manuals. Furthermore, it could be argued that those belonging to lower social ranks would have needed them even more because of possibly not having received this instruction in schools (Steinbach 2004). However, neither the

social position of the women signing the petitions analysed in the present study nor whether all of the writers were actually women can be confirmed. Therefore, it is difficult to know if they had made use of these manuals. Indeed, it seems that if they did not have direct access to the manuals, they would have been in contact with other members of society who would have had access, which meant establishing new relationships and indirectly learning rules on interaction (Whyman 2009).

As shown in the features displayed in the petitions analysed here, despite the abundance of these manuals, not everybody used the formulae or fixed expressions that were dictated in such books. Similarly, many of them did not follow the structure, layout or patterns mentioned in these letter-writing manuals. One reason might be the lack of familiarity with these books. On some occasions, the manuals were addressed exclusively to women (e.g. *The Ladies Complete Letter-Writer* (1765)).¹ However, many of the women who signed the petitions analysed in the present study would not have been considered *ladies* but were often servants of *ladies* instead.

A corpus-based study was carried out in order to compare petitions signed by women who possibly belonged to low ranks with model petitions and instructions in letter-writing manuals. The 50 (originally handwritten) petitions were addressed to men in higher ranks, as they were governors of the Foundling Hospital or of the Bank of England. The women were in need of being granted either a home for the children they had as single mothers or some help while they were in prison waiting to be transported to Australia in most cases. The petitions were extracted from two different corpora, and they display variation in several aspects, which include the use of more or less fixed formulae, the presence or absence of standard grammar and spelling, the disparity in the length of the texts, and the possible inclusion of some politeness features, such as excuses of boldness.

The present study analyses the form and the content of the selected petitions. It may be presumed that the women who signed these petitions would not have attended school and/or received any other form of formal education, given their condition as servants or prisoners due to minor thefts. However, it has been argued (Meldrum 1997) that the origin of these women servants, as is the case of the Foundling Hospital corpus, is not easy to identify and they may have belonged to a variety of social strata. This implies that some might have had access to some type of education. Nevertheless, the fact that very often these petitions are signed by an “X”, or the signature is in a different handwriting from the rest of the text may imply that these women were in fact either illiterate or had only basic literacy skills. This led to the expectation that the petitions would display more differences

1. This manual was first printed in 1763 in London, but in this study the second edition, dating from 1765 and also published in London, was used.

than similarities in comparison to the models in the manuals. Also, the different circumstances that made these women send their petitions were thought to have an influence in the characteristics of the petitions. The women who wrote to the Foundling Hospital had to write whether they wanted their children to be admitted there, and the hospital had established some rules as to what should be included in the petitions (Evans 2005). The women who wrote to the Bank of England requested something they wanted, but the governors of the bank were not expecting such petitions. The former did not necessarily need an excuse to write, while the latter did.

Simply by observing the handwriting and the layout of the petitions, it is clear that some of the petitions were written by people who had good literacy skills and knew how to write letters, as evidenced by neat handwriting, standard spelling and grammar.² However, the use of capital letters and punctuation does not show much consistency either among the petitions or when compared to the manuals. In a similar way, although superscriptions and fixed formulae are present in the manuals, together with instruction on which terms of address to use, the petitions analysed do not always include these expressions or address the governors as recommended.

In addition, the petitioners in the manuals refer to themselves mainly using the third person. However, the personal pronouns used in the two sets of petitions vary considerably, both in relation to the models in the manuals and to each other: sometimes the petitioners write in the first person, sometimes in a combination of the third and the first person, and sometimes in the third person.

Similarly, the length of the petitions varies although the manuals recommended that a petition should be short. However, the results show that all the model petitions are shorter than the ones analysed, although differences can be observed not only between the two datasets (Foundling Hospital and Bank of England) but also within each of them.

The last aspect considered in this study is the presence of an excuse of boldness for writing. The manuals indicated that in letters of request, this type of excuse should be present. However, not all the model petitions include it, and variation can also be observed in this respect in the two sets of petitions. In general, the petitioners to the Bank of England excuse their boldness more often than the petitioners to the Foundling Hospital.

2. The present study does not include an analysis of grammatical features, as this would require a separate study which would include not only the grammar rules present in the manuals but also in the grammar books published at the time.

2. Letter-writing and petitions in eighteenth-century England

Letter-writing in Late Modern English has been the object of study in the last decades (e.g. Auer et al. 2015; Dossena & Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008; Dossena & del Lungo Camiciotti 2012; Nevalainen & Tanskanen 2007; Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2011, 2014). Many analyses have been based on letters written by literate people, including well-known grammarians and writers (e.g. Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2011, 2014), but less literate members of society have also been the object of attention (e.g. Fairman 2000; Sokoll 2001, 2006; Levene et al. 2006; King 2007; Tomkins 2011; Auer 2015; Laitinen 2015; Timmis 2018). The possibly lower literacy skills of some of these people may have contributed to the lack of manuscripts available, but even the extant letters are not always readily accessible but buried in local archives and have never been analysed from a linguistic point of view. However, the increase in digitised materials in general, and more specifically manuscripts of letters (e.g. the project of *Letters of Artisans and the Labouring Poor*),³ has facilitated this type of studies, and it has contributed to a better understanding of the variety of actual letter-writing practices in the eighteenth century.

The main means of communication for most people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the letter. People from all ranks of society used letters in their everyday lives, even those who may not have been expected to do so, such as servants (Brant 2006) or people who did not have access to formal education (Whyman 2009). On occasion, they were people who had very few reading and writing skills, if any. This lack was covered either by having somebody nearby writing for them, or writing as they could, often using non-standard grammar and spelling, but making themselves understood in transmitting the message they intended to. In other words, they did not always follow the instructions prescribed by the scholars of the time, but they were able to convey meaningful messages, very often thanks to someone else's help. The eighteenth century was the time when the language was being codified and the notion of standard was arising, but appreciably many more men than women were able to read and write (Bannet 2005). It has been estimated that in the middle of the century, only 40 per cent of women were able to sign their names, and it took longer for women to start using standard grammar and spelling, and they often made use of simple sentences rather than subordinate ones (Brant 2006). Many of the less literate people frequently used formulae in their writings that had been acquired by repetition (Elspass 2012). However, as Evans (2005: 14) indicates, specifically in relation to the language used by the women who sent their petitions to the Foundling Hospital that their

3. Details of this project can be found on its blog: <https://lalpcorpus.wordpress.com/>.

style “was often closer to the spoken word” and that is the reason why “they allow us unusual access to the culture of poor women”.

Letters belong to a specific genre which seems to have had a very clear pattern, and letter-writing manuals in the Late Modern English period provided guidance both on format and on content. Whereas the format might have been very similar for most letters, the content would have been mainly determined by the topic and the relationship between the writer and the addressee (Mitchell 2007).

Petitions were already very popular in Early Modern England (Zaret 1996, 2000; Waddle 2016). In Late Modern English, the practice of requesting via written petitions continued. People in all social contexts, for example in prison (Woodfine 2006; Palk 2007), or people looking for a home for their newly-born babies (Evans 2005) resorted to petitions when in need. Although the intention of a petition is always the same, that is, the writer needs something from the addressee, the personal situation of the petitioner may condition some of the features of the text. A petition may be interpreted as a type of letter, as evidenced by the many characteristics that both share (e.g. the format, the layout, the presence of the date, and some fixed formulae). However, Nevalainen (2007: 4) indicates that petitions are “a super text type of their own”. This claim may explain why petitions were sometimes included in a separate section within the letter-manuals of the Late Modern English period (cf. Section 3.1).

3. Letter-writing manuals in Late Modern England

Although the publication of letter-writing manuals experienced a tremendous growth in numbers in the eighteenth century, these collections of letters and manuals of instruction regarding writing practices had already existed since the sixteenth century (Green 2007; Fens-de Zeeuw 2008). These instructions were often accompanied by other types of information, such as *directions of behaviour* particularly addressed to women. For instance, Hannah Woolley’s manual, *The Gentlewoman’s Companion or a Guide to the Female Sex*, published in 1673, is presented as “being an exact Rule for the Female Sex in general”, and it includes a guide for all women that “go to service” and who are expected to behave in a particular way. Nevertheless, in this manual the *gentlewoman* is referred to as a *lady*, which implies that the main audience of this book were elite or middle-class women who could afford to have servants and were expected to write “letters and discourses upon all occasions”.⁴

At the beginning of the eighteenth century there was a change in the style of these manuals, probably motivated by a change in the expected audience, as

4. The quotations in this paragraph are from the front page of the manual, where the title is.

this was a time when many people moved from rural areas into towns and cities with the expectation to improve their lives (Steinbach 2004). These books “advertised themselves as being for critical use in instruction and emulation by the middle classes” (Green 2007: 103). Particularly in London, most of the manuals that appeared were addressed to servants, understood as any employee (Bannet 2005). Consequently, the manuals began to be used in schools (Mitchell 2007). Nevertheless, not all children, and more specifically not all girls, had access to schooling (Steinbach 2004). This means that in particular the women that belonged to the lower layers of society may not have been in direct contact with such manuals. As Brant (2006: 39) indicates, “the relation of manuals to actual epistolary practice is complex”, that is, it is difficult to determine to what extent the manuals actually influenced letter writers, particularly the ones who did not have access to them and who despite being illiterate needed to write letters. As regards the women who signed the petitions analysed in this study, it may be stated that it is not possible to know the level of literacy that most of them had. Only when the petitions include a signature that differs in handwriting when compared to the rest of the text, or when the signee uses an “X”, is it clearer that the petitioner was different from the writer. Consequently, when these features are present, the petitions were most probably written by somebody who had writing skills, and they were expected to contain more standard forms and similarities with the manuals.

In relation to the letters that are collected in the manuals in general, it has been argued that “many of the letters are highly fictionalized, containing contrived characters, dramatic situations” (Nixon & Penner 2009: 164). In a similar way, Green (2007: 184) states that “the models in *The Young Secretary’s Guide* often have a stilted, inflated style”. However, the petitions analysed here contain many of these features, which means that the models in the manuals may have been closer to actual language use than it may have been thought.

Some of the words present in the letter-writing manuals of the eighteenth century (e.g. *instruction, directions, rules*) may contribute to considering them prescriptive, like their contemporary grammar books. However, since they seem to include collections of real letters and actual practice, it has been suggested that they could either be simply descriptive (Brant 2006), or both descriptive and prescriptive in different aspects (Bannet 2005). In fact, some manuals clearly indicate that they contain *real* letters, together with others that appear to have been created especially for the purpose of the books. For instance, the preface of *The Complete Letter-Writer or Polite English Secretary* (1772), states that “the main body of the Work, is a proper Collection of Letters, (with some Originals) by eminent Authors”. Similarly, Brown in *The English Letter-Writer* (1790: xiv) assures the reader that “[a]ll the letters in the following pages are originals, not one of them having been copied from any author whatever”. These statements corroborate the

idea that these manuals could indeed be considered not only prescriptive, but also descriptive, as suggested by Bannet (2005).

As regards the structure of these manuals, in most cases the letters are classified according to their function (e.g. letters of advice, familiar letters, letters of business, and invariably there is a section on letters of love and courtship), and usually petitions appear in a separate section (Bannet 2005). Furthermore, apart from the model letters that they contain, other parts can be identified. Although these vary, all the manuals include, usually in the introduction, the ‘directions for writing letters’, as well as ‘directions for addressing people’. Among the rest of the sections, some incorporate a brief chapter on grammar, and others devote a few pages to orthography, mainly the use of capital letters. Also, some of the manuals include models of legal documents, such as wills.

3.1 The instructions in these manuals

Eighteenth-century letter-writing manuals contain information concerning every detail of letter writing practices. These include rules on format and structure. In this respect, *The Complete Letter-Writer or Polite English Secretary* (1772) is particularly instructive. For example, it provides instructions on the margins that should be left in the paper used (e.g. “Begin your Letter about two Inches below the Top of your Paper, and leave about an Inch Margin on the Left-Hand”, p. 37). It also provides information on the way the superscriptions should be written on the external side of the letter, i.e. when the letter has been folded (e.g. “When your Letter is sealed, you must write the Superscription (if it be to your Superior or Equal) in the following Manner ... Write the Word To by it self, as nigh the Left-hand upper Angle, or Corner of your Letter”, p. 39). Similarly, when including different paragraphs, this manual instructs you to “begin every fresh or new one, at the same Distance from the left-hand Margin of the Paper” (p. 38). Other manuals also refer to the layout of the letter. For instance, in *The Young Secretary’s Guide* (1719), the writers are advised to “leave a large distance between the body of the letter and the subscription” (p. 100).

All letter-writing manuals consulted emphasise the need to address the receiver of the letter properly, and give instruction on this (e.g. “Proper DIRECTIONS for addressing Persons of every Rank or Denomination, at the Beginnings of Letters, and the Supercriptions”, *The Ladies Complete Letter-Writer*, 1765: 12). Most of them offer indications on how to write superscriptions both inside the letter and once the letter has been folded (e.g. *To the Right Honourable...*). Also, they give detailed examples of the most common opening and closing formulae, taking into account the position that the writer occupies in society and the position of the addressee. *Sir/ Sirs* and *Honoured Sir/ Sirs* seem to be the preferred opening phrases

when addressing a man or men,⁵ whereas *your humble servant* and *your obliged humble servant* are the phrases that appear more frequently before the signature of the letter. The word *superior* is often mentioned, as it is important to acknowledge the higher position of the one of the two participants, most frequently this being the addressee. This may be partly motivated by the fact that an act of parliament had already decided on the ranks and orders of precedence, as all the manuals indicate. The formulae of the petitions were different and will, therefore, be discussed separately since they correspond to the two types of letters analysed here (cf. Section 3.2).

It is fairly common to find manuals that incorporate a section on grammar instruction (e.g. *The Complete Letter-Writer or New and Polite English Secretary* 1756, *The Complete Art of Writing Letters* 1797). These sections, which are not particularly long, include information regarding syntax and morphology, as well as spelling and punctuation. Sometimes there are punctuation marks that are said to be uncommon in the manuals (*The Young Secretary's Guide* 1719: 101–102), such as the hyphen (-) and a separation (—), which, on the contrary, are found in the petitions analysed in the present study, being particularly more frequent in petitions addressed to the Foundling Hospital. One of the aspects that is often described in detail is the use of capital letters. For example, in *The Complete Letter-Writer or New and Polite English Secretary* (1756: 15) together with instruction on when to use these “great Letters”, the expressions “It has become Customary to begin any Substantive in a Sentence with a Capital” or “sometimes Capitals are used” indicate that the authors are describing usage rather than just prescribing it. In general, punctuation followed different rules when compared to today’s punctuation in English. In the eighteenth century, according to Bannet (2005: 90), “punctuation points and capitalization of the first letter of words were understood, used and taught as guides to pronunciation or reading aloud.” She adds that the reason for the capitalization of letters was precisely “to indicate where emphasis should be when reading aloud” (Bannet 2005: 91).

Content and politeness are usually guided. Some of the manuals clearly state this in the long title, as in *The Complete Letter-Writer or New and Polite English Secretary* (1756). These manuals incorporate instruction on polite writing and behaviour. For instance, they often indicate that, when writing to a superior, “the letter should be as short as the subject, or occasion, you write on will permit; especially such wherein favours are requested” (*The Complete Letter-Writer* 1778: 15). Also, “subscriptions [...] ought to express [...] the quality of the person [...] a power of authority” (*The Young Secretary's Guide* 1719: 100). Similarly, in letters of

5. Since the petitions analysed in this study are addressed to the governors of two institutions, and they are expected to be men, only these phrases are included here.

request, i.e. petitions, it is commonly stated that “you must excuse your boldness in requesting a Favour from a person...you must very feelingly press him to it, by demonstrating the miseries and misfortunes you are under” (*The Young Secretary’s Guide* 1721: 3), or that a “request must be made in humility” (*The English Letter-Writer or the Whole Art of General Correspondence [...] together with the Universal Petitioner*, Brown 1790: 208).

According to Bannet (2005: xi), these manuals “sought to ‘improve’ their users by offering examples of whatever conduct and sentiments they considered proper”, becoming guides for any member of society, independently of their social position, given the need of the time to write letters on so many occasions. In relation to this, the language that these manuals used on the first page provides a clear indication of the intention of the manuals. Most of them incorporate the word *polite* even in the title (e.g. *The Complete Letter-Writer or Polite English Secretary* 1772), and in the more expanded title which follows the words, *directions*, *instructions* and *rules* can often be read.

Finally, it is not uncommon to find a separate section on petitions in the manuals, as in Brown’s *The English Letter-Writer or the Whole Art of General Correspondence [...] together with the Universal Petitioner* (1790), and Cooke’s *The Universal Letter-Writer or New Art of Polite Correspondence [...] to which is added the Complete Petitioner* (1791).

3.2 Features of the petitions in the manuals

The sections in the manuals devoted to petitions are usually introduced by some directions. These are given mainly with the modal verb *should*, which implies some kind of obligation. In other words, the writers of petitions were supposed to follow the instructions provided. These refer to the use of humble language, the choice of the right superscriptions and terms of address as well as their position in the petition, the briefness of the message, and the inclusion of a final prayer. However, the introductions to these sections do not state that excuses should be made when petitioning, unlike the information provided when referring to requests, which invariably, in all the manuals, indicates that excusing boldness was required. More importantly, these introductions show that the authors are completely aware of the need and lack of knowledge of many people who apply to superiors for different reasons, often in situations of despair.

The actual petitions present in the manuals have some distinctive features that need to be mentioned, as they will be considered in the present analysis. These are

6. Due to the length of some titles, they have been shortened, including [...], so as to be able to include the information required in each case.

the specific superscriptions, opening and closing formulae, as well as the use of third person in the body of the text.

Expressions seem to be clearly fixed regarding the beginning and the end of the petitions. Superscriptions vary depending on the person they are addressed to, but the opening formula is always the same, *The humble petition of (name of petitioner) sheweth that...* Similarly, the closing sentence does not offer much variation, that is, *your petitioner, as in duty bound will/shall ever pray* is the preferred sentence to end these petitions.

It could be argued that the formality of this specific genre may be the reason why petitions are written in the third person. The actual petitioner presents her/himself as an external being when, in fact, s/he will be the direct recipient of what is being asked for. When the petitions are not written by the petitioner because of their illiteracy, the use of the third person seems more appropriate.

4. The present study

The petitions chosen for the present study have been partly researched from a socio-historical point of view (e.g. Evans 2005; McClure 1981; Pugh 2007; Woodfine 2006). However, no in-depth analyses of the language present in these petitions seem to have been carried out so far.

4.1 The data

The 50 petitions under investigation have been extracted from two larger corpora: a corpus of petitions written to the Foundling Hospital (henceforth FH) in London, and a corpus of petitions addressed to the Bank of England (henceforth BoE) also in London.

The main shared characteristics between them are the fact that they were signed by women, and addressed to superiors who were the governors of either the Bank of England or the Foundling Hospital and therefore most probably men. Despite the presence of similarities mainly due to the inclusion of requests in both cases, the BoE petitions display greater variation than the FH ones, which seem to follow a very similar pattern in most cases.

These are the main features of each set of petitions:

Petitions addressed to the Foundling Hospital

These petitions were written between 1793 and 1799, and signed by young women, who were unmarried and needed a home for their first child. The Foundling Hospital was one of such homes. Founded in 1739 by Thomas

Coram, it soon became a secure place for many babies who could not be looked after by their families.

Since 1741, when the first children were admitted, different systems were used for their admission. It was not until 1763 that the governors of the Foundling Hospital established that those who wanted to have their children admitted into the hospital, “had to petition the governors directly” (Evans 2005: 93), and over the following years different rules were established as to what should be included in the content of such petitions. The women were usually servants who had been “seduced by lovers” (McClure 1981: 140) or by the master of the house where they worked, which was not an uncommon event of the time (Meldrum 1997 and 2000). Finding a home for their babies was a means “to keep their jobs” (McClure 1981: 85). In most of the cases, there is only one petition signed by each woman.

Petitions addressed to the Bank of England

These petitions were written between 1785 and 1815. They were signed by women prisoners, many of whom also had children. The reason why most of them were in prison was forgery of bank notes or exchanging forged bank notes. Their petitions were mainly motivated by the need for some money, other type of material help, or the desire to be transported to Australia sooner than they were supposed to be sent there. On several occasions some of the women sent more than one petition to the BoE requiring different needs, and a relatively active correspondence seems to have been maintained between the petitioners and the governors.

Unfortunately, on many occasions it is not possible to state whether the person who signed the petition was actually the writer. The direct access to the manuscripts sometimes contributes to clarification in this respect, but not always, as handwriting practices were also very similar among many people of the time. They probably used the numerous copybooks that were common at the time, such as *The Universal Penman*, written by George Bickham in 1743, as it is reflected in the round hand used in a few of the analysed letters and is very similar to the calligraphy present in this copybook.

4.2 The manuals

A selection of manuals was required to carry out this study. Many of the manuals first published in the eighteenth century in England were reprinted several times. For instance, as Mitchell (2007: 184) points out, “*The Young Secretary’s Guide* went through well over twenty-seven editions in London and at least twenty-four in Boston.” In the present study the twentieth edition of this manual, dated in 1719,

is the one used. Similarly, two of the manuals included in the present study, *The Complete Letter-Writer or New and Polite English Secretary* (1756) and *The New Letter-Writer or Polite English Secretary* (1772), are two different editions (the second and the fourteenth respectively) of the same original manual, which implies the presence of multiple reprints. Although different editions usually add something new, many are repeated as directions and rules and often editions are almost identical. For example, the edition of 1812 of *The Universal Letter-Writer or New Art of Polite Correspondence [...] to which is added the Complete Petitioner* (Cooke 1791) does not display any variation when compared to the first edition from twenty years before. Only the 1791 edition has been included in this study because of the dates of the letters that are analysed here, although the fact that both editions are identical would not have altered the results of this study despite the distance in time.

The titles of the manuals were often very long, as in *The English Letter-Writer or the Whole Art of General Correspondence [...] together with the Universal Petitioner* (Brown 1790). And sometimes the same or a very similar title was used by different manuals. This is the case of the two manuals entitled *The Young Secretary's Guide*, which are used in this study. There is no clear indication in the second one, published in 1721, that it is a later edition of the one written by Hill in 1687, whereas the one published in 1719 clearly indicates that it is the twentieth edition of Hill's manual. Both manuals have a different number of sections and the style in which the introduction to the reader is written differs considerably between the two. The title may reflect a possible influence from writers of previous manuals, which might have served as models.

Due to the possible variety of actual writers of the petitions analysed here, it was necessary to choose a selection addressed to different audiences, both men and women from a variety of social layers. They are the following:

- *The Young Secretary's Guide* (Hill 1719)
- *The Secretary's Guide* (Gent 1721)
- *The Young Secretary's Guide* (1721)
- *The Complete Letter-Writer or New and Polite English Secretary* (1756)
- *The Ladies Complete Letter-Writer* (1765)
- *The Complete Letter-Writer or Polite English Secretary* (1772)
- *The Complete Letter-Writer* (1778)
- *The English Letter-Writer or the Whole Art of General Correspondence [...] together with the Universal Petitioner* (Brown 1790)
- *The Universal Letter-Writer or New Art of Polite Correspondence [...] to which is added the Complete Petitioner* (Cooke 1791)
- *The Complete Art of Writing Letters* (1797)

The information provided in all the manuals has been taken into account in the present study. However, the two manuals that include a special section on petitions, Brown (1790) and Cooke (1791), will be considered more carefully, particularly in the quantitative analysis.

5. Method

All the petitions included in the present study were transcribed from the original manuscripts. This is part of an ongoing project that aims at transcribing approximately 100 petitions addressed to the Foundling Hospital and over 700 addressed to the Bank of England. These transcriptions are faithful representations of the original petitions (see Figure 1). This means that they maintain not only the spelling, grammar and punctuation as it appears in the original but also the

Hon^{ble} J^{ts} Kingbench Prison

Pardon my presumption in writing
to you but real necessity now obliges me to make
you acquainted with my present situation
I have bin in hear since last June have had no
help from Mrs Harris my sister but one I per
week have bin so bad with the Pneumonia I
have not bin able to earn but a small triffel
I have now got my discharge from Mr
Fruman but not yet have got my
freedom by reason I cannot pay my
fees I have no body to apply to except
your self and the parish therefore hoping
to find a feeling heart in Mr Acton I flatter
my self he will answer my request in
advancing to me a triffel that may enable
me to quiet this horro^d place call^d
the Kingbench I shall be ever bound
to pray for you and your family
any sum of monny you please to send
will come safe to me by the heavens for
God sake send me some relief your obed^t
Sarah Walker Servant Sarah Walker

Figure 1. Letter written at King's Bench Prison. Signed by Sarah Walker. Undated in 1785 about her case. (F25/1/20; by kind permission of the Bank of England Archive)

margins, spaces between the lines and paragraphs. So far, a total of 63 petitions to the Foundling Hospital and 200 to the Bank of England have been transcribed, and it is out of these that the 25 from each corpus were extracted (see Table 1).

Table 1. Number of petitions

Corpus	Total transcribed	Signed by women	Signed by men
Foundling Hospital (FH)	63	61	2
Bank of England (BoE)	200	105	95

Previous transcriptions of around 700 petitions to the Bank of England exist (Palk 2007). However, there are several reasons that justify a new transcription of these letters. To begin with, Palk's transcriptions do not preserve the layout and format of the original letters. They do not always include the dates in the letters themselves but include it in the accompanying description. Therefore, it was important to analyse these aspects in comparison with the manuals and to check the original documents for the present study. In addition, when the original documents were analysed, it was observed that the existing transcriptions contain some errors. Some words were transcribed with a modern spelling, not preserving the original that contained non-standard spellings of that time. On occasions, even a different word had been transcribed.⁷ Finally, some of the petitions by the Bank of England present in the digitised version had not been transcribed, and were, therefore, not included in Palk's book.

The selection of the 50 petitions was the first step, prior to the analysis and the comparison with the manuals. This process required some decisions as both corpora differ considerably in the number of men and women signing the petitions (see Table 1). For this reason, it was decided that only petitions signed by women would be analysed. The next step was the selection of data. This was done randomly once the women petitions had been isolated from the men's. Each petition was given a number, and 25 numbers were taken from each group with a random number generator programme.⁸

The petitions of the manuals contain both a superscription that shows deference towards the addressee (*To the Right Honourable...*) and an opening formula which clearly states that it is a petition (*The humble petition of (petitioner's name)*),

7. It has to be noted that Palk's transcriptions were done before the original manuscripts were digitised by the Bank of England. This probably explains the errors found, as it is more likely that the new digitised version is easier to read and, therefore, to transcribe than the original documents as such.

8. This is the link to the random generator programme used: <https://www.calculator.net/random-number-generator.html?slower=1&supper=60&ctype=1&s=6300&submit1=Generate>

Sheweth that...). But this is not always the case in the two datasets. The presence of both or either of these two elements was thought to determine a lower degree of deviation from the directions of the manuals. This expectation was motivated by the fact that if writers were aware of how to introduce a petition, they may also have known about the rest of the characteristics. For this reason, it was decided to divide the petitions into two groups within each dataset. One set contained a superscription and/or an opening formula and the other did not contain either of these elements.

The final step was to analyse the petitions manually in order to see their similarities with and differences from the letter-writing manuals regarding the following aspects:

1. The layout, i.e. the format and structure, as well as the spelling and punctuation
2. The types of superscriptions, opening and closing formulae
3. The persons and/or personal pronouns that were used, whether first (*I, me, my*) or third (*your petitioner, she, her*)
4. The content, including the length of the petition and the politeness as indicated in the manuals

6. Results

The first difference that can be observed when both datasets are compared is the presence or absence of superscriptions and/or opening formulae (see Table 2): 80 per cent of the petitions contained both or either in the FH set, whereas only 32 per cent of the petitions of the BoE could be included in this group. This may be due to the fact that the governors of the Foundling Hospital had already established some characteristics that these petitions had to include, which was not the case in the second corpus (cf. Section 4.1). Also, the FH petitions had a clear aim, that is, all the women request that their newly-born babies be accepted in the Foundling Hospital, but this is not the case in the BoE corpus, where the needs and requests differ and the situation of despair also varies.

All the models of petitions included in the manuals incorporate both elements, a superscription and an opening formula stating that the letter is a petition. For this reason, it was expected that the petitions with one or both of these fixed phrases were influenced by the manuals more than the rest, as the writers would have been aware of some conventions to start their petitions, independently of the content of the request. This explains the division of the petitions into the two groups for the present study. In Group 1, only two petitions of the FH do not

contain a superscription, and this is the case for only one of the petitions of the BoE (see Table 2). Similarly, while all the BoE petitions included in Group 1 contain an opening formula, only one of the FH does not contain an opening formula, but it includes a superscription.

Table 2. Distribution of the two corpora (in raw figures and percentages) according to the presence or not of superscriptions and opening formulae

	FH petitions	BoE petitions
Group 1. Including a superscription and/or opening formulae	20 (80%)	8 (32%)
Group 2. Not including a superscription and/or opening formulae	5 (20%)	17 (68%)

6.1 Group 1: Petitions that include a superscription and/or an opening formula

As expected, Group 1 in both sets of petitions followed the format and structure of the manuals. In general, the layout of these petitions indicates that the petitioners were aware of their position in relation to the addressees. As recommended by the manuals, they left the margins and spaces that they were supposed to leave due to the superior ranks of the governors they were addressing. Likewise, the majority of these petitions include a similar introduction and closing formula to the ones present in the manuals.

Although exceptions can be observed (e.g. *Your Petitioner will be Ever bound to Prey, or humbly bow down to you honnared Gantlemen prayeng*), most of these petitions contain standard spelling and grammar,⁹ that is, they follow the rules of the prescriptive grammarians of the time and their spelling reflects the specific features of the English language of the late eighteenth century.

However, there is one aspect of spelling that requires special attention, that is, capitalisation. Most of the petitions analysed display a very inconsistent use of capital letters (e.g. *The Father of the Child, as Absconded and Left me in Great Distress*). On the other hand, the writers of the petitions in the manuals only capitalise proper nouns, the pronoun *I*, words placed after full stops and those that refer to important positions or ranks, such as *Majesty*, *Lordship* or *Secretary*. This is precisely what the grammarians of the eighteenth century instructed (e.g. Coar 1796; Greenwood 1737). The grammarians' concern arose after the extended practice of capitalisation that had spread in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

9. The analysis of the grammatical features in the petitions goes beyond the scope of the present study.

and led to the establishment of some rules (Crystal 2018). However, among such rules some were ambiguous, for instance, that capitals are used at the beginning of “every substantive of peculiar significance” (Coar 1796: 213). This could explain the abundance of capital letters in the petitions analysed, although not only substantives were capitalised, but other types of words, too (e.g. *A* (determiner), *Bin* (*been*, verb), *Everey* (*every*, determiner)).

Punctuation shows no consistency. Most of the manuals include a brief section on punctuation as well as on the use of capital letters, and all the model petitions in the manuals include punctuation marks such as commas, semi-colons and full stops. As shown in Table 3, 25 per cent of the petitions in the FH data and the BoE data do not include any punctuation marks at all, and some of them only include an occasional hyphen, a separation or a comma; the different function in the eighteenth century may explain this variation and inconsistency.¹⁰ Similarly, the petition models in the manuals are usually written in one single paragraph, whereas the petitions in Group 1 are often organised into several paragraphs and there seems to have been a clear division of the paragraphs according to sub-topics.

Table 3. Punctuation in the petitions in Group 1

	4 or more punctuation marks	1, 2 or 3 punctuation marks	No punctuation at all
Foundling Hospital	11 (55%)	4 (20%)	5 (25%)
Bank of England	5 (62.5%)	1 (12.5%)	2 (25%)

Regarding the closing formulae,¹¹ all petitions in the manuals conclude with the phrase *as in duty bound will ever pray* (sometimes with a slight variation, such as using *shall* instead of *will*).¹² Consequently, this concluding formula was expected in this group of petitions. However, the results show that all the petitions addressed to the governors of the Bank of England contained this phrase (or a very similar expression, e.g. *your Petitioner, with her Children, and probably Children's Children, will, as in Duty Bound, ever pray for their benefactors &c*), but only 85 per cent of the FH petitions included it (see Table 4), often with slight variations (e.g. *Your Petishoner will be Ever bound to Prey, or Should your Petitioner be so fortunate as to have Her Case Considered In Duty Bound With Gratitude Shall Ever Pray*). As

10. Four punctuation marks were established as the limit, but most of the petitions with less than 4 marks only had 2.

11. The superscriptions and closing formulae are not dealt with here as they have already been mentioned to establish the distinction between the two groups of petitions to analyse.

12. These variations have not been considered in the present study, since the focus is on whether the petitions included the promise to pray or not, rather than on stylistic variation.

explained above, the single mothers who wrote to the Foundling Hospital did not need to excuse their boldness, and thus they may have felt that they did not need to promise their prayers either. Whereas the women who were in prison could only request their needs from the governors of the Bank of England, the women who wrote to the Foundling Hospital may have had the opportunity to find a home for their children in other institutions.

Table 4. Closings in petitions in Group 1

	FH	BoE
Containing <i>as in duty bound will ever pray</i>	(17) 85%	(8) 100%
Not containing <i>as in duty bound will ever pray</i>	(3) 15%	0

As mentioned above (cf. Section 5), the petitions in the manuals were mostly written in the third person (e.g. *sheweth that your petitioner has...*). Even though the petitions in the present study also show a preference for the third person, the percentages are lower than those in the manuals (see Table 5). In addition, a combination of the first and the third person was observed in all of them, but more often in the petitions than in the manuals that usually start with the third person and change to the first person either in the middle of the text or towards the end. The differences may imply that the writers were following the conventions present in the manuals, as also shown by the presence of the superscription and/or the opening formulae. When they started detailing personal circumstances and the letters became more personal, the first person was introduced. The predominance of the third person all through most petitions also indicates that some of these petitions may have been written by a different person than the one who signed them, despite the suggested norms in the manuals. Finally, it needs to be pointed out that there are not only some differences between the manuals and the petitions, but also between the FH and the BoE petitions, as the BoE set includes petitions with a mixture of third and first person. Furthermore, in the FH set, there is even one petition written exclusively in the first person. However, these results have to be taken with caution as the number of petitions in the BoE set is rather low.

Table 5. Person (and personal pronouns) in petitions in Group 1 and in the manuals

	FH	BoE	Brown (1790)	Cooke (1791)
Third person	14 (70%)	(5) 62.5%	16 (84%)	53 (93%)
First person	1 (5%)	0	0	0
Third and first person	5 (25%)	(3) 37.5%	3 (16%)	4 (7%)

The analysis of the content and the politeness practices did not match the indications of the manuals in every respect. For example, many of these petitions are

fairly long, in contrast to the recommendations. In addition, the model petitions contain only one paragraph whereas the petitions usually include several paragraphs. As regards their length, Table 6 illustrates the similarities and differences between the two sets of petitions and compares them to the manuals. A higher number of words is found in the BoE set, where the longest petition contains as many as 520 words. The longest petition of the FH set has 323 words, which is less than in the BoE set but more than double the average number of the petitions in the two manuals.

Table 6. Average number of words in the petitions in Group 1

Group 1	Number of words
Foundling Hospital	160 words
Bank of England	210 words
Brown (1790)	120 words
Cooke (1791)	140 words

All petitions refer to the miseries and misfortunes of the petitioners, as suggested by the manuals (e.g. *your Petitioner fell an innocent victim to the offended Laws of her Country, or your Petitioner having no means of supporting her helpless infant humbly ...*). They show modesty and humility, as evidenced not only by some of the fixed phrases of the time such as *your humble servant*, but also by regular comments describing the petitioners' feelings and actions (e.g. *with the deepest humility prays, or humbly craves's your aid*).

Interesting differences can also be observed in petitions that include excuses of boldness not only in their numbers but also in the language used (see Table 7). The manuals in general recommended that these excuses be included, and two manuals include special sections for them (Brown, 1790 and Cooke, 1791). Nevertheless, excuses are not always incorporated or mentioned in the introduction section. This is particularly the case in Cooke's manual whereas Brown includes more excuses (68 per cent) than any other sets. In this respect, the petitions to the Bank of England seem to follow the suggestions more faithfully. Excuses of

Table 7. Excusing boldness in the petitions in Group 1

	Excuse their boldness	Do not excuse their boldness
Foundling Hospital	4 (20%)	16 (80%)
Bank of England	5 (62.5%)	3 (37.5%)
Brown (1790)	13 (68%)	6 (32%)
Cooke (1791)	19 (33%)	38 (67%)

boldness are more frequently found in contrast to the FH dataset, where only 20 per cent include them.

Similarly, the expressions used in these two manuals to excuse boldness differ from what can be found in the BoE data. Both Brown and Cooke use mainly the verb *presume* when excusing boldness. The same phrasing is found in most excuses in the FH data (e.g. *your Petitioner (...) humbly presums to apply*). On the other hand, the structures in the BoE examples vary, and *presume* is never used. The expressions found are *beg leave*, *venture*, and even a much more direct one, *humbley bow down to you honnared Gantlemen prayeng your Goodness will Pardon the Liberty I take in thus Adrasing*.

Two reasons could lie behind these differences. First, the fact that excuses are hardly present in some of the manuals, particularly in some of the model petitions provided (e.g. Cooke's), may have contributed to their absence in cases where writers were using such manuals as models. Second, the women who wrote to the Foundling Hospital did not have to find an excuse for writing because the objective was clear, and a petition was required to get the children admitted into the hospital. The situation of the women who wrote to the Bank of England was very different because they were not expected to write any petitions and, therefore, they may have felt a greater need to excuse their boldness.

In addition, the different structures and the fact that the FH petitions show more similarities with the manuals might suggest that the petitioners of the FH were probably more aware of the language used in these manuals.

6.2 Group 2: Petitions that do not include a superscription and/or an opening formula

The analysis of Group 2 reveals some similarities to Group 1 in relation to the content and in particular to the excuses of boldness. However, in all the other aspects, much more deviation from the manuals was encountered. These petitions are shorter than those in Group 1, and, as will be shown, they are more similar in this respect to the model petitions in the manuals.

The petitions in Group 2 display expressions of humility (e.g. *With the greatest humility do I take the Liberty to address this Letter to you, or she is nothing but a common servent at seven or Eight gineas per year and cannot git her child nursh*) that suggest that the petitioners were not the actual writers, but had possibly received help from others who would have been familiar with the manuals. The content as well as the chosen words in the petitions appear to imply that the signees also had an awareness of their lower social rank.

These petitions were written when the English language was being codified, and the first dictionaries and grammar books were establishing the spelling and

grammar rules. However, those rules are not always observed in these petitions. For instance, in the clause *wich makes us both vary unhapey*,¹³ there are three words whose spelling was already established in Johnson's dictionary (1755), namely *wich* for *which*, *vary* for *very* and *unhapey* for *unhappy*. Similarly, capitalisation of initials does not seem to follow any consistent patterns in most petitions in this Group (e.g. *in the unfortunate Place where I am Confined your Generous Goodness soon transpires*). In many cases it is obvious that the petitioners' literacy skills were poor, as evidenced by their non-standard grammar¹⁴ and spelling deviations as well as almost illegible handwriting.

In addition, not all petitioners follow the indications regarding the layout, the format and the structure present in the manuals. In fact, much variation can be observed in this respect. For instance, many petitioners do not leave margins anywhere on the paper, and the placement of address terms such as *sirs* or *gentlemen* is not consistent in the different petitions.

Punctuation is not often used in these petitions although differences appear between the two sets (see Table 8). There are hardly any punctuation marks in the FH set, with the exception of one petition that has very few. In the BoE set more petitions than not include punctuation. However, in 41 per cent of the petitions only a few commas and full stops are present. In addition, paragraphs are hardly ever used, which, together with the lack of punctuation, does not facilitate the understanding of the petitions. Often long sentences extend over several lines and the original idea is sometimes lost because of this.

Table 8. Punctuation in the petitions in Group 2

	4 or more punctuation marks	1, 2 or 3 punctuation marks*	No punctuation at all
Foundling Hospital	0	1 (20%)	4 (80%)
Bank of England	4 (24%)	7 (41%)	6 (35%)

*These are commas and full stops in the FH, and commas and dashes in the BoE.

The formulae used at the beginning and at the end of the petitions also show differences. Since the petitions included in Group 2 do not include either a superscription (*To the right Honorable...*), or an opening formula (*The humble petition of...*) like the ones in Group 1, it is necessary to describe the introductions that these petitions contain. Table 9 shows how the petitions are introduced and the addressees addressed in Group 2. As can be observed, the BoE set displays a higher

13. This example has been extracted from one of BoE petitions.

14. As mentioned before, an analysis of grammar deviations is not carried out in this study. For this reason, no examples are provided here.

variety of addressing terms than the FH set. It is not surprising that the plural form is more commonly used than the singular (*gentlemen* versus *gentleman*), as the addressees were governors of both institutions, i.e. a plural addressees in each case. In the manuals *sir* or *honoured sir* are indicated as the usual terms when addressing a superior (cf. Section 3.1). But these terms are used only in the BoE corpus, and not in the FH. The differences may be partly due to the lower number of petitions in the FH dataset (5) as opposed to the BoE set (17), within Group 2.

Table 9. Address formulae in petitions in Group 2

	FH corpus	BoE corpus
<i>Gentlemen</i> *	3 (60%)	4 (23.5%)
<i>Gentleman</i>	1 (20%)	1 (6%)
<i>Honored** Gentleman</i>	1 (20%)	4 (23.5%)
<i>Honored Sir</i>	0	7 (41%)
<i>Sir</i>	0	1 (6%)

*Variation in spelling can be seen in the two corpora in some of these words, especially *gentlemen* and *gentleman* (e.g. *gentelmen*).

**This adjective can be found with different spellings in the two corpora, such as *Hon*, *Honoured* or *Hon^d*.

The analysis of the concluding expression shows an inverted tendency regarding the use of the closing formula *as in duty bound will ever pray* in petitions of Group 2 (see Table 10). Most of the FH petitioners use this expression while less than half, i.e. 41 per cent, of the BoE ones end their petitions in the way modelled in the manuals. It remains arguable that the difference in size in the datasets in Group 2 (5 in the FH set and 17 in the BoE set) might have contributed to these results.

Table 10. Closing formulae in petitions in Group 2

	FH	BoE
Containing <i>as in duty bound will ever pray</i>	4 (80%)	7 (41%)
Not containing <i>as in duty bound will ever pray</i>	1 (20%)	10 (59%)

In the analysis of the personal pronouns, the first-person pronouns were expected to prevail in Group 2, as these petitions seem to be written from a more personal perspective. However, the results were rather different (see Table 11). First, in the FH set there is a slight preference for the use of a mixture of persons as both the first and the third are combined. The petitioners of the BoE prefer to write in the first person, although a mixed use of both is present in 12 per cent of the petitions, and strikingly the same number of petitions, i.e. 12 per cent, displays an exclusive use of the third person. In the model letters in the manuals, the third person is the most frequently used, which is hardly present in the datasets analysed here.

Table 11. Persons (and personal pronouns) used in petitions in Group 2

	FH	BoE	Brown (1790)	Cooke (1791)
Third person	0	2 (12%)	16 (84%)	53 (93%)
First person	2 (40%)	13 (76%)	0	0
Third and first person	3 (60%)	2 (12%)	3 (16%)	4 (7%)

The average length of the petitions addressed to the Foundling Hospital in Group 2 is very similar to the average length found in Cooke's petitions, whereas the petitions sent to the Bank of England are appreciably longer, as shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Average number of words in the petitions in Group 2

Group 2	Number of words
Foundling Hospital	146 words
Bank of England	181 words
Brown (1790)	120 words
Cooke (1791)	140 words

As to the politeness issues mentioned in the manuals, very few petitioners excuse their boldness in the FH corpus, in most petitions sent to the Bank of England, there is some type of reason or excuse for writing (see Table 13). In addition, these excuses are usually very clearly stated, as in *Pardon my presumption in writing to you, or I [...] have taken the liberty of troubling you*. Nevertheless, in all petitions of both sets, emphasis is placed on the miseries and misfortunes of the petitioners (e.g. *The father [...] Left me in great Distress [...] to had to my misfortune I have been deprived of parants*), who clearly state their needs in a modest and humble way. This can be observed in the adjectives and expressions, e.g. *We unfortunet sufferers [...] humbly bow down to you*. As suggested in Section 6.1, the difference may be due to the fact that the women who addressed their petitions to the Bank of England actually felt they were being bold when asking for their favours, whereas the ones who wrote to the Foundling Hospital may have thought that such an excuse was not needed. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the differences displayed also in the two manuals that contain petition models.

Table 13. Excusing boldness in the petitions in Group 2

	Excuse their boldness	Do not excuse their boldness
Foundling Hospital	1 (20%)	4 (80%)
Bank of England	15 (88%)	2 (12%)
Brown (1790)	13 (68%)	6 (32%)
Cooke (1791)	19 (33%)	38 (67%)

7. A comparison between Group 1 and Group 2

When the results of Group 1 and Group 2 are compared, there seems to be a correlation between starting the petitions in the same way as the manuals (e.g. *To the honourable the Governors...*) and sharing more similarities in general, not only with the model petitions in the manuals, but also with the recommendations suggested in all the manuals used in the present study.

The only exceptions are found in paragraph organisation and in their length. Most of the petitions in Group 1 contain several paragraphs, all of them in the case of the BoE. In contrast, hardly any of the petitions in Group 2, and none in the case of the BoE, include more than one paragraph. The writers in Group 1 seem to have felt the need to separate each idea in a different paragraph while the writers in Group 2 wrote continuously without separating topics. This is precisely what can be found in the model petitions in the manuals, but the writers of the manuals may, of course, have been conditioned by the characteristics of the book and its format. As shown in Table 14, the petitions in Group 2 are shorter than the petitions in Group 1. They are also more similar to the length displayed by the manuals. This result was unexpected because the recommendation in the manuals was precisely to write short petitions, in other words, petitioners should convey the main ideas of their needs without entering into many details. Therefore, the petitions in Group 1, which were expected to be shorter, were in fact longer on average than the ones in Group 2, which deviated from the manuals in many other issues. Nevertheless, the average number of words in the BoE petitions is still relatively high in both groups when compared to the FH dataset.

Table 14. Average number of words in the petitions in both groups of datasets and in the manuals

	Group 1	Group 2
Foundling Hospital	160	146
Bank of England	210	181
	Manuals	
Brown (1790)	120	
Cooke (1791)	140	

In relation to the rest of the aspects analysed, petitions in Group 2 differ more from the manuals than those in Group 1. For instance, regarding the layout, spelling and punctuation, Group 1 petitions are more consistent and similar to the models in the manuals. In Group 2, writers did not seem to follow any rules on layout and punctuation, and spelling very often appears to vary and differ from the spelling

of the time. On some occasions, for instance, these deviations may be reflecting different pronunciations or ways of speech, as even though all the petitions were written in London, not all the petitioners came from London. As mentioned in Section 4.1, the petitioners that wrote to the Foundling Hospital were mainly servants living and working in London, but their origins are not known and they may have come from rural areas looking for work, as “[t]here was a demand for country servants in London households” (Evans 2005: 19). Similarly, most of the petitioners of the Bank of England were prisoners in Newgate Gaol in London, but they were not all originally from the city or even the south east. This is clearly indicated in some of the petitions that refer to where these people came from or where they were arrested after committing a crime. One exception seems to be the use of capital letters, which in both groups shows inconsistencies.

In a similar way, whereas most petitions in Group 1 end with a promise of “praying”, as suggested by the manuals, there is a lower number of petitions in Group 2 that conclude in the same way, especially in the BoE dataset (see Table 15). Likewise, the third person pronouns are more common in Group 1, agreeing with the model petitions in the manuals, whereas first person pronouns used exclusively are more notably present in Group 2 (see Table 16).

Table 15. Presence of *as in duty bound will ever pray*

	FH Group 1	FH Group 2	BoE Group 1	BoE Group 2
Containing <i>as in duty bound will ever pray</i>	(17) 85%	4 (80%)	7(8) 100%	7 (41%)
Not containing <i>as in duty bound will ever pray</i>	(3) 15%	1 (20%)	0	10 (59%)

Table 16. Person (and personal pronouns) in the petitions and in the manuals

	FH Group 1	FH Group 2	BoE Group 1	BoE Group 2	Brown (1790)	Cooke (1791)
Third person	14 (70%)	0	(5) 62.5%	2 (12%)	16 (84%)	53 (93%)
First person	1 (5%)	2 (40%)	0	13 (76%)	0	0
Third and first person	5 (25%)	3 (60%)	(3) 37.5%	2 (12%)	3 (16%)	4 (7%)

Finally, the petitioners to the Bank of England excuse their boldness more than the FH petitioners. This is the case in both groups, independently of following other rules more faithfully in Group 1 than in Group 2 (see Table 17). The reason may lie in the fact that the petitioners to the Foundling Hospital were expected to send a petition, as this was a requirement to have one’s child admitted into the Hospital, whilst the Governors of the Bank of England did not require these

petitions to be sent. However, this is more often the case in Group 2 petitions to the Bank of England.

Table 17. Excusing boldness

	FH Group 1	FH Group 2	BoE Group 1	BoE Group 2	Brown (1790)	Cooke (1791)
Excuse their boldness	4 (20%)	1 (20%)	5 (62.5%)	15 (88%)	13 (68%)	19 (33%)
Do not excuse their boldness	16 (80%)	4 (80%)	3 (37.5%)	2 (12%)	6 (32%)	38 (67%)

8. Conclusions

Letter-writing was a common practice in Late Modern England, and a desired practical skill regardless of one's social position. Even people who may not have had literacy skills used this means of communication in requests addressed to the higher ranks. As has been observed, despite the petitions' signees having similar needs and some of them possibly belonging to similar layers of society, differences occur in their petitions. They are often due to the specific social contexts in which these petitions are signed, i.e., by a prisoner or by a single mother, and whether the petition begins with a fixed formula according to the models in the letter-writing manuals of the time.

The distribution of the petitions from both datasets into two groups has shown that those petitions with a similar introduction to that instructed in the manuals (Group 1) display less deviation from the manuals than the petitions that do not contain this introduction. This is especially the case in the layout (e.g. the margins and spaces left between the superscription and the beginning of the petition), the use of the third person when referring to the petitioner, and in the incorporation of the closing formulae *as in duty bound will ever pray*. The main difference these petitions show compared to the manuals is their length. They are appreciably longer than the models provided by the manuals.

The petitions that do not start with a superscription and/or an opening formulae as suggested by the manuals (Group 2) differ more from the models. The main differences, apart from the absence of the mentioned introductory phrases, are the more frequent use of the first person and the lower presence of the concluding phrase *as in duty bound will ever pray*. Regarding their length, despite being also longer on average than the petitions in the manuals, they are shorter than the petitions in Group 1.

However, in both groups neither punctuation nor use of capital letters seem to follow consistent patterns. The explanation for this may lie in the fact that the use

of punctuation and capital letters was in a state of flux in the eighteenth century. It might have been influenced by personal choice on which words to emphasise and on where to pause when reading the petition aloud.

Nevertheless, within each group, the two datasets also show differences. In general terms, the BoE petitions display more deviation from the texts included in the manuals. The only aspect in which the petitions to the Bank of England show more consistency, in accordance with the manuals, is the excuse of the writer's boldness. One of the reasons for this may be that these petitions were "optional" as opposed to the "compulsory" ones of the FH set. Otherwise, the petitions to the Foundling Hospital are more similar to the manuals, although in terms of punctuation, they use more hyphens and separations than the BoE ones. However, the low number of FH petitions in Group 2 may have contributed to these results.

The context of writing may have influenced the deviations found in both datasets. Despite the possible similarities between the two groups of women in terms of social ranks, education and literacy skills, the circumstances in which the petitions were written differed. This means that although all the women felt that their addressees were from a superior social layer and many had an idea of how a petition should be made, their situations were different. While most women servants addressing the governors of the Foundling Hospital might have been helped by a more literate person in the house where they worked, not all the prisoners who wrote to the Bank of England would have had the assistance in the writing process.

Furthermore, the letter-writing manuals are likely to have contributed to the variation, as the models do not agree in all aspects. While most of the manuals used in this study provide similar recommendations, differences appear. For instance, the two manuals that include a special section on petitions, Brown's (1790) and Cooke's (1791), differ in the average length of the petitions, the persons used, and most notably in the presence of excuses of boldness, although neither state explicitly the need to include such excuses in petitions.

This study has shown that despite the popularity of letter-writing manuals in eighteenth-century England, not everybody had access to them or followed their recommendations. It has also argued that these instruction books could be considered both descriptive and prescriptive, as had already been suggested, and that they also display variation. Whereas the models could perfectly reflect what better educated people may have written in actual fact (descriptive), their instructions may have been understood as prescriptive by those who used these books for the first time or regularly resorted to them as references.

Further research would provide more conclusive results. For instance, an extension of the analysis of this sample to all the petitions collected in both corpora could confirm the results found so far. In addition, the study of the grammatical features will probably provide more insightful conclusions.

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Impoliteness in Blunderland

Carroll's Alice books and the manners in which manners fail

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Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), two linguistic treatises in disguise, create ingenious fantasy worlds where the rules of language and the conventions of communication are turned upside down. What is (semantically) illogical or (pragmatically) inappropriate confounds Alice, who struggles to make sense of nonsense and to keep the order of a polite, rational world in place. In her dialogues with anthropomorphic animals and objects, ambiguity and fallacy coexist with interactive manipulation, while her communicative expectations crumble and comic misunderstandings arise.

This article looks into the construction of linguistic and pragmatic transgressions in Carroll's acclaimed books with a view to unveiling their contribution to impoliteness. On the one hand, the paper analyses the structural mechanisms of wordplay vis-à-vis phonetic, morpho-syntactic and lexical ambiguity. On the other, it examines the pragmatic strategies whereby speech-act infelicities, conversational maxim violations, and bald-on-record clashes contribute to reversing the established conventions of (polite) social interaction. The premise guiding the analysis is that the pervasive existence of double meaning and incongruity in the Alice books underlies not only linguistic phenomena such as punning, neologism, and relexicalisation, but also interactive patterns, in which the expected norms of courteous conduct in social exchanges do not obtain. The antithetical and script-oppositional (hence, humorous) nature of this process defrauds outsider Alice – the victim, but at times the happy recipient, of the uncooperative challenges of this inverted, refracted, teasingly nonsensical world.

Keywords: impoliteness, face, manners, incongruity, ambiguity, wordplay, infelicity, speech act, nonsense, humour

1. Introduction

This article intends to map the ways in which fictional characters transgress manners in a particular case study of modern English literature: Lewis Carroll's Alice books, namely *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871). This transgression must be considered against a set of social norms, whose existence and acknowledgement are the condition for any transgression to be possible in the first place. In Carroll's works, norms of proper behaviour are very much present. Characters show to be aware of, and keep an eye on, each other's manners, for instance by spotting and condemning rudeness. They also routinely engage in polite exchanges and use politeness formulae. Alice, for one thing, is the ultimately courteous figure: she excels in thanking, apologising, agreeing, and praising, just as she does in showing interest, approval, and concern, and so on and so forth.

In light of Alice's behavioural carriage, which is rigidly framed by conventional Victorian rules of civil interaction, it remains to be seen the extent to which such norms ever get to be broken, and if so, by whom and to what effect. The answer to these questions will allow us to unveil not only the transgression of manners in Carroll's Alice books, but also, and crucially, the role language plays in such a transgression. It will also allow us to understand whether, and in what way, the resulting impoliteness may be regarded as humorous.

The hypothesis from which this article departs is that transgression occurrences in Carroll's works bear on a dual analytical level. On the one hand, they exploit language structure in what comes to the ambiguity inherent in phonetic, morphological, syntactic and lexico-semantic features of the language system; on the other, they stem from pragmatic interaction, in terms of conversational maxim infringements, speech act infelicities, and explicit enactments of impoliteness. Therefore, the textual analysis section of this article will divide transgressions in the Alice books into two categories – linguistic and pragmatic transgressions – so as to confirm, or refute, the above hypothesis. At the same time, it will ponder the ways in which such forms of transgression, if existent, consubstantiate (humorous) impoliteness strategies.

But a number of theoretical questions need be approached beforehand. For that reason, the following section will address, in a necessarily brief way, some issues regarding the Victorian cultural context, the ever-evolving field of impoliteness research, and the corresponding methodological and conceptual implication for a treatment of literary fiction, particularly that meant for children, where humour plays an important role.

2. Victorian manners

Written in the very midst of the Victorian era, it is no wonder that Carroll's Alice books mirror the ways and customs of civilised living in nineteenth-century England. The survival of very detailed reports of how to behave according to strict conduct rules dating from that time (e.g. Hayward 1837; Klein 1899; Mitchell 1844; Sala 1864) leaves little doubt as to how important courtesy was held as being. Besides etiquette books, novels also played a pedagogical role in teaching their (especially female) readership how to behave. As Maunder (2000: 55) points out, novels "encouraged in readers – especially in 'ladies' – the close observation of how people conducted themselves in particular social situations".

As a girl, Alice must be placed in a cultural context where the pressure of Victorian morals and ideals greatly affected the upbringing of women. As Montabrut (1994: 151) remarks, in his discussion of *The Angel in the House*, the ever so famous poem by Patmore, women were raised to exhibit faultless behaviour and to almost emulate saints in their role as wives and mothers. Hence the nearly consecrating connotation that civility held: "Civility in this light (...) connotes the idea of a humanising, civilising, and ultimately *sanctifying* energy at the root of courtly manners" (ibid.). Besides, when it came to girls, who had no educational or professional prerogatives, little more was expected of them than to be good bride material. In privileged classes, like Alice's, this meant mastering the skills of sophisticated living: Jordan (1987: 65) significantly mentions that "a girl was led towards becoming marriageable through her command of the pianoforte and French".

As a Victorian child, Alice is also supposed to keep a respectful distance from her elders and betters. This distance is not only ritual and behavioural, but also physical. Hughes (1993: 66) notes that upper-class children in Victorian times were kept away from adults, even from their parents: "In very large houses where the schoolroom and nursery were housed in a distant wing, parents might encounter their children only by prearranged appointment". The idea that children should be under control in such a way as to be almost invisible is also present in Robinson-Tomsett's (2013: 77) discussion of the "importance of being inconspicuous" for young ladies' ideal conduct in the nineteenth century: "Any desire for self-expression that broke social convention was to be suppressed; any action that drew the attention of others should be avoided."

The way Victorian children were raised actually involved, in middle- to upper-class environments, submissiveness and deference to their superiors. In the family realm, as Frost (2009: 32) puts it, "most middle- and upper-class children remained dutiful to their parents and followed the expected family roles". The sense of hierarchy and the notion of indebtedness to parents made the ordinary parent-child

relationship be one “in which affection is coloured by deference and partial reserve” (Roberts 1978: 69). Indeed, the idea that children and adolescents should be subordinate and subservient to adults seems to underlie Victorian civility.

At the outset of this article it is fitting to briefly outline how noticeably polite Alice is in her use of conventionally courteous forms of address and her mannerly verbal performance. Besides, it is useful to sketch the framework of “good manners” against which Carroll’s characters interact, from the perspective of their own comments, or from the remarks the narrator makes about their opinions and thoughts. Even though Alice, at times, yields to provocation and commits etiquette blunders herself, she stands out from the group as the epitome of good manners.

In the Grinning Cat episode, for example, she addresses the Duchess by using politeness hedges, namely modals and the request marker “please”, which the narrator actually frames as being a result of her concern with manners:

- (1) “*Please would you tell me,*” said Alice a little timidly, for *she was not quite sure whether it was good manners* for her to speak first, “why your cat grins like that?” (Carroll 1865: 82. Italics mine, henceforth.)

Alice also apologises profusely throughout the chapters, as happens when she addresses the Mouse and the Pigeon:

- (2) “You are not attending!” said the Mouse to Alice severely. “What are you thinking of?”
“*I beg your pardon,*” said Alice very humbly: “you had got to the fifth bend, I think?” (1865: 38)
- (3) “Why, I haven’t had a wink of sleep these three weeks!” said the Pigeon.
“*I’m very sorry* you’ve been annoyed,” said Alice, who was beginning to see its meaning. (1865: 72)

Likewise, Alice rather often employs polite address forms, like “Sir” and “your Majesty”, as is the case in the following situations:

- (4) “Well, I should like to be a little larger, *sir*, if you wouldn’t mind,” said Alice: “three inches is such a wretched height to be.” (1865: 67)
- (5) “My name is Alice, so please *your Majesty*,” said Alice *very politely*; but she added, to herself, “Why, they’re only a pack of cards, after all. I needn’t be afraid of them!” (1865: 116)

Significantly, in the above example, the narrator’s use of the adverbial phrase “very politely” further emphasises Alice’s overall stance. The same phrase occurs at other moments in the books:

(6) “I’m afraid I can’t put it more clearly,” Alice replied *very politely*, “for I can’t understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.” (1865: 60)

(7) “All cats can,” said the Duchess; “and most of ’em do.”
“I don’t know of any that do,” Alice said *very politely*, feeling quite pleased to have got into a conversation. (1865: 83)

The affirmation of Alice’s engagement with politeness is directly proportional to her dislike for rudeness, which the narrator also acknowledges, in a rather literal way, next:

(8) Alice did not much like keeping so close to her [the Duchess]. However, *she did not like to be rude*, so she bore it as well as she could. (1865: 132)

Even if sometimes Alice is so baffled and taken aback that she lets some affronts go unnoticed, she is very much able to assess other people’s rudeness, and she actually complains about it several times in the stories. A paradigmatic example takes place in her difficult conversation with the Hatter:

(9) “You should learn not to make personal remarks,” Alice said with some severity: “*it’s very rude*.” (1865: 96)

The other characters also reprimand Alice for her alleged lack of proper manners, as is the case in the Mad Tea-Party, in which she jumps to her own defence:

(10) “*It wasn’t very civil of you* to sit down without being invited,” said the March Hare.
“I didn’t know it was your table,” said Alice; “it’s laid for a great many more than three.” (1865: 96)

Sometimes, in her rush to set things straight, and to restore truth and common sense, Alice makes other courtesy blunders, such as contradicting the other characters – and she thus fails to keep her politeness unblemished. In the following passage, for instance, Alice contradicts the Dormouse, getting duly scolded:

(11) “It was a treacle-well”, the Dormouse said.
“*There’s no such thing!*” Alice was beginning very angrily, but the Hatter and the March Hare went “Sh! sh!” and the Dormouse sulkily remarked:
“*If you can’t be civil*, you’d better finish the story for yourself.” (1865: 107)

As can be seen from these examples, Carroll’s characters interact in a clearly established politeness framework, apparently knowing what is conventionally expected from their behaviour. When there are infringements and transgressions of such conventions – as we shall see in greater depth in the next sections – the animals and

Alice sometimes (though by no means always) acknowledge the inappropriateness of such a behaviour and produce reprimands that function as repair utterances.

In politeness research, these corrective utterances are instances of what is called First-Order (Im)politeness. Watts et al. (1992: 3–4) proposed the distinction between “politeness1” and “politeness2” at the beginning of the 1990s, and a decade later Eelen (2001) followed in their footsteps. The former term designates a layperson’s understanding of the concept, which is usually limited to showing good manners, using formal language, and abstaining from cursing. Second-Order (Im)politeness, on the other hand, amounts to technical, theoretical approaches to the phenomenon, which tend to be more comprehensive, covering communicative strategies that are not usually deemed (im)polite, but which are, from the analyst’s perspective, “perceived to be salient and marked behaviour” (Haugh 2013: 305), such as insider joking, in-group nicknaming, and aggression.

Approaching Carroll’s patently impolite Alice books from a Politeness Theory perspective necessarily implies, as the previous paragraph shows, going beyond not only the forerunning treatise in the field, namely Brown and Levinson’s (1978/1987), but also Lakoff’s (1973) and Leech’s (1983) seminal contributions, in search of later research into the reverse phenomenon, that of impoliteness. A brief outline of the evolution of this extremely rich area of enquiry (see e.g. Ermida 2006, Locher 2015) will help us lay out a few essential tools to tackle Carroll’s works.

3. From politeness to impoliteness

When Lakoff, in 1973, puts forth her Rules of Pragmatic Competence – Be Clear vs. Be Polite – she shows an early understanding of politeness as the avoidance of offense. This, she holds, is more important in a conversation than to achieve clarity, “since in most informal conversations, actual communication of important ideas is secondary to merely reaffirming and strengthening relationships” (Lakoff 1973: 298 – this phatic function of language is clearly present in our Examples 7 and 37, where Alice is happy enough to keep a conversation going). Two years later, Grice’s (1975) cooperative model makes room for politeness, albeit as a rather secondary concern: “be polite” is just one among “all sorts of other maxims (aesthetic, social, or moral in character)” (Grice 1975: 47). In 1983, Leech follows up on the “conversational-maxim view” (Fraser 1990: 222) in his approach to politeness. Hence the three principles that substantiate his Interpersonal Rhetoric: Cooperation, Irony and Politeness. The latter includes six politeness maxims, namely Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy – to which, in a recent book-length approach, *The Pragmatics of Politeness* (2014), were added three others: Obligation, Opinion Reticence, and Feeling Reticence. With

Brown and Levinson (hereafter B&L 1978/1987), the speaker's "apparent irrationality or inefficiency" (B&L 1987: 4) in not talking strictly according to Grice's maxims are due to valid and legitimate politeness concerns. B&L's Theory of Politeness lies at the core of the critical hub that has kept growing to this day.

Later researchers, however, came to concentrate on the reverse phenomenon, which I propose to call "communicative egotism", a type of linguistic behaviour that takes the interests of the speaker as more important than the hearer's and the latter's needs as negligible. This is in contrast to Leech's (2014: 4) notion of "communicative altruism", a view of politeness as the promotion of the image and ego (i.e. face) of others. Increasingly, impoliteness and its correlates (aggression, disrespect and offense) came to the fore. The scope of analysis broadened from face-saving behaviour to concerns about face-aggravating communication. One important precursor of this tendency dates back to 1980: Lachenicht was the first to apply B&L's early version of politeness theory (1978) to what he calls "aggravating language" and defines as "a rational attempt to hurt or damage the addressee" (1980: 607). What Lachenicht does in his analysis is invert B&L's framework and propound two essential types: (a) *positive* aggravation is "conveying that the addressee is not liked and does not belong"; and (b) *negative* aggravation is "interfering with the addressee's freedom of action" (1980: 608).

It was roughly from the 1990s onwards that impoliteness received proper attention in its own right. With Culpeper (1996), a reversal of B&L's politeness taxonomy produced a model of impoliteness with five impoliteness superstrategies: "bald on record", "positive impoliteness", "negative impoliteness", "sarcasm" or "mock politeness", and "withhold politeness". Soon afterwards, Kienpointner (1997) also analysed impolite utterances, proposing two types of rudeness: cooperative and non-cooperative rudeness. In the former category are included e.g. ritual insults, reactive rudeness, and sociable rudeness, whereas the latter comprises e.g. strategic rudeness in public institutions. Later on, Culpeper applied his five superstrategies to TV corpora (Culpeper et al. 2003; Culpeper 2005).

A number of researchers, such as Cashman (2006) and Kienpointner (2008), adopted Culpeper's 2005 model. Bousfield (2008), in particular, did so but he dropped the positive/negative impoliteness distinction, on the grounds that positive/negative face strategies had by then been found to associate systematically in interaction, which renders Brown and Levinson's classic distinction superfluous. Yet, several other scholars preserved similar distinctions. This is the case of Scollon and Scollon's (2001) "involvement" vs. "independence" face, House's (2005: 17–18) "societal" vs. "individual" tensions (animal urges of "coming together" versus not being disturbed), Terkourafi's (2008) attempt to establish a universal notion of face2 based on the emotions of "approach" vs. "withdrawal", and Arundale's (2010) dichotomy between relational "connectedness" and "separateness", among many others.

The variety of early twenty-first-century approaches to (im)politeness also reflects, besides conceptual and methodological debates such as the above, two further issues: one is what some call the “discursive” trend; the other is interdisciplinarity. Indeed, the new century drew attention to the embeddedness of (im)polite social practices within specific societal ideologies, which are locally situated and community-centred. Early universality claims came under attack, whereas the emic comprehension of what it means to be polite or impolite came to be valued. This focus on negotiable assessments of politeness within particular moral orders is of a characteristically postmodern flavour. Eelen (2001: 255) states that politeness requires a “different analytical treatment” as follows: “Instead of cataloguing the behaviours evaluated as (im)polite, the focus would be more on the discursive role and functionality of the evaluations themselves”. Besides, the recipient’s role becomes central: “in everyday practice im/politeness occurs not so much when the speaker produces behaviour but rather when the hearer evaluates that behaviour” (2001: 109). Locher and Watts (2005) reinforce this methodological turn, claiming that “politeness is a discursive concept” and that “what is polite (or impolite) should not be predicted by analysts” or “just equated with FTA-mitigation”: rather, scholars “should focus on the discursive struggle in which interactants engage.”

In recent years, the interdisciplinary bent of politeness research has characterised what is usually regarded as its third wave, one which examines data with an “interpersonal” lens (for an overview, see e.g. Locher 2015; Jucker & Rüegg 2017). Examples of interdisciplinarity are Spencer-Oatey (2007), Locher (2008), and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2013), who borrow the concept of identity from social sciences and introduce it into the discussion of (im)politeness. Locher and Langlotz (2008), Culpeper (2011), and Kádár and Haugh (2013) put forth the key role that emotions play in negotiating (im)polite meaning, drawing on input from cognition and psychology. Kádár and Haugh (2013: 45ff) also point out the need to go beyond two fallacies: the first is the normative and essentialist notion of culture, which is far from homogeneous, and which should be replaced by that of the social group, across which meanings vary; the second is the wrong idea that short units of analysis are inherently (im)polite, instead of focusing on the larger interactional context, where meanings are negotiated.

What remains from this necessarily sketchy overview of the evolution of impoliteness research is the need for this article to be anchored in the specific context of the characters’ interaction. Indeed, to analyse Alice’s experiences in Wonderland and in the Looking-Glass world, one needs to take into account the relational work between her and the characters, instead of focusing on isolated units of meaning. Only by situating the different dialogues, or polylogues, in their larger actional and interactional framework, can their meaning be more safely examined, possibly from the very characters’ assessments ((im)politeness1). This is

in tune with third-wave relational and interactional approaches to (im)politeness. At the same time, the particular community of practice where Carroll's characters dwell – judging from the author's circumstances of writing and the real-life girl Alice is inspired by (i.e. Alice Liddell) – takes us to a specific time, place and social context: in fact, the way to analyse (im)politeness in Carroll's books cannot avoid considering the Victorian era, some Oxfordian location, and children from a privileged, conservative, and traditional upper class. Notwithstanding the fictional combination of these variables in imaginary contexts (on the pragmatics of fiction, see e.g. Jucker & Locher 2017, but also Pratt 1977; Simpson 1989; Sell 1991), one needs to bear in mind the moral order presiding over this social conjuncture, which is in tune with second-wave discursive approaches to (im)politeness as well. Last but not least, this analysis also resorts to first-wave conceptions of face-saving strategies – and crucially of face-aggravating ones – as well as the positive/negative face dichotomy and the on-/off-record distinction “à la B&L”, not to mention the insight from Leech's politeness maxims. It is thus assumed that an eclectic, complementary treatment of different trends and concepts in (im)politeness research serves our analytical purposes more effectively.

4. Transgressions in Carroll's Alice books

The construction of transgression in the Alice books is achieved, I venture, both linguistically and pragmatically. Linguistic transgressions rely on creative usages of language that go against regular practice and usual interpretive expectations. Such usages exploit features of language in ways that are unexpected and surprising, thus requiring extra processing efforts on the recipient's part, and seemingly break the cooperative principle. There seem to be three major types of linguistic transgression in Carroll's works: puns, neologisms and relexicalisations. All three defy the established linguistic norms and conventions by which the characters abide in their use of English. On the other hand, pragmatic transgressions are linked to a non-observance of interactional rules and social guidelines, the disrespect for which is perceived as face-threatening and rude. There seem to be three major types of pragmatic malfunction, as it were: conversational maxim violations, infelicitous speech acts, and bald-on-record impoliteness. The next textual analysis sections will check these linguistic and pragmatic transgressions in Carroll's stories.

4.1 Linguistic transgressions

The occurrences of punning, neologism and relexicalisation in the Alice books all rely on a discrepancy between form and content. Indeed, a pun consists in one

form (a word) with at least two meanings (Redfern 1984; Sherzer 1985; Mulken et al. 2005); a neologism is a new form – or a form that combines existing forms – with new, creative meanings, which have not been recorded in general dictionaries (see e.g. Bauer 1983 and Fischer 1998); and relexicalisation is the process whereby a crystallised form, e.g. a collocate, or an idiom, is taken in a new, different sense (Sinclair 1991; Stubbs 2001; Partington 2006). Ambiguity is, therefore, a key factor in Carroll’s language manipulation and transgression.

In Carroll’s books, such a discrepancy, which is unexpected and sometimes farfetched, makes Alice puzzled and uneasy, in her efforts to understand what her interlocutors tell her. Indeed, her Wonderland companions regularly defy her powers of interpretation, forcing her to find hidden meanings and concealed linguistic connections. At the same time, by demanding extra processing efforts on her part, these linguistic games automatically become a threat to her negative face, insofar as they impinge upon her, invading her space, and force her *to do* something, namely to decode and decipher this “manipulatory play with language”, as Sutherland (1970: 21–26) dubs it. Besides, as her inability to keep up with the other characters’ conversation becomes evident, she also loses her positive face, i.e., she fails to achieve her desire to be liked and admired. In the following sections, a choice of such linguistic transgressions illustrates different structural mechanisms of wordplay, the difficult comprehension of which makes Alice grow more and more baffled.

4.1.1 *Punning*

Carroll’s books are renowned for their richness in wordplay. Phonetic puns, to begin with, abound. They are sometimes based on homophony of independent lexemes and sometimes on juncture. It should be noted that, typically, adult speakers disdain phonetic puns as “the lowest form of humour, in which groans are traditionally expected from the listener” (Beer 2016: 75). However, children tend to relish in their sudden discovery, which explains their abundance in two of the most famous children’s books ever.

Consider the dialogue between the King and the Hatter, which plays on the rather elementary homophony between “tea” and the letter “t”, and which looks like the perfect candidate for a good children’s laugh:

- (12) “The twinkling of the what?” said the King.
 “It began with the *tea*,” the Hatter replied.
 “Of course twinkling begins with a *T*!” said the King sharply. “Do you take me for a dunce?” (1865: 170)

Likewise, homophony feeds the pun that occurs in the conversation between Alice, the Mock Turtle, and the Gryphon:

- (13) “And how many hours a day did you do *lessons*?” said Alice (...).
 “Ten hours the first day,” said the Mock Turtle: “nine the next, and so on.”
 “What a curious plan!” exclaimed Alice.
 “That’s the reason they’re called lessons,” the Gryphon remarked: “because they *lessen* from day to day.” (1865: 145)

This is a play on two homophonous words, namely a noun, “lesson” (a period of learning or teaching), and a verb, “lessen” (to make or become less, diminish), both of which are pronounced as /ˈlesən/.

The same goes for the following phonetic game, which exploits the homophony between two different words with the same pronunciation (/teɪl/):

- (14) “Mine is a long and a sad *tale*!” said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing.
 “It is a long *tail*, certainly,” said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse’s tail; “but why do you call it sad?” And she kept on puzzling about it while the Mouse was speaking (...) (1865: 36)

Other phonetic puns in the stories derive from a play on the juncture of separate words, instead of words taken as single units. The Mock Turtle episode again provides us with an example:

- (15) “The master was an old Turtle—we used to call him Tortoise—”
 “Why did you call him Tortoise, if he wasn’t one?” Alice asked.
 “We called him *Tortoise* because he *taught us*,” said the Mock Turtle angrily; “really you are very dull!” (1865: 142)

The identical pronunciation of “tortoise” and “taught us” /tɔ:təs/ provides the Turtle with an implausible play on sound that confuses Alice, making her fall prey to his verbal abuse easily.

Unlike homophones, homonyms are words which also share their spelling, besides their pronunciation. They provide semantic, also called lexical, punning. In the following passage, the Dormouse plays on the homonymy between the noun “well” (a deep hole in the ground from which you can get water, oil, or gas) and the adverb “well” (in a thorough manner, completely, effectively):

- (16) “But they were *in the well*,” Alice said to the Dormouse (...)
 “Of course they were,” said the Dormouse; “—*well in*.” (1865: 108)

Likewise, the two senses of the verb “to beat” – “to mark a rhythmic unit or main accent in music” and “to strike (a person or an animal) repeatedly and violently” – provide material for the Hatter to confuse Alice further:

- (17) “I dare say you never even spoke to Time!” the Hatter said, tossing his head contemptuously.
 “Perhaps not,” Alice cautiously replied: “but I know I have to *beat* time when I learn music.”
 “Ah! That accounts for it,” said the Hatter. “He won’t stand *beating*. Now, if you only kept on good terms with him, he’d do almost anything you liked with the clock.” (1865: 101)

Interestingly, the following passage illustrates a homonymic pun, of whose humorous existence the Gnat shows to be aware. Indeed, he quite pointedly notices the playful effects of switching the noun “Miss” (a title for a single woman with no other title) for the verb “miss” (not to attend):

- (18) “(...) The governess would never think of excusing me lessons for that. If she couldn’t remember my name, she’d call me ‘*Miss!*’ as the servants do,” said Alice.
 “Well, if she said ‘*Miss,*’ and didn’t say anything more,” the Gnat remarked, “of course you’d *miss your lessons*. That’s a joke. I wish you had made it.” (1871: 28)

One final example of lexical punning in Carroll’s books bears on antithesis. It is a complex play on the colours black and white, before which Alice becomes utterly mystified:

- (19) “Do you know why it’s called a *whiting*?”
 “I never thought about it,” said Alice. “Why?”
 “It does the boots and shoes,” the Gryphon replied very solemnly.
 Alice was thoroughly puzzled. “Does the boots and shoes!” she repeated in a wondering tone.
 “Why, what are your shoes done with?” said the Gryphon. “I mean, what makes them so shiny?”
 Alice looked down at them, and considered a little before she gave her answer. “They’re done with *blacking*, I believe.”
 “Boots and shoes under the sea,” the Gryphon went on in a deep voice, “are done with a whiting. Now you know.” (1865: 154)

Once again, the Gryphon elaborates on the under-sea shoe issue by means of a comparison with a particular type of fish – this time, a whiting (a slender-bodied marine fish of the cod family). He exploits the morphological similarity of the word with the adjective “white” to evoke a pun with the adjective “black” as regards the noun “blacking” (black paste or polish, especially that used on shoes).

From a Gricean perspective, all these puns can be read as uncooperative violations of the Maxim of Manner (or Clarity), before which Alice is rendered unable to understand, hence becoming an incompetent recipient who loses face.

4.1.2 *Neologism*

A second way in which Alice is confronted with linguistic transgression occurs when she passes through the looking-glass, in the eponymous sequel (1871) to the first Alice book. There, she finds a poem, entitled “Jabberwocky”, written back to front, which is one of the most well-known passages of Carroll’s works. The nonsense set of stanzas is laden with coinages which cause Alice to hesitate and wonder in bewilderment, as they present a world she has no knowledge of and no meaning for, or at least one that she can relate to (on Carroll’s nonsense see e.g. Dolitsky 1984 and Lucas 1997). Indeed, the numerous neologisms in the verses offer her a fake version of reality, one in which the non-existent words, in their ontological capacity, point to the existence of things and beings that *are not*:

- (20) ’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
 Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
 All mimsy were the borogoves,
 And the mome raths outgrabe. (1871: 10)

Neologisms (from Gr. *véo- néo-*, “new” and *λόγος lógos*, “speech, utterance”) in Carroll can be, as Sutherland (1970: 24) points out, “pure gibberish”, though those in *Jabberwocky* “have a strangely evocative quality, suggesting meanings where none are actually present”. Worth noting is the fact that Carroll originally published the first stanza in 1855, as a fragment of Anglo-Saxon poetry, with spoof scholarly footnotes, in his *Mischmasch* home-made periodical. A glimpse into some of these will help us understand the nature of the nonce words on which the poem is based:

- (21) *Toves*: “badgers with horns that fed on cheese”. (...) *Borogoves*: “an extinct kind of parrot with no wings that nested under sundials”. (...) *Raths*: “a species of land turtle with a mouth like a shark that walked on its knees”. (1855: 141–142)

Complete fantasy disguised as scientific data is what these fake academic annotations boil down to. Humpty Dumpty also supplies Alice with meanings for the coined words: though they sometimes differ from those Carroll provided earlier, they coincide in their utterly whimsical and made-up character. Some of the absurd words he defines also derive from blends of existing, separate words:

- (22) “That’s enough to begin with”, Humpty Dumpty interrupted: “there are plenty of hard words there. ‘*Brillig*’ means four o’clock in the afternoon – the time when you begin *broiling* things for dinner.”
- “That’ll do very well”, said Alice: “and ‘*slithy*’?”
- “Well, ‘*slithy*’ means ‘lithe and slimy’. ‘Lithe’ is the same as ‘active’. You see it’s like a portmanteau – there are two meanings packed up into one word. (...) Well then, ‘*mimsy*’ is ‘flimsy and miserable’ (there’s another portmanteau for you). (...)”
- “And then ‘*mome raths*’?” said Alice. “If I’m not giving you too much trouble.”
- “Well a ‘*rath*’ is a sort of green pig, but ‘*mome*’ I’m not certain about. I think it’s sort for ‘from home’ – meaning that they’d lost their way, you know.”
- (1871: 58)

No wonder poor Alice is at pains to situate herself in such a nonsensical, fanciful universe – typical, after all, of children’s literature at the Victorian time and earlier (Lucas 1997; Reichertz 2000). What makes the recurrent situation humorous is that she ends up being held accountable for her ignorance, despite the fact that she is the one who knows better. Interestingly enough, some of Carroll’s coined blends made it to the English lexicon, so popular did his Alice works become. This is the case of “chortled” (a blend of *chuckle* and *snort*) and “frabjous” (perhaps a combination of *fair* and *joyous*), according to the definitions given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives, crediting Lewis Carroll. So too is the case of “galumphing” (possibly, galloping in a triumphant way), which the *Merriam-Webster New Book of Word Histories* (1991) defines as “to move with a clumsy and heavy tread”.

A key passage in the Jabberwocky episode lies in Dumpty’s following pronouncement:

- (23) “When *I* use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.”
- “The question is,” said Alice, “whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.”
- “The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master – that’s all.”
- (1871: 57)

Dumpty’s arrogant take on language – his “myopic”, “radically non-social conception of utterances” (Dickerson 1997: 528) – shows he does not attribute stable meanings to words. From his perspective, language means just what he wishes it to mean. This, of course, is a philosophical fallacy, just like trying to make neologisms pass for established words and expect other characters to understand them. Even though Saussure (1916) correctly, and groundbreakingly, ascertained the arbitrary nature of the relationship between signifiers (sounds) and signifieds (meanings),

this arbitrariness cannot be re-enacted by speakers every time they use a word. For instance, there is nothing in the sound /tri:/ that connects it to the meaning of a “tree”; yet, speakers cannot refer to a “tree” by using any new, or existing, cluster of sounds they feel like, lest communication should collapse. As Wittgenstein (1953) remarked, language is a social construct, earning its legitimacy – and operability – by communities of language users: only in the extended group do words acquire their meanings (see also Westacott 2018; on the complexities of the so-called “private language argument”, see Nielsen 2008). Alice is well aware of the stability of common names and the impossibility of switching their lexical tag arbitrarily. Hence her objections to Dumpty’s misapplication of the word “glory”:

- (24) “I don’t know what you mean by ‘glory,’” Alice said.
 Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. “Of course you don’t – till I tell you. I meant ‘there’s a nice knock-down argument for you’”.
 “But ‘glory’ doesn’t mean ‘a nice knock-down argument,’” Alice objected.
 (1871: 57)

Conversely, Dumpty defies Alice’s linguistic common sense when he declares proper names to require meanings:

- (25) “My *name* is Alice, but –
 “It’s a stupid name enough!” Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently.
 “What does it mean?”
 “*Must* a name mean something?” Alice asked doubtfully.
 “Of course it must,” Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh: “*my* name means the shape I am – and a *good handsome shape* it is too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost.”
 (1871: 54)

Not only does Dumpty insult Alice’s name (again, a violation of Leech’s *Approbation Maxim*), and praise himself (thus disrespecting the *Modesty Maxim*), but he also imposes new rules for language. In Humpty Dumpty’s inverted world, although common nouns can freely be given to objects at random, proper names must have definite meanings that automatically “describe” their bearers (on Carroll and names, see Sutherland 1970: 113–142). The upside-down nature of this theory of meaning makes Alice, once again, at a loss for words. But why should she use them – the words – if they are said to have no meaning whatsoever?

4.1.3 *Relexicalisation*

A different type of linguistic transgression has to do with the lexical manipulation of certain common, established expressions, which are deconstructed and imbued with new meanings. Partington (2006: 121) calls this phenomenon “relexicalisation”: the process whereby indivisible preconstructed phrases, whose meaning is

unified, are broken down, taken separately, and given a new, independent meaning (on idioms and fixed expressions, see e.g. Moon 1998).

A very curious example in the Alice books occurs in the dialogue between the Mouse and the Duck, to which our heroine is the baffled bystander:

- (26) “(...) and even Stigand, the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury, *found it advisable*—”
 “Found what?” said the Duck.
 “Found *it*,” the Mouse replied rather crossly: “of course *you know what ‘it’ means*.”
 “*I know what ‘it’ means* well enough, when I find a thing,” said the Duck: “it’s generally a frog or a worm. The question is, what did the archbishop find?”
 (1865: 31)

Such phrases as “find it advisable”, “find it inconceivable”, and “find it convenient” are indivisible and have a cohesive meaning as they stand. In this case, the Duck attempts to “discover a real-world exophoric referent for the pronoun and isolate some meaning for it” (Partington: *ibid*), which is nonsensical, hence humorous. In other words, the Duck refuses to take the pronoun as a “delexicalised” item in the idiomatic expression, and tries to “relexicalise” it. As Sinclair (1991: 113) remarks, delexicalisation happens when an item reduces its distinctive contribution to the meaning of the sequence where it usually occurs, acquiring “less of a clear and independent meaning”. Stubbs (2001) also speaks of delexicalised words as words that are “semantically depleted”, or “desemanticised”.

A similar example takes place in the Cheshire Cat episode. Alice uses an adverb, “suddenly”, in its delexicalised sense, as a mere emphatic particle, but the Cat takes it otherwise:

- (27) “I wish you wouldn’t keep appearing and vanishing *so suddenly*: you make one quite giddy.”
 “All right,” said the Cat; and this time it vanished *quite slowly*, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.
 (1865: 93)

Indeed, the Cat relexicalises the empty intensifier Alice collocates with the verb “vanish” (“vanishing so suddenly”) and treats it as a pure adverb of manner. Yet, what Alice objected to was not the manner in which the Cat vanished, but the very fact that it did.

Similarly, Humpty Dumpty relexicalises Alice’s following question into a different meaning:

- (28) “Why do you sit out here all alone?” said Alice (...).
 “Why, because there’s nobody with me!” cried Humpty Dumpty. “Did you think I didn’t know the answer to *that*?” (1871: 54)

Dumpty’s reply is surprising to Alice because he does not take her question in its conventional meaning, i.e., as intending to elicit the reasons for someone to do something in this way or another, in this case for him to sit there all alone. The reasons might be that he is anti-social, or his friends are away on holiday. Instead, he takes the question in its metalinguistic dimension, i.e. as intending to elicit the reasons for someone *to be considered* to sit alone.

Likewise, Humpty Dumpty relexicalises a conventional question to ask about a person’s age, making Alice fall into the trap of giving the conventional answer, thus losing her positive face:

- (29) “So here’s a question for you. How old did you say you were?”
 Alice made a short calculation, and said “Seven years and six months.”
 “Wrong!” Humpty Dumpty exclaimed triumphantly. “You never said a word like it.”
 “I thought you meant ‘How old *are* you?’” Alice explained.
 “If I’d meant that, I’d have said it,” said Humpty Dumpty. (1871: 56)

Another way of breaking preconstructed idioms and relexicalising formulaic expressions is using adverbial phrases that do not usually collocate with verbs. As Norrick (2017: 30) points out, “formulaic language lends itself to play, precisely because of its recognisable, hackneyed character”. In the passage where Alice talks to the White and Red Queens, the following exchange takes place:

- (30) “What do you suppose is the use of a child without any meaning? Even a joke should have some meaning – and a child’s more important than a joke, I hope. You couldn’t *deny* that, even if you tried *with both hands*.
 “I don’t *deny things with my hands*,” Alice objected.
 “Nobody said you did,” said the Red Queen. “I said you couldn’t if you tried.” (1871: 87)

“With both hands” is a manner adjunct that cannot collocate with the verb “deny”. One can “grab” something (an opportunity, a chance) “with both hands”. As to “denying”, possible adverbial modifications could be “consistently”, “vehemently”, and “repeatedly”, among others – but one definitely cannot **deny something with both hands*”.

In the same episode, the Red Queen and Alice engage in yet another lexical game: what would remain if Alice took a bone from a dog? Nothing, perhaps, Alice wonders.

- (31) “Wrong, as usual,” said the Red Queen: “the dog’s temper would remain.”
 “But I don’t see how—”
 “Why, look here!” the Red Queen cried. “The dog would *lose its temper*,
 wouldn’t it?”
 “Perhaps it would,” Alice replied cautiously.
 “Then if the dog went away, its temper would remain!” the Queen exclaimed
 triumphantly.
 Alice said, as gravely as she could, “They might go different ways.” But she
 couldn’t help thinking to herself “What dreadful nonsense we are talking!”
 (1871: 88)

Once again, the verb “lose” in the idiomatic expression “lose one’s temper” is delexicalised insofar as it does not carry its usual sense of “cease to have or retain, be unable to find”. Since “temper” is a person’s state of mind, which cannot be “lost”, “lose one’s temper” cannot be made to mean the same as “lose one’s keys”. But this is exactly what the Red Queen does: she relexicalises the idiom by applying a literal sense to it.

In all these occurrences of linguistic blunders by the other characters, Alice plays the role of (perplexed) recipient. Although she initially tries hard to make sense out of nonsense, she eventually capitulates, unable to process the language transgressions which turn conventional meanings upside down. Her reactions may be to stare in bewilderment, ask for clarification or disambiguation, try to correct her interlocutors, and, more rarely, be amused. Whatever her response, she tends to get rudely reprimanded for not succeeding to understand what is said to her. In short, not only is her negative face unceremoniously destroyed, that is, her right not to be impinged upon, and not to be made to decipher difficult language games, but so is her positive face, insofar as her wish to be liked and admired quite disgracefully falls flat.

4.2 Pragmatic transgressions

The second major category of transgression in the Alice books is, according to the hypothesis, pragmatically based, covering three core types of pragmatic interaction: conversational maxim violations; infelicitous speech acts; and bald-on-record impoliteness. All rely on a discrepancy between expectation and realisation, i.e., between what Alice *expects* from her interlocutors and what she realises they actually *say* – and *do*. Indeed, the three main types just mentioned elicit, respectively, the following expectations on Alice’s part: (1) Alice expects her interlocutors to follow the cooperative principle (cf. Grice 1975), but they do not; (2) Alice expects her interlocutors to produce felicitous speech acts (cf. Austin 1962; Searle 1969), but they do not; (3) Alice expects her interlocutors to be polite (cf. B&L 1978/1987; Leech 1983/2014), but they are not. As seen in the previous section, all types of

discrepancies in Carroll's books put a heavy onus on Alice's positive and negative face, since she cannot manage to handle them successfully despite all her efforts. At the same time, the script-oppositional nature of these utterances (cf. Raskin 1985 and Ermida 2008), which are not only incongruous but surprising (just like jokes), make Alice become the humorous butt of most of the stories' sequences. Sutherland (1970: 28) calls this second category of transgression "functional play with language", and defines it as bearing on conventional usages which lend themselves to humour: as he puts it, "[Carroll] realised that humour could be derived from treating these usages in a strictly logical and nonconventional manner".

4.2.1 *Conversational maxim violations*

As a very well-behaved young girl, Alice is also a careful and respectful communicator, always providing her interlocutors with the truth, with the right amount of information they require, with relevant observations, and with clear and unambiguous utterances at all times. In other words, Alice dutifully, if unconsciously, abides by Grice's Principle of Cooperation and its four maxims of conversation. However, that is not the case with the other characters in the stories, whose violations of conversational maxims carry humorous potential (see Attardo's 1993 analysis of such occurrences in jokes). We saw above that the strictly linguistic transgressions Alice is confronted with also rely on violation of conversational maxims, especially that of Manner (or clarity). Yet, the next instances have to do, not with a play on words, but with a play on interactional conventions.

Consider the following dialogue between Alice and the Pigeon, where the latter patently breaks the Maxim of Quality:

(32) "Well! *What* are you?" said the Pigeon. "I can see you're trying to invent something!"

"I—I'm a little girl," said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she remembered the number of changes she had gone through that day.

"A *likely* story indeed!", said the Pigeon *in a tone of the deepest contempt*.

(1865: 72)

By contemptuously saying that Alice's story is "likely", the Pigeon actually means it is *unlikely*, or invented. Irony is one of the typical examples Grice himself gives (1975: 53) of the infringement of the Maxim of Quality, the definition for which goes: "Do not say what you believe to be false [or] that for which you lack adequate evidence" (Grice 1975: 46).

The Maxim of Quantity, meanwhile, stipulates that speakers should give as much information "as is required" (Grice 1975: 45), neither more nor less. In her conversation with the Cheshire Cat, Alice clearly receives less information than she asked for:

- (33) “Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”
 “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.
 “I don’t much care where –” said Alice.
 “Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat. (1865: 89)

The Cat’s insufficient reply breaks the maxim of informativeness, as it fails to provide Alice with the advice she requested. But if his reply is inadequate in pragmatic terms, that is, in terms of the principle of Cooperation, in logical terms it must be said to be completely faultless. Strictly speaking, Alice does not tell the Cat where she wants to get to (all she knows is that she wants to get out of *there*), which makes him unable to give her directions.

The Cat’s uninformative stance continues in the next lines, where he offers her a pure tautology:

- (34) “—so long as I get *somewhere*,” Alice added as an explanation.
 “Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.”
 Alice felt that this could not be denied. (1865: 90)

The following dialogue with the Knight is also off-putting to Alice, as she is expecting more information than she is given:

- (35) “It’s long,” said the Knight, “but very, very beautiful. Everybody that hears me sing it — either it brings the tears into their eyes, or else—”
 “Or else what?” said Alice, for the Knight had made a sudden pause.
 “Or else it doesn’t, you know.” (1871: 79)

In this case, the Knight introduces a disjunctive construction (either/or) which creates an expectation for the second term of the dichotomy. In failing to provide it, the Knight defrauds such an expectation and violates the Maxim of Quantity at the same time, with obvious humorous effect.

Likewise, the Duchess’s reply to Alice, next, does not respect the Maxim of Quantity, or Informativeness, either:

- (36) “Please would you tell me,” said Alice a little timidly (...), “why your cat grins like that?”
 “It’s a Cheshire cat,” said the Duchess, “and that’s why.” (1865: 82)

Actually, the conversation with the Duchess is a particularly uncooperative passage, providing examples of infringements of other conversational maxims as well. Her penchant for giving a moral for every story she hears does not coincide with what should be her concern to be relevant:

- (37) “The game’s going on rather better now,” Alice said, by way of keeping up the conversation a little.

“’Tis so,” said the Duchess: “and the moral of that is: ‘Oh, ‘tis love, ‘tis love, that makes the world go round”

“Somebody said,” Alice whispered, “that it’s done by everybody minding their own business!”

“Ah, well! It means much the same thing,” said the Duchess, digging her sharp little chin into Alice’s shoulder as she added, “and the moral of *that* is: ‘Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves.”

(1865: 132)

Obviously enough, the morals the Duchess offers hardly bear any relation at all with what they are applied to. Actually, they are so completely irrelevant as to be absurd. The conversational maxim the Duchess thus breaks is that of Relation, which Grice (1975: 46) succinctly defines as “Be relevant”. Finally, the Duchess does not seem to abide by the fourth of Grice’s maxims either, namely the Maxim of Manner, “Be perspicuous”: be clear, unambiguous, brief, and orderly (1975: 46). Rather, the Duchess seems to delight in confusing Alice, when the latter admits she cannot follow what the former says in her lengthy and convoluted rephrasing:

(38) “I quite agree with you,” said the Duchess; “and the moral of that is ‘Be what you would seem to be, or if you’d like it put more simply: *Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise.*”

“I think I should understand that better,” Alice said very politely, “if I had it written down: but I can’t quite follow it as you say it.”

“That’s nothing to what I could say if I chose,” the Duchess replied, in a pleased tone.

(1865: 134)

4.2.2 *Infelicitous speech acts*

The idea that there must be conditions for performative utterances to be felicitous goes back to Austin’s original writings (1962). Later, Searle propounded a set of “rules” for illocutionary acts, taking the case of promises as paradigmatic. As he puts it, “speaking a language is performing acts according to rules” (1969: 36; see also 1979: 44ff). Some of these conditions and rules may be material, or “preparatory”. For instance, it makes no sense for me to ask you the time if we are at the beach and I can see you have no watch on. Others bear on thoughts and feelings (“sincerity condition”). If I congratulate you, or apologise to you, I should be happy for your achievement and sorry for what I did, respectively. Others, still, depend on the hierarchy of social structure. Only my superiors can order me felicitously, and so on. In Carroll’s books, the characters often violate such conditions, performing speech acts that are void or faulty – and also, due to the blatant pragmatic

incompetence of which they are symptoms, humorous (on speech act violations in jokes, see e.g. Hancher 1980).

A very obvious illocutionary infelicity, against which Alice protests, takes place during the appropriately called “Mad Tea-Party”:

- (39) “*Have some wine*,” the March Hare said in an encouraging tone. Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea.
 “I don’t see any wine,” she remarked.
 “*There isn’t any*,” said the March Hare.
 “Then it wasn’t very civil of you to offer it,” said Alice angrily. (1865: 96)

A preparatory condition for the commissive illocutionary act of offering (Searle 1979) is to have the thing you offer in your possession. As the March Hare does not have any wine, he cannot – and should not – offer Alice any wine. When he does, he is engaging in a patently faulty, and uncivil, speech act, which Alice actually acknowledges and reprimands him for (thus threatening the March Hare’s positive face).

A different faulty offer occurs in the following passage:

- (40) “But she must have a prize herself, you know,” said the Mouse.
 “Of course,” the Dodo replied very gravely. “What else have you got in your pocket?” he went on, turning to Alice.
 “Only a thimble,” said Alice sadly.
 “Hand it over here,” said the Dodo.
 Then they all crowded round her once more, while the Dodo solemnly presented the thimble, saying “We beg your acceptance of this elegant thimble”; and, when it had finished this short speech, they all cheered. (1865: 34)

In this case, the performative infelicity lies in offering the hearer something that already belongs to the hearer. The absurd speech act also implies, from an impoliteness perspective, that the Dodo does not show respect for Alice’s possessions, for what she has or who she is.

Riddles are interesting interactive patterns insofar as they are characteristically impossible to guess. Asking a riddle is similar to asking an exam question in that the speaker knows the answer beforehand, but it is different from an exam question in that s/he is supposed to inform the hearer about the answer, instead of expecting the hearer to provide it. The Hatter, however, breaks the illocutionary appropriateness of riddles in the next passage:

- (41) “Why is a raven like a writing desk?” (...)
 “Have you guessed the riddle yet?” the Hatter said, turning to Alice again.
 “No, I give it up,” Alice replied: “what’s the answer?”
 “I haven’t the slightest idea,” said the Hatter.

“Nor I,” said the March Hare.

Alice sighed wearily. “I think you might do something better with the time,” she said, “than waste it in asking riddles that have no answers.” (1865: 101)

The Hatter does not fulfil the condition for the illocutionary act of asking a riddle question. In failing to provide the answer, he “wastes” Alice’s time, thus jeopardising her negative face and violating her right not to be intruded upon.

On a different note, promises are commissive illocutionary acts which are only felicitous when the sincerity condition is obeyed, i.e. when the speaker intends to act according to what s/he promises and when s/he actually does so (Searle 1969/1979). This is not the case in the following passage:

(42) “Come back!” the Caterpillar called after her. “*I’ve something important to say.*”

This sounded promising, certainly. Alice turned and came back again.

“Keep your temper,” said the Caterpillar.

“Is that all?” said Alice, swallowing down her anger as well as she could.

(1865: 62)

If the Caterpillar makes a promise to Alice that he will tell her something important, he should keep it. What would qualify as important? Certainly, new information, unbeknownst to Alice. Being advised to keep her temper is hardly what Alice would expect as new information. Also, giving a piece of advice such as this one not only breaks the Caterpillar’s promise, but also impinges upon Alice’s negative face, i.e. her right not to be told about or intruded upon.

Arguing (an expositive) is evidently a different illocutionary act from threatening (a commissive). The following passage, however, takes the latter for the former:

(43) The executioner’s argument was that you couldn’t cut off something’s head unless there was a trunk to sever it from. He’d never done anything like that in his time of life, and wasn’t going to start now.

The King’s argument was that anything that had a head, could be beheaded, and you weren’t to talk nonsense.

The Queen’s argument was that if something wasn’t done about it in less than no time, she’d have everyone beheaded all round.

It was *this last argument* that had everyone looking so nervous and uncomfortable.

(1865: 127)

Obviously, what the Queen does is not to offer an argument, or a piece of reasoning, but to issue a threat. The effect of such a threat on the positive face of anyone present, Alice included, is evident: being told one is going to be beheaded does not qualify as a sign of respect or esteem.

Advising is an exercitive (Austin 1962) / directive (Searle 1969) illocutionary act which threatens the hearer's negative face, insofar as it impinges upon the latter's freedom of deliberation. As such, it requires a recipient, i.e., it targets a hearer to do something which the speaker considers beneficial for the former. The same goes for reprimanding (a behabitive), which cannot exist without a second party: the speaker scolds the hearer for something negative the hearer has done. Yet, this is not the case in the following situation, in which Alice advises and scolds... herself:

- (44) "Come, there's no use in crying like that!" said Alice to herself, rather sharply; "I advise you to leave off this minute!"
 She generally gave herself very good advice (though she very seldom followed it), and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears into her eyes; and once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing against herself. (1865: 12)

In these cases, Alice is the humorous victim of her own pragmatic blunders.

4.2.3 *Bald-on-record impoliteness*

Besides all the actual threats to face, both positive and negative, that Carroll's characters target at Alice, by making her look like an incompetent speaker and communicator, there are a number of other occasions on which – regardless of what Alice does, or says, or fails to do or say – her interlocutors are openly and explicitly impolite. The first of such occurrences takes place when the Hatter speaks to Alice for the first time. Instead of greeting her (a positive politeness strategy), by saying, for instance, "hello, how do you do" and introducing himself, he goes:

- (45) "Your hair wants cutting," said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity, and this was his first speech.
 "You should learn not to make personal remarks," Alice said with some severity; "it's very rude." (1865: 96)

The Hatter's rudeness, which Alice immediately reprimands him for, rests upon two factors: on the one hand, he "withholds politeness" by not greeting her or introducing himself, which is what speakers are supposed to do upon meeting one another; on the other, he violates the principle "don't presume /assume". In other words, he fails to "avoid presumptions about the hearer, his wants, what is relevant, or interesting, or worthy of his attention – that is, keeping ritual distance from the hearer" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 144). In making the suggestion that she should cut her hair, he also "presumes" to know better, "assuming" she needs his guidance, as if she were incapable of self-determination.

In the following passage, Humpty Dumpty commits exactly the same impolite pragmatic blunder:

- (46) “I mean, what is an un-birthday present?” [Alice asked.]
 “A present given when it isn’t your birthday, of course.”
 Alice considered a little. “I like birthday presents best,” she said at last.
 “*You don’t know what you’re talking about!*” cried Humpty Dumpty.
 (1871: 57)

By presuming to know what she knows, that is, by presuming to be acquainted with what is on her mind, again he intrudes upon her privacy and fails to keep his distance. His remark is also both a way of scolding her and a bald-on-record way of disagreeing (on disagreements and impoliteness, see e.g. Ermida 2018). At the same time, it breaks one of Leech’s politeness maxims, the Approbation Maxim (“Minimise dispraise of other” – Leech 1983: 132).

The Cat also indulges in bossing Alice around, by telling her what she can or cannot do, and what she is or is not – a presumption Alice rightfully challenges:

- (47) “But I don’t want to go among mad people,” Alice remarked.
 “Oh, you can’t help that,” said the Cat: “we’re all mad here. I’m mad. *You’re mad.*”
 “*How do you know I’m mad?*” said Alice.
 “You must be,” said the Cat, “or you wouldn’t have come here.” (1865: 90)

Giving explicit orders is a second major category of bald-on-record impoliteness in Carroll’s books. Being ordered around is actually a very common experience Alice undergoes throughout her adventures, as can be seen in the following examples:

- (48) “Well, *be off*, then!” said the Pigeon in a sulky tone, as it settled down again into its nest. (1865: 63)
 (49) “Oh, *don’t bother* me,” said the Duchess; “I never could abide figures!” (1865: 84)
 (50) “*Hold your tongue!*” added the Gryphon, before Alice could speak again. (1865: 142)
 (51) Very soon the Rabbit noticed Alice, (...) and called out to her in an angry tone, “(...) *Run home this moment, and fetch me a pair of gloves and a fan!* Quick, now!” And Alice was so much frightened that she ran off at once (...) (1865: 42)

In all these cases, the use of straight imperatives (direct directives, in Searle’s 1979 terms) heightens the nature of the FTA insofar as no softening or hedging of the raw illocutionary force of the order is in place. As Brown and Levinson (1987: 108) point out, it is a “power-backed command”, the pragmatic inappropriateness

of which Alice is well aware in the following situation (on the connection between power and impoliteness see e.g. Ermida 2006):

- (52) “Why, she,” said the Gryphon. “It’s all her fancy, that: they never execute anybody, you know. *Come on!*”
 “Everybody says ‘come on!’ here,” thought Alice, as she went slowly after it:
 “I never was so ordered about in all my life, never!” (1865: 139)

Interrupting is consensually considered to be against social etiquette: Sacks et al. (1974: 723–4) significantly refer to the “the lore and practices of etiquette concerning ‘interruption’ and complaints about it”. At the same time, interrupting is considered to be a strong marker of power. As Brown and Levinson (1987: 30) remark, “not only do men tend to interrupt women, but high-status men interrupt low-status men, high-status women interrupt low-status women, and adults interrupt children”. Once again, as far as turn-taking goes, Alice is treated as occupying the bottom of the power hierarchy. Indeed, the other characters interrupt her only too often throughout the two books: Humpty Dumpty, for starters, does it all the time (see Examples 22 and 25, above), but many other characters do it as well:

- (53) “But when you come to the beginning again?” Alice ventured to ask.
 “Suppose we change the subject,” the March Hare *interrupted*, yawning. “I’m getting tired of this. (...)” (1865: 104)
- (54) “And how did you manage on the twelfth?” Alice went on eagerly.
 “That’s enough about lessons,” the Gryphon *interrupted* in a very decided tone (...) (1865: 146)
- (55) (...) However, there would be no harm, she thought, in asking if the game was over.
 “Please, would you tell me—” she began, looking timidly at the Red Queen.
 “Speak when you’re spoken to!” the Queen sharply *interrupted* her. (1871: 87)

One of the most serious face-threatening interruptions Alice suffers takes place when the Hatter, preventing her from finishing her sentence, takes her expression “I don’t think (...something to be the case)” in isolated terms, as an assertion about her *inability* to think:

- (56) “Really, now you ask me,” said Alice, very much confused, “I don’t think—”
 “Then you shouldn’t talk,” said the Hatter.
 This piece of rudeness was more than Alice could bear: she got up in great disgust, and walked off. (1865: 110)

Contradicting, another major impoliteness category in Carroll’s stories, implies that the speaker does not agree with whatever the hearer says. In so doing, the

speaker shows lack of respect towards the speaker's opinion and the speaker's positive face. Once again, contradicting is a power-fuelled bald-on-record speech act:

- (57) "Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.
 "I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least—at least I mean what I say—that's the same thing, you know."
 "*Not the same thing a bit!*" said the Hatter. "You might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see!'" (1865: 97)

In her conversation with the Caterpillar, who also bluntly contradicts her, Alice actually acknowledges the full length of this particular violation of manners which her interlocutors commit against her:

- (58) "Oh, I'm not particular as to size," Alice hastily replied; "only one doesn't like changing so often, you know."
 "I *don't* know," said the Caterpillar.
 Alice said nothing: *she had never been so much contradicted in her life before*, and she felt that she was losing her temper. (1865: 67)

Being such a frequent victim of contradiction, Alice ends up doing likewise and being impolite on record. What is more, she even contradicts the Queen – more than once, for that matter – when her patience runs out. The following two passages are examples of this:

- (59) "When you say 'hill,'" the Queen interrupted, "I could show you hills, in comparison with which you'd call that a valley."
 "*No, I shouldn't,*" said Alice, surprised into *contradicting* her at last: "a hill can't be a valley, you know. That would be nonsense—" (1871: 17)
- (60) "That proves his guilt," said the Queen.
 "*It proves nothing of the sort!*" said Alice. "Why, you don't even know what they're about!" (1865: 182)

Finally, insults are the ultimate expression of impoliteness: they are the most disrespectful and demeaning of all forms of uncivil exchanges, showing utter contempt for the hearer's positive face. Alice is frequently the target of the other characters' insults in the stories. The Hatter, for instance, does not hesitate to slur her, even publicly:

- (61) "But I don't understand. Where did they draw the treacle from?"
 "You can draw water out of a water-well," said the Hatter; "so I should think you could draw treacle out of a treacle-well—*eh, stupid?*" (1865: 108)

Similarly, in her conversation with the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon, discussed above, Alice suffers their verbal abuse, the effects of which the narrator lets us know:

- (62) “Why did you call him Tortoise, if he wasn’t one?” Alice asked.
 “We called him Tortoise because he taught us,” said the Mock Turtle angrily:
 “*really you are very dull!*”
 “*You ought to be ashamed of yourself for asking such a simple question,*” added
 the Gryphon; and then they both sat silent and looked at poor Alice, who felt
 ready to sink into the earth. (1865: 142)

Even the flowers, which Alice initially takes as passive, harmless things of beauty, affront her openly and gratuitously, going as far as judging her intelligence on the basis of her looks.

- (63) “And can all the flowers talk?,” asked Alice.
 “As well as you can,” said the Tiger-lily. “And a great deal louder. (...) I really
 was wondering when you’d speak! Said I to myself, ‘Her face has got some
 sense in it, though *it’s not a clever one!*” (1871: 14)

What is more, the flowers seem to gather together in a chorus of offence, as if trying to lynch poor Alice through words. Even the most innocent of her remarks, like admitting she was not aware of the pun between “bed of flowers” and “beds to sleep in”, causes her to be their easy prey:

- (64) “In most gardens,” the Tiger-lily said, “they make the beds too soft—so that
 the flowers are always asleep.” (...)
 “I never thought of that before!” Alice said.
 “It’s my opinion that *you never think at all!*” the Rose said in a rather severe
 tone.
 “*I never saw anybody that looked stupider,*” a Violet said, so suddenly, that
 Alice quite jumped; for it hadn’t spoken before. (1871: 15)

5. Conclusion

The textual analysis above has confirmed my initial hypothesis: that Carroll’s books construct transgression on a twofold level, both linguistically and pragmatically. On both levels, indeed, Alice is confronted with blunders and anomalies which she finds difficult to process. Some of these are incongruities that bear on features of the linguistic system, be they phonetic, syntactic, lexical or semantic; others are glitches that have to do with the pragmatic principles governing communication. In this upside-down world, where language is different from what it should be, and the conversations do not follow usual social conventions, Alice is at a loss for making sense out of what, to her (even though apparently not to everybody else), is sheer nonsense.

Her interpretive difficulties, then, become the trigger for the other characters to bully and abuse her, engaging in different forms of impoliteness. Therefore, the reason why Alice systematically loses her face – both positive and negative, that is, both her wish to be liked and admired and her right to be unimpeded – derives from her patent inability to understand a faulty language on the one hand, and a faulty interactive system on the other.

Yet, her predicaments are not sad or tragic; instead, they are perceived as comical. The humour of the passages in which Alice is the guileless victim of the other characters derives from three main factors. The first, as stated above, is the incongruity between her expectations and her realisations, i.e. between her anticipation and her interpretation (on incongruity and humour, see e.g. Beattie 1764 and Schopenhauer 1818). What she expects to hear and the way she expects to be treated are at odds with what she gets. This clash is semantically organised: every script (or frame of reference) Alice projects and anticipates gets to be overruled by a competing, surprising and farfetched, script (Raskin 1985).

Her bewilderment, and sometimes her anger and revolt, in getting caught between the two pervades through Carroll's books comically. Alice struggles and toils, attempting to understand, trying to make sense, but to no avail. Only with the punch-line – the solution to the pun, the explanation of the new meaning, the discovery of the funny word – does she (and the audience) breathe in relief. Indeed, it is the surprising effect of this constantly re-enacted process that allows the release of interpretive tensions, which is psychologically pleasant (on release in humour, see e.g. Bergson 1900 and Freud 1905).

Finally, there is a third element that contributes to the comicality of Alice's misadventures. It is the fact that it is her, not the reader, that is undergoing such difficulties. The audience relishes in comic enjoyment at her expense. Because of the emotional distance, they establish a sort of *Schadenfreude*, or pleasure, at other people's misfortune (on disparagement and laughter, see e.g. Descartes 1649 and Hobbes 1651). Significantly enough, a passage in the Alice books shows that laughing at other people's adversity is not a prerogative of the audience alone: sometimes, the characters themselves engage in such forms of disparagement, as happens when the Dodo's rhetorical skills become the butt of the other animals' scorn:

- (65) “In that case,” said the Dodo solemnly, rising to its feet, “I move that the meeting adjourn, for the immediate adoption of more energetic remedies—”
 “Speak English!” said the Eaglet. “I don't know the meaning of half those long words, and, what's more, I don't believe you do either!”
 And the Eaglet bent down its head *to hide a smile: some of the other birds tittered audibly.* (1865: 32)

All in all, Alice is the rule-abiding character in a rule-transgressive world. Her rationality is as much out of place in nonsensical “Blunderland” as is her care not to hurt or offend her abusers. And if, at times, she does pay them back in their own coin, the reader cannot but sympathise with the exasperated heroine.

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“Collect a thousand loyalty points and you get a free coffin”

Creative impoliteness in the TV comedy drama *Doc Martin*

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The British comedy drama *Doc Martin* is set in the fictional fishing village of Portwenn in Cornwall, where the community’s only medical practitioner, Dr Martin Ellingham, is known to be brilliant as regards the clinical aspects of his profession but totally devoid of even the most basic interpersonal skills. He is habitually gruff, ill-tempered and extremely rude to patients, and indeed to the entire population of Portwenn.

This paper draws upon Brown and Levinson’s (1987) pioneering study of face-threatening acts and politeness, but also Spencer-Oatey’s more recent work (2007, 2008) on quality face, social identity face and relational face. The concept of creative impoliteness owes much to Culpeper’s view (1996, 2005, 2011) of impoliteness as a phenomenon related to situated behaviours that conflict with interlocutors’ expectations, wishes and notions of what ought to be said or done during interaction. The aim is to demonstrate how Dr Ellingham’s rudeness does not consist of unoriginal insults or standard terms of offence – if it did, viewers would quickly switch off – but involves highly creative use of language and thus serves as the main source of humour in the TV series. In *Doc Martin* imaginative script writers and a skilled actor create a character who in real life would be insupportable, but on the TV screen is a comic monster.

Keywords: entertaining impoliteness, implicational impoliteness, asymmetrical power relationships, intentionality, quality face, social identity face, relational face, conversational implicature

1. Introduction

This study aims to show how impoliteness can be entertaining for onlookers not directly involved in specific instances of rude behaviour. The comedy drama *Doc Martin* is based on a grumpy, ill-mannered protagonist who offends all who have contact with him but amuses viewers who are detached from him in space and time and can switch him off at any moment.

Since the main character of the programme is a doctor, the present study begins with consideration of doctor-patient exchanges and how each party expects the other to speak and behave. We often offend people without meaning to, and the question of intentionality is also taken into account. Any study of this nature necessarily refers to Brown and Levinson's ground-breaking work on face and politeness (1987), while Spencer-Oatey's more recent investigations of face (2000, 2002, 2007, 2008) are also used as analytical tools. On creative and entertaining impoliteness, whether bald-on-record or expressed indirectly through irony or sarcasm, Culpeper's work (2005, 2011, 2013) has had a notable influence on the present study. Culpeper (2011: 155) uses the expression *implicational impoliteness* as an umbrella term for mock politeness, irony and sarcasm, and this investigation also refers to Taylor's recent study (2016) of the perceptions of implicational impoliteness in British and Italian cultural contexts.

The protagonist of *Doc Martin*, Dr Martin Ellingham, is an extraordinarily capable doctor but has disastrously poor interpersonal skills. He has difficulty in forming relationships, lacks any notion of tact and is habitually rude to his patients. He has to interrupt his career as a cardiovascular surgeon in London when he acquires a blood phobia, a problem he believes he can overcome but knows that it will be a long process and that in the meantime he must work in a different branch of medicine. When the only general practitioner (GP) in the Cornish fishing village of Portwenn retires, Ellingham applies for the vacancy. The choice of location is not accidental: Portwenn is where his Aunt Joan lives, the woman who each year during the school holidays gave him the love that his mother denied him. Ellingham is thus obliged to leave a prestigious hospital where he is respected by colleagues and has little need for a good bedside manner given that his patients are under general anaesthetic during the crucial stage of their treatment. At Portwenn he has no colleagues to acknowledge his expertise and has to work with patients who are conscious and quick to take offence. Cold and aloof though he is, he nevertheless manages to fall in love with Louisa Glasson, a teacher at the local primary school, and for her sake makes a genuine (though largely unsuccessful) effort to curb his curmudgeonly excesses.

Ellingham actually sees himself as a victim of impoliteness. When he starts work at Portwenn he expects his patients to address him using the title + surname

formula. Unfortunately for him, the news quickly spreads that Dr Ellingham is really just little Martin, the rather strange child who used to spend his summer holidays with his Aunt Joan, and armed with this knowledge most people feel authorised to call him simply Doc or Doc Martin.

2. Asymmetrical power relationships in doctor-patient interaction

In his seminal work on language and power, Fairclough (2001: 2) notes that in medical consultations the doctor has power deriving from her specialist knowledge while the patient's ignorance of medicine puts her in a position of powerlessness. This asymmetry leads to linguistic conventions that we take for granted.

[...] the conventions for a traditional type of consultation between doctors and patients embody 'common sense' assumptions which treat authority and hierarchy as natural – the doctor knows about medicine and the patient doesn't; the doctor is in a position to determine how a health problem should be dealt with and the patient isn't; it is right (and 'natural') that the doctor should make the decisions and control the course of the consultation and of the treatment, and the patient should comply and cooperate; and so on. (Fairclough 2001: 2)

Asymmetrical power relationships influence our use of direct or indirect linguistic strategies. Both directness and indirectness are potentially dangerous: the former may cause offence while the latter risks creating ambiguity and misunderstanding. The more powerful participant in a verbal exchange may not be overly worried about causing offence, and Ellingham is brutally frank when warning patients of the consequences of not following his instructions. If they wish to object to their GP's peremptory approach, their ignorance of medicine means that a direct challenge is ruled out; they are necessarily defensive and must resort to circumlocution, modality, semantic vagueness and other indirectness strategies, all examples of linguistic impreciseness that irritate the scientifically-trained Ellingham.

The question of how doctors and patients interact has been investigated in considerable detail. In the 1970s the UK's Department of Health and Social Security commissioned research that resulted in the significantly entitled *Doctors Talking to Patients: A Study of the Verbal Behaviour of General Practitioners Consulting in Their Surgeries* (Byrne & Long 1976). The title of the volume focuses on how doctors talk to patients rather than the contrary, which immediately indicates that it is the powerful participant who establishes the ground rules and steers the verbal exchange towards his/her goal. The authors describe how doctors derive authority not only from their medical expertise, but also from a more general socio-cultural superiority. It should be noted that in the 1970s doctors were likely to be

male, middle class, highly educated in fields other than medicine, and speakers of Received Pronunciation (RP), the prestige accent of the British Establishment.

Today many GPs are women, come from a working-class or ethnic-minority background, or have an accent that is far removed from RP. Despite these developments, in a recent study of language use and the medical profession, Harvey and Koteyok (2013) dedicate an entire chapter to asymmetry and another to power and authority.

Ellingham ticks all the boxes for the kind of GP who expects his dealings with patients to follow the traditional asymmetrical structure: he is an RP speaker who had an expensive education; he is a brilliant doctor and knows it; he operates a one-doctor practice with no colleagues to urge him to be less bossy with his patients. The patients rarely behave as he would like them to, partly because everyone knows that Dr Ellingham is just the grown-up version of the little Martin who spent his holidays with his aunt, and partly because the residents of Portwenn include a number of outspoken individuals whose assertiveness is inversely proportional to their medical knowledge. The frequent breakdown of the typical doctor-led consultation acts as a spur to Ellingham's creative rudeness and is the source of much of the humour in *Doc Martin*.

3. Towards an understanding of impoliteness and its comic potential

Conventionalised impoliteness causes offence, is unoriginal to the point of being formulaic, is far less frequent than most people imagine, and is usually not funny at all (Culpeper 2011: 113–154). The easiest way to offend people is to use taboo words, although what appals one person may not be perceived as particularly shocking by another: four-letter swear words, blasphemy, racial slurs and sexist language are rated very differently by different people. Given the distinctions between swearing, cursing, profanity, blasphemy, oaths and taboos, some lexicologists use the term *dysphemism* as an umbrella term for all lexemes that cause offence. A problem, however, is that a dysphemistic expression may lose its power to offend over time, or, conversely, a word that was once used quite freely may, centuries later, become wholly unacceptable.¹ The degree of offensiveness of a specific lexeme may also vary among different discourse communities using the same language. In Australia the word *bastard* is generally used with no intention of upsetting people, and only becomes an insult if qualified by the adjective *proper*.

1. For example, Hughes (1998: 20) notes that in 1230 there was a London street named *Gropecuntlane*, but in 2000 *cunt* was ranked the most offensive word in British English by the Oxford English Corpus.

On the Indian subcontinent, however, the strict denotation of the word prevails, which means that its use is potentially dangerous. Dysphemism is rarely funny, and it is no coincidence that Dr Ellingham hardly ever swears.

What is perceived as impolite behaviour may not stem from malicious intent. We have several terms to refer to unintentional impoliteness – *blunder*, *gaffe*, *faux pas*, *clanger* etc. – which suggests that incidences of unintentionally causing offence are far from rare. Intentional impoliteness aims to cause offence and only in special circumstances can it be considered amusing. One of those special circumstances is the phenomenon of competitive impoliteness, defined as banter when conducted playfully or a slanging match when the illocutionary force is more aggressive, in which two people compete to come up with ever more original insults to hurl at each other.

As we will see in the extracts from *Doc Martin* analysed below, Ellingham's social ineptitude means that he often fails to anticipate the likely impact of his words, which results in unintentional rudeness that is amusing for the detached observer but deeply offensive for whoever is on the receiving end of his *faux pas*. On other occasions his impoliteness is clearly intentional when he takes advantage of his position of power relative to his patients.

Current investigations of (im)politeness remain indebted to Brown and Levinson's (1987) pioneering work on positive face, negative face and face-threatening acts. Positive face relates to an individual's self-esteem, his/her desire to be approved of and to feel part of a group, while negative face concerns people's desire that their actions be unimpeded by others (Brown & Levinson 1987: 62). Positive politeness involves showing solidarity, responding to the desire to be accepted and connected that makes up the interlocutor's positive face; negative politeness consists in acknowledging the interlocutor's desire not to be imposed upon (negative face) and mitigating unavoidable impositions through face-saving acts, such as apologising for taking up his/her valuable time. Failure to take account of the interlocutor's positive or negative face represents a face-threatening act, causes offence and is, therefore, perceived as impolite behaviour.

Although Brown and Levinson have been hugely influential, their claim that their theory is universally applicable has been challenged, with many scholars expressing the view that their model is culturally biased. The main objection is that they have based their work on individualistic Western societies, particularly the USA, and have largely ignored those non-Western societies in which group identity prevails over that of the individual. In the case of Dr Ellingham and the residents of Portwenn, however, it is difficult to imagine a more uncompromising bunch of individuals, so analysis in terms of positive or negative face is most certainly pertinent. Indeed, Ellingham consistently ignores the villagers' positive face when they try to be friendly and likeable (for them, calling him Doc Martin

is a positive politeness strategy) and seek in vain to involve him in community events. His reaction is seen as standoffish and rude. Conversely, Ellingham's negative face is manifest in his desire to be allowed to get on with his work without impediments, a forlorn hope given his patients' ingenuity in finding ways to waste his time. Their behaviour is seen by the GP as irresponsible and ill-mannered.

Helen Spencer-Oatey's more recent work (2000, 2002, 2007) proposes three types of face: quality, social identity and relational. She defines quality face as follows (2002: 540, italics original):

Quality face: We have a fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities; e.g. our competence, abilities, appearance etc. *Quality face* is concerned with the value that we effectively claim for ourselves in terms of such personal qualities as these, and so is closely associated with our sense of personal self-esteem.

Ellingham is never really off duty and his quality face requires people to have a high opinion of him as a medical practitioner. Since he is realistic about his own clumsiness in social interaction, he does not mind if people do not evaluate his interpersonal skills positively, but he is deeply offended if someone questions his knowledge and good intentions as a doctor. He interprets criticism of his professional expertise as impolite behaviour, and as we will see in the analyses below, tends to retaliate by raising the level of rudeness to a higher level.

With social identity face Spencer-Oatey addresses the criticism levelled at Brown and Levinson. It is based on the collective rather than the individual, whether small groups like the family or the workplace, or at a much larger scale with religious, ethnic or national communities. She defines social identity face in this way (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540, italics original):

Social identity face: We have a fundamental desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles, e.g. as group leader, valued customer, close friend. *Social identity face* is concerned with the value that we effectively claim for ourselves in terms of social or group roles, and is closely associated with our sense of public worth.

If Ellingham's quality face relates to himself as an individual doctor, his social identity face is based on his belonging to the medical profession. He considers homeopathy, aroma therapy and reflexology to be mere quackery, and those who defend alternative medicine are treated to a blast of linguistically creative scorn. He will criticise individual colleagues for their shortcomings but vigorously defends his profession and the scientific rigour underlying conventional medical practice.

Quality face focuses on the individual, social identity face operates at the group level and relational face is concerned with the degree of connection or

separation between interlocutors and “the fundamental personal/social entitlements that individuals effectively claim for themselves in their interactions with others” (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 14). In a later work, Spencer-Oatey (2007: 647) clarifies the concept as “the relationship between participants (e.g. distance-closeness, equality-inequality, perceptions of role rights and obligations), and the ways in which this relationship is managed or negotiated.” Ellingham has serious problems with relational face: he claims all the entitlements and role rights of the traditional asymmetrical interactions with his patients, cares little about acquiring some kind of bedside manner, and manages relationships (including the special one with Louisa) maladroitly.

There is no universally accepted definition of what impoliteness is. Culpeper (2011: 19, 20) lists no fewer than thirteen definitions in the literature before offering one of his own (2011: 23) which, at 125 words, is somewhat unwieldy. Any definition of rudeness, however, must take account of three factors considered in this and the preceding section: our expectations of how participants should speak and behave in a given situation, intentionality and threats to or attacks on the interlocutor’s face. In the present study it is those three elements that are investigated in analyses of instances of impolite behaviour.

Culpeper (2011: 17) defines implicational impoliteness as “an impoliteness understanding that does not match the surface form or semantics of the utterance or the symbolic meaning of the behaviour.” In other words, what is said does not coincide with what is meant, a mismatch that most people call irony or sarcasm while many linguists adopt Geoffrey Leech’s term *mock politeness* (1983: 144). In a British comedy series set in an English village many people might expect mock politeness to feature intensively, although Charlotte Taylor’s corpus-based study (2016) demonstrates that the common perception of irony as a national characteristic of the British is a stereotype not supported by hard evidence. Indeed, irony is only one of Dr Ellingham’s impressive repertoire of ways to cause offence, and his impoliteness is often bald-on-record rather than expressed obliquely. When he does elect to use sarcasm, however, he generally does so to great effect, and some such instances of mismatches between surface form and illocutionary force are also investigated.

Impoliteness on television programmes intended to be entertaining is not entirely unexplored territory: Jobert (2013) investigated the rudeness of Basil Fawlty, the lead character of the British sitcom *Fawlty Towers*; Pillière (2013) analysed the grumpiness of the eponymous hero of the American drama series *Dr House*; Culpeper (2005) focused on the cutting put-downs of Anne Robinson, host of the BBC quiz show *The Weakest Link*. The fact that rudeness is an essential part of TV programmes of this nature supports Culpeper’s view that there is a fundamental misconception concerning impoliteness (2013: 9):

[...] impoliteness is generally assumed to be the entrails, or perhaps even the faeces, of language – a repugnant thing, best avoided. Moreover, as such, it is assumed to be simplistic, hardly meriting study. This assumption is not true. Impoliteness is often creative, and in fact achieves its effects through their creativity.

Impoliteness often involves just one speaker and one hearer, and in the absence of an audience the former is unlikely to go to the trouble of making his/her rudeness especially witty. Rudeness that amuses third parties is exploitative entertainment since “it involves entertainment at the expense of the target of the impoliteness” (Culpeper 2011: 232), and the aim of offending the interlocutor is often of less importance than that of impressing onlookers, or in the case of TV drama, millions of viewers. All collections of Winston Churchill’s quotations include the following exchange with the parliamentarian Bessie Braddock:

Bessie Braddock: Winston, you’re drunk.

Churchill: Bessie, you’re ugly. But tomorrow I shall be sober.

Despite the effects of excessive brandy consumption, Churchill was still lucid enough to employ parallelism – “you’re ugly” reproducing the syntactic structure of Braddock’s accusation – and a conversational implicature – the unstated observation that his interlocutor will still be ugly in the morning – primarily to entertain others, and thus ensure that this example of his quick wits would be remembered half a century after his death.

Culpeper (2011: 134–5) suggests that entertaining impoliteness can generate five sources of pleasure: (i) *emotional pleasure*, given that episodes of rudeness involve people in conflict situations which create a sense of arousal in the observer; (ii) *aesthetic pleasure* deriving from witty banter and verbal creativity; (iii) *voyeuristic pleasure* as the participants expose aspects of their private selves; (iv) *the pleasure of being superior* as we observe people in a worse state than ourselves; (v) *the pleasure of feeling secure* because we know we can walk away, or switch off the TV, whenever we like.

The first four types of pleasure are experienced in almost every episode of *Doc Martin*. The fifth is fundamental given that as much as we would like to have a GP with Ellingham’s clinical skills, we are glad that we won’t have to deal with a similar personality the next time we have to renew a prescription. The exchanges analysed below are in chronological order from the first seven series of *Doc Martin*, and in each case the aim is to describe the type of impoliteness portrayed and why it is entertaining.

4. Analysis of extracts from Series 1 to 7

4.1 Series 1 (2004): Starting off on the wrong foot

Martin Ellingham makes an inauspicious start to his career change as Portwenn's GP. On the flight from London to Bristol, he finds himself sitting near an attractive young woman. He stares at her intensely, then leans forward to get a closer look at her. Unsurprisingly, she moves to a vacant seat several rows away. The full significance of this incident becomes apparent a few minutes later in this first episode of the first series.

Before Ellingham is officially appointed GP for Portwenn, he must satisfy the interviewing panel of the Primary Care Trust (PCT). This is a mere formality given that all but one of the people on the panel can scarcely believe their luck in securing the services of such an eminent surgeon. The one exception is the lay member of the PCT, Louisa Glasson, the woman he had stared at on the aeroplane. Sensing that the candidate's clinical expertise is not matched by his bedside manner, she asks him to describe his interpersonal skills and is clearly dissatisfied with his answer. She is outvoted and Ellingham is duly appointed, but after the interview she warns him that she will monitor every move he makes in Portwenn. Once again, he unnerves her by staring intensely into her eyes, but before she can react, he informs her that she has acute glaucoma and should see a specialist immediately.

This is clearly not intentional impoliteness, but his behaviour is such that any woman in Louisa's position would be offended. It is social ineptitude rather than rudeness and exemplifies Ellingham's inability to step out of his professional role coupled with his assumption that the asymmetrical power relationship overrides matters of decorum or privacy and authorises him to carry out an impromptu examination. He makes no attempt to mitigate the face-threatening nature of his behaviour by explaining that his interest is purely medical and apologising for disturbing his interlocutor. In terms of Culpeper's five sources of pleasure in entertaining impoliteness, this scene appeals to our feeling of being superior since we believe that we would have the tact to utter a few preliminary words to the recipient of the unsolicited medical examination, thus avoiding any risk of misunderstanding.

When his predecessor's dilapidated surgery is cleaned and fully equipped, Ellingham prepares to receive patients for the first time. To his consternation, he finds the waiting room packed and the previous GP's receptionist providing tea and biscuits. By the time his first patient enters the consulting room, he is already exasperated.

- Ellingham:* Mrs Walker.
- Patient:* Marianna, please. Am I your first official patient?
- Ellingham:* Indeed you are, yes. Collect a thousand loyalty points and you get a free coffin.
- Patient* [*admiring the cleaned up consulting room*]: If old Dr Sim could see this, he'd be thrilled.
- Ellingham:* Er, thank you. Sit down, please. What can we do for you?
- Patient:* I keep getting headaches. On and off.
- Ellingham:* Really? How long has this been going on?
- Patient:* I suppose all my life.
- Ellingham:* And now they're worse? More intense?
- Patient:* No, not especially.
- Ellingham:* More frequent then?
- Patient:* No, not really.
- Ellingham:* So today the problem is?
- Patient:* I just thought you should know.
- Ellingham:* Consider me informed.
- Patient:* Have you thought of redecorating? When you were doing all this?
- Ellingham:* Mrs Walker, do you have a medical problem?
- Patient:* Indigestion. But that's much better since I discovered aloe vera. That was one of your Aunt Joan's tips, as a point of fact.
- Ellingham:* Good.
- Patient:* Have you tried aloe vera?
- Ellingham:* I do have other patients to see.
- Patient:* Do you suffer from wind?
- Ellingham* [*rising and opening the door*]: I'll be happy to see you when you actually have something wrong with you.
- Patient:* Are you saying...? But I haven't even had a cup of tea.
- Ellingham:* Tea?
- Patient:* Yes.
- Ellingham:* Try a café!
- Patient:* Well, I must say!
- Ellingham:* I'll make a note of it.
- Patient:* I haven't been here two minutes.

As noted earlier, Dr Ellingham believes that he is the victim of other people's rudeness and the above dialogue exemplifies the mutual incomprehension that brings out the worst in both the GP and his patients. Mrs Walker treats her first encounter with the new doctor as a social visit. Given Spencer-Oatey's (2000: 14) definition of relational face as "the fundamental personal/social entitlements that individuals

effectively claim for themselves in their interactions with others”, we can see that the villagers’ demands on their GP’s attention when they do not have medical problems clashes with Ellingham’s conviction that he is entitled to expect greater respect for his valuable time. Quite simply, they do not fulfil his expectations of how patients should behave. Since his predecessor had evidently not objected to having his waiting room turned into a café, the patients are used to a more laid-back approach and find the new doctor’s irascibility unreasonable. In the above dialogue, Mrs Walker exacerbates the problem, first with her reference to aloe vera (alternative remedies challenge Ellingham’s social identity face), then by switching roles and asking the GP if he suffers from “the wind”. When he opens the door to indicate that the consultation is over, she is offended that she has been granted so little time and hasn’t even had a cup of tea.

4.2 Series 2 (2005): People coming back

In this series we encounter Ellingham’s decidedly unpleasant parents, who give us some insight into why the unloved Martin grew up to be such a disaster at forming and maintaining relationships. The relationship he most wishes to improve is with his polar opposite, the gregarious and popular Louisa Glasson, but although they are attracted to each other, their widely divergent personalities seem to represent an insurmountable barrier to greater intimacy.

Another person who has left London and returned to Portwenn is the architect Danny Steel, who had once been Louisa’s boyfriend. He knows that Martin and Louisa’s attempts to form a closer relationship have floundered, and he assumes that there is no longer anything between them. Steel wishes to be straight with Ellingham about his prospects of getting back together with Louisa. In the following dialogue, the young man’s speech is punctuated by coughing fits.

Ellingham: I see that cough’s no better.

Steel: Is it OK if I call you Martin?

Ellingham: Not really, no.

Steel: I’ve been meaning to say... um, I know that you and Lou were at one point... although I gather that nothing actually...

Ellingham: That is none of your business.

Steel: The thing is, I’ve got to be straight with you. Louisa and I – you know there’s a history there between us – and we seem to have become very close again. [*Coughs repeatedly*] Obviously not deliberately, but I wonder, things not happening for me in London, whether it’s a sign. I know it’s a cliché but God sometimes...

Ellingham: Yes, He works in mysterious ways, doesn’t He? Like malaria.

- Steel:* I made a mess of things with Lou once. Perhaps the Lord's letting me have a second... [*Coughs*]... chance.
- Ellingham:* Sounds more like the Lord just might want you back at the ranch.
- Steel:* You know the old joke. What's the difference between God and a surgeon? God doesn't think he's a surgeon.
- Ellingham:* I'm busy. [*He walks away*]
- Steel:* No hard feelings then, mate?

Steel (the name is surely a pun on *steal*), by asking if he can address Ellingham by his first name, appeals to the doctor's positive face in an attempt to be well thought of and treated as a friend. In an adjacency pair featuring a request as the first part, the preferred second part is acceptance, but Ellingham opts for the dispreferred option of refusal. He rebuffs Steel's positive politeness strategy and attempts to establish greater distance between himself and his interlocutor, a tactic that fails because the young architect, convinced that he has correctly surmised that Ellingham is no longer interested in Louisa, carries on regardless. Even when the doctor states directly that whatever has happened between himself and Louisa is none of Steel's business, the latter ploughs on as if he has not heard Ellingham's words. His speculations upon a divine intervention to bring Louisa and himself together again prompt Ellingham into deliberate rudeness and heavy sarcasm: first he finishes Steel's cliché for him, then uses an extraordinary simile to associate God's works with the progression of malaria. Belittling a person's religious convictions ought to be a high-risk strategy, but again Steel is curiously untouched by the insult. The GP who sometimes carries out unrequested examinations is untypically indifferent to Steel's persistent cough: his "back at the ranch" metaphor implies that if Steel's cough is symptomatic of something potentially fatal, he has no desire to interfere with the Lord's will, which contrasts with his habitual commitment to treating all patients to the best of his ability irrespective of whether he likes them or not. The younger man's God/surgeon joke can be seen as a second attempt to employ a positive politeness strategy to get his interlocutor to approve of his sense of humour. He fails miserably to achieve his objective; any criticism, even tongue-in-cheek criticism, of surgeons as a professional group attacks Ellingham's social identity face. The GP's reaction is to walk away without the usual courtesy of excusing himself and saying goodbye, but even at this point Steel deludes himself that they are parting on good terms.

This dialogue is entertaining in that it contains the first three of Culpeper's sources of pleasure in impoliteness: there is the emotional pleasure of observing the conflict between two men who are in love with the same woman (although one of them is unaware that his interlocutor is a rival); Ellingham's malaria simile

provides aesthetic pleasure; voyeuristic pleasure derives from observing the normally unsentimental Ellingham as he reveals the strength of his feelings for Louisa and a previously concealed capacity for jealousy.

The second series of *Doc Martin* shows viewers that Ellingham is far more than a monstrous caricature. Having seen his horrendous parents, we understand why he has grown up to be such an uptight individual, while the depth of his feelings for Louisa is not in doubt. Steel's cough is indeed a symptom of a life-threatening condition; he later suffers a collapsed lung, and before the ambulance arrives Ellingham performs an emergency procedure that saves the life of his rival in love.

4.3 Series 3 (2007): The course of true love never did run smooth

The third series sees Martin and Louisa's complicated on-off relationship finally stabilise. In the penultimate episode their engagement is the talk of Portwenn, and the final episode is their wedding day. A series of mishaps occur to put the ceremony in jeopardy. When Ellingham catches the vicar drinking heavily hours before the wedding, he tries to wrestle the bottle from him, and in the struggle the vicar falls and breaks his hip. Ellingham's new receptionist, Pauline, recalls that there is an eccentric vicar who has retreated to a solitary life in the countryside who might be persuaded to step in. Martin's Aunt Joan is also involved in the following exchanges.

- Pauline:* Louisa sent me to make sure preparations for the church were going OK. If you don't have a vicar, then you can't get married, can you? I mean, you need a bride, a groom and a man in black.
- Ellingham:* Shut up, Pauline.
- Pauline:* No, no, I'm just saying.
- Ellingham:* Which part of "shut up" are you having difficulty with?
- Pauline:* OK, fine. I was going to mention Mr Porter, but I suppose as you're so clever you know all about him.
- Ellingham:* All right. Who's Mr Porter?
- Pauline:* He used to be a vicar over at Delabole. Very well liked and respected, until one day he flipped out in the middle of a wedding service, so they say. Since then he's been holed up on the moors.
- Ellingham:* Oh, right. It would be too much to ask for him to lead a normal, healthy life, wouldn't it?
- Pauline:* Oh no, he's not crazy. He just hates weddings. And people. He might hate people too. Mrs Norton! Does Mr Porter still live up at the old Sparrow Farmhouse?
- Aunt Joan:* Martin! Martin, what have you done?

- Ellingham:* I haven't done anything.
- Pauline:* Nobbled the vicar.
- Ellingham:* I suspect he's suffered a fracture to his femur.
- Pauline:* Nobbled the vicar.
- Ellingham:* I haven't!
- Aunt Joan:* You're due to get married in two hours. We've lost the vicar. I can't find any substitute flowers. It's going to be a disaster.
- Ellingham:* Stating the obvious is really helpful. I'm going to find this Mr Parsons. [*Walks away*]
- Pauline:* Porter.
- Ellingham:* Porter!
- Aunt Joan:* He always has to do things the hard way.

In contrast with the two extracts analysed previously, this time we have two people who know Ellingham well, are used to his rudeness and are not intimidated by him: his receptionist is subject to his sharp tongue on a daily basis and has learnt how to respond, while his Aunt Joan has known him since he was a child. They are both sufficiently self-assured to engage in competitive impoliteness.

The vicar's injury is the last of a number of unfortunate events and it is the one that appears to make it impossible for the wedding to go ahead. When Pauline states what is self-evident, he takes her words as a worthless distraction when he is trying to think of a solution. Since he is her employer, in terms of relational face he is clearly in a superior position, so much so that he feels authorised to tell her to shut up. When she continues talking, his sarcastic question about her difficulty in understanding his two-word imperative is entertaining in that it offers a certain aesthetic pleasure. Pauline knows that he has a high opinion of his own intelligence and makes an ironic reference to how clever he is as she pretends to comply with his instruction to be silent. In this way she cleverly attacks his relational face by reversing roles: she, as the person who has some vital information, is now in the superior position while Ellingham's ignorance obliges him to climb down and ask her to elaborate (though without mitigating his offensive behaviour with an apology). At first Ellingham assumes that the vicar "holed up on the moors" will be of no use to him until Pauline reassures him that Mr Porter has not lost his mind.

The conversation takes place as the medical crew are taking the injured vicar to the ambulance outside the church. When Joan recognises the patient, she correctly assumes that her nephew had a hand in the accident, which Ellingham denies but Pauline confirms with an idiomatic expression normally used to refer to the practice of tampering with a racehorse to prevent it from winning. Since his role is to cure rather than hurt people, and he is proud of his professional expertise, Pauline's words represent an attack on his quality face. He responds with medical terminology in an endeavour to reclaim self-esteem and omits any mention of his

own role in the vicar's accident. Pauline immediately deflates him again by translating his medical explanation into the same idiomatic expression. When Joan, like Pauline earlier, states the obvious, Ellingham replies sarcastically but lacks the superiority in terms of relational face to say something as direct as "shut up".

What this extract demonstrates is that those who really know Martin Ellingham – and by series 3 that includes the TV viewers – understand that his bark is worse than his bite and are more likely to be exasperated than offended by his curmudgeonly ways. Joan and Pauline both know that he is a fundamentally well-meaning man who creates problems for himself with his short temper and hopeless social skills. As his aunt observes, "He always has to do things the hard way."

4.4 Series 4 (2009): Blood's no problem

At the end of series 3, a substitute vicar is found in time to marry Louisa and Martin, but the wedding does not go ahead because both the bride and groom have second thoughts and fail to show up at the church. Series 4 starts with Louisa having moved away from Portwenn and Ellingham deciding that since he no longer has any reason to stay in Cornwall, he should accelerate his treatment to overcome his haemophobia so that he can return to surgery and London. Then Louisa returns to the village and informs her ex-fiancé that she is carrying his baby.

Louisa falls under the influence of Molly O'Brian, a midwife who dislikes doctors and favours natural remedies over conventional pharmaceuticals. When Ellingham learns that Louisa has been persuaded not to take the antibiotics he had prescribed to cure her urinary tract infection, he goes to her house and finds the midwife in the process of explaining to her how to give birth at home in an inflatable birthing pool.

Ellingham [to *Molly O'Brian*]: Did you prevent this patient from taking her prescribed medication?

O'Brian: Excuse me, Dr Ellingham, but I am with a client. Perhaps you'd like to...

Ellingham [to *Louisa*]: Have you completely lost your mind? You're not seriously considering giving birth in this harpy's paddling pool, are you?

O'Brian: How dare you? I'm a fully qualified...

Ellingham: Be quiet! Louisa, take your medicine. [*He produces a packet*]

Louisa: No.

Ellingham: What?

Louisa: You heard me.

O'Brian: Miss Glasson is making an informed decision endorsed by...

Ellingham: I told you to shut up.

Louisa: No, don't you speak to her like that! You always have to be in control, don't you? I'm the doctor, I'm the expert, I'm so clever. You don't understand women at all, do you, Martin? Well, you're not my doctor; she is, so you can take your ruddy drugs and you can shove them where the sun don't shine. Goodnight, Martin.

Ellingham: When your infection gets worse, take these. [*He places the antibiotics on the table and leaves*]

This extract demonstrates how Ellingham's angry outbursts are often counterproductive. Instead of calmly explaining to Louisa why taking antibiotics is in her and her baby's interests, Ellingham launches into a furious tirade, rudely interrupts Molly O'Brian three times and shows undisguised contempt for the midwife, which activates Louisa's female solidarity circuit. He sees belief in alternative medicine as a rejection of his profession and therefore an attack on his social identity face, while Louisa's decision not to get the antibiotics he prescribed questions his personal competence and attacks his quality face. O'Brian unwittingly provokes him further by referring to Louisa not as her patient but as a client, a term that implies a link between medicine and commerce, something that is anathema to a doctor who has spent his entire career working for the State-funded National Health Service. In the circumstances, he cannot control his temper, but Louisa, like Pauline and Joan, has seen these outbursts before and is no longer intimidated by his bullying approach. Responding in kind, she points out the plain truth that the man she nearly married interprets the asymmetrical power relationship as a licence for control freakery, intellectual arrogance and bossiness. The profile "I'm the doctor, I'm the expert, I'm so clever" is a summary Fairclough would approve of. The final attack on Ellingham's social identity face is the assertion that Molly O'Brian is now her doctor, an unwarranted promotion of the midwife that further infuriates a genuine doctor who has a keen sense of professional hierarchy.

In terms of Culpeper's five sources of pleasure in entertaining impoliteness, we can say that this scene provides the emotional pleasure of observing a conflict coupled with the pleasure of feeling secure because we are detached from that conflict. There is also aesthetic pleasure in the linguistic creativity of Ellingham's description of "this harpy's paddling pool" and Louisa's amusing euphemism when she tells him where to shove his drugs.

Ellingham's prediction that without antibiotics Louisa's condition will worsen is proved right. When he next sees her, again in the presence of Molly O'Brian, he explains to her in a far more measured tone that the infection has spread to her kidneys, she has a very high fever and that prolonged high temperature could trigger premature delivery of the baby. In O'Brian's opinion he has expressed "a very

male point of view” but this time Louisa prefers to heed the advice of a genuine doctor and reaches for the antibiotics.

4.5 Series 5 (2011): Leaving Portwenn, or maybe not

Series 5 begins the day after the birth of Louisa’s as yet unnamed son. Ellingham has resigned as Portwenn’s GP and is due to leave for London to take up a post as cardiovascular surgeon, but his departure is delayed following the sudden death of his Aunt Joan. During the extra week spent in Cornwall, he monitors the health of mother and baby with some zeal, and also manages to clash with his successor, Dr Diane Dibbs, and her husband, Gavin, who describes himself as “practice manager”. In effect, he has replaced Pauline as receptionist.

When Louisa has the common postpartum condition of perineal pain, she does not want to be examined by her ex-fiancé, so Ellingham takes her to see the new doctor. While Louisa is in the consulting room, Gavin Dibbs attempts to make friendly chat, and says something that creates serious misgivings in the departing GP’s mind about his successor’s competence.

Gavin Dibbs: Yes, it’s been a long and winding road. She only finished training last month. Late bloomer.

Ellingham: She’s got to be fifty.

Gavin Dibbs: Well, she’s her own worst enemy when it comes to exams and that. She’s highly strung. She always puts her heart and soul into the task at hand, then along comes a test and that little voice starts up in her head. Nag, nag, nag and whoosh! She just forgets it all.

[Ellingham goes to the door of the consulting room and opens it]

Ellingham [to Louisa]: Everything all right?

Louisa: Could you give us a moment, please?

Ellingham [to Dr Dibbs]: What have you found?

Dr Dibbs: Well, there’s nothing jumping out at me.

Ellingham [to Louisa]: Are you managing? Is there anything you want to ask?

Louisa: She’s a doctor, Martin. I’m sure she’s got everything in hand.

Ellingham: Hm.

[He closes the door]

Gavin Dibbs: Difficult to let go, yes?

Ellingham: Has she been failing exams for thirty years?

[omissis]

Ellingham: Have you had any medical training?

- Gavin Dibbs:* Me? No, no, no. Total layman. But I've read the trades and you pick things up, don't you?
- Ellingham:* No. [*to Dr Dibbs*] How many medications are you taking altogether?
- Dr Dibbs:* Erm. Oh, where to start? Erm.
- Ellingham:* A few then?
- Gavin Dibbs:* She's got a lot of ailments. Poor woman.
- Ellingham:* [*to Dr Dibbs*]: Related or discrete?
- Dr Dibbs:* Pardon?
- Ellingham:* Are they derived from a common cause or are they separate?
- Dr Dibbs:* Um...?
- Ellingham:* Shall I examine you?
- Dr Dibbs:* Examine me?
- Ellingham:* Yes. You don't seem on top of things.
- Gavin Dibbs:* She's likely more au fait with current thinking than you are, Dr Ellingham, having qualified more recently.
- Ellingham:* Be quiet. [*to Dr Dibbs*] You're probably over-medicating. Would you like me to examine you?
- Gavin Dibbs:* I'm all right, thank you.
- Ellingham:* Fine. It's your funeral.

On learning that Dr Dibbs has only just completed her training, Ellingham makes a somewhat ungallant remark about her age. As usual, his penchant for directness is unmitigated by social graces. Then, after Gavin Dibbs describes his wife's difficulty in completing her degree, the man who resolutely defends his own entitlements in doctor-patient relations undermines his successor's by literally invading her territory and addressing his first question not to his colleague and professional peer, but to the patient, whose privacy he has violated. By now he suspects that Diane Dibbs is not up to the demands of her job. He withdraws when urged to by Louisa, not because he believes the new GP merits professional respect. Gavin Dibbs is remarkably tolerant in excusing Ellingham's unprofessional behaviour as difficulty in letting go, but the latter replies with an indirect speech act whose illocutionary force is unmistakable: formally an interrogative sentence enquiring about how many years Di Dibbs has spent failing her medical exams, the real message is that he considers her to be manifestly ill-prepared for the job she has taken on.

Before Louisa and Ellingham leave, it emerges that the new GP has health problems of her own, but it is the "practice manager" who describes them. Ellingham again uses an interrogative that does not really function as a question: he knows perfectly well that Dibbs has no medical training and the illocutionary force of the utterance is to tell him to keep quiet about things he does not understand. Dibbs'

response could not be more calculated to attack Ellingham's social identity face: he admits that he has no formal training but believes he has picked up knowledge by reading "the trades", i.e. the periodicals published by pharmaceutical companies. That what is effectively advertising material could be equated with genuine medical texts is for Ellingham unthinkable, and he responds to Dibbs' "don't you?" tag question with a curt "no". He continues to question Dr Dibbs while ignoring her husband, but her inability to remember how many medicines she is taking, or even to understand medical terminology, leads Ellingham to treat her as a patient rather than a colleague. His offer to examine her triggers a counter-attack from Gavin, and what he says attacks the doctor's quality face. The suggestion that his wife might be more "au fait" with current thinking because she qualified recently creates the implicature that Ellingham has not updated his knowledge and skills. On this occasion Ellingham's "Be quiet" is entirely justified because Gavin Dibbs has asked for it. He suggests a probable reason for her problems but when she refuses his second offer to examine her, Ellingham responds with an idiom that is somewhat ill-chosen. The expression "it's your funeral" means that you think someone's decision will lead to negative consequences, but you do not intend to interfere. As it happens, it soon emerges that Dr Dibbs has a medical condition that could be fatal, but fortunately Ellingham does interfere and keeps her alive until the ambulance arrives.

This scene is entertaining in terms of Culpeper's notion of voyeuristic pleasure as the hapless Dr Dibbs' insecurity is exposed, along with her professional incompetence and her inability to stand up to a manipulative husband. The scorn Ellingham directs at both the new GP and her husband is entirely understandable, although it is ironic that this stickler for professional standards resorts to unprofessional behaviour in the surgery that is no longer his. He is motivated, of course, by concern that the health of Louisa and their son is going to be in the hands of someone who cannot even prescribe the right medicines for herself.

In the sixth series Ellingham abandons the plan to return to London and he and Louisa make a second attempt to get married. This time both show up at the church.

4.6 Series 7 (2015): Anglo-American relations

In series 7 Louisa and Martin's marriage is not going well and the latter accepts that the problem is his own behaviour. He decides to have psychotherapy because he is afraid of losing Louisa but, as the following extract demonstrates, he does not feel a similar need to modify his behaviour with patients.

[An American tourist goes to Dr Ellingham's surgery to get a prescription for the Timolol eye drops her doctor in the States advised her to use. As a precaution Ellingham decides to check her blood pressure, and as he is doing so she begins to have minor breathing difficulties.]

Ellingham: What's the matter?

Patient: Nothing. I'm sorry. I'm not crying. It's just... I have a garden variety asthma and these hills have got me a little breathless. That's all.

Ellingham: Why are you taking Timolol?

Patient: Because my doctor prescribed it, and he's a good doctor.

Ellingham: Really? How would you know?

Patient: He's very expensive.

Ellingham: I see. Then he should have known that some beta blockers can trigger a severe asthma attack. I'll prescribe you Latanoprost, which is what your physician should have done if he wasn't working out of the back of a covered wagon.

Patient: Oh, and I've always heard that the Brits are so nice and polite. What do I owe you?

Ellingham: You don't owe me anything.

Patient: Thank you. Do you know what some experts and healers have stated is the best medicine a person can have? A simple smile.

Ellingham: I'm sorry, I don't understand what you're saying. Your accent's very thick. Here's your prescription.

The *Doc Martin* scriptwriters never give Ellingham anything explicitly political to say, but it is clear that he believes that doctors should act in their patients' best interests without being influenced by financial considerations. When the tourist says that her American doctor is good, the implicature of Ellingham's follow-up question is that someone with no medical training is not qualified to make such an evaluation. That she bases her assessment on his high fees is a further provocation for a doctor who has never sought any remuneration other than the salary the State pays him. Ellingham's social identity face is that of a member of a professional community of well-trained people whose primary motivation is not economic, so he takes the tourist's words as a face attack. His counterattack is intentionally offensive and denigrates not just the tourist's physician but also the entire system of health care in the United States. The image he conjures up is that of a stock character in western films: the itinerant quack doctor peddling snake oil and other questionable remedies. He then derives a certain satisfaction from being able to inform the tourist that there is no charge for the prescription he is writing. Her suggestion that he might learn about the curative power of a simple smile falls into the category of alternative medicine and is again an attack on his professional

expertise. He retaliates by insulting both the individual in front of him and the entire population of the United States: the tourist speaks standard American with clear diction, but Ellingham claims to find her accent incomprehensible.

Returning to Culpeper's work on entertaining impoliteness, this scene provides emotional pleasure as we observe a conflict that operates simultaneously at both personal and national/cultural levels, and aesthetic pleasure as we appreciate the splendid "back of a covered wagon" put-down.

The tourist discovers that Ellingham does not fit the stereotype of "nice and polite" Brits, and Taylor's comparative study of English and Italian corpora (2016) exposes the falsity of another national stereotype that I, a Briton living in Italy, have heard on many occasions: that the British have an aptitude for irony that Italians do not share. Having analysed examples of mock politeness in two sets of comparable corpora from the two countries, she concludes: "[...] it appears the academic descriptions of mock politeness (mainly under the labels irony and sarcasm) have underestimated (cultural) variation and, in contrast, that cultural variation is overestimated in lay description" (Taylor 2016: 394). Linguists, it seems, are a little too willing to believe they have identified universal features, while the general public continue to believe in cultural differences unsupported by hard data.

5. Conclusions

For Culpeper (2011: 254), "[s]ituated behaviours are viewed negatively – considered 'impolite' – when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be." Dr Ellingham's utterances and attitudes frequently conflict with how his patients expect or want their GP to behave, or how they think he ought to conduct himself. It is not one-way traffic, however. Although the series is called *Doc Martin*, it is not all about the eponymous hero's impoliteness since his patients also fail to comply with his expectations of what should happen in situated behaviours. People do not expect their doctor to drum up business with the offer of a free coffin, but a GP does not expect his first patient to ask him if he suffers from wind. Dr Ellingham is often on the receiving end of impolite behaviour, but because he lacks tact and diplomacy, he invariably reacts in a way that ratchets up the level of conflict, and consequently the degree of offence.

The rudeness displayed in every episode of *Doc Martin* is clearly entertaining, otherwise the comedy drama would not have run for eight series with a ninth in the making at the time of writing. A major reason for this is that conventional insults and swear words are seldom used, while Ellingham in particular is capable of

verbal pyrotechnics in producing original and creative ways to offend people: it is easy to mock the platitude of God's moving in mysterious ways but it is unusual to hear those mysterious ways compared to the progression of malaria; many people ridicule proponents of home births but "this harpy's paddling pool" is unlikely to form part of that criticism; there is nothing especially amusing in dismissing an incompetent doctor as a charlatan but "working out of the back of a covered wagon" conveys the same message in a far more entertaining way.

Dr Ellingham's impoliteness is counterbalanced by the positive qualities that are gradually revealed to viewers over the course of eight series: his intentions are invariably good even when his methods are disastrous; he genuinely loves Louisa despite his inability to say as much; his tactlessness is the negative flipside of his commendable honesty; he treats all patients equally without making moral judgements about those who are more or less deserving of his medical expertise. Without those positive qualities, Ellingham would be an obnoxious individual and the entertainment value of the TV programme would depend solely upon his ability to use words to devastating effect. Because there is much more to him than a sharp tongue, the TV audience views him with the very faculty that he has such difficulty with: empathy. The eighth series of *Doc Martin* ends with Ellingham suspended from duty and unsure whether he will ever be allowed to practice medicine again after a patient complains to the medical authorities that his haemophobia renders him unfit to treat patients. The TV viewers are rooting for him, and for the ninth and probably final series of *Doc Martin*.

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“Meaning you have been known to act rashly”

How Molly Weasley negotiates her identity as a moral authority in conflicts in the *Harry Potter* series

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Molly Weasley, a mother character in J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series, represents a moral authority whose system of moral values and principles that governs her family is also recognised and highly appreciated by other characters in the books and by the readers. However, even Molly Weasley becomes engaged in conflictual situations in which she transgresses her morality and chooses impoliteness to control her interlocutor’s inappropriate behaviour. Such situations enable her to negotiate her identity as a moral authority and to be perceived as a complex character. Drawing upon Culpeper’s (2011) theoretical framework of impoliteness, the objective of the paper is to study how Molly Weasley employs conventionalised and implicational impoliteness in her direct speeches, which functions her impolite formulas have, and how both the triggers and functions are determined by her relation with her interlocutor.

Keywords: impoliteness, conventionalised impoliteness, implicational impoliteness, Harry Potter, Molly Weasley, moral authority, manners

1. Introduction

People’s concepts of an individual’s moral development vary, and some argue that men and women differ in their understanding of morality. Gilligan (2003) asserts that while men’s moral judgement is motivated by their inclination to justice and fairness, women’s moral judgement is determined by their sense of responsibility and caring for others. Women thus make their moral judgement and decisions with respect to the welfare of those for whom they are responsible, which helps them enhance social relations and the bonds between themselves and the ones they care for. Since fictional characters are inspired by real-life characters (Culpeper 2001) – in this case, by the idea of a real-life mother – the point of departure of this chapter

is that Molly Weasley, mother of the Weasley clan and mother-figure to Harry Potter in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, builds her system of moral values on protecting her beloved offspring and their friend Harry Potter, and on teaching them what is good and what is evil.

One of the reasons why the series has been so successful is that J. K. Rowling works with complex and multidimensional characters (e.g. Schanoes 2003; Lykke 2015; Rosado 2015). As McDougal (2015: 161) asserts, “[e]very character inhabiting Rowling’s universe operates in shades of grey, and readers *see* those dimensions in her characters. Thus, those characters become human; they become real” (original italics). Chappell (2008: 282) ascribes the success of the *Harry Potter* books to the fact that they “create a pattern for young people’s consciously subversive behaviour through their recognition and response to the notion that ‘society’, as imagined by adults, contains hegemonic structures that may not benefit those living within it”. Vezzali et al.’s (2014) psychological experiment proves that reading such a postmodern narrative with the motif of the protagonist’s moral maturation helps to improve attitudes to out-group minorities, such as refugees. Considering its social impact, the series offers a “uniquely complex understanding of morality” (Schanoes 2003: 131). To follow this argument, the paper presupposes that the complex and multidimensional character of Molly Weasley consists in how she maintains the moral values and how she conforms them to unpleasant and difficult situations that accumulate as the narrative develops. Even though she mostly behaves in a socially appropriate and acceptable manner so as to set an ideal example for her children and to teach them what is good and what is bad, she errs like any other human being, and sometimes even deviates from what is socially acceptable and appropriate. Consequently, she infringes her own system of moral values and principles. Rarely does this infringement manifest itself in her physical actions (she, for instance, never slaps her children); rather, it becomes apparent in her linguistic behaviour, namely in her maintenance of politeness and impoliteness strategies.

Culpeper (2001: 235–262) argues that a character’s linguistic behaviour, especially the management of politeness and impoliteness, here labelled as (im)politeness, is one of the means underlying the dynamicity of characterisation and contributing to the complexity of a character. Blitvich and Sifianou (2017: 241) add that “(im)politeness is highly functional and ideologically loaded. That is the main reason why (im)politeness can be such a powerful indirect index in identity construction process”. Therefore, it is believed that if Molly Weasley’s uses (im)politeness, it contributes to the multidimensionality of her character and at the same time, it indexes her identity as a moral authority.

In her comparison of impoliteness and identities in the character of Harry Potter and Professor Snape in the original and in the German translation, Pleyer

(2017) discovers that while Harry Potter opts for conventionalised impoliteness when engaged in conflictual situations with Professor Snape at the beginning of the series, he switches to implicational impoliteness with this very same participant in the later books, which reflects Harry’s coming-of-age and his development of competences in pragmatics. Unlike in the case of Harry Potter, however, this chapter hypothesises that Molly Weasley’s employment of impoliteness does not reflect the acquisition of pragmatics skills, but functions as a device for negotiating and constructing her identity as a moral authority. Besides adhering to good conversational manners, reflected in her politeness strategies, Molly Weasley must also opt for less polite conversational behaviour in order to control her interlocutors’ temper or to moderate their language. In accordance with the scope of the current volume, the chapter focuses on the instances of first-order politeness (Taavitsainen & Jucker, this volume). Since it investigates only those communicative events in which Molly Weasley chooses impoliteness to negotiate and to exercise her identity as a moral authority, it can be said that the analysed data represents first-order impoliteness or impoliteness₁ (Watts 2003). The objective is to analyse which types, devices and functions of impoliteness identified by Culpeper (2011) she employs when dealing with her relatives and which she employs when dealing with her peers since the relationship, power, social status and social distance with the other characters are the major variables of (im)politeness.

2. Theoretical background

According to the studies related to impoliteness (e.g. Bousfield 2010; Culpeper 2011; Culpeper and Hardaker 2017; Culpeper and Terkourafi 2017), impoliteness is a negative attitude towards participants in communication and the negative treatment of their face, the public self-image. Impoliteness emerges in those communicative events in which interlocutors’ systems of expectations, beliefs, desires and social values are inconsistent or even collide. In such conflictual events, interlocutors challenge each other’s systems, intentionally or even unintentionally. As a result, they enhance, co-construct, or reconstruct each other’s systems. Additionally, impoliteness can have a negative emotional impact on the target. Following Culpeper (2011: 254–255), there are several factors that influence the quality and degree of impoliteness. These factors include (a) attitudinal factors that concern expectations, desires and beliefs; (b) the linguistic-pragmatic factors that concern linguistic forms, the use of taboo words, intensifiers, and prosodic features, and mismatches between forms and contexts; and (c) contextual and co-textual factors that concern behaviour and the extent to which the language used has positive or negative emotional consequences for the target. This means

that when we become engaged in impolite linguistic behaviour, we, consciously or unconsciously, are driven by several variables. Besides the variables of power (i.e. exercising one's power control, and authority), and of social distance (i.e. in-group and out-group indexicality), and the rank of imposition (i.e. what it actually is that we require to be done), there are other variables that affect our choice of impoliteness strategies, such as emotions (Turner 2000: 52–56; Langlotz and Locher 2017) or cultural variation (Sifianou and Blitvich 2017: 571). Furthermore, Spencer-Oatey and Žegarac (2017: 120) emphasise the fact that even though we are aware of our power status and that of our interlocutor, we negotiate them in the process of interaction, meaning we can change our power position during the interaction. This is why it is important to take the social status of Molly Weasley's interlocutors into consideration since even though she can enter an interaction as the less powerful party, she can negotiate her position and thus achieve her communication goal successfully.

On the basis of his diary report study and of corpus studies, Culpeper (2011) distinguishes two major types of impoliteness: conventionalised impoliteness and implicational (non-conventionalised) impoliteness. Even though impoliteness is dependent on co-textual and situational context (e.g. Bousfield 2010; Culpeper and Hardaker 2017; Culpeper and Terkourafi 2017), conventionalised impoliteness (Culpeper 2011: 130–154) covers those impolite formulas that have become recognised as causing offence regardless of their contextual situation. In other words, besides polite expressions, the English lexicon includes expressions, phrases or idioms that are negatively loaded and are meant to hurt someone's feelings in whatever context. As Culpeper (2011: 153) adds, it is not only the offensive character and frequency of occurrence of such expressions, but also their metadiscursive character, i.e. the speakers' comment on such expressions as being impolite, that make them identifiable as conventionalised. In addition, since language functions with other modes, the degree of impoliteness of such expressions is also determined by paralinguistic aspects such as prosody or gesture. Conventionalised impoliteness includes types such as insults, e.g. *fucking moron*; pointed criticism, e.g. *that is bullshit*; unpalatable questions, e.g. *What's gone wrong now?*; message enforcers, e.g. *listen here*; and dismissals, e.g. *fuck off* (Culpeper 2011: 135–136).

Implicational impoliteness (Culpeper 2011: 155–194) does not work with more or less direct instances of offensive formulas, as conventionalised impoliteness does. Simply speaking, we can cause offense by being indirect and by implying our negative treatment of the other communication participants. According to Culpeper (2011: 155–156), the implication can be triggered in three ways: in a form-driven, convention-driven, or context-driven fashion.

The form-driven type is activated in utterances with a “marked surface form or semantic content relative to Gricean Cooperativeness” (Culpeper 2011: 157).

This means that some of the maxims of the Cooperative Principle are flouted on purpose to hint at the intended implicature and, at the same time, to hurt the hearer’s feelings. An example can be found in Professor Snape’s remark “[a] five-year-old could have told us that much” (Rowling 2005: 431 in Pleyer 2017: 240). Snape’s comment flouts the maxim of relation, since to introduce the competence of a five-year-old child with respect to answering a question addressed to someone much older seems to be irrelevant for the successful flow of the discussion. Nonetheless, in so doing, Snape succeeds in ridiculing Harry Potter in front of his classmates.

Convention-driven impoliteness (Culpeper 2011: 165–180) is triggered by a mismatch between conventionalised polite and/or impolite formulas that are used in a context in which these formulas are socially inappropriate. Culpeper further distinguishes between internal convention-driven impoliteness (2011: 169–178) and the external form (Culpeper 2011: 178–180). While the former is typical of irony and sarcasm, e.g. “Nice of you to turn up, Potter, after Harry arrives considerably late to an event” (Rowling 2005: 153 in Pleyer 2017: 240), the latter appears when the speaker, after being extremely offensive, culminates his or her turn with an expression of over-politeness, such as *thank you*, or *have a good day*. As Culpeper (2011: 166–167) explains, “[a]n interpretation triggered through mismatching is more implicit and involves more inferencing than one triggered through matching, as targets must spend cognitive effort in resolving internal or external mismatches.” However, this might result in the misinterpretation or ill-interpretation of the intended impoliteness.

As far as context-driven impoliteness is concerned, this type works with our expectations of a given context. Like in the previous type, there are two subtypes. Unmarked behaviour means that “an unmarked (with respect to surface form or semantic content) and unconventionalized behaviour mismatches the context,” (Culpeper 2011: 156) e.g. when a mother, motivated by her motherness, tells her 20-year-old daughter what to do or not to do – i.e. without any negative intention. Considering the daughter’s age, this might be perceived as a violation of what is normal and expected in a given situation (Culpeper 2011: 182). The other subtype, absence of behaviour, occurs in such situations in which the speaker, regardless of his or her effort, does not receive any response, nor verbal reaction from the hearer. Such an absence of verbal activity can be perceived as humiliating (Culpeper 2011: 183).

Depending on who she interacts with, the variables of the character of Molly Weasley are as follows. The variable of power consists of her identity as a mother and a seemingly unskilful witch, and it overlaps with the variable of social distance – when being impolite to her offspring she is more powerful and authoritative because of her mother status. But when being impolite to her peers, she is either socially equal, as with the members of the Order of the Phoenix, with whom she has a close relation, though the variable of gender might be at stake, or she is

socially lower, as with those with whom she is expected to have a rather formal relation, such as the Minister for Magic, Cornelius Fudge, or Bellatrix LeStrange, one of Voldemort's supporters. It is needless to add that the conflictual communicative events are always emotionally demanding for her.

3. Molly Weasley as a moral authority

Wolosky (2010), Mauk (2017) and others argue that mothers are very important characters in the *Harry Potter* series and that the topic of maternal love is one of the crucial motifs that made the narrative popular with adult audiences, too. Molly Weasley represents the mother of a traditional Western family. While her husband, Arthur Weasley, is "a middle-rank underpaid, hard-working civil servant" (Blake 2002: 65; quoted in Sunderland 2011: 206), she is a housewife, or rather a housewife witch who runs the household and takes good care of her spouse, and of all their children regardless of their ages and professions. Grimes (2002: 96) describes her as "[a] prototypical mother, having given birth to the magical number of seven children and helping the good Harry by giving him what he needs on his mission: a surrogate family and something that represents familial love and warmth". Their mother-son-like relationship culminates when Molly Weasley gives Harry Potter a watch at his coming-of-age birthday, which is considered to be a tradition in wizarding families:

- (1) The rest of her speech was lost; Harry had got up and hugged her. He tried to put a lot of unsaid things into the hug and perhaps she understood them, because she patted his cheek clumsily when he released her.

(Rowling 2007: 114)

Besides Harry, though, she also imparts her "surrogate motherness" to others in the secret organisation called the Order of the Phoenix, which opposes Lord Voldemort and his supporters, the Death Eaters. Even though she is a full member, she mainly looks after the other members and keeps the headquarters clean. The only time she uses magic is when she cooks or when she needs to empty her children's pockets. She seems in fact to be a rather poor witch as she is not able to get rid of a boggart. It is only at the end of the series that her true magical skills are revealed. In the final battle, the Battle of Hogwarts, it turns out that Molly Weasley is very good at duelling and at non-verbal magic, which are the priorities of the most talented and most skilful wizards and witches.

Owing to her loving and caring character, it is Molly Weasley's image as a mother that is recalled throughout the series. This is especially so on those occasions relating to the Weasley children – she walks them to the station when they are leaving for the boarding school; she always knits them sweaters for Christmas;

she celebrates their successes, as well as commiserates with them on their failures. The stereotype of a caring and loving mother enables the narrator to satisfy the reader’s expectations about mothers in the genre of conventional children’s literature (Sunderland 2011). Unlike other mothers in conventional literature, however, the genre expectations of a loving mother are extended in this series. As in the life of a real mother, Molly Weasley faces a range of concerns that also show her to be strict, authoritative, and unyielding. Trivial concerns can be found in her worries about her son Bill’s appearance, which reflects a parental stereotypical concerning “what-would-they-say”.

- (2) In the middle of the table, Mrs. Weasley was arguing with Bill about his earring, which seemed to be a recent acquisition. ‘...with a horrible great fang on it. Really, Bill, what do they say at the bank?’ (Rowling 2000: 62)

More serious concerns can be traced in Molly Weasley’s worries about the twins’ (Fred and George’s) lack of commitment to their schooling and their decision to open a joke shop instead of following their father’s career at the Ministry. In fact, in her relation with the twins, the worried face of motherhood is demonstrated most frequently. Her anger with them is described in the way she cooks: “pointing her wand a little more vigorously than she had intended”, “Mrs. Weasley slammed a large copper saucepan down on the kitchen table” (Rowling 2000: 58–59), as well as in her direct speech in which she articulates her concerns: “‘Those two,’ she bursts out savagely, [...] ‘I don’t know what’s going to happen to them, I really don’t know. No ambition, unless you count making as much trouble as they possibly can ...’” (Rowling 2000: 58). Her concerns escalate when Percy, the Weasley’s third-born son, a very ambitious employee at the Ministry of Magic, abandons his family due to their conflict of views on Lord Voldemort’s return.

Molly Weasley’s role as a loving as well as concerned mother is often reflected in references made to her both by her relatives and other characters – for instance, “‘*Don’t* tell your mother you’ve been gambling,’ Mr. Weasley implored Fred and George” (Rowling 2000: 117, original italics); or “‘Just don’t tell your mum where you got it’” (Rowling 2000: 733), uttered by Harry Potter when he gives the twins money to start their joke shop. To regulate the twins’ misbehaviour, Hermione in her Prefect role threatens Fred and George to tell on them to their mother:

- (3) ‘If you don’t stop doing it, I’m going to –’
 ‘Put us in detention?’ said Fred, in an I’d-like-to-see-you-try-it voice.
 ‘Make us write lines?’ said George, smirking.
 Onlookers all over the room were laughing. Hermione drew herself up to her full height; her eyes were narrowed and her bushy hair seemed to crackle with electricity.

‘No,’ she said, her voice quivering with anger, ‘but I will write to your mother.’

‘You wouldn’t,’ said George, horrified, taking a step back from her.

(Rowling 2003: 254)

Besides being a moral threat, Molly Weasley is also seen as someone worth following and imitating. Petraki, Baker and Emmison (2007) argue that a strong moral link between mothers and daughters occurs when daughters admit to seeing their mothers as moral authorities worth following and copying. Such links can be found in a scene in which Ginny Weasley, the youngest child and only daughter, admits that even though she does not like her future sister-in-law, Fleur, she will be reconciled with her: “Well, I suppose if Mum can stand it, I can” (Rowling 2005: 635). In the series, this link extends to Molly Weasley’s sons, as well. For instance, when Ron offers to make Hagrid a cup of tea to calm him down in the face of the execution of his beloved hippogriff, the text reads:

(4) ‘Er – shall I make a cup of tea?’ said Ron.

Harry stared at him.

‘It’s what my mum does whenever someone’s upset,’ Ron muttered, shrugging.

(Rowling 1999: 219)

Not only is Molly Weasley loving and caring, and a moral model worth copying, but she is also capable of showing her anger and rage. Her character is motivated by a system of moral values that distinguishes between what is good and what is bad both for her family and for society. There are, however, situations in which her system of moral values contrasts with that of her interlocutors. In these cases, she first tries to resolve the mismatch in a polite and socially acceptable manner. If her endeavour fails, however, and the interaction turns into a conflict between systems of moral values, she deviates from her morality and chooses such expressions and sentence constructions that are interpreted as offensive. However, it is fair to add that other characters, both children and adults, also transgress social norms in wizarding society. Considering the Hogwarts students, Rosado (2015: 76) explains that they “regularly transgress these [Hogwarts] restrictions and limitations, oftentimes doing it out of a sense of ‘greater good’ but also out of typical adolescent rebellion, curiosity, and yearning to trespass established boundaries.” Their most famous rebellion, the one against the corrupt system represented by the antagonist Professor Dolores Umbridge, leads to a secret organisation called Dumbledore’s Army, in which the students “must take transgressive action in order to work toward their own conception of justice” (Chappell 2008: 284). Similarly, guilty of transgressions of specifically moral principles are “morally ambiguous characters” (Rosado 2015: 76) such as Professor Dumbledore, Professor Snape and Lord Voldemort himself, who oscillate between good and bad deeds either for the

sake of the wizarding society and/or Harry’s safety (Professor Dumbledore and Professor Snape) or for the sake of evil and one’s immortality (Lord Voldemort). Consequently, it can be claimed that the transgression of rules, ethical principles, and moral values can be understood as a genre feature of adolescent literature.

4. Methodology

The data for the analysis, the dialogues in which Molly Weasley uses impoliteness, were obtained by the method of close reading of all the seven printed books in the series. First, all the dialogues in which Molly Weasley participates as an active interlocutor, i.e. in which she produces a direct speech, were selected. To make sure that no dialogue was omitted, the printed books were scanned and then the key words “Molly”, “Molly Weasley” and “Mrs. Weasley” were searched for in the electronic documents to double check the selected dialogues. The reason for choosing these three key words is that regardless of who she is talking to, the narrator always refers to her as “Molly Weasley” or “Mrs. Weasley” (together with the pronoun “she”) in the reporting clause. Her first name was included in the searches in order to double check the dialogues in which she is addressed by her husband while the narrator uses only “she” in the reporting clause. Out of the 105 dialogues found in the series, only those interactions in which triggers of impoliteness were identified were chosen for further analysis. This means that Mrs. Weasley’s turns with no triggers of impoliteness were excluded from the analysis. For instance, at the end of book 1, Mrs. Weasley asks Harry:

- (5) ‘Busy year?’ she said.
 ‘Very,’ said Harry. ‘Thanks for the fudge and the sweater, Mrs. Weasley.’
 ‘Oh, it was nothing, dear.’ (Rowling 1999: 332)

Since there is no trigger that would indicate her conflict of interest or her intention to regulate Harry’s misbehaviour or to hurt his feelings, this dialogue was not counted into the final dataset. By contrast, dialogues that contain an instance of conventionalised impoliteness, e.g. “that wretched Skeeter woman” (Rowling 2002: 168), in which Mrs. Weasley explicitly indicates her disrespect towards a journalist named Rita Skeeter, or an instance of implicational impoliteness based on the co-textual and situational contexts, were included in the dataset. This selection method gave the final number of 22 dialogues in which Molly Weasley inclines to impoliteness.

The next step consisted in analysing the triggers based on Culpeper’s (2011) framework of conventionalised and implicational impoliteness (for more theoretical detail, see Section 2 above). To identify such triggers, attention was paid not

only to those expressions and sentence structures Molly Weasley employs in her direct speeches but also to her own and her interlocutors' non-verbal behaviour communicated in the narrator's voice, and to her interlocutors' verbal responses (if provided). The reason for considering both the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the participants involved is that impoliteness is realised via more than just one turn, and because non-verbal reactions participate in interpreting whether an utterance has been perceived as impolite. To demonstrate this, consider the following dialogue:

- (6) 'He's not your son,' said Sirius quietly.
 'He's as good as,' said Mrs. Weasley fiercely. 'Who else has he got?'
 'He's got me!'
 'Yes,' said Mrs. Weasley, her lip curling, 'the thing is, it's been rather difficult for you to look after him while you've been locked up in Azkaban, hasn't it?'
 Sirius started to rise from his chair.
 'Molly, you're not the only person at this table who cares about Harry,' said Lupin sharply. 'Sirius, sit *down*.' (Rowling 2003: 90, original italics)

Molly Weasley's intention is to convince Sirius Black, Harry Potter's godfather, and the other people present that Harry should not know about Lord Voldemort's plans. Driven by her maternal love and motivated by her strong disagreement with Sirius, her flouting of the maxim of manner and relevance ("the thing is, it's been rather difficult for you to look after him while you've been locked up in Azkaban, hasn't it?") was identified as a form-driven trigger by which she wanted to humiliate Sirius, and at the same time to imply that he is not the one that should make decisions about Harry Potter's future due to his lack of parental responsibilities. The fact that Sirius, as well as the others, understood both the intended implicature and the humiliation is indicated in Sirius's rising from the chair and in Lupin's modification of Molly's behaviour and his command targeted at Sirius.

The next step was to distinguish between conventionalised and implicational impoliteness, and to identify their subtypes. To do so, the analysis distinguished between turns that contain lexical units of conventionalised impoliteness, such as *idiots*, *bitch* etc., and turns with lexico-grammatical formulas that were interpreted as implicational impoliteness based on Culpeper's (2001) criteria. When Molly Weasley uses formulas that flout Grice's maxims with the intention to cause offence in the given situational context (like Example 6 above), these were identified as the form-driven type; when she uses conventionalised polite formulas that are found inappropriate in the given situational context, e.g. "thank you very much, Mundungus," said Mrs. Weasley sharply" (Rowling 2003: 86) without being thankful at all, these were labelled as the convention-driven type; and when she utters formulas that go against one's expectation in the given situational context, e.g.

“You keep your mouth closed while you’re eating!” (Rowling 2000: 35) told to an adult child as if he were a pre-schooler, these were identified as the context-driven type. The total number of triggers scrutinised in the analysis is 28. It is obvious, however, that some of her formulas might be interpreted as belonging to a different type than indicated in this chapter because the boundaries can be fuzzy and the reading of the selected formulas is highly dependent not only on one’s knowledge about the narrative and its characters, but also on one’s pragmatic skills in interpreting the speaker’s intention. Additionally, the targets of Molly Weasley’s impolite behaviour were identified in order to discover which types and subtypes of impoliteness she prefers when talking to the members of her family, where she is either socially higher than her younger children, or socially equal to her eldest children and to her husband, and which types she prefers when talking to her peers. These are mostly the members of the Order of the Phoenix, with whom she has a close relation, but also strangers with whom she is expected to have a rather formal relation. The final step was to identify the functions of her impolite treatment. These will be discussed in Section 6.

As far as her transgression is concerned, it is important to mention that in book 1, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, and in book 3, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Molly Weasley is not involved in any dialogue that would be identified as impolite. The majority of her impolite behaviour comes from book 2, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, and book 5, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. In book 2, the conflict occurs at the beginning of the story when she finds out that her sons, namely the twin brothers George and Fred together with her youngest son Ron, stole her husband’s enchanted car to rescue Harry Potter from the Dursleys, Harry’s foster-parents. When they return from their rescue mission, she constructs and performs her identity as a furious mother, one who has been overcome by the fear of losing her sons and a valuable possession. In book 5, when it is obvious that Lord Voldemort has gained enough power to start a new war, the Order of the Phoenix is reconvened. Of course, the threat of Lord Voldemort’s return and the fact that Molly Weasley has opposing views on what Harry Potter should know about the Order and Voldemort’s plans cause her significant anxiety and disquiet. Her emotional mood often gets her into conflictual situations with other members of the Order, mostly Sirius Black. In such situations she has to negotiate her identity as an equivalent Order member and that of a mother-figure to Harry Potter, as well as to construct and perform her identity as a moral authority by teaching the other members morality. Besides these two major conflicts, there are other occasions in the rest of the books when she constructs her identity as a moral authority via impoliteness.

5. Findings

Molly Weasley (together with her husband, it is fair to add) stands for moral values that determine what is good and what is bad, and she embodies the idea that one must abide by these values even during the hardest times of one's life. Her life philosophy thus stems from the idea that living by moral principles fosters moral welfare in the whole of society. She follows her morality not only in her deeds, but also in her linguistic behaviour. This is the reason why she prefers politeness. This is mostly reflected in her interaction with Harry Potter. Whenever she welcomes him, she uses *dear* or *darling*. Following Wilamová (2004: 115), “greetings, farewells, invitations and compliments are generally considered as positively polite devices, which aim to express solidarity and claim common ground between the speaker and the addressee.” In other words, Molly Weasley always treats Harry Potter with positive politeness since she wants him to feel part of the family – that is, she wants to establish common ground between her identity as a mother and his as a foster-son. On the other hand, there are situations when she has to opt for non-polite linguistic behaviour, which often culminates into impoliteness.

As pointed out in Section 4, the total number of triggers of impoliteness is 28. Even though the numbers of the analysed data are rather low, they are provided in the two tables below to illustrate which types of impoliteness Molly Weasley uses with whom. Table 1 shows the occurrence of conventionalised and implicational triggers of impoliteness relating to individual participants, i.e. the targets of her impolite behaviour.

Table 1. Quantification of instances of Molly Weasley's conventionalised and implicational impoliteness with regard to the target

	Target	Conventionalised impoliteness	Implicational impoliteness
Family members	Sons	5	7
	Daughter-in-law	0	1
	Husband	2	3
Total for family members		7	11
Peers	Black, Sirius	0	5
	Diggory, Amos	0	1
	Fletcher, Mundungus	0	2
	Fudge, Cornelius	0	1
	Lestrangle, Bellatrix	1	0
Total for peers		1	9
Total		8	20

Table 1 covers instances of Molly Weasley’s impoliteness found over the whole series and without considering individual books. The reason is that not all of the books contain situations which would require her to be impolite. On the other hand, it might be said that the more complicated the narrative becomes, the denser the occurrences of impolite turns.

5.1 Conventionalised impoliteness

The numbers reveal that Molly Weasley prefers implicational impoliteness. However, in a couple of situations she chooses directness in order to cause emotional injury to her interlocutor – that is, she chooses conventionalised impoliteness. As for the members of her family, she twice uses pointed criticism towards her husband to demonstrate dissatisfaction with his interest in Muggle-made or Muggle-originated (i.e. non-wizard) products and inventions. Mr. Weasley, an employee of the Ministry of Magic, works in the Misuse of Muggle Artefacts Office, where he is responsible for preventing Muggle items from being enchanted and misused by wizards. However, while working in this office, Mr. Weasley has learnt to admire Muggle items, which is something that Molly Weasley finds very irresponsible. This is why she directly criticises his passion after finding out that he had enchanted the car stolen by their sons, enabling it to fly.

- (7) ‘Arthur Weasley, you made sure there was a loophole when you wrote that law!’ shouted Mrs. Weasley. ‘Just so you could carry on tinkering with all that Muggle rubbish in your shed!’ (Rowling 2000: 39)

The narrator’s choice of *shouted* and Molly Weasley’s use of her husband’s full name, by which she distances herself from him at the moment of speaking, indicate her anger. Following Culpeper’s (2011: 58–59) concept of five major emotions and their relation to (im)politeness, the category of anger represents an outcome of what happens against one’s expectations. This outcome is perceived as non-acceptable or illegitimate, which is reflected in Molly Weasley’s interpretation. She criticises her husband’s passion by choosing emotively loaded expressions, such as *tinkering* and *rubbish*, the devices of conventionalised impoliteness, and by accusing him of finding a loophole in order to humiliate him. Another instance of humiliating Mr. Weasley occurs when he is in hospital after being attacked by Lord Voldemort’s snake. In order to recover more quickly, Mr. Weasley considers allowing one of the doctors to use Muggle treatment, which Molly Weasley finds very foolish.

- (8) ‘It sounds as though you’ve been trying to sew your skin back together,’ said Mrs. Weasley with a snort of mirthless laughter, ‘but even you, Arthur, wouldn’t be *that* stupid –’ (Rowling 2003: 507, original italics)

The noun phrase *a snort of mirthless laughter*, which indicates Molly Weasley’s disdain, and the choice of the adjective *stupid* with the boosting determiner the prosodic feature of which (here indicated by the italics) signals her disbelief communicate her pointed criticism towards her husband despite the seriousness of his injury. In both cases quoted above, Molly Weasley deviates from watching her manners since her intention is to attack her husband’s positive face and to humiliate him.

Besides pointed criticism, the other device of conventionalised impoliteness Molly Weasley uses is insult. When upset with the twins’ use of magic instead of their physical strength, she calls them idiots after they knock their sister down the stairs.

- (9) Mrs. Black and Mrs. Weasley were both screaming at the top of their voices. ‘- COULD HAVE DONE HER A SERIOUS INJURY, YOU IDIOTS -’ (Rowling 2003: 179)

The prosodic features reflected in the choice of capital letters signal her anger, which seems to be more intensive than when she criticises her husband in the previous examples. This is the result of the broader context of book 5, of Lord Voldemort’s return, as well as of the immediate situational context, as the whole family and the members of the Order of the Phoenix are in a hurry to catch the school train and to export Harry Potter to the train station in disguise. The choice of *idiots* helps Molly Weasley to relieve her negative emotions of stress and anxiety and to make the twins feel ashamed.

The last example of conventionalised impoliteness considered here occurs in book 7, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, in the final battle called the Battle of Hogwarts. Like all the members of the Order of the Phoenix, Molly Weasley is duelling hard in the battle. When she notices that Bellatrix Lestrange, Lord Voldemort’s most devoted supporter, is duelling with Ginny, the Weasley’s youngest child and only daughter, Molly Weasley draws Bellatrix’s attention by shouting at her: “NOT MY DAUGHTER, YOU BITCH!” (Rowling 2007: 736, original capitals). This threat is further accompanied by her “OUT OF MY WAY!” when she clears her way towards reaching Bellatrix, and by her “No!” [...] “Get back! *Get back!* She is mine!” (Rowling 2007: 736, original capitals and italics) when she discourages others from helping her to duel Bellatrix. Here, the choice of a rather unexpected swear-word totally removes Molly Weasley from the schema of a moral puritan mother who always reminds her children to watch their language, though

her violation of morality is of course comprehensible in this case. She has lost one of her twin sons, the war between the good and the evil is culminating, and she is determined to do anything to win this particular battle to save her daughter, and in fact to save the whole wizarding world from the evil power (“You-will-never-touch-our-children-again!” screamed Mrs. Weasley”, Rowling 2007: 736). Considering the immediate situational context, not only does the swear word gain Bellatrix’s attention, but it also helps Molly Weasley to gather all her courage and to perform a successful non-verbal duel in which Bellatrix is killed. This is the scene in which Molly Weasley’s lexical repertoire and her pragmatic competences are fully revealed to the reader. Even though she commits a murder, and thus totally transgresses the moral principle of never taking a life, her motivation is driven by her moral responsibility to protect her only daughter and by the imperative to act for the “greater good”.

5.2 Implicational impoliteness

Table 2 shows the instances of Molly Weasley’s use of implicational impoliteness, the type that is more context dependent. The occurrences are presented according to which triggers she uses with whom.

Table 2. Quantification of Molly Weasley’s types of implicational impoliteness with regard to the target.

Target	Form-driven	Convention-driven	Context-driven	Total
Sons	4	1	2	7
Daughter-in-law	0	1	0	1
Husband	2	1	0	3
Black, Sirius	4	0	1	5
Diggory, Amos	0	0	1	1
Fletcher, Mundungus	1	1	0	2
Fudge, Cornelius	0	0	1	1
Lestrangle, Bellatrix	0	0	0	0
Total	11	4	5	20

The table illustrates that the most frequent type of implicational impoliteness used by Molly Weasley is the form-driven type. She uses this in 11 events, while the convention-driven type can be found in four events and the context-driven type in five.

Form-driven impoliteness is triggered by flouting some of the cooperative maxims (quantity, quality, relevance, and manner) in order to imply a meaning that goes beyond the semantic meaning of the words used. Within the context of the series, Molly Weasley uses this type when she wants to insinuate that her interlocutor deviates from the moral values she and her family represent. For instance, when Ron and the twins return home after stealing their father's car, bringing Harry Potter safely to their house, Molly Weasley tells them off, instructing Fred that he could learn a lesson from his older brother Percy.

- (10) '[...] we never had trouble like this from Bill or Charlie or Percy –'
 'Perfect Percy,' muttered Fred.

'YOU COULD DO WITH TAKING A LEAF OUT OF PERCY'S BOOK!' yelled Mrs. Weasley, prodding a finger in Fred's chest.

(Rowling 2000: 33, original capitals)

She chooses the idiomatic expression to imply that Fred's behaviour does not achieve Percy's moral standards. She flouts the Maxim of manner owing to the obscurity of the idiomatic expression used. Her raised voice (indicated in capitals) and her physical poking intensify her intention to teach Fred a moral lesson.

Another example of her form-driven impoliteness can be found in her heated debate with Sirius Black. The conversation takes place at Black's house, which is currently the Order of the Phoenix headquarters. While Sirius Black wants Harry to know all about Lord Voldemort's plans, Molly Weasley thinks that due to his age and for the sake of his safety, it is not necessary to tell him everything the Order knows. The debate culminates when Molly Weasley hints at Sirius's lack of parental responsibility and his hasty behaviour:

- (11) 'What's wrong, Harry, is that you are *not* your father, however much you might look like him!' said Mrs. Weasley, her eyes still boring into Sirius. 'You are still at school and adults responsible for you should not forget it!'

'Meaning I'm an irresponsible godfather?' demanded Sirius, his voice rising.

'Meaning you have been known to act rashly, Sirius, which is why Dumbledore keeps reminding you to stay at home and –'

'We'll leave my instructions from Dumbledore out of this, if you please!' said Sirius loudly.

(Rowling 2003: 89)

The narrator's part *her eyes still boring into Sirius* indicates that even though Molly Weasley answers Harry Potter's question, her message is meant to address Sirius, too. However, her intention is to imply that Sirius is not a reliable person as far as Harry's welfare is concerned. This is signalled in her choice of the generic reference in *adults responsible for you*. If she had chosen the specific type *the adults responsible for you*, she would have referred to all those adults that look after Harry

Potter, including herself and her husband. However, out of this group she considers Sirius to be the least responsible, probably due to his former imprisonment and current concealment. She thus flouts the Maxim of Quantity since her contribution is overinformative in terms of who is responsible for Harry Potter. Sirius infers her opinion, as indicated by the narrator’s *his voice rising*, and by his own interpretation *Meaning I’m an irresponsible godfather?* His question is then echoed in Molly Weasley’s clarification in *Meaning you have been known to act rashly*, in which she flouts the Maxim of Quantity and Manner since the choice of the passive voice of a mental process (*to be known*) used in present perfect indicates a lower level of modality, by which she distances herself from saying explicitly that he acts rashly. The explicit accusation would be less effective in hurting his feelings than when she hints at the poor level of his reputation. On top of that, she continues with *which is why Dumbledore keeps reminding you to stay at home*, in which she raises the authoritative power of Albus Dumbledore and his constant inspection of whether Sirius Black has left the Order’s headquarters. By mentioning Albus Dumbledore, she goes on to flout the Maxim of Relevance, since at the moment of discussing Harry Potter’s welfare, Dumbledore’s interest in Black’s compliance with respect to staying at home is rather irrelevant. She succeeds in aggravating Sirius because he asks her, in a mockingly polite manner, not to talk about Dumbledore’s instructions anymore.

As mentioned earlier, Culpeper (2011: 165–180) distinguishes between internal and external types of convention-driven impoliteness. While the former refers to polite conventionalised formulas that mismatch a situational context in which such formulas are used, the latter covers those situations in which formally appropriate utterances do not correspond with what is expected to be uttered in a given situation. In the case of Molly Weasley’s convention-driven impoliteness, only the internal type occurs. When she wants her husband to realise that his public dispute with Mr. Malfoy was totally inappropriate and against the good morality she and her husband have been teaching their children, she makes a sarcastic remark: “A *fine* example to set for your children” (Rowling 2000: 63, original italics). The use of italics in her direct speech indicates that the nucleus of her utterance communicates the opposite of the denotative meaning of the adjective *fine*. In other words, she uses mock politeness to reveal her anger and to imply that her husband’s deed was socially unacceptable.

A similar example can be found in book 5, when she intends to prevent Mundungus Fletcher, one of the members of the Order of the Phoenix, from continuing to share his illegal business experiences with her children: “I don’t think we need to hear any more of your business dealings, thank you very much, Mundungus,” said Mrs. Weasley sharply” (Rowling 2003: 86). The speech act of thanking mismatches her appreciation of Mundungus’s story. Her genuine

intention is to make him stop talking, which is approved of by Mundungus himself in his apology: “‘Beg pardon, Molly,’ said Mundungus at once, wiping his eyes and winking at Harry” (Rowling 2003: 86). She uses another instance of mock thanking in book 6, this time addressed to her to-be daughter-in-law. In this case the intention is to stop Fleur expressing her opinion of another important female member of the Order of the Phoenix, Nymphadora Tonks, because Fleur’s ill judgement might have a negative impact on how the Weasleys’ children construct their relations with Tonks. These examples demonstrate that even though Molly Weasley is aware of conventionalised politeness formulas, she does not hesitate to use them in such communicative events in which her illocutionary force contrasts with the utterance meanings. In other words, Molly Weasley utilises mock politeness in order to indirectly remind her interlocutors that their behaviour is not appropriate in front of the Weasleys’ children and Harry Potter.

As far as context-driven types of implicational impoliteness are concerned, Culpeper (2011: 180–183) speaks about two sub-types, namely unmarked behaviour and the absence of behaviour. The latter can be found in those events in which the speaker opts not to perform a verbal response, which might be perceived as impolite; this subtype is not found in the series, as Molly Weasley always acts verbally in conflict situations. The former, meanwhile, is in fact a violation of “what is socially acceptable” (Culpeper 2011: 182). Even though this strategy is not predominant in Molly Weasley’s impoliteness repertoire, there are a few events in which she exploits it. As with the other types of implicational impoliteness, the following example occurs in the stolen car scene. This time, however, Molly Weasley is more calmed down as the narrator’s comment “with a slightly softened expression” (Rowling 2000: 35) suggests. In her remark to Fred’s violation of morality “You keep your mouth closed while you’re eating!” (Rowling 2000: 35), Molly Weasley demonstrates the asymmetry of power between the identity of a mother and that of a son, who, however, is old enough to know that one does not speak with a full mouth. In order to enhance its humiliating effect, she uses the imperative enhanced with the personal pronoun *you* and the temporal condition *while you’re eating*. Even though the reader is deprived of Fred’s reaction, it must be embarrassing for him to be told to be quiet in a way pre-schoolers are usually instructed.

Besides employing this subtype in an asymmetrical relation in which Molly Weasley is more powerful, she is not afraid of lecturing her peers who are in a socially superior position. This happens in book 4, when Molly Weasley visits Harry Potter in the school hospital, where he is recovering from the Triwizard Tournament, which turned out to be Lord Voldemort’s trap. Being informed that Lord Voldemort is alive, has killed one of the students, and is planning to gain power, Cornelius Fudge, the Minister for Magic, hurries up to ask Harry Potter to

confirm the facts regardless of his hospitalisation. The urgency of his visit is communicated in Mr. Fudge’s absence of greetings:

- (12) Fudge came striding up the ward. Professors McGonagal and Snape were at his heels.
 ‘Where’s Dumbledore?’ Fudge demanded of Mrs. Weasley.
 ‘He’s not here,’ said Mrs. Weasley angrily. ‘This is a hospital wing, Minister, don’t you think you’d do better to –’ But the door opened and Dumbledore came sweeping up the ward. (Rowling 2000: 702)

Molly Weasley does not approve of Mr. Fudge’s absence of greetings, as indicated in the way she responds. Nonetheless, she takes advantage of her turn to speak by giving him the redundant answer *he’s not here*, and goes on to inform him that he is in a hospital wing where he is expected to behave appropriately. Even though the reader is deprived of the rhematic part of her piece of advice as well as of Mr. Fudge’s reaction due to Dumbledore’s sudden appearance, one can guess what she, drawing upon her identity as a moral authority, intends to convey to the Minister. Simply speaking, she takes the opportunity to give him a lesson about proper behaviour, which is socially rather unacceptable considering the social distance between them.

6. Conclusion

Molly Weasley represents a prototypical mother, whose complexity is revealed throughout the narrative. Being a mother of seven children and a life-long supporter of good against the evil, she is responsible for teaching and cultivating good manners and moral values while bringing up her offspring and taking care of the Weasleys’ household. She is the one who never misses an opportunity to give a lecture in morality not only to her relatives, but also, in fact, to anyone who happens to be around her. This pursuit of moral perfectionism constructs her identity as a moral authority who never seems to deviate from her moral values. Motherness, however, is not only about love and joy, but also about fear and sadness, and even anger when things develop differently from one’s expectations and in spite of one’s endeavours. Even Molly Weasley sometimes violates social expectation and appropriateness, and infringes her moral principles, which results in humanising her character and making her more realistic.

Analysing those communicative events in which her system of moral values conflicts with that of her interlocutor’s, this paper discovers that Molly Weasley prefers to use implicational to conventionalised impoliteness. She opts for conventionalised impoliteness in emotively challenging situations in which the intensity

of her anger and/or fear, caused mainly by her relatives' violation of social norms, functions as a variable of her impolite communication. In such situations, she chooses pointed criticism and insulting language, which results in deviation from good morality. This enables her to relieve her immediate negative emotions, hence the affective function is performed, and to accuse the target, either her sons or her husband, of being the source of these emotions. Her only usage of insulting language targeted at a non-family member is addressed to Bellatrix Lestrange, which enables Molly Weasley to gather all her courage and duelling skills, and to finish Bellatrix off. In this case, both coercive and affective functions are performed. While the former helps Molly Weasley to exercise her authoritative power as a supporter of good over the evil Bellatrix, the latter helps her relieve the sadness of losing her son prior to the duel with Bellatrix.

As far as implicational impoliteness is concerned, she employs it both with her relatives and with her peers. The most preferred type Molly Weasley uses is the form-driven one, which appears in 11 instances. Regardless of whether she debates with relatives or peers, she flouts cooperative maxims in order to imply the target's deviation from the moral values and principles her family lives by. By flouting the maxims, she performs coercive impoliteness that is meant either to re-establish the values she expects her family members to share, or to coerce her peers, especially Sirius Black, to align his system of moral values with hers. However, she fails with Sirius as he wins in the argument over what is good for Harry Potter. In contrast, Molly Weasley's convention-driven impoliteness dominates the interactions with her relatives. In the analysed interactions, this type represents in fact a form of mock politeness that performs both affective and coercive functions: she reveals her anger and indicates that what the target has done is socially unacceptable. In addition, she lectures the target about morality, even though indirectly. The last type of implicational impoliteness, the context-driven one, performs the same functions with the same communicative goals, yet it also allows her to imply that even a small child would be aware of the target's inappropriate behaviour, which causes the target to feel ashamed; hence, the entertaining function is employed.

In summary, when Molly Weasley is impolite with her family members, her impoliteness carries all three functions. The affective function enables her to relieve her emotion; the entertaining one allows her to humiliate her relatives, especially the twins and her husband; and the coercive one makes them realign their perspective with the values the family stands for. When being impolite with peers, she mainly performs the coercive function in order to make them act according to moral values, or to prevent them from acting in a socially unacceptable way. Needless to say, however, when interacting with her peers, she tends to mitigate the impolite impact by lowering the degree of modality – for instance, she uses such constructions as *I have noticed that you, you seem, you have been known*, etc.

McIntyre and Bousfield (2017: 56) claim that “deviation from pragmatic norms gives rise to a range of literary effects, many of which arise from the complexities of discourse structure to be found in fictional texts, and the relationships between discourse participants in such texts.” In the *Harry Potter* series, narrative complexities are accompanied by the characters’ complexities. In the case of Molly Weasley, her complexity and multidimensionality are achieved by means of conflictual situations in which she negotiates her identity as a moral authority. She deviates from social norms in order to demonstrate her dominance over her own children as well as to teach others lessons on which moral values and principles both the fictional wizarding and non-fictional worlds should uphold.

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